

**FORMER MEF, PARAMILITRY & IFM
APOLOGISE AT TOTONGO AND AOLA EAST
GUADALCANAL**

Former members of the MEF, Paramilitary and IFM apologised to individuals, families and communities of Totongo and Aola for their actions over the ethnic tension experience. Thanks to the Sycamore Tree Ministry's facilitated counselling sessions effected at Totongo and Aola east of Guadalcanal which ran from 8th to 15th June 2011.

The Sycamore Tree Ministry of the Prison Fellowship Solomon Islands has completed yet another of the counselling sessions at Totongo and Aola east of Guadalcanal giving opportunity for members of the warring faction to come face to face with their victims and apologised for the pain grief and agony they caused to their victims over the ethnic tension.

Former members of the warring factions accompanied the Sycamore Tree team and were met by members of warring factions and victims that resided at the Totongo and Aola communities. These direct encounters were possible since the members of the former warring factions themselves who indicated locations of their victims to the Sycamore Tree team.

At first contact, one can sense the tenseness in the atmosphere. With adequate groundwork preparation these parties greeted each other when a marching band from the villages escorted the Sycamore Tree team into their villages to be garland with flowers.



Members of the former warring factions greeting their victims for the first time.



Team escorted by a marching band

An emotional James Kili and John Taloi apologised to families of a militant that died when police exchanged fire with militants at the height of the ethnic tension at the Totongo/Aola area.



Chief Vincent Kaku believes the only means of bridging Guadalcanal and Malaita is through the cross

On the final day of the Sycamore Tree Ministry's counselling sessions, a prominent chief in the Totongo/Aola communities (Chief Vincent Kaku) made the admittance to the effect that a bridge is now being built from Guadalcanal to Malaita not through carnal efforts but only through the precious blood of Jesus Christ as evidenced in the demonstrations in uniting of these former warring parties once again. He further stated that given the efforts made by various organisations in fostering peace. The Sycamore Tree brought the honest and real means to bridging Guadalcanal and Malaita which is through the cross of Jesus Christ.

That is evident given the simplicity of the approach employed by the Sycamore Tree Ministry in that the coming together of



Former warring factions reconciling

former warring factions and their willingness to go to their victims to confess, apologise and repent of their actions is something that cannot come from academic excellence. Rather it is the manifestation and demonstration of the power of the Almighty Gods redeeming love as demonstrated by God Himself at the cross of Calvary.

Speaking on behalf of the former IFM, John Damusi said, "we want our freedom, we thought weapons (guns) will give us this freedom, but it only leaves us with more pain, agony and un-necessary sufferings. Today I stand here to declare to you my people that

the only true freedom, peace and healing comes through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Facilitators of the Sycamore Tree counselling sessions Pastor Seru and Pastor Sakiusa were deeply touched and expressed their sincere gratitude to victims and offenders who saw the value of saying sorry, acceptance and giving of forgiveness to each other. It is not about the Sycamore Tree, nor about the offenders and victims or the facilitators. Its all about the redeeming love of God our creator through His son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Prison Fellowship Solomon Islands is humbled in acknowledging the following individuals for their generous contributions towards effecting of these sessions. Hon. Joseph Onika, Hon. Premier of Guadalcanal Province, Hon. Manasseh Maelanga, Hon. Steve Abana Mr. Alex Bartlett, Hon. Irovia. The next counselling sessions are scheduled to be held at the Guadalcanal Plains on a date to be confirmed soon.



Former MEF men presenting shell money to former IFM men at Aola