Truth for peace?

Exploring the links between the Solomon Islands' TRC process and people's attitudes towards peace

by Dr Karen Brounéus
Department of Peace and Conflict Research
Uppsala University, Sweden
and
National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
University of Otago, New Zealand

Foreword

This report presents results from a research project that studied the links between the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the country's peace building process.

The aim of the research was to study the effects of the TRC process on people's attitudes towards issues that are important for peace, for example trust, coexistence, the TRC, and ex-combatants.

A total of around 1,900 Solomon Islanders participated in the research, in surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews in 2011 and 2013.

The project was conducted with support from the Solomon Islands TRC, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, and Ministry of Peace, Unity and Reconciliation. The New Zealand Tearfund and the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund funded the project.

The fieldwork was conducted in collaboration with Pasifiki Ltd, Honiara.

In this report, the main results of the study are summarised. Hopefully, the findings may be of use to Solomon Islands Ministries, Churches, NGOs and others working with peace building in the Solomon Islands.

Acknowledgments

List of key concepts and abbreviations

Kastom	Pijin for 'custom', that is, a specific set of "[…] traditions [,] moralities and ways of contemporary practice" [1]
Lotu	Church
Tafuliae	Red/shell money
Waetman	Pijin for a white man/Westerner
Wantok	Pijin for "one talk", meaning the ethno-linguistic group to which one belongs
The *Tension*	a low intensity armed conflict, which erupted in 1998 and lasted until 2003

IFM	Isatabu Freedom Movement
MEF	Malaita Eagle Force
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SICA	Solomon Islands Christian Association
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Contents

Executive summary

Since the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the mid-1990's, TRCs have become a very popular tool for post-conflict peacebuilding. One of the main expectations of a TRC is that *the truth will heal*. That is, that people who hear the truth will have more understanding for their former enemies, and that this will lead to healing, reconciliation and peace. However, research has shown that it is not guaranteed that the truth will heal. In fact, we know very little about what effect TRCs have on peacebuilding for regular people over time.

This is the first research project to follow a TRC process over time to study people's attitudes towards issues that are important for peace. The overarching research question of the project was: *How does the Solomon Islands TRC process affect women's and men's attitudes towards peace, trust, and coexistence, and their experience of security?*

The Solomon Islands TRC was established to promote national unity and reconciliation after the armed conflict known as the *Tension*. During the TRC's two-year mandate (2010–2012), it conducted eleven public hearings throughout the Solomon Islands and collected approximately 4,000 statements.

To measure the effects of the Solomon Islands TRC on attitudes towards peace:

- We interviewed approximately 900 women and men on Guadalcanal and Malaita for a survey in 2011 and 2013.

- We conducted 7 focus groups in 2011, and 12 focus groups in 2013. Each focus group consisted of 6-8 participants, so in total around 110 Solomon Islanders participated in the focus groups.

- We interviewed 5 ex-combatants who had witnessed in the TRC. The interviews were about their experiences of witnessing in the TRC, and why they had chosen to witness.

In the surveys and focus groups, we asked questions about trust, coexistence, and the reintegration of ex-combatants. We also asked about experiences of the Tension and psychological health. This was to understand how war-related trauma, psychological health, and attitudes toward peacebuilding may be linked, and what challenges people face. We asked both women and men about how they experienced the TRC process.

Below, seven important results of this research project are highlighted:

1. **Impact of the Tension on mental ill-health**

   Both the survey and focus group results show the severe effect the Tension has had on mental ill-health for the people of the Solomon Islands. The levels of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) seen among the participants in this study can be compared to those in war veterans after deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. It is also worrying that the level of PTSD has increased over the two years, in particular among men.

2. **Need for protection and economic opportunities**

   The two largest threats to safety for the participants in this study were *renewed violence in the community* and the *struggle for economic wellbeing*. The view that *domestic abuse or violence* was the greatest threat to safety nearly doubled over the two years. These results show that *the protection of people and providing economic opportunities* are two of the most important areas for the Solomon Islands government to invest in.

3. **Disappointment in the peace process**

   The survey results show that *support* of the TRC was quite high in both 2011 and 2013. A majority of the participants thought the TRC was good in principle, would relieve suffering, and would decrease revenge.

   However, during the same time there was a significant *decrease in confidence* in the TRC. Between 2011 and 2013 there was an *increase* in the number of people who thought that many false statements were given in the TRC, that it would intensify suffering, and that the TRC would increase revenge. Taken together, the results suggest a general disappointment with the TRC process, two years after its completion. The disappointment might be caused by the government's silence and inaction regarding the recommendations of the TRC Final Report for nearly four years. The new government's recent focus on the TRC Final Report (early 2016) is therefore very hopeful for the peace building process.

4. **The importance of *kastom* for reconciliation**

   An overwhelming majority of the survey participants thought that *traditional ceremonies* were more important for reconciliation in their community than the TRC. Less than 15 people out of the over 900 participants in both years thought the TRC was *more* important than traditional ceremonies. But around one-third of the participants thought traditional ceremonies and the TRC were *equally* important, and this number increased between 2011 and 2013.

   The results show the importance of traditional reconciliation ceremonies in the country, and that reconciliation needs to be built on *kastom*.

5. Untrue testimonies worsen attitudes towards ex-combatants

The survey participants had much greater confidence in what *victims* told the TRC than in what *ex-combatants* said. Four times as many participants thought that victims told the truth in the TRC compared to ex-combatants. In both 2011 and 2013 around 60% of the participants said that victims' stories in the TRC reflected the truth, while only around 15% thought the ex-combatants' stories reflected the truth.

The *in-depth interviews* with five ex-combatants support the view that there was a systematic telling of untruths in the TRC by ex-combatants. The ex-combatants said they had decided amongst themselves what to say in the TRC hearings, since they did not trust the state to not punish them after their testimonies.

In the *focus groups* many participants said that public TRC hearings would hinder truthful testimony from ex-combatants due to the risks of revenge from victims' relatives and big men. For this reason, they said, ex-combatant testimonies were shallow and untruthful.

The survey results further show a sharp worsening in attitudes towards ex-combatants between 2011 and 2013. For example, in 2011, nearly half of the participants said they were comfortable with living in the same community as ex-combatants. In 2013 this number had decreased to less than 1 in 5 people.

Together, the *surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews* suggest that if a country has a truth-telling process and if the state cannot be trusted to support it, false testimonies may be systematically told. If ex-combatants testify but are seen as not telling the truth, the damage this has on societal relationships may be worse than having no testimonies at all. These findings are of major importance – also to other TRC processes around the world.

6. Feelings of discrimination increase among men and Guale people

The survey participants' feeling that their own Island group is respected and equally treated has generally increased between 2011 and 2013. But the results also show that some groups feel more discriminated against.

1. Among *men* there is a steep negative trend concerning the perceived status of the own group. From having been more positive than women in 2011, in 2013 men think that their Island group is less respected, not equally treated, and more discriminated against.

2. Among people from *Guadalcanal* we see the same worrying trend.

One possible cause for these negative developments is that the expectations of better life conditions after the peace process have not come true. Levels of unemployment are still high, which may take a difficult toll on men in the Solomon Islands. These problems may also be greatest for those living in Guadalcanal.

In the *focus groups* people told of how they were fed up with the level of corruption among politicians. These disappointments may lead to a feeling that one's own group is not getting an equal share of developments or opportunities in the country.

7. Trust needed for peace in the Solomon Islands

Earlier research has shown that trust is key for peace. A TRC may play a central role to increase trust in society, for example by increasing knowledge of the past, and by stopping rumours and misunderstandings which may lead to violence.

Trust levels are low in the Solomon Islands (similar to other developing countries), but the survey results show that trust has increased between 2011 and 2013. For example, more participants thought that *most people could be trusted* and that *people would try to be fair* in 2013 than in 2011. So even though trust is low, a careful positive trend can be seen in the survey results.

In the *focus groups* the discussions on trust centred around two themes:

1. Distrust between people at the grassroots level.

2. Distrust in the government.

In all focus groups, the issue of trust was discussed in relation to the Tension. Several spoke of how trust had been hollowed out, and that corruption must end in order to build trust and peace. The focus groups showed with absolute clarity that people do not trust the government. Corruption among government officials was seen as endemic in the Solomon Islands. The participants said that corruption erodes the country and undermines the possibility of peace. The focus group participants said that trustworthy politicians are needed for equal development and better life conditions across the country. This, they said, will bring trust, improved relationships – and peace.

Introduction

The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) began its work in the beginning of 2010. During its two-year mandate, the TRC conducted eleven public hearings throughout the Solomon Islands. Approximately 4,000 statements were collected [2]. The TRC was created on the initiative of the Solomon Islands Churches Association (SICA), and followed the adoption of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act in 2008. The TRC Commissioners handed over their Final Report to the Prime Minister in early 2012, at the end of their term. The Prime Minister of the time considered the TRC Final Report to contain sensitive material that could disturb the peace. Its release was therefore postponed, and the report was surrounded by silence for a long time.1 However, in early 2016, the new Government has begun to discuss the TRC Final Report, with the intention to evaluate and implement its recommendations. This is most positive news.

About Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

The first Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created in Uganda in 1974. In 1995 the well-known South African TRC was led by Nelson Mandela and chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The South African TRC was a hope and an inspiration to many post-conflict countries. After this, TRCs have become very popular as a post-conflict peacebuilding tool. Since 1974 over 40 TRCs have been established in post-conflict societies around the world [3]. The vast majority of them were held after the South African TRC. The TRC in the Solomon Islands was the first to be held in a microstate and in the South Pacific region.[2]

The Effects of Truth-Telling – What Does the Research Say?

One of the main expectations of a TRC is that *the truth will heal*. That is, that people who hear the truth of the conflict will have more understanding for their former enemies. And that this will lead to healing, reconciliation and peace. However, we know very little about what effect TRCs have on peacebuilding for regular people over time.

At the *global level*, research has found TRCs to be beneficial for durable peace in democratic states but not in nondemocratic states [5]. This is quite worrying as most TRCs are established in countries devastated by war where there has not been a chance to establish democracy. At the *global level* research has shown that giving amnesties can be both destabilizing and leading to shorter peace [5], and leading to more durable peace [6].

Also at the *country level*, research presents some contradictory results. Truth telling processes have for example been found to improve the foundation for the state of law in Eastern Europe [7], and to increase hostilities between ethnic groups in Bosnia-Hercegovina [8]. An important study in South Africa found that the TRC led to more reconciliatory attitudes among Whites but not among Blacks [9, 10].

---

1   Many suspect, however, that the reasoning for avoiding its public release was that many individuals in power were implicated in crimes and/or abuses committed during the Tension (personal communication, Bishop Terry Brown, September 2012).

2   A microstate is a country consisting of a population below 2 million 4.Imam, P., *Exchange rate markets of microstates, in IMF Working Paper*, I.M. Fund, Editor. January 2010.

Finally, at the *individual level*, research has found truth telling processes to be both a positive and a negative experience. For example, in South Africa and Timor Leste researchers found that witnesses in the TRC processes had both positive and negative feelings about their experience [11, 12]. In Rwanda, witnessing in the village-based truth telling process was linked to re-traumatisation and poorer psychological health among victim witnesses [13, 14].

In short, research tells us that it is not guaranteed that the truth will heal. TRCs can be both good and bad for peace. The effect depends on when, where and how the TRC is held.

This research project wanted to see how we can understand these seemingly contradictory results. The most important question was: what effect does a TRC process have on peacebuilding for regular people?

A lot of resources are invested into TRC processes. Both financial resources but also personal, by those who witness, take statements, and listen to testimonies. It is important that we know how TRCs affect people's attitudes to peace, and their experience of peacebuilding in everyday life. How does a TRC affect attitudes towards issues that are important for peace?

For example:

- If someone hears a victim testify, does this heal the wounds of the past, or does it create feelings of revenge?

- Is it easier to live together with ex-combatants after hearing their stories?

The Solomon Islands TRC presented an important opportunity to learn more. It is important for the Solomon Islands itself, to see how its people experienced their own TRC process. But it is also important to create more knowledge about TRCs to help other post-conflict countries. Through research, experiences from around the world can be collected and shared. This can improve the chances of TRCs contributing to a more peaceful world.

Aim of the research project

This is the first study to follow a TRC process over time to study people's attitudes towards issues that are important for peace. The overarching research question of the project was: *How does the Solomon Islands TRC process affect women's and men's attitudes towards peace, trust, and coexistence, and their experience of security?*

To measure the effects of the Solomon Islands TRC on attitudes towards peace:

- We interviewed approximately 900 women and men on Guadalcanal and Malaita for a survey in 2011 and 2013.

- We conducted 7 focus groups in 2011, and 12 focus groups in 2013. Each focus group consisted of 6-8 participants, so in total around 110 Solomon Islanders participated in the focus groups.

- We interviewed 5 ex-combatants who had witnessed in the TRC. The interviews were about their experiences of witnessing in the TRC, and why they had chosen to witness.

In the surveys and focus groups, we asked questions about trust, coexistence, and the reintegration of ex-combatants. We also asked about experiences of the Tension and psychological health. This was to understand how war-related trauma, psychological health, and attitudes toward peacebuilding may be

linked, and what challenges people face. We asked how women and men experienced the TRC process. War affects men and women differently [15, 16]. More men are killed, while more women experience sexual violence, or being forced to see family members killed [17]. To be able to help women and men with these different burdens of war and challenges of peacebuilding it is important to know how they experience the TRC process.

The surveys, focus group interviews, and in depth interviews will together hopefully provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Solomon Islands TRC process. This can improve our understanding of attitudes and changes in attitudes over time that are of importance for the peace building process.

The Solomon Islands TRC – background, creation and work

The Tension

The Solomon Islands is a small island nation in Melanesia, northeast of Australia. The nation consists of around 900 islands and atolls. The population of the Solomon Islands consists of many different ethnic groups: the around 560,000 people speak one or several of the around 70 languages. The *wantok* system – the Solomon Islands Pijin word for *'one talk'* or clan – is more important than any other political system. Loyalty is to the wantok – historically and up until today, there is very little sense of nationhood.

