

The challenges

- Stop large-scale industrial logging and clearing forests for plantations
- Conduct a comprehensive and independent Social Impact assessment of the Sylvania Plantation Products Ltd's (SPPL) oil palm operation on Vangunu Island
- Delay decisions over mineral prospecting in the Marovo area until there is an independent audit of social, economic and environmental impacts
 - Adopt Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards for any forestry or plantation operations

The solutions

- Adopt small/medium scale business models
 - Stop funding and promoting large-scale plantation developments and industrial logging
 - Set up a community compensation and restoration program for villages badly affected by logging or plantation development
 - Establish a financial package to compensate Governments who move away from large-scale industrial logging
 - Assist communities to set up, manage and market village-based enterprises such as eco-timber, eco-tourism, carving, papermaking and sustainable marine harvesting

Challenges & Solutions

From 'Caught between two worlds – A social impact study of large and small-scale development in Marovo Lagoon, Solomon Islands (2001)' by Pam Oliver and Greenpeace, with Solomon Islands Development Trust assistance.

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What if YOU had the Earth's RICHIES But no money to spend?

Marovo people are guardians of a natural treasure – one of the world's largest tropical lagoons, enclosing forest clad, rainfall soaked mountains. They value traditions, trust, sharing and working together.

The land, rivers and sea provide fresh fish, vegetables, fruit and nuts, and wild game. The forest is their ancestral home and it offers medicines, shelter, wood for canoes and carving.

"...We have good food and we are happy." – Father of five, aged mid-30s

But their natural treasures and happiness face a great threat...



CASH

came into Marovo people's lives during the last century with copra (coconut) production and a local sawmill in the 1960s. Money was used for school fees, motorised canoes and iron roofs.

SMALL BUSINESS IS A SOLUTION

The Marovo Lagoon is an example of what can happen in Solomon Islands and the Pacific, where people are caught between two worlds.

"I go to Honiara and see all those young men on the streets and the unhappy people, and I want my village to stay how we have always been." – Village man

Many of Marovo's people fear gradually losing their culture along with their forests, rivers, lagoon and soil.

However, the study found that positive things emerge when the Marovo people develop small enterprises like eco-tourism, eco-forestry, paper-making and sustainable marine harvesting.

They can have the best of both worlds.



MODERN LIVING

"Modern living" came at a cost. People started to buy things they didn't really need like tinned and processed foods, brandname clothes and shoes, TVs and VCRs, alcohol, and gambling.

A recent study of what's happened to Marovo people has shown that any business – whether large or small – affects traditional life. When the enterprise is 'big business' – logging, mineral prospecting and plantations – the impacts are most harmful.

Marovo villages are struggling to hang onto their good village life – even long after the logging companies have left.

Forest felling has taken away trees for houses, canoes, weaving, carving and natural medicines. Tambu (sacred) sites have been destroyed. Lagoons are polluted with oil and silt. In some places the soil is so badly damaged that vegetables won't grow.

"Now no-one goes to the river because it's full of oil and mud and it's not safe even for our children to swim in." – Woman at Sombiro

