**Contribution of Franciscans International during the Consultation with OHCHR on the impacts of climate change on the human rights of people living in vulnerable situation.**

**3 December 2021**

**Solomon Islands**

Solomon Islands, a low-lying reef island country, is particularly vulnerable to climate change as a small island state. It is an archipelago country comprised of 992 islands, of which 147 are inhabited. Despite contributing minimally to greenhouse gas emissions that lead to climate change, the Solomon Islands is already experiencing the severe impacts of it, such as extreme weather patterns, increases in temperature, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and decreasing precipitation.

The rise of sea level in Solomon Islands is amongst the highest in the world, and of grave concern as the majority of the country’s population lives in low-lying coastal areas. Between 1947 and 2014, the country experienced the vanishing of five vegetated reef islands, while a further six islands experienced severe shoreline recession.

Franciscans International has previously raised concerns regarding the impacts of logging activities on human rights in the Solomon Islands, including in regard to how logging serves to exacerbate the impacts of climate change.

The destruction of forests and lands has left soil exposed to sun and rain, dried up or contaminated water supplies, and caused precipitation to inefficiently disperse, leading to “flash floods, extremes of wet and dry, soil erosion and landslides.” Several communities have stated that there is a clear direct impact on water quality due to damage to preexisting water systems by logging companies and contamination.

A combination of increased run-off from upstream cutting areas, and log pond and wharf construction, are also leading to increased sedimentation in the water. According to Ray Andresen, Solomon Islands Water Strategic Manager, logging activities by Tabilo Timber, which operates in the area of Honiara, have reportedly affected the quality of Honiara’s main water source due to silt causing the water to become a milky color. Although different government authorities were alerted, no action was taken to address the problem at the time.

The logging sector also has a severe impact on fisheries, a major source of livelihood and food security for communities. Fish resources have declined, in part, as a result of sedimentation of rivers and reefs. This is a result of runoff from upstream cutting areas, and log-pond and wharf construction. Riverbanks erode as the prescribed buffer zones are often disrespected, and riverbeds are damaged by logging machinery as bridges are not consistently and properly constructed. If the coral reefs die, there can be serious effects on the shoreline because reefs can absorb up to 97% of the wave energy and thus constitute key protection against natural hazards.

Logging companies have also caused direct destruction of reefs and mangroves, due to log pond and wharf construction, impeding coastal communities’ access to these resources for sustenance. Women have been disproportionately impacted by this destruction. Mangrove forests hold a unique importance for the local fishing livelihoods of women, and their destruction is hampering their right to access fresh-water resources. For example, women from Marao, Aiparuru and Raroasi used to have close proximity to a productive fishing ground, but now they have to paddle for 20 to 30 minutes to collect shells and mud crabs. “We used to always collect our shells from the mangrove area that has now changed into the log pond. Even if the sea was rough, we could always go to this area [because it is close by and sheltered]. But now we cannot use it anymore. Even if logging goes out, we will not be able to use that area anymore. Our fishing ground here is destroyed. This is a big problem for us mothers”

Frequent oil leaks from logging machinery and fuelling stations, often positioned at the edge of the shore, as well as the dumping of oil into the ocean, have also had widespread impacts as well. One woman reported, “Last week when we were eating our cabbage, we suddenly noticed a bad taste. We went to check the part of the river from where we always take water for cooking, and we saw oil in it. We had to throw away our meal”

**El Salvador**

Geographically, El Salvador should have a good water supply, however, the lack of watershed protection, the poor distribution of water assets, and the lack of water protection legislation and culture, have caused the country to be in a level of scarcity considered as "water stress." In other words, the demand for water is higher than the available water. Climate change aggravates these impacts and will “likely lead to water stress for much of El Salvador’s population.”

El Salvador is part of what is known as the "Central American Dry Corridor", a phenomenon that affects at least 700,000 people, with basic needs including access to water due to the late and irregular onset of rainfall. This phenomenon is characterized by periods of heat waves or intense rains that are aggravated by the influence of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO). According to studies such as German Watch's Global Climate Risk Index (2012), El Salvador ranks 4th among the countries with the highest vulnerability conditions in the world in the last two decades.

This situation was confirmed by the former Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, who found that more than 600,000 people in El Salvador do not have access to any type of drinking water and sanitation service, with the rural population, indigenous populations, people deprived of liberty and women and girls the most affected.

At the beginning of 2020, the departments of San Salvador and La Libertad suffered a water crisis due to its poor quality and water shortage, affecting approximately 1.5 million Salvadorans, generating protests, which forced the Legislative Assembly to develop a process of interpellation to the Minister of Health and the President of ANDA in order for them to respond to their incapacity in the management of the crisis and its consequences for the affected population. It is expected that El Salvador will have “longer and drier periods of drought.”

At the end of May 2020, the passage of storm Amanda once again exposed the vulnerability of the territory and the water network, generating a shortage of water supply in all the municipalities of the metropolitan area and putting the groups at risk at a disadvantage. In November 2020, hurricane ETA also revealed these problems once again, causing the evacuation of thousands of people.

**Madagascar**

In September 2021, our members visited South Amboasary in the ANOSY region and Ambovombe in the ANDROY region, in the southern part of Madagascar. This region is one of the poorest regions in the country. The population and the local authorities in this area are aware that they have experience change of climate pattern. The report the intensification of heat and droughts which has impacted in water scarcity. During the visit, it has been 3 years since there was no rain in the region. People reported the increase of illness such as high blood pressure and fever. The change of climate pattern also leads to a poor harvest or the absence of the harvest because the water is insufficient for their agriculture.

The impact has been very severe to the already poor population. To survive, some people are forced to cut the trees and turn them into charcoal. The desperation to survive for their family, some are reported to sell their plot of land or cattle and leave the area.

We were informed on the cases of malnutrition. When the crop yield is not satisfactory, it is the children and the elderly who are most affected and who cannot stand the malnutrition. They eat whatever they see, especially the fruits of cacti. This causes the swelling of the belly and weight loss in children.

We were also informed on the increase of Internal migration. Despite lacking the concrete numbers and data, we were informed that many people leave their places to seek better source of income or livelihood somewhere else in the country, in particular in the Western part of Madagascar. They try to find whatever odd jobs to survive such as security guards, street vendors. Some others occupy unattended or empty plots in the new areas in the Western Madagascar. Sometimes this is the cause of bush fires because they practice slash-and-burn, and they sometimes do not master the

fire.

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