The ethnic conflict in the Solomon Islands broke out in 1998 when young Guadalcanal fighters terrorized, raped and forced thousands of Malaitans from their Guadalcanal homes. In response to this, young Malaitan combatants took to arms [18-20]. This was the beginning of five years of armed conflict, known as the Tension. During the Tension there was severe violence and killings, and over 20,000 people had to flee from their homes. The conflict had a deep impact on the Solomon Islands, not least on its women [21-23]. Sexual violence against women and girls was one of the most common forms of violence, used as a form of revenge by rival forces [23]. The Tension ended in 2003 when the Solomon Islands government invited a foreign peace-building force. The force was led by Australia and was called the *Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands* (RAMSI) [24, 25].

RAMSI

RAMSI began peacekeeping operations in the Solomon Islands in July 2003, and played an important role in restoring law and order [26]. They had a prosecutorial approach, arresting more than 6,000 Solomon Islanders over the next few years after the conflict ended [27].

While RAMSI was criticized for its high numbers of arrests, it was also praised for its role in stopping the Tension. RAMSI's yearly People's Surveys have consistently shown that Solomon Islanders have confidence in the mission for providing safety [28].

However, over time, RAMSI became more and more criticized for not having a clear strategy for how and when to end the mission. It was also criticized for having taken over much of the Solomon Islands state's tasks, such as administration and security, instead of helping to build such capacity in Solomon Islands society. The fear was that this would cause problems when the force would finally end its mission [29, 30].

After 10 years RAMSI withdrew its military contingent in 2013. Since then it is solely a policing mission, planned to continue through 2017 [31].

The creation of the Solomon Islands TRC

A TRC was first proposed by the Churches of Solomon Islands in 2000 [32]. However, since RAMSI's mission did not include peacebuilding or reconciliation, the proposal was not put into action [32]. After continuing community demands, however, the Solomon Island's Parliament passed an Act in August 2008, to set up the TRC.

According to the TRC Act, the aim of the TRC was to promote national unity and reconciliation. The TRC would investigate the events that took place during the Tension, involving all stakeholders in the process. Victims would have an opportunity to tell about their suffering. Perpetrators would be allowed to tell about their experiences.

The TRC was not aiming to prosecute or name perpetrators. An amnesty had already been declared for the crimes that had occurred in this time period.[3]

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) provided funding to support the TRC process [27].

The TRC had three national and two international commissioners.[4] A National Selection Committee in the Solomon Islands nominated the national candidates and the UN Human Rights Office nominated the two non-national candidates. The National Selection Committee then elected all five commissioners.

The TRC hearings – and an important incident

The TRC conducted 11 public hearings throughout the Solomon Islands from early 2010 to late 2011 [2]. In all, about 4,000 statements were taken.

Public hearings for ex-combatants were held in May 2011.

- On May 2–4, 19 ex-combatants from the Malaita Eagle Force gave their testimonies in Buma village, West Kwara'ae, Malaita.

- On May 11–12, a public hearing with 15 Guadalcanal ex-combatants was conducted at the Holy Cross Cathedral in Honiara [2].

Public hearings were planned to be held with the ex-combatants known as the Black Sharks later in 2011, in Gizo in Western Province and in Choiseul Province. After consultations these hearings were decided to be held behind closed doors.

However, on the first day of the hearings in Gizo, on 8 September 2011, RAMSI and local police arrested one of the leaders after his testimony. The Black Sharks then called off the hearings, out of fear of being arrested by the authorities.

No further ex-combatant hearings were held after this. Looking at the results from this research project, the arrest may have been of extreme importance for the whole TRC process. This will be described in more detail below.

---

3   The Solomon Island's TRC is not unique in its mandate of not being used to prosecute. Other truth commissions, such as Morocco's and Chile's second truth commission, have also been prohibited from using the truth commission process for prosecution 33. Hayner, P., *Transitional Justice and the challenge of truth commissions*. 2 ed. 2011, New York: Routledge.

4   Fr Sam Ata, Chair, Ms Carolyn Laore, Mr George Kejoa (all of Solomon Islands), Ms Sofia Macher, Deputy Chair (of Peru) and Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi (of Fiji).

The TRC Final Report

The TRC Final Report was completed and submitted to the Prime Minister in early 2012. It was then kept hidden and was not made public until just recently.

Research suggests that victims were disappointed at the lack of real benefits from their participation in the TRC [3]. The previous government's decision to keep the Report hidden was therefore very unfortunate.

However, now after four years, the new government is beginning to focus on the TRC Final Report, and on how to make good use of its recommendations. This holds great hope for the peace building process in the Solomon Islands.

The following section describes how the present research project was designed and conducted.

Methods

Ethical review and research permission

This project was approved by the University of Otago Ethics Committee in February 2010.

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the University of Otago in May 2011.

- Research permission was granted by the Solomon Islands Ministry for Education and Human Resources Development in June 2011.

- In all research locations, permission to interview was first sought from the provincial authority/village elders.

Fieldwork

Pasifiki Limited were contracted to conduct the survey interviews and focus groups. Pasifiki is a Honiara-based company with previous experience of surveys and focus groups in the Solomon Islands.

A research team was recruited by Pasifiki and the lead researcher before each study. Candidates with excellent track records of survey interviewing were employed in the teams. Nearly half of the research team members were women.

In both 2011 and 2013, the research teams were given a three-day training course in Honiara. The training focused on the objectives of the research, ethics and confidentiality, quality control procedures and how to conduct interviews and focus groups for best results.

Research design

The project was designed to study the effect of the TRC process on attitudes of importance for the peacebuilding process over time. The surveys and the focus groups were conducted in October 2011 and in October/November 2013. The in depth interviews were done in June 2011 and October 2013.

To protect the anonymity of the participants, the two surveys included different participants. This means that we cannot observe change at the *individual* level in this study, but we will observe changes within *groups* (all participants, women/men, Guale/Malaitan, etc).

The research was carried out in three locations where violence took place during the Tension: Honiara, greater Guadalcanal and Malaita.[5] The locations represent a mix of urban and rural areas, including some very remote areas. This was to study the reach of the TRC's work and to see to what extent people were affected by the process.

---

5   The areas that were surveyed are Honiara (Burns Creek, Kakabona, Gilbert Camp (in 2011), Sun Valley (in 2013)), rural Guadalcanal (Marau (east), Visale (west), Weather Coast (south) and bush (central Guadalcanal), the two latter in 2011), and Malaita (North: Faalau to Malu'u) and Central Malaita (Auki, West and Central).

Surveys

Sampling and locations

To reach both Malaitan and Guadalcanal people, both women and men, in each of the three research locations, a method called *multistage cluster random sampling* was used. The method is often used in survey field research. The aim is to get a selection of research participants that is as similar as possible to the population that is to be studied. In short, the population is divided in several groups or *clusters*. Such clusters can for example be different locations, ethnic groups and men/women. The participants are then randomly selected from within these clusters.

In general, no incentive or reward was given to participants. This is common practice in survey research, as 'paying' for participation may risk skewing the answers. For example, people may feel more obliged to answer in certain ways if they are given rewards. However, an exception was made in Honiara, where the interviewers found they needed to offer betel nut to build trust so that people would feel comfortable talking with them.

Around 900 people (50% women, 50% men) were interviewed in both 2011 and 2013. The interviews were conducted face-to-face without other people present. In the beginning of the interview participants were informed that the interviews would be kept anonymous, and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. At the end of the interview, they were informed that they could contact Pasifiki or the lead researcher if they had questions or needed any other assistance in relation to the survey. No personal information was kept for survey participants in 2011 or in 2013. The surveys therefore consist of different people in 2011 and 2013.

Survey questionnaire

The survey consisted of around 110 questions. The questions were divided into the following sections:

- Background
- Psychological health (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD)
- Trust
- Ethnicity/Island belonging
- The TRC
- Security
- Economic status

As much as possible, the questions were based on previous survey questionnaires and measures. This is to be sure that the questions measure the right things and to be able to compare results with previous research [14, 34-37].

When the questionnaire had been translated and back-translated, it was tested through interviews with eight to ten people. After some adjustments it was retested and thereafter finalized.

Focus groups

At the same time and in the same locations as the surveys, *focus group interviews* were conducted in both 2011 and 2013. A focus group is a group discussion where a small number of people are asked to talk about a certain topic amongst themselves. Through the discussion the researcher will learn more about the participants' opinions and underlying reasons for these opinions.

To recruit participants for the focus groups, the research team leaders were introduced to key people by the village heads or by the Church. The key people then helped the team leaders to find participants in a "snowball sampling" way.[6]

In some cases the team leaders would walk around the village asking people if they would be interested to participate. It is important to point out that the focus group participants did not fill in the survey, and survey participants did not participate in the focus groups. That is, focus groups and survey participants are not the same people, but they live in the same locations.

The focus groups were guided by a set of core questions, which were asked to each group. The discussions in the different groups could still take their own direction at any point. The interviewers could use the core questions to guide the discussion back to the topic, if needed. The core questions focused on five themes from the survey:

- Island/Ethnic belonging
- The TRC
- Trust
- Security
- Peace

In 2011, seven focus groups were conducted, consisting of between six to eight participants. Three of the groups consisted of men only, three of women only, and one group included both men and women.

In 2013, twelve focus groups were conducted, each consisting of the same number of participants as before. This time we had seven all-men groups and five all-female groups, and no mixed groups.[7] In 2011 we had seen that the 'same sex' groups were more fruitful compared to the mixed groups. In Solomon Islands culture, women often speak more freely with other women, and men speak more freely with other men.[8]

In total around 110 people participated in the focus groups. The focus groups were recorded, so that they could later be transcribed for analysis. No personal information was kept for focus group participants in 2011 or in 2013. The focus groups therefore consist of different people in 2011 and 2013.

---

6   *Snowball sampling* is a sampling method whereby one participant suggests the next participant, who suggests the next, etc.
7   The research team found it more difficult to assemble women for a focus group discussion as they were more often out working, both during the day and in the evening.
8   No monetary compensation was given, however coffee, tea and biscuits were provided during the focus groups, which lasted on average one hour. In the beginning of each focus group interview, participants were informed of the aim of the study, and that while we asked their permission to record the interview, no identifying information would be retained and the material would be used for research purposes only. They were also informed that participation was entirely voluntary, and that they were free to leave the focus group at any time.

In-depth interviews

In 2011, in depth interviews were conducted with three ex-combatants who had witnessed in the TRC. One bystander who had witnessed torture, but who refused to witness in the TRC was also interviewed. Torture being committed by one of the armed groups but who refused to witness in the TRC.

In 2013, again three ex-combatants were interviewed – one of whom had been spoken to also in 2011. The aim of these interviews was to hear of their experiences of witnessing in the TRC, and why they had chosen to do so – or not.

The ex-combatants and the bystander were guaranteed anonymity at the beginning of the interviews.

Findings: Solomon Islanders' Attitudes Towards Peace and the TRC

In this section, the survey results on attitudes around the TRC, ethnicity, trust, and ex-combatants will be presented. Findings and quotes from the focus group interviews are added for a richer picture of some of the themes. First however, we will begin by introducing the survey participants by providing some short background information, including to what extent they had been exposed to trauma during the Tension and their psychological health. We will also see what the focus groups said on some of these issues.

1. a. Background information

Table 1 shows that the survey participants in 2011 and 2013 were quite similar in their background. Around 900 people participated in each of the two surveys. Half of the participants were women and half were men.

Table 1. Survey participants in 2011 and in 2013 (N=total number of participants)

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Female	452	50	447	50
Male	453	50	451	50
From Malaita	475	52	451	51
From Guadalcanal	372	41	385	44
Marital status (single)	244	27	162	18*
Marital status (married)	611	67	671	75*
Education (none/prim)	451	50	418	46
Education (second/higher)	453	50	475	53
Displaced during Tension	473	52	500	56
In SI during Tension	892	99	891	99
Part of armed group	35	4	24	3
Accused of Tension crimes	8	1	12	1

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at $p < .05$.

- In 2011, the participants were between 18–70 years (median 34 years, mean 36 years). In 2013, the age range was 18–88 (median 37, mean 38).

- Most participants in both surveys were married (67% in 2011 vs 75% in 2013).

- Around 50% of the survey participants were Malaitan, around 40% were Guale. The other participants were of a large number of other Island belongings, and mixes of Island belonging.

- Approximately half of the participants had gone to primary school and half had gone to secondary school (or higher).

- Most of the participants had been displaced during the Tension (52% in 2011 vs 56% in 2013).

- Nearly all lived in the Solomon Islands during the Tension.

The survey also included a few ex-combatants.

- In 2011, 35 participants (4%) said they had been part of an armed group during the Tension. Eight had been accused of committing crimes during that time.

- In 2013, 24 participants (3%) said they had been part of an armed group during the Tension. Twelve had been accused for crimes committed during that time.

b. Economic Situation

The two survey populations are quite similar with regards to economic situation. But there are some differences as well.

In both years (Table 2), most participants got their drinking water from:

1.   a community tap standpipe (84% in 2011; 56% in 2013)

2.   a river/stream/spring (9% in 2011; 13% in 2013)

3.   a pipe to the house (5% in 2011; 11% in 2013).

A smaller number of participants had rain tanks or protected or unprotected wells as their main source of drinking water.

Table 2: Economic situation of survey participants[9] (N=total number of participants)

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Main source of drinking water:				
Community tap standpipe	759	84	509	56*
River/stream/spring	77	9	113	13*
Piped to house	45	5	96	11*
Main materials used in roof of house:				
Natural materials	590	65	461	51*
Corrugated iron	298	33	423	47*
Does your household have:				
Radio	435	48	457	51
Electricity	281	31	186	21*
Television	58	6	70	8
Telephone	21	2	22	2
Fridge	21	2	22	2
Family owns land	704	78	656	73*
Family's financial situation:				
Worse than before Tension	503	54	447	50*
Better than before Tension	218	24	305	34*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

9   Measures compiled in parts from 38. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A study of violence against women and children*. 2009(Honiara, Solomon Islands). 28. ANU Enterprise, *Solomon Islands Goverment-RAMSI People's Survey 2010*. 2010, Australian National University: Canberra: Australia.