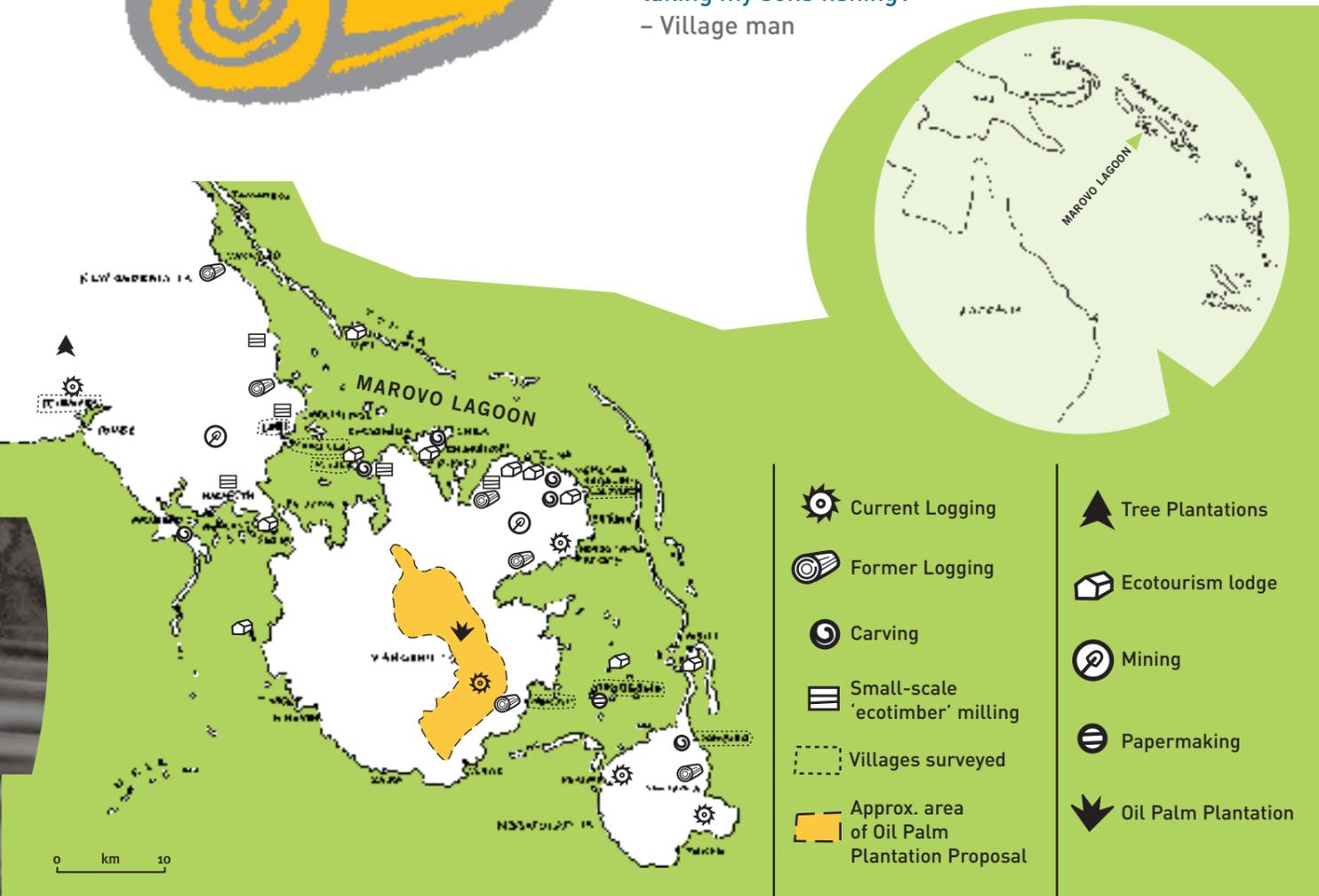
There is little respect for village leaders and elders who signed away the trees or the land. Many men have become lazy and unmotivated – and alcohol abuse is becoming a problem. The women are angry and tired – they have to work twice as hard to feed their families and little of the cash comes their way.

Some village problems might be resolved if control of their land and forests is restored to the Marovo people – but that will take time and effort.

"For myself, I can't see how we can ever get back to what it was like before. Money has spoiled us. People have become selfish, and only looking after themselves. But also we've lost our land, and without our land, we don't have a way back." – Viru Village elder

"What's important to me are my children and my church. Why would I want to work for the [logging] company and be away from my family all day long and working hard in the hot sun in an ugly place to get only a few dollars, when I can get all the food I need by taking my sons fishing?"

– Village man





TRADITIONALLY

Bartering, shell and feather money.

Reliance on subsistence gardening, gathering, hunting lifestyles.

The little money gained is focused on essentials such as bride-price and schooling.

Resources are controlled and used by customary owners.



BIG BUSINESS

Money is desirable and can replace traditional subsistence lifestyle.

Money is used for non-essential and status symbol items like 'label' clothes, TVs, and alcohol.

Money is earned, generally individually by men and often not shared, leading to conflict and resentment.

Families and relatives fight over money.



SMALL ENTERPRISE

Money seen as a useful addition to traditional resources.

Money trickles in and is shared by the whole family.

Money adds value where new skills are developed and local people trained.

Village enterprises strengthen culture by using traditional materials and skills for food, bush medicines, bush stories and handcrafts.



TRADITIONALLY

People respect their chiefs, 'bigmen' and elders.

Villagers respect one another (men for women, women for men, young people for elders).

BIG BUSINESS

People stop respecting chiefs and elders who are motivated by greed and short term gains (ie. sell off land rights) and/or squander village income.

Respect for one another breaks down in some villages.

Less joint village activities like shellfish collecting and house building.

Elders are upset about young peoples' loss of connection with traditional skills and culture and worried about increases in suicide, alcohol abuse and prostitution.

More malaria, rotten teeth, and other health problems.

SMALL ENTERPRISE

Traditional village chief and leadership remains – in individual households, women and children become involved in decision making.

Respect for one another is reinforced through working together and valuing traditional skills.

More work for women but work divided between men and women.

Change is slower so people can adjust and plan for the future.



HOW THINGS

HAVE CHANGED

Labour and natural resources like food and housing materials tend to be shared.

Food, water, housing products and bush medicines are abundant.

Extended family activities are common.

Strong belief systems are the centre of community life.

Loss of control of resources through involvement of foreign companies.

Logging and plantations permanently damage food sources, water, housing and bush medicines.

Distrust and suspicion are common.

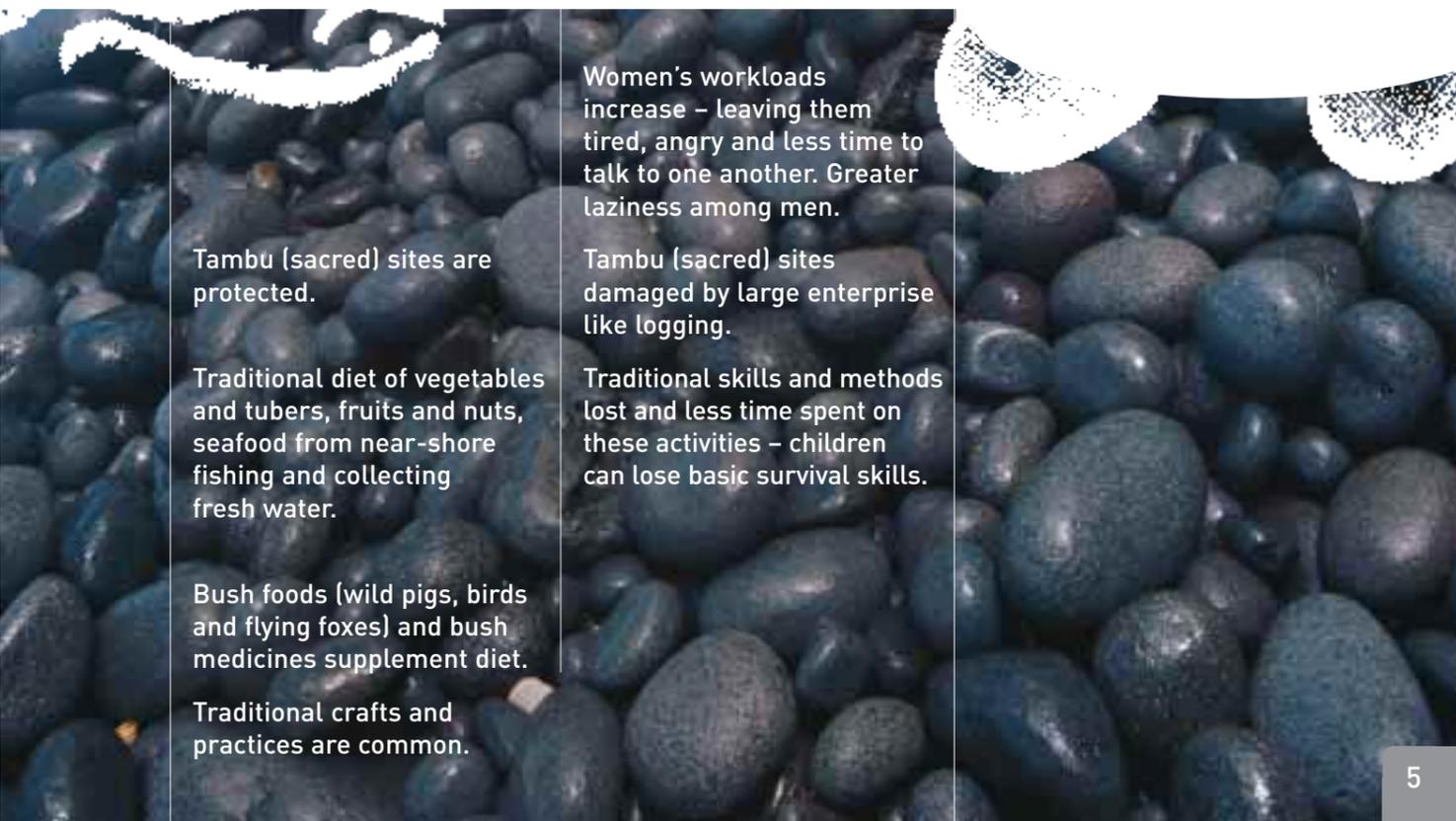
People stop praying together and going to church.

Money is used for schooling, taking sick babies and elders to hospital, water supply, toilets, housing and put back into the business.