The main materials used in the roof are natural materials (65% in 2011; 51% in 2013) and corrugated iron (33% in 2011; 47% in 2013).

Fewer participants had electricity in their household in 2013 (21%) than in 2011 (31%). About half of participants had a radio (48% in 2011; 51% in 2013).

Few had a television set (6% in 2011; 8% in 2013).

Very few people had a telephone and/or fridge in their home (2% in both years).

Around 75% of participants answered that their family owned land in both years.

In 2011, 54% said their economic situation was worse than before the Tension. In 2013 this number had decreased to 50%.

In 2011, 24% thought their economic situation was better than before the Tension. In 2013 this number had increased to 34%.

2.1. Focus group discussions on the economic situation

The focus groups give some important information behind the survey results. The focus group participants said that people's economic situation was caused by **corruption and bad governance**. Many were very **disappointed with the government**.

> On financial security, as they've already expressed, we've gone from bad to worse. One thing I see, first, we're just about ready to take the Government to court, for defamation of character. Every project from the aid donors that they say is for rural people, the money comes but it hangs up there [in the government] so we don't know, they use our names in vain to bring money.
>
> Man, Radefasu, Central Malaita, 2013
>
> ....
>
> One thing too, I'd like to say, is that the government stays "on top", it forgets the human resources of the nation. ... We forget – because one statement says, "Government for the people" – but that is what is missing; it's isn't "Government for the people."
>
> Woman, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2011

Focus group participants said that **power corrupted politicians** as soon as they became members of parliament. It made them **ignore the people's concerns and needs**.

> The parliamentarians [would] take twenty million and you [would] never see where this money goes for the people.
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2011

Focus group participants also said that **corruption and financial stress** are important **threats to peace**.

> I have to tell you straight – No, I see we are headed in a direction where there will be no peace. And we will build and escalate all sorts of frustration; eventually, somewhere, it will end up in something worse than what happened before. Why? Because this devil which we call Corruption, which happens in the country, most especially [among] the leaders, where they misuse, where they mismanage what is meant for rural people; and it is just used up in Honiara – not even a part reaches us – how can we expect peace in the future? Because frustration, anger, bad feelings, can only create the things that will lead to disaster.
>
> Man, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2013
>
> ....
>
> I'd like to share. One point I see: Our leaders in the church must look seriously at this [topic]. Our leaders in government must look seriously at this too. Because if those "on top" work together well, I think they can help us. But what I see about our leaders in government, many are in prison this time because they are not honest enough. So you [political leaders] spoil us more than the Tension did. This problem that you Members have done is worse than the Tension. You are people who are supposed to help in the country, our nation. But what other countries have given, you put in your pocket. That's why it's worse than the Tension that happened on Guadalcanal.
>
> Woman, Marau, East Guadalcanal, 2013

Focus group participants said that **corruption is endemic** among Solomon Islands government officials. They said there is **risk of more violence** as people are frustrated over this systematic misuse of funds. They emphasized the importance of giving all Solomon Islanders **equal opportunities** for development. They thought this is necessary for financial security and peace.

> To build back peace in our "happy isles", one way the TRC has come with; another way is through the church [*lotu*]; and I think the third thing I see is that our national government must come down with more ideas for development, for each province or ethnic group; for each group to be busy what they can do in their provinces... the government can play its part; it must make development in every one of our provinces, how many provinces we have, to make each ethnic group busy with what they can do in their province. That's all.
>
> Man, North Malaita, 2011
>
> ....
>
> I would like to make one comment, especially for our national government again; that they must fulfill their promises for us. That's what people are looking for, to address the issues related to ethnic tension; and the development they have promised for rural people. That's all I want. That is my main point of view.
>
> Man, North Malaita, 2011

Finding **jobs for the young people** was also discussed as an **important factor for peace**. Many said that the youth need to be kept busy.

> Find some things to make people busy, especially the young people today. Many young people today make all kinds of problems because they have nothing to do. There are things there but they need someone to help find them. That's my thought: that we try to develop the physical side, to make peace. That's my small thought.
>
> Woman, Maravovo, West Guadalcanal, 2013

c. Personal safety

Table 3 shows what survey participants perceived to be the greatest threat to their safety. The two largest threats to safety were:

1. renewed violence in the community (30% in 2011; 37% in 2013)

2. struggling for economic wellbeing (27% in both years).

Table 3: What do you perceive to be the greatest threat to your safety?

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Renewed violence in my community	269	30	325	37*
Struggle for economic wellbeing	245	27	239	27
Demands for compensation	143	16	117	13
Domestic abuse or violence	72	8	125	14*
Physical violence against myself	103	11	35	4
Imprisonment	29	3	26	3
Sexual abuse or violence	19	2	13	2

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at $p < .05$.

The number of people who thought domestic abuse or violence was the greatest threat to safety has nearly doubled over the two years (8% in 2011; 14% in 2013). This is a very worrying trend. As we will see in the following, domestic violence was in fact raised in all female focus groups as a serious threat to women's safety.

3.1. Focus group discussions on personal safety

In the focus groups, all women mentioned domestic violence when asked about security and trust in general. It is concerning that without asking about it, **violence against women was mentioned by all female participants**.

> We're not free now, because I've heard that some feel the effects of rape yet, they raped women and girls [during the Tension]. So we still feel frightened to move around. We don't trust anyone, any man. I think the men are still criminals.
>
> Woman, Gilbert Camp, Honiara, 2011

This is the difficult reality for many women in the Solomon Islands. The country has one of the highest domestic violence rates in the world [39]. Research suggests that the rates may have increased after the Tension [23]. Also, many women do not report when they have been beaten or raped, so the true numbers are likely to be even higher than seen here [40, 41].

It is important to emphasise that for many women, peace did not bring security. The Solomon Islands government's new focus on combatting violence against women and girls is a critical step for the safety of its population, and for the country's development.

We did not ask about **alcohol and drug abuse** in the survey, but this emerged as a **very important issue for wellbeing and security** in the focus group interviews.

> They're drunk and drink the *kwaso* [homebrew], they [smoke] too much marijuana. I don't like this kind of thing. I think a lot about it, I don't like it. Because today my child has joined this [group] and they fight me now. Even if I tell him to do something, he doesn't do it. He just sits down like a stone… it really spoils my mind. I like my child to work to help me. Because he uses this one [*kwaso*, marijuana], he doesn't think about me now. [*nearly crying*] This really spoils my mind. Some young people bring it home, sit down with it and don't do any work. When I do community work, my child doesn't follow me. I talk but he doesn't hear what I say. I talk but my child goes not go to what I tell him. It's as though he doesn't hear what I say. This really spoils my mind.
>
> Woman, Marau, East Guadalcanal, 2013
>
> ....
>
> Alcohol has become a big threat to our families because a lot of violence, a lot of arguing, a lot of fighting, is from beer…
>
> Man, Gilbert Camp, Honiara, 2013

The **connection between alcohol, criminality and domestic violence** was often discussed, also of how this can start bigger conflicts.

> For me [we must avoid] the criminal activities that start off fights and hating each other, such things we must try to avoid. Domestic violence too… it is better that we avoid such things, because sometimes the small fights in the community and family can end up with the police. When the matter comes to the police, some from the tribe come to back [her] up. Then that man, if he is from Malaita but married to someone from the West, that gang from Malaita will back him up, then, look, the two sides are in conflict. That is my small thought.
>
> Woman, Maravovo, West Guadalcanal, 2011

Protection is also important for the feeling of safety and security. **Confidence in the police** was discussed in the focus groups.

> [A security threat is] whether our police force has settled down and ready to take over from RAMSI if they go back. At the moment we say, RAMSI is here, peace has been restored. If RAMSI goes back, who will look out for us? Our police are not … sometimes there are some arguments here, we call the police and say, "Come!" but the police make an excuse, "We don't have a truck". Their excuse, "No truck!" But the truck is parked in front of the police station.
>
> Man, Gilbert Camp, Honiara, 2013

d. Psychological health

The violence and social upheaval during the Tension resulted in problems such as substance abuse, mental suffering, and suicide [42]. After the Tension, the church and other local organisations (mostly in Honiara) have supported some people with mental health problems after these experiences. However, this support has reached very few.

In the survey, we asked interviewees about their difficult experiences during the Tension. In Table 4, we can see the deep effects of the violence during this time. In both the 2011 and 2013 survey:

• More than half had been **displaced during the Tension**.

• Nearly half had had **belongings or property stolen**.

• 41% had their **house destroyed**.

• Nearly one in three had been **threatened with violence**.

• Nearly one in seven had been **threatened with death**.

There are a few differences between the 2011 and 2013 groups in terms of types of traumatic events experienced:

- More participants in the 2011 survey had **witnessed violence** during the Tension than in 2013 (27% vs 17%).

- More participants in 2013 **had a household member injured** (13% vs 9% in 2011).

- More participants in 2013 had been **beaten violently** (7% vs 3% in 2011).

- More participants in 2013 had been subjected to **sexual violence** during the Tension (2%; 1% in 2011).

Research has shown that both women and men often do not tell of experiences of violence in surveys. This is even more true for sexual violence [43]. Therefore there are unfortunately strong reasons to believe that the true numbers are higher than in our surveys.

Table 4. Traumatic events experienced during the Tension

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Displaced	477	52	498	55
Goods/property stolen	436	48	433	48
House destroyed	370	41	373	41
Threatened with violence	268	29	281	31
Threatened with death	123	14	141	16
Witnessed violence	244	27	157	17*
Household member injured	83	9	118	13*
Household member killed	36	4	28	3
Beaten violently	28	3	61	7*
Forced to commit violence	13	1	12	1
Experienced sexual violence	9	1	18	2*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

Table 5 shows how many survey participants who had experienced any of the traumatic events listed in Table 4. Most survey participants had experienced traumatic events during the Tension: 60% in 2011 and 58% in 2013.

To better understand what mental problems people are dealing with after the Tension, we asked about their psychological health. In Table 5 we see the number of interviewees who were suffering from symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at the time of the interview.[10]

10 Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was assessed through the PTSD Checklist–Civilian Version (PCL-C). This is a widely used measure that is easily administered by laypeople. It also uses simple language, which makes it easy to translate 44. Blanchard, E.B., et al., *Psychometric Properties of the PTSD Checklist (PCL)*. Behavior Research and Therapy, 1996. 34(8): p. 669-673, 45. Veijola, J., et al., *The Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25 in Screening DSM-III-R Axis-I Disorders*. Nordic Journal of Psychiatry, 2003. 57: p. 119-123, 46. Weathers, F.W., et al., T*he PTSD Checklist (PCL): Reliability, Validity, and Diagnostic Utility, in Annual Meeting of International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies*. 1993: San Antonio, Texas, USA. To suffer from PTSD a person needs to have at least one re-experiencing symptom, three avoidance and psychic numbing symptoms, and two hyperarousal symptoms.

PTSD

After a traumatic experience, most people are deeply affected for a time but then return to normal life within three to six months. By talking with family and friends about what happened, the trauma becomes a part of life, but does not take over life. However, for some people, the trauma continues. PTSD is when traumatic experience becomes a handicap in life. A person suffering from PTSD displays a combination of three groups of symptoms. The three symptom groups are (1) being overwhelmed by **re-experiencing** the trauma through memories or images or feelings of the event, (2) **avoiding** certain situations or places or feelings to not be reminded of the trauma, and (3) feeling **hyper-aroused**, that is, has difficulty sleeping, has outbursts of anger, or is startled easily (see footnote 10 for more details).

Table 5. Traumatic experience and PTSD

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Any traumatic experience	545	60	520	58
PTSD	103	11	141	16*
Re-experiencing	217	24	298	33*
Avoidance or Numbing	117	13	170	19*
Hyperarousal	200	22	264	29*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at $p < .05$.

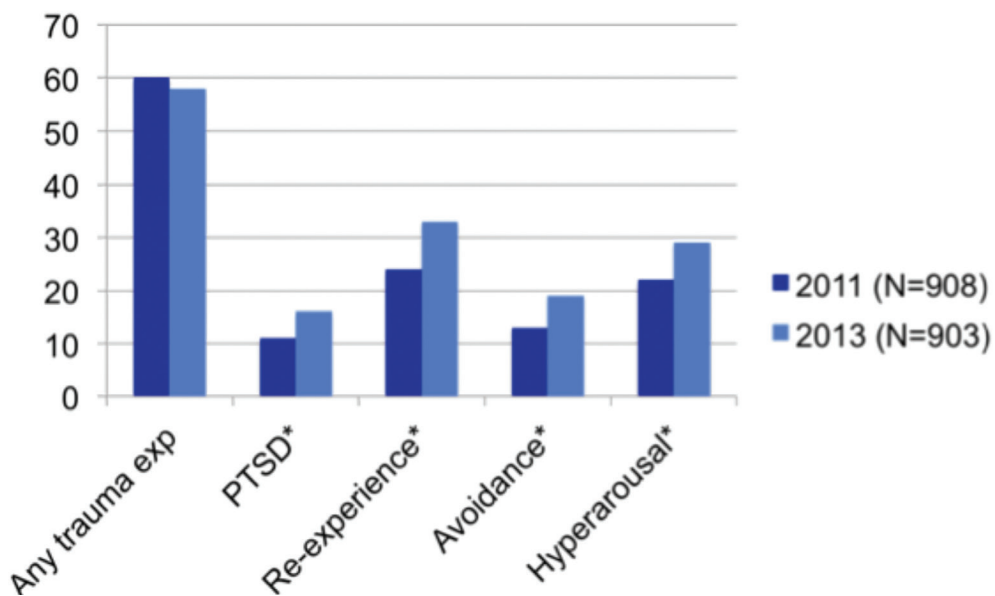Figure 1. Traumatic experience and PTSD

Table 5 shows that in 2011, 103 participants (11%) were suffering from PTSD. In 2013 the number was 141 (16%). It is worrying that the level of PTSD has increased between the two years, and that we see an increase in all three symptom clusters (re-experiencing, avoidance and hyper-arousal). These developments can also be seen in Figure 1.