The whole village or clan may work together in the business.

Small-scale enterprises can improve extended family life – or it can leave business owners with less time to visit family members and relatives.

Continued belief systems and church-going.



Tambu (sacred) sites are protected.

Traditional diet of vegetables and tubers, fruits and nuts, seafood from near-shore fishing and collecting fresh water.

Bush foods (wild pigs, birds and flying foxes) and bush medicines supplement diet.

Traditional crafts and practices are common.

Women's workloads increase – leaving them tired, angry and less time to talk to one another. Greater laziness among men.

Tambu (sacred) sites damaged by large enterprise like logging.

Traditional skills and methods lost and less time spent on these activities – children can lose basic survival skills.



CASE STUDY

PAPER MAKING AT TENGGOMO

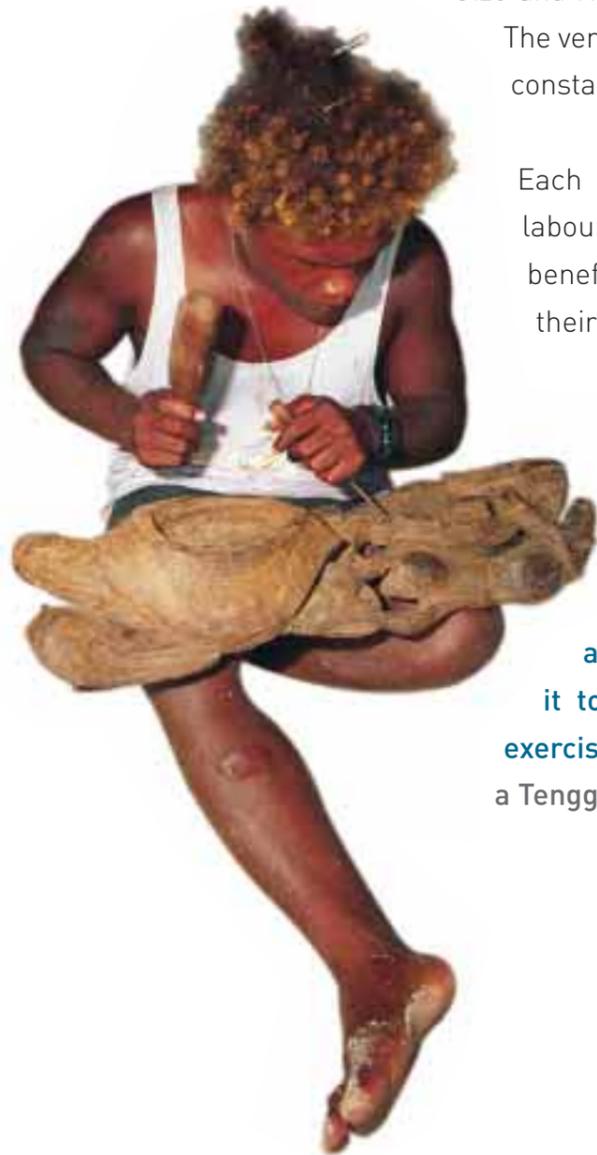
Tenggomo is a small island village. Three generations of one family have been making paper for the past four years. They heard about other village paper making projects and got started with a small grant from the New Zealand Government for equipment and tutoring from an experienced paper-maker.

The paper – made of banana leaf fibre from the family palm trees, and printed with Marovo cultural designs – is sold to tourists, both locally and in outlets in Gizo and Honiara, for around US\$6 per sheet.

The venture is very successful and demand constantly exceeds supply.

Each family member contributes their labour and they all see a wide range of benefits in return – both for themselves, their family and the wider community.

“The good thing about paper making is that women, children and older people can work on it and equally benefit. The money we have earned is divided among the families. They have used it to buy basic needs like soap and exercise books for school.” Jerry Tekopo, a Tenggomo Chief



General benefits include

- Ownership, pride and a sense of achievement
- A business that supports their culture and wins community respect
- Income for education, medical and dental care and secure housing
- Contributions to community projects like building a new church
- New skills, including mechanical and business skills
- Reduced desire for children to seek opportunities elsewhere such as the main city Honiara
- Relief at no longer being tempted to sell their forest to commercial loggers

They offer these tips for setting up a successful small business

- Be willing to work hard
- Keep the business within a relatively small family unit to avoid money conflicts
- Work in your own back yard, so all the family can get involved and fit the work around other activities
- Share the profits equally and make decisions with all family members
- Seek help to develop management, business and marketing skills
- Put profits back into the business so that the business keeps growing