In countries at peace, PTSD levels are very low. Around 0.5%–2.5% of people in Western European countries and New Zealand have PTSD [47, 48]. In the USA the figure is 7% [49].

Psychological research has shown that war leads to much mental suffering and illness for people [50-52]. In war-affected populations PTSD levels can be very high, such as 34% in Timor Leste [53] and 37% in Algeria [54].

The levels of PTSD among Solomon Islanders in this survey are lower than in other war-affected populations. A probable explanation is that the level of violence during the Tension was lower than in other wars, for example in Timor Leste or Rwanda.

At the same time, the levels of PTSD among the Solomon Islanders in this study are much higher than in countries at peace.

The PTSD levels among Solomon Islanders can be compared to levels among war veterans. For example among US war veterans after deployment to Iraq (15-17%) or Afghanistan (11%) [55].

Table 6 shows the results of traumatic experience and PTSD for men and women, and for different ethnicities.

- More than twice as many Guale participants had experienced traumatic events during the Tension compared to the Malaitan participants.

- Slightly more women (63%) reported they had experienced trauma than men (57%) in 2011. In 2013 the levels were approximately the same for women and men (56% vs 59%).

Table 6. Trauma exposure and PTSD, per ethnicity and gender

	Guadalcanal		Malaita		Female		Male	
	2011 (375)	2013 (385)	2011 (475)	2013 (451)	2011 (456)	2013 (447)	2011 (454)	2013 (451)
Traumatic experience	88%	92%	41%	31%*	63%	56%*	57%	59%
PTSD	6%	15%*	16%	17%	15%	9%*	8%	22%*
Re-experiencing	22%	40%*	27%	27%	29%	30%	20%	37%*
Avoidance	7%	18%*	18%	19%	16%	13%	10%	25%*
Hyperarousal	18%	33%*	26%	26%	30%	27%	14%	32%*

*Statistically significant difference (within subgroup, over time) at p < .05.

It is hopeful to see that the PTSD levels of **women** decrease by nearly half from 2011 to 2013 (15% vs 9%).

However, the levels of the three symptom groups of PTSD (re-experiencing, avoidance/numbing, hyperarousal) are almost the same for the two years. So, although the women do not meet the criteria for PTSD in 2013 as much as in 2011, they still have high levels of the PTSD symptom groups (re-experiencing, avoidance, hyperarousal). This shows that for many women, high levels of anxiety are part of the struggles of everyday life.

For **men**, a worrying trend is the nearly threefold increase in PTSD symptoms between 2011 and 2013 (8% to 22%). Men also report a high increase in all three symptom groups (re-experiencing, avoidance/ numbing and hyperarousal).

There may be several reasons behind this increase in mental ill-health among men. Research has shown that people who experience difficult events *after* the first trauma have a higher risk of developing PTSD [56, 57]. Unemployment is high in the Solomon Islands and economic security is seen as one of the largest threats to safety among the participants in this study. This could worsen mental ill-health among men, who traditionally have earned the family income. It might also be that men are losing hope. In 2013, 10 years had gone since the end of the Tension. If life is not getting better despite peace, this will have a negative effect on their mental health.

Another worrying trend is that people from **Guadalcanal** have higher levels of mental ill-health in 2013 than in 2011. It is also concerning that participants from **Malaita** have high levels of mental ill-health in both years.

Traumatic experiences during the Tension are much lower among Malaitan than among Guale participants. But the Malaitan participants still report high levels on all mental ill-health measures. More research is needed to explain this in detail. What we know is that there is a lot of violence in Solomon Islands society and families [38]. We also know that domestic violence seems to have increased after the Tension (as in many countries after war) [21]. This widespread violence in families and society can be one explanation for the high levels of mental ill-health among both Guale and Malaitan men and women.

4.1. Focus group discussions on psychological health

When the focus group discussions focused on the Tension, this brought much conversation on psychological health. The conversations confirm what we see in the survey results above – that people are struggling after the end of conflict. Many focus group participants spoke of how the time of the Tension continues to affect their lives still today, many years later. One woman said:

> It was ten years ago, the conflict; how many times I think about it? I think about it always. I dream about it. As I said, I was one who was traumatized. It spoiled everything, all my businesses, all my thoughts, [all my] resources; that's why it cannot leave me.
>
> Woman, Marau, Guadalcanal, 2013

> [The Tension] affected many people. It affected their thinking, their feelings too, all of us, what we went through…our young people were very affected…. It affected the brains of people…Very many problems came after the Tension…marijuana, kwaso (homebrew), raping, many bad things have happened after the "tension".
>
> Woman, Marau, Guadalcanal, 2013

People in the focus groups often spoke of how the Tension changed people.

> One disadvantage of that "ethnic tension:" is that that because it happened, "ethnic tension" stays inside every person. Because all have been victimized by that "ethnic tension". It has changed the character of the people.
>
> Man, Visale, West Guadalcanal, 2013

Many also spoke of the youth of today, and how the Tension affected them.

> The children who are big now were brought up at a time when people held guns, so they acted like Rambo then. So this is inside their mentality from that time. We can expect many things to happen: raping. If a boy acts to rape a girl, he is just following what men did during the "tension"…
>
> Woman, Marau, Guadalcanal, 2013

Again and again, the long-lasting effects of the Tension were made sadly clear.

> [Very softly]: [What happened to me during the time of the Tension] is something a person cannot forget, you want to suicide from it.
>
> Man, Radefasu, Central Malaita, 2013

The survey and focus groups results show that the violence suffered during the Tension still has an effect on the people of the Solomon Islands today. Mental ill-health is an important – and potentially growing – problem for people and society in the Solomon Islands.

2. The TRC

The participants in the two surveys were asked about their views of the TRC.

During the survey in 2011 the TRC was still at work. The TRC Commissioners gave the TRC Final Report to the Prime Minister in 2012. But it was not until the beginning of 2016 that the government began to pay it any attention. So when the survey was done in 2013, two years had passed since the end of the TRC, and nothing had happened.

The TRC – knowledge and involvement

Most of the survey participants had heard about the TRC. In both 2011 and 2013, about two out of three interviewees had heard about the TRC (Table 7).

Table 7: Heard about the TRC and from what source, in 2011 and 2013

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Heard about the TRC	594	65	656	73*
Learned about TRC from:				
Radio	426	72	474	72
TRC Awareness event	313	53	249	38*
Newspaper	175	30	239	36*
Rumours	138	23	242	37*
Elders	97	16	116	18
Church	61	10	140	21*
TV	50	8	52	8

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

Most of the participants had heard about the TRC through the **radio** (72%). Other important sources were **TRC awareness events** (53% in 2011; 38% in 2013), the **newspaper** (30% in 2011; 36% in 2013) and rumours (23% in 2011; 37% in 2013). The high numbers for rumours shows that the TRC became more and more known over time. It also shows how important word of mouth is in Solomon Islands society. For this reason

• information must be reliable, so that rumours can be based on correct information and

• people need education to critically assess the rumours.[11]

In 2013, twice as many people had heard about the TRC through the **Church** (10% in 2011; 21% in 2013). This shows the important role of the Church in disseminating knowledge about the TRC also after it was finished.

---

11 The importance of rumours is emphasised in May 2016, with ongoing reports in the Solomon Islands' press about rumours of ex-IFM combatants regrouping for renewed violence in Guadalcanal. Ex-IFM leaders have denied this rumour (The Solomon Star, May 5, 2016; Island Sun, May 10, 2016).

Tabel 8: TRC Hearings in community, attendance and witnessing, 2011 and 2013[12]

	2011 N=594		2013 N=656	
	number	%	number	%
TRC Hearings in Community	131	22	90	14*
Heard on Radio	379	64	374	57*
Attended TRC Hearing	123	21	105	16*
Watched on TV	70	12	84	13
Witnessed in TRC	42	7	51	8
Discouraged from witnessing in TRC	23	4	12	2*
Afraid to witness in TRC	115	19	297	45*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

As can be seen in Table 8, not many TRC hearings were held in the participants' communities. In 2011, 131 participants said that the TRC had held hearings in their communities. In 2013, 90 people answered the TRC had been there. Few participants had **attended a TRC hearing** (21% in 2011; 16% in 2013), but many had **heard a TRC hearing on the radio** (64% in 2011; 57% in 2013). Not many interviewees had seen a TRC hearing on TV (12% in 2011; 13% in 2013).

We can see in Table 8 that 42 participants in the survey of 2011 had **witnessed in the TRC** (either in open hearings or in the TRC statement taking process). In 2013, 51 participants said that they had witnessed.[13]

We also asked participants if someone had tried to **discourage them from witnessing in the TRC**. Fortunately, this does not seem to have been a big problem for the TRC process. In 2011, 23 interviewees (4%) said they had been discouraged to witness. In 2013, this number was 12 (2%). In both years participants said that it had been mostly family and friends who had tried to discourage them, because they were worried for their safety.

In 2011, 19% of participants said they would be **afraid to witness in the TRC**. In 2013 this number had increased to 45%. It is worrying that nearly half of the participants who had heard of the TRC would be afraid to witness in the TRC – two years after it had finished.

---

12 The percentages in the Tables concerning the TRC (this Table 8 and Table 9 are based on the total number of participants that had heard of the TRC. Reason: it would not be possible to attend a TRC hearing or hear a TRC hearing on the radio if one had never heard of the TRC. Therefore, the total population for 2011 is 594 and for 2013 it is 656 in this table and the next.

13 Unfortunately, the survey did not ask interviewees to specify if they had witnessed in open hearings or in closed statement taking. In total, 146 victims and 34 ex-combatants participated in the open hearings of the TRC; as mentioned earlier in this report, around 4000 statements were taken. 2. Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, January 2012.

Attitudes towards the TRC

In Table 9 we see the interviewees' attitudes towards the TRC. The attitudes are mixed, which was expected with such a complex process. *Support* of the TRC is quite high and stable across the two years. But there is also a large decrease in *confidence* in the TRC from 2011 to 2013.

In both years, a large majority of the participants thought the TRC

- was **good in principle** (86% in 2011; 84% in 2013),
- was **fair to their Island group** (81% in both years),
- **relieved suffering** (73% in 2011; 70% in 2013).

Around half of the participants thought the TRC would **decrease revenge** (54% in 2011; 50% in 2013).

At the same time however, nearly half (45%) answered in 2011 that **many false statements are given in the TRC**. This belief increased to 53% in 2013.

The feeling that the TRC was **unjust to their own group** nearly doubled over the two-year period (17% in 2011; 36% in 2013).

More people answered that the TRC would **intensify suffering** in 2013 (43%) than in 2011 (27%).

And the number of people who thought the TRC would **increase revenge** doubled (10% in 2011; 20% in 2013).

The results suggest that there was a strong support of the TRC. But in 2013, two years after the TRC was finished, people were disappointed with the process.

Tabel 9: Attitudes towards the TRC

	2011 N=594		2013 N=656	
	number	%	number	%
TRC good in principle	511	86	551	84
TRC false statements	265	45	346	53*
TRC fair to my group	480	81	528	81
TRC unjust to my group	100	17	234	36*
TRC relieves suffering	434	73	462	70
TRC intensifies suffering	162	27	284	43*
TRC decrease revenge	323	54	347	53
TRC increase revenge	57	10	134	20*
TRC learned about the past	442	74	435	66*
Support TRC work with exhumations	362	61	438	67*
TRC help reintegration of ex-combatants	286	48	368	56*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

A large majority of the participants thought they had **learned important things about the past** through the TRC (74% in 2011; 66% in 2013).

There was an increased **support of the TRC's work with exhumations** (61% in 2011; 67% in 2013).

More people in 2013 thought the TRC would **help ex-combatants reintegrate into their home community** (48% in 2011; 56% in 2013). Here we see that people are hopeful about the role the TRC can play for ex-combatant reintegration.

Tabel 10: Traditional reconciliation ceremonies and the TRC[14]

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Participated in traditional reconciliation ceremony	301	33	259	29*
Traditional ceremony more important	425	47	504	58*
TRC more important	14	2	11	1
Both equally important	288	32	327	38*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

Table 10 shows that around one-third of the participants had **participated in a traditional reconciliation ceremony** in their community (33% in 2011; 29% in 2013).

Many people thought **traditional ceremonies were more important than the TRC** for reconciliation in their community. This figure increased across the time period (47% in 2011; 58% in 2013).

Few participants thought the **TRC was more important** (2% in 2011; 1% in 2013). But around one-third of the participants thought **traditional ceremonies and the TRC were _equally_ important** to reconciliation in their community. This number increased over the two years (32% in 2011; 38% in 2013).

That many people saw the TRC as an important addition to traditional reconciliation is very positive news for the TRC, especially given the very strong standing of _kastom_ in the Solomon Islands.

Focus groups on the TRC[15]

> But we are not _waetman_, we are only natives and how we settle problems is different from how Europeans settle problems...
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2011

---

14 If we only look at those who had heard of the TRC (N=594 in 2011; 656 in 2013), the numbers are surprisingly similar: Participated in traditional reconciliation ceremony: 39% in 2011; 31% in 2013. Traditional ceremony more important: 50% in 2011; 54% in 2013. TRC more important: 2% in both years. Both equally important: 42% in 2011; 41% in 2013.

15 This section is based on a forthcoming chapter: 31.Guthrey, H. and K. Brounéus, _Peering into the 'Black Box' of TRC success: Exploring local perceptions of reconciliation in the Solomon Islands TRC_, in _Transitional Justice in the Solomon Islands_, R. Jeffery, Editor. forthcoming, Palgrave: New York.

The 110 participants in the focus groups gave a more critical picture of the TRC process. There was understanding and support for the difficult task of the TRC Commissioners, but there was also very strong criticism against the TRC for not being based in *kastom*. The focus groups said this may lead to revenge.

Focus group participants said that according to *kastom*, only the conflicting parties and the chiefs should solve a conflict. The process should not be open, and not public. If the story of the conflict comes out, it could cause anger and feelings of revenge, and damage more relationships.

> …where[as] in our *kastom*, one thing that is done is that the story will not be told in full detail. The chiefs know that the problem is there; only a few people solve it, the two people reconcile, [the problem is] finished. But if you go ahead with the full details, yes, you will be reconciled but not in the mind – [you think] will there be retaliation someday or what? […] Because we on Guadalcanal have an expression about *kastom*, 'don't complete the story'. You don't complete the story. You put it in a parcel. Because once you complete it, once you complete it, it's a different story. So you'll parcel the story, the leaders and chiefs are wise… they'll charge [compensation] accordingly. So what the TRC is doing is out a little from *kastom*. That is what I know and think, it misses [the point of *kastom*] a bit. We from Guadalcanal have a word, *humuru* – 'that's all, they've set the compensation, you don't tell the full details of the story.'
>
> Woman, Maravovo, West Guadalcanal, 2013

Many shared the view that hearings should involve only the persons who were affected and their leaders. Statements that it should not 'dig out what has been buried' (Man, Visale, West Guadalcanal, 2011), 'it would be best for just the people who were directly affected to sit down themselves together with the leaders and talk together' (Man, Visale, West Guadalcanal, 2011) and 'it is not good to tell out such things' (Woman, Maravovo, West Guadalcanal, 2013), were common.

> I think really to tell them out in public in such a place [as the TRC] is just nonsense. Just the victims and perpetrators alone should come together and talk. I think it is very dangerous to tell the stories out in public… We can tell out things and anything can happen. So I think the real victims and the perpetrators, only they, should meet together and sort out [their problems] for the TRC. Don't put them out to the public. The stories have nothing to do with the people. The same time they hear the story, they will be angry – crazy with anger; then a different story will go out and around and come back and injure us more; so it will be dangerous too. It will be hard to tell the story out to the public. I don't believe in it. If you stand up in public and tell the truth of what you did wrong, people will have bad thoughts about you who did something wrong. That's just my thought.
>
> Woman, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2011

These quotes above from a woman in Guadalcanal and a woman in Malaita show the belief that telling the full story in public can have serious consequences. The story itself turns into something different and becomes a new kind of story by now belonging to many. This goes against *kastom*.

> ...The TRC doesn't follow our *kastom* because our *kastom* is secret... It's secret. We talk about things secretly until you find the real truth and solve the problem. Not come to the public, and one person says something, and someone else says something, and everyone hears it; it is really against our *kastom*.
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2013

The opinion that truth telling for reconciliation should not be done openly was linked with the perception that the TRC was a foreign concept.

> I was surprised when they invited Bishop Desmond Tutu to come, a man from Africa, South Africa, to come. This is not South Africa. This is Solomon Islands. South Africa is an apartheid system that they are trying to deal with, not an ethnic conflict. So when I saw it, I was a little critical as a Solomon Islander and a Malaitan. Why not build on the *kastom* and culture that is already here?'
>
> Man, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2013

Another man in the same focus group continued:

> ...The big TRC leaders – why do they not take the church leaders and chiefs, people in the community who are directly involved with the people? When they bring the Commissioners from outside, they show that this concept of the TRC comes from outside. Yes? A foreign type. We don't need a foreign concept. We need our own cultural way so that when we settle our problems the old *kastom* way, it is more peaceful and its lasts long, it stays for a longer time, and nothing will happen afterwards. The way they do it, they bring another culture to try to step on top of our culture to settle problems; I tell you, no how much longer we go on with the TRC, it cannot work. All we are doing is [*shouts*] wasting our time and wasting the money!
>
> Man, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2013

Many participants pointed out that according to *kastom*, conflicts should be left behind once they have passed.

> One thought goes like this: let the past go. When we think about the past, it takes us back to the past; feelings about the past still remain... That's all I think, we should just let go.
>
> Woman, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2011

Leaving the past behind was important to prevent revenge.

> …but for some of us, something like the 'blood system' is very strong.[16] So there is the danger if we talk about something and one person there – maybe his brother or someone close to him died in the tension – he might be among us; when he hears it, something that was done, [says] 'For what they did, I must pay back the life that was taken.' That is how I see it; I say what has been buried, let it stay buried now.
>
> Man, North Malaita, 2011
>
> ....
>
> But as to the ex-combatants, one thing, we are in Melanesia. When such a man confesses in public, someone will say, 'You did that….I'll see you one day [to retaliate]'. That kind of thinking cannot be avoided. It stays with us in Malaita and every island. And so I think it is good, as my other colleague has said, let this be done confidentially.
>
> Man, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2013

Many also said that open hearings would hinder ex-combatants from giving truthful testimony. This will be discussed in more detail on page 50.

> As far as having witnesses as part of the TRC panel, I see that that is straightforward because that person tells what is in his/her heart. But for the combatants and the men who went to fight, to come to the public to tell what is in their heart, I see that this concept does not allow this person to confess what is under and inside his heart. The TRC should call them privately or use any other approach so that the person has freedom to pour out what is in his heart to the TRC.
>
> Man, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2013

The focus groups thought that ex-combatants may not dare to confess openly in the TRC for several reasons:

- fear of revenge from the victim's relatives,
- loyalties to former commanders who pressure ex-combatants to not tell the truth.

> I think some of the combatants are just liars. They are frightened because I've heard that some 'big men' are backing them and that's why they don't want to tell out the truth. I think it's good for [the TRC] to go and ask them again carefully about their stories.
>
> Woman, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2011

---

16   A traditional Malaitan belief that people's actions are controlled by the demands of their ancestral blood or deep ancestral ties. 'Blood' will require that payback be made.

They also spoke of how the TRC hearings were just testimony or education – not proper reconciliation.

> But because the concept came, when people testify, they seem to talk about the truth, but the reconciliation part has not yet [been achieved]. I see that that's not reconciliation. It's only testimony.
>
> Man, Radefasu, Central Malaita, 2013
>
> ....
>
> The TRC is for educating young people, just for awareness… to go back to all the happenings and to look inside to see who was involved inside, to see who really caused the problem, then put all that information in a paper, to see how [the problem] might be solved, then put in a book to remind others.
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2013

Focus group participants in all locations said that *kastom* is needed for testimony to lead to reconciliation.

> The way we have to solve it, especially our group, we will take red money.[17] We will take red money and give it and everything which has happened, we forget it… I know from my life experience, it is something that is very simple. That's what I think about reconciliation.
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2011

One man was more hopeful, and suggested an integration between the TRC and *kastom*:

> When the TRC came, it should have taken some time to integrate this foreign concept with [our local cultures] for us to accept it. I think this foreign idea by itself works. But if it comes and integrates with our cultures, I think it will work even better.
>
> Man, Radefasu, Central Malaita, 2013

A view that the truth does not necessarily lead to healing came through strongly in the focus groups. Many also spoke of the importance of amnesty. This is in line with the *kastom* of smaller, private reconciliations, where chiefs decide upon compensation, and then letting bygones be bygones.

---

17   Also, shell money.

> I think that if the government of Solomon Islands lays out amnesty to cover this Tension that has finished, so that everyone, every combatant who was involved in the tension, would come out clear when the government itself says it gives amnesty to cover everyone; that whatever crime you were involved with that happened during the tension, you are free. I think true reconciliation would happen that way. But today, even if you do true reconciliation but the government does not provide amnesty, we will still not know the hidden hearts of people. We will hear their talk but what is really inside the hearts of people, we will not know; it will still be hidden; even the government will not know the heart of each one. But if the government gives amnesty, then I believe true reconciliation will come; those who are hiding in the bush will come out now because amnesty covers them now. That's my additional thought about this reconciliation. Thank you very much.
>
> Man, North Malaita, 2011

Taken together, the surveys and focus groups give a mixed picture of the TRC process.

The survey results show that there was consistent *support* for the TRC but that *confidence* in the process decreased over the two years.

In the **focus group discussions** the TRC hearings were seen as good for education, so that people learned about the Tension and that the knowledge was passed on to younger generations.

However, the focus groups pointed to several problems with the TRC's approach to reconciliation. The problems were all related to the TRC process not being done according to *kastom*.

Public hearings were seen as re-opening ill-feelings among people, and that this might lead to revenge. The participants also thought that public hearings lead to untruthful testimonies by ex-combatants. If done according to *kastom*, the hearings should be small, private, and held in secret between the chiefs and the affected parties only.

In short, the TRC hearings were seen as good for education but not suitable for reconciliation.

3. Esteem of own Island group

Table 11 shows how survey participants felt that others treated their own Island group.

Around 60% of participants in both years thought their own Island group was **respected by others** and **treated equally to others**. However, there is a large increase in people's sense that their own group is discriminated against (55% in 2011; 68% in 2013).

Table 11. Own ethnic/Island group: respect, discrimination, and equal treatment

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Own group respected	518	57	522	61
Own group treated equally	530	58	522	62
Own group discriminated against	499	55	578	68*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

In Table 12 the same questions are shown per Island group and gender.

Among people from **Malaita** the sense that one's own Island group is **respected** and **treated equally** to others has improved significantly over the two-year period. At the same time, there is also an increase in the feeling that the **own group is discriminated against**.

Table 12. Own ethnic/Island group: respect, discrimination, and equal treatment

	Guadalcanal		Malaita		Female		Male	
	2011 (372)	2013 (385)	2011 (475)	2013 (451)	2011 (452)	2013 (447)	2011 (453)	2013 (451)
Own group respected	60%	46%*	54%	73%*	50%	65%*	64%	57%*
Own group treated equally	66%	45%*	52%	74%*	45%	72%*	72%	53%*
Own group discriminated against	59%	76%*	54%	63%*	61%	61%	50%	74%*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

Among **Guale** participants, the sense of being **respected** and that the own group is **equally treated** has decreased sharply between the two years. At the same time, the feeling that the **own group is discriminated against** has increased.

In 2011, **men** were more positive than **women** regarding how they felt that others treated their own Island group. But in 2013 **men** were more negative, reporting that their Island group is **less respected, not equally treated**, and **more discriminated against**.

From the survey questions, we cannot know what caused these negative developments. One possible cause (also discussed on page 29) is that the hopes for a better life after the peace process have not come true. Another reason may be that increased crime rates make men feel more at risk.[18] In the focus groups section below we also learn that people are fed up with the corruption among politicians. The survey results may reflect how these types of disappointment among men have lead to a sense that their group is not getting their share of developments or opportunities in the country.

Among women there is a positive change between 2011 and 2013. While **feelings of being discriminated against** remain high and constant, more women in 2013 think that their Island group is **respected** and **treated equally to others**.

The survey does not tell us the reasons for these positive changes. One possible factor may be the many women's projects at the grassroots level in the Solomon Islands after the Tension. These activities may have formed bonds between women, strengthening their self-perception. This would be important to look into in future research.

Focus groups on Island belonging

The focus groups provide a mixed picture on Island belonging.

One woman told of the traditional role that Guale women have when it comes to land ownership. She described how they carry this responsibility fairly and justly – but how provincial leaders exclude women from important decision-making.

> I really admire it that many women are good, they can share; we have lots of land, and in this province, women are important with regard to land.[19] They are the important people with regard to land, to speak about land, for the future lives of themselves and their children. But one thing I see is that…leaders in the province, they forget the women. These are the things I see and I do not feel happy about it because women must have a say in any part of development or the community.
>
> Woman, Marau, East Guadalcanal, 2013

---

18 Research shows that men are at higher risk of being victims of criminal violence (eg physical assault and murder) by strangers than women (for women, the perpetrator is most often an intimate acquaintace 58. Kellermann, A.L. and J.A. Mercy, *Men, women and murder: Gender-specific differences in rates of fatal violence and victimization*. The Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery, 1992. 33(1).).

19 Guadalcanal is matrilineal and matrilocal, with land ownership being passed down from mother to daughter. At marriage, a man goes to live on his wife's land. This is in contrast to Malaita which is generally patrilineal.

Another woman spoke of how other Island groups see her own people, also referring to the importance of land. She says it is a reason for other groups to use Guale women – to get access to land.

> They don't really like Guadalcanal people very much. Because we people from Guadalcanal are not very well educated… So I think people from other places only like us from Guadalcanal for our land. That's why they like to come and marry us from Guadalcanal so they can stay on Guadalcanal. Yes, they don't really love the people of Guadalcanal. They love land. That's why they like to come.
>
> **Woman, Marau, East Guadalcanal, 2013**

One man felt that his Island group was seen as aggressive, and that his group had part in creating this reputation.

> Generally, Malaitans have a very aggressive reputation. All through the country, other islands see Malaitans as the enemy; they won't really welcome us because of the attitudes and visibility of just two or three, not everyone… Maybe if people do not have respect for you, it could well be that the track record of your island or the people from your island has alienated people from that island.
>
> **Man, Radefasu, Central Malaita, 2013**

A woman similarly said:

> It's true, the islands of our country do not like us now. They don't respect us because – as we see, we too contribute to why they do not respect us…When you respect another person, he/she will respect you.
>
> **Woman, Kilusakwalo, Central Malaita, 2013**

In this way, several focus group participants highlighted the importance of one's own role in creating the perception of the own group. They spoke of the need for mutual respect, and of worry for the younger generation.

> We must try to teach our children, this present generation, to respect so that when they go to other provinces, they will respect others; and also they will have respect in our own communities. But if we don't teach them at home, our children will have this "no care" attitude; then they will not care for anyone, no matter in the community or in our nation; they won't care for anyone.
>
> **Woman, North Malaita, 2011**

To change attitudes towards other Island groups was also put forward as key for peace in the Solomon Islands.

> I see peace as something that cannot be forced. I see that the Government tries to force peace on the people. One thing I see, only my personal feeling, if the mentality or mindset of people do not change, peace cannot come. So something has to be done to change the mind of the people, so people change their minds. The mind must be renewed. Every mind must be renewed – even those involved in the Tension – they must renew their minds so they see a good thing and see peace. Peace cannot prevail if the mindset of people is still wrong, if they have wrong thinking; if they have hatred; if they have [bad] feelings [against] other people.
>
> Man, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2013

Others spoke of how Island belonging was very strong for them. They also explained how this belonging was separate from feeling part of the nation. One man said that the services of the government did not reach the people on the ground.

> Yes, I think I would like to contribute too. As a Guale man, I stand, my view, my feeling, I don't know if it is right to say it, but I feel that I am a real man of this province, Guadalcanal. The *only* one thing I see that I am not a part of… the problem I face and see, that I do not feel a part of the services of the national and provincial governments. That is how I see it, services especially – especially we people of Guadalcanal.
>
> Man, Visale, West Guadalcanal, 2011

For the unity of the nation, it was important for people to feel in everyday life that government services reached people on the ground.

> What I see is if every province develops, we should have unity, I think. That's all I think.
>
> Woman, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2011

4. Trust

Research has shown that trust between people is very important for social and economic development, and for peace processes in particular [59-62].

Many multi-ethnic communities in the world have been able to resist war. These communities all have good networks for dialogue between the different ethnic groups. The networks increase the level of trust in local society by stopping rumours, removing misunderstandings, and identifying perpetrators behind crimes. In this way, peace is protected at the local level [63]. In social science research, it is difficult to establish causal links – for example, to say with certainty that due to the TRC process trust has increased or decreased over time. However, based on research theory – such as the theory above on networks and trust – we can make plausible links.

In this study we wanted to learn about the level of trust in the Solomon Islands, and whether trust changed over time with the work of the TRC.

In Table 13 we see some very hopeful results. While levels of trust are low in the Solomon Islands, the results show that trust has increased between 2011 and 2013.

Table 13: Trust in general

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
1. Most people can be trusted	146	16	188	21*
2a. People will take advantage	361	40	274	30*
2b. People will try to be fair	265	29	446	49*
3. One should be on guard towards other people	783	86	731	81*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

More participants thought that **most people could be trusted** in 2013 than in 2011 (21% vs. 16%). This is a step in the right direction, but we need to remember that these levels of trust are still low. For comparison, in New Zealand or Sweden, around 55% to 60% respond that people can be trusted. The Solomon Islands trust levels are higher than in the Philippines or Trinidad and Tobago where only 3% think that people can be trusted. Trust levels in the Solomon Islands are similar to some post-conflict countries like Rwanda (17%).

Table 13 also shows a very positive trend in that *fewer* participants believe that **people would take advantage of them** in 2013 than in 2011 (40% in 2011; 30% in 2013) and that many more participants think that **people would try to be fair** in 2013 than in 2011 (49% vs. 29%).

In 2011 86% of the participants answered that one should be **on guard towards others**, even if they are neighbours or friends. In 2013, 81% were of this view. The levels of distrust in the Solomon Islands are high, higher than the levels found in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina for example [64]. The levels in the Solomon Islands are more similar to levels found in post-conflict Rwanda and in Ethiopia [36]. The explanation may be that the question is closely linked to post-conflict issues in developing countries, such as poverty and general living conditions.

Table 14: Trust in general, per ethnicity and gender

	Guadalcanal		Malaita		Female		Male	
	2011 (372)	2013 (385)	2011 (475)	2013 (451)	2011 (452)	2013 (447)	2011 (453)	2013 (451)
Most people can be trusted	23%	14%	*11%	29%*	11%	20%	*21%	23%
People will take advantage	38%	36%	40%	40%	47%	34%*	33%	42%*
People will try to be fair	39%	64%*	23%	60%*	24%	66%*	35%	58%*
One should be on guard towards other people	86%	90%	87%	78%*	93%	91%	80%	76%

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05. For the calculations of the 2013 data in this table, there were unfortunately many missing values (missing data) within the different subgroups. The percentages given here are therefore the valid per cent, that is, the percentage of the non-missing values (as we do not know what those who have not answered would have answered. A full table with all exact values can be found in the Appendix.

Table 14 shows the same questions on trust among different ethnic groups and among women and men.

Among **women**, promising developments can be seen. Women were very much *less trusting than men* in 2011 (women 11% and men 21%). In 2013 the women's level of trust has nearly doubled (20%), while the men report similar levels of trust (23%) as they did in 2011.

Fewer women in 2013 than in 2011 thought *people will take advantage of you*.

Twice as many women thought *people will try to be fair* in 2013 compared to 2011.

At the same time, over 90% of women answer yes to the question if *one should be on guard towards other people*, even if they are neighbours or friends.

So, while women's levels of trust seem to be increasing, there is still a lot of caution towards others.

Among **men** the results are mixed. More men think *people will take advantage of you* in 2013 than in 2011 (42% vs. 33%). But at the same time, more men also think *people will try to be fair* (35% in 2011; 58% in 2013). Levels of *trust* and of *being on guard* are similar for both 2011 and 2013.

When we look at the results on trust by **Island belonging** we find a curious, reversed trend.

In 2011, 23% of people from **Guadalcanal** thought *most people can be trusted*. Among people from **Malaita** the figure was only 11%.

In 2013 trust has *decreased* to 14% among people from Guadalcanal, while Malaitan trust has significantly *increased* to 29%.

The same trend can be seen regarding whether one should *be on guard towards other people*, even if they are neighbours or friends. People from Guadalcanal show *more distrust* in 2013 than in 2011 (86% in 2011 to 90% in 2013). Malaitans show *less distrust* (87% in 2011 to 78% in 2013).

Table 15: Number and percentage of participants who have trust in different groups

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Trust in family	853	94	897	99*
Trust in neighbours	714	79	797	88*
Trust in another island/396 province group	44	444	49*	
Trust in people of Malaitan background	323	36	425	47*
Trust in people of Guadalcanal background	332	37	285	32*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

We also asked questions about how participants trusted people from different groups (Table 15). We asked about their trust in family, neighbours, other Island groups, Malaitan, and Guale people respectively.

Nearly *all* Solomon Islanders in this study have **trust in their family** (94% in 2011; 99% in 2013).

Around 80% have trust **in neighbours** (79% in 2011; 88% in 2013).

Less than 50% of the interviewees have **trust in people of another island group** than themselves. The figure has increased significantly between 2011 and 2013 (44% vs. 49%).

Trust in people of Malaitan background has increased from 36% in 2011 to 47% in 2013.

Trust in people of Guadalcanal background has decreased from 37% in 2011 to 32% in 2013.

The survey cannot tell us *why* trust in Guale people has declined. Possible reasons could involve difficult living conditions in Honiara, the increased levels of crime in the capital or other factors. More research is needed to answer this question.

Nonetheless, the survey results show that although general levels of trust are *low* in the Solomon Islands, they have *increased slightly* over the two-year period.

Focus groups on Trust

The focus groups confirm the survey results that in general, trust is very low in the Solomon Islands. The discussions in the focus groups centred around two themes:

1. Distrust **between people at the grassroots level**.

2. Distrust **in the government** (again raising the critical issue of corruption).

At the grassroots level, all participants said that **trust had not been restored since the Tension**.

> That trust is not there yet. My trust has been taken away.
>
> Man, Radefasu, Central Malaita, 2013
>
> ....
>
> My thought as a young girl, I don't feel like having any trust in anyone either, because now, as we know, rape and things like that are increasing now. Rape and other things are increasing, not like before... Because what happened in the past [in the Tension] is a live scar in the minds of the people.
>
> Woman, North Malaita, 2011

For everyone in the focus groups, **the issue of trust was connected to the Tension**. Several spoke of how trust had been hollowed out, also from within one's own group.

> Before the Tension, it was easy to trust another person. Then we see, after the Tension, trust has almost disappeared. If you want to talk about anything, think about it well first. If you want to talk about anything, look good at it first. So even with our families – some have married and live there now, some of us through marriage are there – our trust almost doesn't exist.
>
> Woman, Kilusakwalo, Central Malaita, 2013
>
> ....
>
> It's a little bit hard to trust. Because even in our local place, I tell a secret to someone but then he lets it drop [to everyone]. How much more if it were about the problems [of "ethnic tension"]. There will be more problems.
>
> Man, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2013

Others spoke of **distrust between Island groups** since the time of the Tension.

> The different islands now only trust themselves. A man from this island only trusts others from this island.
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2013
>
> ....
>
> This is why we can't build Solomon Islands, if each island only trusts itself. No trust. Each one likes to build itself, not as a whole.
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2013

Several focus group participants spoke of the **importance of trust to build the country** as a whole.

> If trust is missing in any community, unity in diversity is missing…
>
> Woman, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2011
>
> ⋯⋯⋯
>
> We can make our nation a good nation, if we ourselves develop [trust]. That's what I think.
>
> Woman, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2011

A man in Radefasu spoke of how the **peace process can restore confidence and trust** in the country. But he also said that **corruption must end** in order to build trust.

> I have only two points. One, we finish the peace process. Two, the Government must deal with the corruption in the country. Then I'll have hope for the country. If it doesn't deal with these two [issues], [we'll be] very sorry. Our country, we'll live in a country where we'll only suffer, while we're sitting down amongst our riches, because of corruption. So those are the two points I see. We restore the confidence of the country through our peace process and we do away with corruption in the country. So then personally I would have hope that the country will run well. Today's leaders! Let's do away with our mess of today – so the young generation will come and build up [the country]. Otherwise, they will have to come in and go back and address what the leaders did before, the messes they made. If we created the mess, we clear it to make the young generation come and address the prosperity of this nation.
>
> Man, Radefasu, Central Malaita, 2013

The focus groups strongly demonstrated that **people do not trust the government**. People see funds being held amongst the government and provincial leaders – not reaching the people they are aimed for. This not only undermines development and trust – but peace.

> I think there is hope for our nation if there is no corruption; if accountability can happen for the nation, we can hope. One thing that can spoil us; if we have corruption and things like that, there is no hope. If people do things with trust, we will have hope.
>
> Man, North Malaita, 2011

In the focus groups, the importance of non-corrupt politicians for peace was brought forward, again and again. People see **corruption among government officials** as a **widespread problem that must be addressed for peace**.

> And another thing, the Government must look at the Members [of Parliament] to make sure they are not doing corrupt [practices] in the Government; they must use the money to struggle for our own island to make peace come in a good way. The Members must struggle for their own islands, and not just stay in town just to relax, wasting the Government's money, don't lie about it.
>
> Woman, Maravovo, West Guadalcanal, 2013
>
> ....
>
> To have peace, you have to straighten the government. The wrong starts with the government, that's why we have no peace.
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2013

To **build trust and peace** at all levels of society, people must be able to **trust government and provincial leaders to do good** with the resources they are entrusted to manage.

> We still have hope if we have good leaders to lead our country. If the leaders come in with only corruption, nothing good will happen in future years.
>
> Woman, North Malaita, 2011

5. Feelings towards ex-combatants

In this section we turn to the survey's findings concerning ex-combatants, findings that are quite concerning.

Similar to surveys in other post-conflict settings, we asked the question: **Do you feel comfortable in the following situations in the presence of ex-combatants?** Situations include for example living in the same community, as close household members, neighbours, or sharing a meal etc.

Table 16 shows how people felt in the company of ex-combatants in 2011 and 2013. For all questions there is a sharp decline over the two-year period (see Figure 2).

For example, in 2011, 47% of participants were comfortable with **living in the same community** as ex-combatants. In 2013 this number had decreased to 18%.

Table 16: Number and percentage of participants feeling "very comfortable" and "comfortable" in the presence of ex-combatants in different situations[20]

Do you feel comfortable in the following situations in the presence of ex-combatants?

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Living in the same community	430	47	161	18*
Living as close neighbours	368	41	131	15*
Living as household members	203	22	59	7*
Sharing a meal	371	41	220	24*
Working with them	367	40	157	17*
Going to the market	434	48	185	21*
Going to the same church	624	69	386	43*
Marrying a family member	333	37	113	13*
Going to the same school as you/your children	490	54	299	33*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at $p < .05$.

20　Measure by 35. Pham, P. and P. Vinck, *Transitioning to Peace: A Population-Based Survey on Attitudes About Social Reconstruction and Justice in Northern Uganda*. 2010, Human Rights Centre, University of California: Berkely.

Figure 2. Percentage of participants feeling comfortable in the presence of ex-combatants, 2011 and 2013
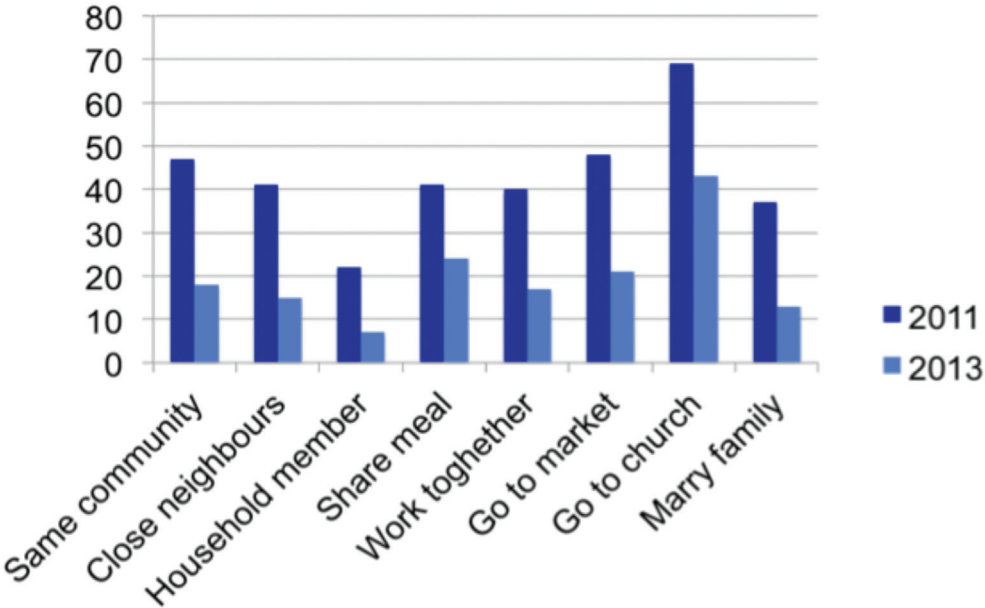
The percentage of participants who felt comfortable **living as close neighbors** with ex-combatants decreased from 41% in 2011 to 15% in 2013.

Living as household members fell from 22% in 2011 to 7% in 2013.

In 2011 69% of the interviewees felt comfortable **going to the same church** as ex-combatants. In 2013 the figure had dropped to 43%.

The same trend is seen for all questions.

Also when we focus on the different groups in the survey (Guale and Malaitan, women and men) we see this sharp decline for *all* questions among *all* interviewees.

People feel **less comfortable in the presence of ex-combatants in all spheres of life** in 2013 compared with 2011. Often the decrease is dramatic, as can be seen in Table 17.

Table 17: Number and percentage of participants feeling "very comfortable" and "comfortable" in the presence of ex-combatants in different situations, per ethnicity and gender

Do you feel comfortable in the following situations in the presence of ex-combatants?

	Guadalcanal		Malaita		Female		Male	
	2011 (372)	2013 (365)	2011 (475)	2013 (437)	2011 (452)	2013 (433)	2011 (453)	2013 (437)
Living in the same community	58%	16%*	40%	21%*	39%	16%*	56%	22%*
Living as close neighbours	51%	11%*	33%	19%*	35%	9%*	46%	20%*
Living as household members	37%	5%*	13%	8%*	23%	3%*	28%	10%*
Sharing a meal	59%	27%*	29%	21%*	41%	26%*	41%	23%*
Working with them	60%	18%*	28%	18%*	34%	12%*	47%	24%*
Going to the market	66%	25%*	36%	17%*	37%	12%*	58%	30%*
Going to the same church	87%	47%*	53%	40%*	66%	40%*	72%	46%*
Marrying a family member	46%	9%*	31%	16%*	25%	8%*	48%	18%*
Going to the same school as you/your children	73%	38%*	41%	28%*	46%	29%*	62%	37%*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

We also asked participants in 2011 and 2013 **what they would like to see happen to ex-combatants**. The results can be seen in Table 18 (and in Figure 3).

The three most important things for the participants in the survey was that ex-combatants should be:

1. put in jail (60% in 2011; 62% in 2013),

2. seen in trials or courts (52% in 2011; 57% in 2013),

3. made to compensate victims (52% in 2011; 61% in 2013).

Around one-third of the participants thought ex-combatants should be *punished*. Fewer thought they should *confess to their crimes or ask for forgiveness*.

At the same time, significantly less people thought ex-combatants should be *forgiven* (74 people in 2011; 29 people in 2013).

There was also a more than five-fold increase in people thinking ex-combatants should be *killed* (21 people in 2011; 117 people in 2013).

Very few participants thought ex-combatants should be *reintegrated into the community* (30 people in 2011; 47 people in 2013).

Table 18: What participants would like to see happen to ex-combatants[21]

	2011 N=908		2013 N=903	
	number	%	number	%
Put them in jail	541	60	560	62
Have them compensate victims	470	52	552	61*
See them in trials/court	473	52	515	57*
Punish them	340	37	268	30*
They should confess to their crimes	242	27	201	22*
They should ask for forgiveness	181	20	128	14*
Disarm them	164	18	154	17
Kill them	21	2	117	13*
They should be forgiven	74	8	29	3*
Give them amnesty	38	4	23	3
Reintegrate them into the community	30	3	47	5*

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at p < .05.

Figure 3. What participants would like to see happen to ex-combatants, 2011 and 2013
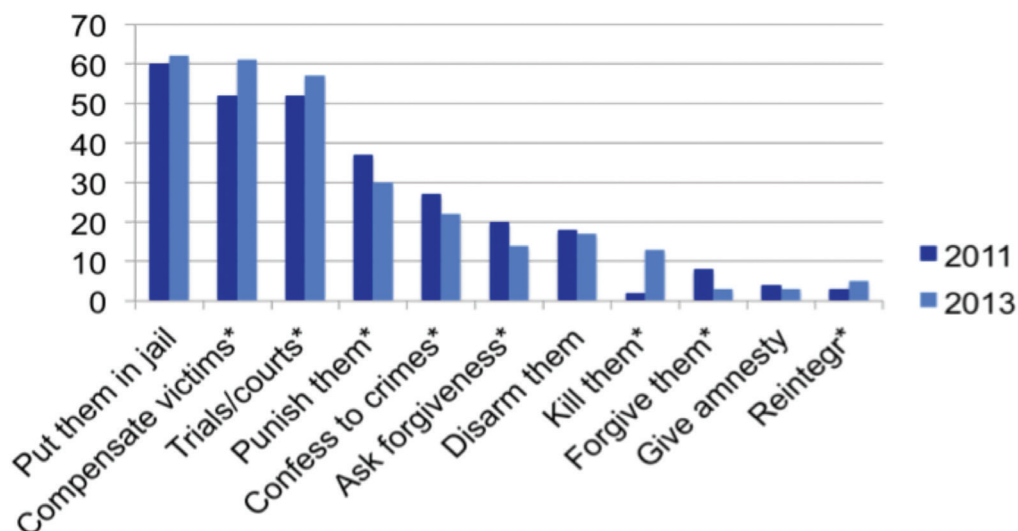
21   Measure by Vinck et al 2008.

The survey participants were asked whether they thought testimonies made by victims and ex-combatants in the TRC reflected the truth. As can be seen in Table 19, confidence in the victims' stories was much greater than in the ex-combatants' stories.

Table 19. Belief that victims' and ex-combatants' stories reflected the truth in the TRC[22]

	2011 N=594		2013 N=656	
	number	%	number	%
Victims' stories in the TRC reflected the truth	530	89	582	89
Ex-combatants' stories in the TRC reflected the truth	140	24	129	20

*Statistically significant difference between groups in 2011 and 2013 at $p < .05$.

In both 2011 and 2013, nearly 9 out of 10 interviewees (89%) said that victims' stories in the TRC reflected the truth. Only around 1 in 5 interviewees thought ex-combatants' stories reflected the truth (24% in 2011; 20% in 2013).

Ex-combatant interviews and focus groups

The survey results correspond well with the focus group discussions and with the in-depth interviews I conducted with five ex-combatants who had testified in the TRC.

The **survey results** showed that people did not feel comfortable in the presence of ex-combatants, and that this had worsened over time. In the **focus groups** it was clear that people were still afraid.

> If an ex-combatant comes – before the time of the Tension, he was my friend – but now I am selective because I still have fear.
>
> Woman, Marau, East Guadalcanal, 2013

The **interviews with the five ex-combatants** support the survey participants' view that ex-combatants did not tell the truth in the TRC. In the interviews the ex-combatants said that they had decided amongst themselves what to say in the TRC hearings. The reason was that they were afraid to be punished despite the promised amnesty.

Several ex-combatants had already been sent to jail for crimes committed during the Tension. The ex-combatants were worried that what they said now in the TRC could be turned against them in the future.

Their suspicion was proved correct. In September 2011, local police and RAMSI arrested a Black Shark leader on his way from giving testimony to the TRC.

---

22 Numbers based on responses from those who had heard of the TRC. (Less than a handful of interviewees who had not heard of the TRC had responded to these questions.)

There is reason to believe that this severely undermined the legitimacy of the entire TRC process. Ex-combatants now knew they could not speak freely in the TRC as they might be arrested.

In the in depth interviews in June 2011, one ex-combatant leader said:

"...listen to the testimonies, all the boys said the same thing."

In the TRC Final report, the 34 ex-combatant testimonies show some very clear similarities. All ex-combatants:

1. devote most of their testimony to explaining what made them take to arms in the Tension,

2. apologize if they have hurt anyone,

3. ask God to bless the Solomon Islands.

No ex-combatants spoke of specific crimes they committed during the Tension. For example, of what happened to the remains of people they had killed, for family members to find them and give them proper burials – aspects that have been important in TRC processes in other countries.

The focus groups further strengthen this view of the ex-combatants' part in the TRC process. Focus group participants were very critical to the ex-combatants giving testimony in the TRC.

They pointed out that the problem with open hearings was that they would stop ex-combatants from telling the truth.

Many spoke of the risks of revenge, and the importance of the blood system.

> I think [our *kastom*] is secret.... For example, if I fought in the Tension and killed five men, I would be frightened and like to hide it. It would not be good for me to tell it out publicly and you report me to the police; and people harm me in return. I would be frightened of that.
>
> Man, Burns Creek, Honiara, 2013

Focus group participants also said that ex-combatants would not dare confess in the TRC due to loyalties to former commanders who pressured ex-combatants to withhold the truth in the TRC hearings.

> I think some of the combatants are just liars. They are frightened because I've heard that some 'big men' are backing them and that's why they don't want to tell out the truth. I think it's good for [the TRC] to go and ask them again carefully [privately] about their stories.
>
> Woman, Bita'ama, North Malaita, 2011

One man pointed to the fact that the Tension turned from being fought *between* ethnic groups to *within* ethnic groups. This caused people to hate ex-combatants of their "own" side too.

> I must admit that the most hated people are the ex-combatants, both Malaita and Guadalcanal, because we say that the ex-combatants fought on behalf of the people of their province or island but they themselves too spoiled their own people – and those are the people who are hated very much…I for one think they will only tell lies, just to tell a story. That's all.
>
> Man, Visale, West Guadalcanal, 2011

The surveys, the focus groups and the in-depth interviews together show two contradictory aspects of ex-combatant testimony in the Solomon Islands TRC.

1. The testimonies by ex-combatants were seen as shallow and untruthful. This seems to have worsened people's view of the ex-combatants as a group.

2. People did not think it was in line with *kastom* to hear the ex-combatants openly in the TRC. One focus group participant spoke of how open hearings with ex-combatants would bring shame to everyone:

> I really don't like the ex-combatants to tell anything in public. We're ashamed on their behalf. And they spoiled people too. We don't know whether what they'll tell is true or not too.
>
> Woman, Marau, Guadalcanal, 2013

In the focus groups there was a strong feeling that reconciliation should be done according to *kastom*, and that this is secret – not open.

From this perspective, we do not know what might have happened if the ex-combatants had spoken more openly. There is a possibility that more truthful testimonies could have caused more damage.

But what we *do* know, based on these results, is that that *if* a country has a truth telling process and *if* the state cannot be trusted to support it, untruths may be systematically told, damaging relationships even more.

If ex-combatants testify but are **seen as not telling the truth**, the damage this has on relationships in society may be **worse than having no testimonies at all**.

Summary of Results

The results from this research can hopefully be used to help inform and explain areas that are important for the Solomon Islands peacebuilding process. Seven important results will be highlighted in this summary.

1. **Impact of the Tension on mental ill-health**

    Both the survey and focus group results show the severe effect the Tension has had on mental ill-health for people. The levels of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) seen among the participants in this study can be compared to those in war veterans after deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. It is also worrying that the level of PTSD has increased over the two years, in particular among men. The results tell us that the violence during the Tension has had a long-lasting effect on the people of the Solomon Islands, and that mental ill-health is an important – and potentially growing – problem.

2. **Need for protection and economic opportunities**

    The two largest threats to safety for the participants in this study were *renewed violence in the community* and the *struggle for economic wellbeing*. The view that *domestic abuse or violence* was the greatest threat to safety nearly doubled over the two years (although the numbers are small). These results show that *the protection of people* and *providing economic opportunities* are two of the most important areas for the Solomon Islands government to invest in. The Government's launch of the Family Protection Act in April 2016 is an excellent beginning. The *realisation* of the Act will be essential, for example through raising awareness of human rights and women's rights among all Solomon Islanders.

3. **Disappointment in the peace process**

    The survey results show that *support* of the TRC was quite high in both 2011 and 2013.

    A majority of the participants thought the TRC

    - was good in principle,
    - was fair to their Island group,
    - would relieve suffering,
    - would decrease revenge.

    However, during the same time there was a significant *decrease in confidence* in the TRC. Between 2011 and 2013 there was an *increase* in the number of people who thought that

    - many false statements were given in the TRC,
    - the TRC was unjust to their own group,
    - the TRC would intensify suffering,
    - the TRC would increase revenge.

    Taken together, the results suggest a general disappointment with the TRC process, two years after its completion. The disappointment might be caused by the government's silence and inaction regarding the recommendations of the TRC Final Report.

    That the new government in early 2016 has begun working on the TRC Final Report recommendations is an important step to renew Solomon Islanders' confidence in the peace process.

4. **The importance of *kastom* for reconciliation**

   An overwhelming majority of the survey participants thought that *traditional ceremonies* were more important for reconciliation in their community than the TRC. This figure increased significantly between 2011 and 2013.

   Less than 15 people out of the over 900 participants in both years thought the TRC was *more* important than traditional ceremonies. But around one-third of the participants thought traditional ceremonies and the TRC were *equally* important, and this number increased between 2011 and 2013.

   Since *kastom* has a very strong standing in the Solomon Islands, it is positive news for the TRC that it was seen by many as an important addition to traditional reconciliation.

   The results show the importance of traditional reconciliation ceremonies in the country, and that reconciliation needs to be built on *kastom*.

5. **False testimonies worsen attitudes towards ex-combatants**

   The survey participants had much greater confidence in what *victims* told the TRC tha*n in what ex-combatants* said.

   Four times as many participants thought that victims told the truth in the TRC compared to ex-combatants.

   In both 2011 and 2013 around 60% of the participants said that victims' stories in the TRC reflected the truth, while only around 15% thought the ex-combatants' stories reflected the truth.

   The *in-depth interviews* with five ex-combatants support the view that there was a systematic telling of untruths in the TRC by ex-combatants. The ex-combatants said they had decided amongst themselves what to say in the TRC hearings, since they did not trust the state to not punish them after their testimonies. Their distrust was proved correct when a Black Shark leader was arrested after the TRC hearing in Gizo in 2011.

   In the *focus groups* many participants said that public TRC hearings would hinder truthful testimony from ex-combatants due to the risks of revenge from victims' relatives and big men. For this reason, their testimonies were shallow and untruthful.

   The survey results show a sharp worsening in attitudes towards ex-combatants between 2011 and 2013. For example, in 2011, nearly half of the participants said they were comfortable with living in the same community as ex-combatants. In 2013 this number had decreased to less than 1 in 5 people.

   This steep decline in tolerance towards ex-combatants is seen among all groups in the study – women and men, Guale and Malaitan – and is of serious concern.

   Together, the survey, focus group and in-depth interviews suggest that if a country has a truth telling process and if the state cannot be trusted to support it, false testimonies may be systematically told. If ex-combatants testify but are seen as not telling the truth, the damage this has on societal relationships may be worse than having no testimonies at all.

   These findings are of major importance – also to other TRC processes around the world.

6. **Feelings of discrimination increase among men and Guale people**

   The survey participants' feelings that their own Island group is respected and equally treated has generally increased between 2011 and 2013. But the results also show that some groups feel more discriminated against.

   1. Among *men* there is a steep negative trend concerning the perceived status of the own group. From having been more positive than women in 2011, in 2013 men think that their Island group is less respected, not equally treated, and more discriminated against.

   2. Among people from *Guadalcanal* we see the same worrying trend.

   Unfortunately, the survey results cannot tell us the cause for these negative developments among men and Guale people. One possible cause is that the expectations of better life conditions after the peace process have not come true. Levels of unemployment are still high, which may take a difficult toll on men in the Solomon Islands. These problems may also be greatest for those living in Guadalcanal. Another reason may be that increased crime rates make men feel at greater risk.

   In the *focus groups* people told of how they were fed up with the level of corruption among politicians. These disappointments may lead to a feeling that one's own group is not getting an equal share of developments or opportunities in the country.

7. **Trust needed for peace in the Solomon Islands**

   Earlier research has shown how important trust is for peacebuilding. A TRC may play a central role to increase trust in society, for example by increasing knowledge of the past, and by stopping rumours and misunderstandings which may lead to violence.

   Trust levels are low in the Solomon Islands (similar to other developing countries), but the survey results show that trust has increased between 2011 and 2013. For example, more participants thought that *most people could be trusted* and that *people would try to be fair* in 2013 than in 2011. So even though trust is low, a careful positive trend can be seen in the survey results.

   In the *focus groups* the discussions on trust centred around two themes:

   1. Distrust between people at the grassroots level.

   2. Distrust in the government.

   In all focus groups, the issue of trust was discussed in relation to the Tension. Several spoke of how *trust had been hollowed out,* and that *corruption must end* in order to build trust and peace.

   The focus groups showed with absolute clarity that people do not trust the government. Corruption among government officials was seen as widespread in the Solomon Islands.

   The participants said that when government and provincial leaders misuse funds, this undermines development, trust and peace. They said that corruption erodes the country and undermines the possibility of peace.

   The focus group participants said that trustworthy politicians are needed for equal development and better life conditions across the country. This, they said, will bring *trust, improved relationships –* and *peace.*

References

1. Hviding, E., *Contested Rainforests, NGOs, and Projects of Desire in Solomon Islands*. International Social Science Journal, 2003. 55(178): p. 539-554.
2. Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, January 2012.
3. Guthrey, H., *Victim healing and Truth Commissions: Transforming pain through voice in the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste* Springer Series in Transitional Justice. 2015, Switzerland: Springer.
4. Imam, P., *Exchange rate markets of microstates*, in *IMF Working Paper*, I.M. Fund, Editor. January 2010.
5. Lie, T.G., H.M. Binningsbo, and S. Gates *Post-Conflict Justice and Sustainable Peace*. Post-Conflict Transitions Working Paper No. 5, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4191, 2007.
6. Snyder, J. and L. Vinjamuri, *Trials and Errors: Principle and Pragmatism in Strategies of International Justice*. International Security, 2004. 28(3): p. 5-44.
7. Kaminski, M.M. and M. Nalepa, *Judging Transitional Justice: A New Criterion for Evaluating Truth Revelation Procedures*. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2006. 50(3): p. 383-408.
8. Meernik, J., *Justice and Peace? How the International Criminal Tribunal Affects Societal Peace in Bosnia*. Journal of Peace Research, 2005. 42(3): p. 271-289.
9. Gibson, J.L., *Does truth lead to reconciliation? Testing the causal assumptions of the South African truth and reconciliation process*. American Journal of Political Science, 2004. 48(2): p. 201-217.
10. Gibson, J.L., *The contributions of truth to reconciliation: Lessons from South Africa*. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2006. 50(3): p. 409-432.
11. Byrne, C.C., *Benefit or burden: Victims' reflections on TRC participation*. Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 2004. 10(3): p. 237-256.
12. Stanley, E., *Torture, truth and justice: the case of Timor-Leste*. 2009, New York: Routledge.
13. Brounéus, K., *Truth Telling as Talking Cure? Insecurity and Retraumatization in the Rwandan Gacaca Courts*. Security Dialogue, 2008. 39(1): p. 55-76.
14. Brounéus, K., *The Trauma of Truth Telling: Effects of Witnessing in the Rwandan Gacaca Courts on Psychological Health*. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2010. 54(3): p. 408-437.
15. Jones, A., *Gendercide and Genocide*. Journal of Genocide Research, 2000. 2(2): p. 185-211.
16. MacKinnon, C., *Genocide's Sexuality, in Political Exclusion and Domination*, M.S. Williams and S. Macedo, Editors. 2005, New York University Press: New York.
17. Human Security Report, *War and Peace in the 21st Century*, ed. H.S. Centre. 2005, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press
18. Bennett, J., *Roots of conflict in Solomon Islands though much is taken, much abides: legacies of tradition and colonialism*. State, society and governance in Melanesia: discussion paper; 02/5. 2002, Canberra: Australian National University.
19. Dinnen, S., *The Crisis of State in Solomon Islands*. Peace Review, 2009. 21(1): p. 70-78.
20. Kabutaulaka, T.T., *A weak state and the Solomon Islands peace process*. 2002, Honolulu, Hawaii: East-West Center: Center for Pacific Islands Studies University of Hawai'i at Manoa.
21. Corrin, J., *Ples Bilong Mere*: Law, Gender and Peace-Building in Solomon Islands*. Feminist Legal Studies, 2008. 16(2): p. 169-194.
22. Leslie, H., *Conceptualising and addressing the mental health impacts of gender roles in conflict and peace making*. Development Bulletin, 2000. 53: p. 65-69.
23. Leslie, H. and S. Boso, *Gender-related violence in the Solomon Islands: The work of local women's organisations*. Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 2003. 44(3): p. 325-333.
24. Fry, G. and T.T. Kabutaulaka, *Intervention and state-building in the Pacific: the legitimacy of 'cooperative intervention'*. 2008, Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press

25. Moore, C., *Happy isles in crisis: the historical causes for a failing state in Solomon Islands, 1998-2004*. 2004, Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, Australian National University. xi, 265.

26. Maebuta, J., *Peace Education and Peace-building in the Solomon Islands: Disconnected Layers*. Security Challenges, 2012. 8(4): p. 93-104.

27. Braithwaite, J. and R. Nickson, *Timing Truth, Reconciliation, and Justice after War*. Journal on Dispute Resolution, 2012. 27(3): p. 443-476.

28. ANU Enterprise, *Solomon Islands Goverment-RAMSI People's Survey 2010*. 2010, Australian National University: Canberra: Australia.

29. Allen, M.G., *Resisting RAMSI: Intervention, Identity and Symbolism in Solomon Islands*. Oceania, 2009. 79(1): p. 1-17.

30. Hameiri, S., *The trouble with RAMSI: reexamining the roots of conflict in Solomon Islands*. The Contemporary Pacific, 2007. 19(2): p. 409(33).

31. Guthrey, H. and K. Brounéus, *Peering into the 'Black Box' of TRC success: Exploring local perceptions of reconciliation in the Solomon Islands TRC, in Transitional Justice in the Solomon Islands*, R. Jeffery, Editor. forthcoming, Palgrave: New York.

32. Vella, L., *Translating Traditional Justice: The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in SSGM Discussion Paper*. 2014, Asia Pacific School of Economics and Government: Australian National University.

33. Hayner, P., *Transitional Justice and the challenge of truth commissions*. 2 ed. 2011, New York: Routledge.

34. Inglehart, R., et al., eds. *Human Beliefs and Values: A Cross-Cultural Sourcebook Based on the 1999-2002 Values Surveys*. 2004, Siglo Veintiuno Editores: Mexico.

35. Pham, P. and P. Vinck, *Transitioning to Peace: A Population-Based Survey on Attitudes About Social Reconstruction and Justice in Northern Uganda*. 2010, Human Rights Centre, University of California: Berkely.

36. Svensson, I. and K. Brounéus, *Dialogue and inter-ethnic trust: A randomized field trial of 'Sustained Dialogue' in Ethiopia*. Journal of Peace Research, 2013. 50(5): p. 563-575.

37. Vinck, P., et al., *Living With Fear: A Population-Based Survey on Attitudes about Peace, Justice, and Social Reconstruction in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2008, Human Rights Centre, University of California: Berkeley.

38. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A study of violence against women and children*. 2009(Honiara, Solomon Islands).

39. UN Women, *Violence against Women Prevalence Data: Suveys by Country*. 2012.

40. Ellsberg, M., et al., *Researching Domestic Violence against Women: Methodological and Ethical Considerations*. Studies in Family Planning, 2001. 32(1): p. 1-16.

41. Wilt, S. and S. Olson, *Prevalence of domestic violence in the United States*. Journal of the American Medical Women's Association (JAMWA), 1996. May/July.

42. Zwi, A.B., et al., *Decision-makers, donors and data: factors influencing the development of mental health and psychosocial policy in the Solomon Islands*. Health Policy and Planning, 2011. 26(4): p. 338-348.

43. Koss, M.P., et al., *No safe haven: Male violence against women at home, at work, and in the community, in The prevalence of intimate violence*, M.P. Koss, et al., Editors. 1994, American Psychological Association: Washington DC. p. 41-67.

44. Blanchard, E.B., et al., *Psychometric Properties of the PTSD Checklist (PCL)*. Behavior Research and Therapy, 1996. 34(8): p. 669-673.

45. Veijola, J., et al., *The Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25 in Screening DSM-III-R Axis-I Disorders*. Nordic Journal of Psychiatry, 2003. 57: p. 119-123.
46. Weathers, F.W., et al., *The PTSD Checklist (PCL): Reliability, Validity, and Diagnostic Utility, in Annual Meeting of International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies*. 1993: San Antonio, Texas, USA.
47. Darvez-Bornoz, J.-M., et al., *Main Traumatic Events in Europe: PTSD in the European Study of the Epidemiology of Mental Disorders Survey*. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 2008. 21(5): p. 455-462.
48. MacDonald, C., K. Chamberlain, and N. Long, *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and its effects in Vietnam veterans: The New Zealand experience*. New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 1995. 24(2): p. 63-68.
49. Kessler, R., et al., *Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of dsm-iv disorders in the national comorbidity survey replication*. Arch Gen Psychiatry, 2005. 62(6): p. 593–602.
50. Mollica, R.F., et al., *Mental health in complex emergencies*. Lancet, 2004. 364: p. 2058-67.
51. Okasha, A., *Mental health and violence: WPA Cairo declaration - International perspectives for intervention*. International Review of Psychiatry, 2007. 19(3): p. 193-200.
52. Srinivasa Murthy, R., *Mass violence and mental health - Recent epidemiological findings*. International Review of Psychiatry, 2007. 19(3): p. 183-192.
53. Modvig, J., et al., *Torture and Trauma in Post-Conflict East Timor*. The Lancet, 2000. 356: p. 1763.
54. de Jong, J., et al., *Lifetime Events and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in 4 Postconflict Settings*. JAMA, 2001. 286(5): p. 555-562.
55. Hoge, C.W., et al., *Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health problems, and barriers to care*. New England Journal of Medicine, 2004. 351(1): p. 13-22.
56. King, L.A., et al., *Resilience-recovery factors in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder among female and male Vietnam veterans: Hardiness, postwar social support, and additional stressful life events*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1998. 74(2): p. 420-434.
57. Steel, Z., et al., *Pathways from war trauma to Posttraumatic Stress symptoms among Tamil asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants*. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 1999. 12(3): p. 421-435.
58. Kellermann, A.L. and J.A. Mercy, *Men, women and murder: Gender-specific differences in rates of fatal violence and victimization*. The Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery, 1992. 33(1).
59. Hoffman, A.M., *A conceptualization of trust in international relations*. European Journal of International Relations, 2002. 8(3): p. 375.
60. Kydd, A., *Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation*. International Organization, 2000. 54(2): p. 325-257.
61. Mitchell, C.R., *Gestures of Conciliation: Factors Contributing to Successful Olive Branches*. 2000: MacMillian Press Ltd.
62. Stein, J.G., *Reassurance in International Conflict Management*. Political Science Quarterly, 1991. 106(3): p. 431-451.
63. Varshney, A., *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. 2002, New Haven: Yale University Press.
64. Magnusson, K., *Aid and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Hercegovina: a sociological survey of life conditions and attitudes, in Returning Home: An Evaluation of Sida's Integrated Area Programmes in Bosnia and Hercegovina*, M. Cukur, et al., Editors. 2005, Sida: Stockholm.

Truth for peace?

Exploring the links between the
Solomon Islands' TRC process and
people's attitudes towards peace