

Social Assessment

Project Title: Developing Conservation Champions: Community-based Conservation Management Course

Organization: The University of the South Pacific: Institute of Applied Sciences

Application Code: 6. IAS USP

As noted in CEPF feedback from the Lol submitted for this proposal, our work will involve indigenous people both as course participants and/or through their field-work projects in communities. In response to CEPF feedback, we have prepared the following Social Assessment.

Indigenous People

It is likely that all of the course participants themselves will be indigenous people and also some of the trainers/facilitators, although this will not be a requirement. Certainly the ethos of the course will be to respect the special rights of indigenous people as outlines in the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

A potential risk though is that as indigenous peoples themselves some participants may feel that a lesser level of scrutiny is needed for them working in indigenous communities as compared to people from outside the country. Especially in Melanesia, the indigenous person may be from a different language group with different cultural practices so the same level of free prior and informed consent should be expected.

In the proposed course this need could occur in two situations

- field exercises during the course
- the 4-5 month project component of the course

Field exercises may involve surveys in indigenous communities and/or 1 of 2-day stays in a community. Such activities are first discussed with local government authorities and their permission and advice sought and they then facilitate a visit with the local community to seek their consent through a meeting with the community governance body. Impacts of such visits can be positive in that people from new cultures come to the community and provide a new experience. At the same time there is the chance for cultural misunderstanding or inappropriate behavior. This is mitigated by a person from the community discussing with the community important cultural norms and expectations. After any such interaction both the participant and the community will have a debrief about the experience and any problems that arose and how things could be improved.

This experience will be a prototype for the participants who will likely be working with communities in their course projects and specific training will be undertaken for them to develop a protocol that includes:

- potential impacts and mitigation
- community participation and consultation
- monitoring plan
- grievance mechanism

These will be shared with CEPF before any community-based field work is undertaken.

The focus of the course is community-based conservation and a significant proportion of the course relates to community engagement and participatory tools; the suggestion by CEPF that this is extended to include the principles of FPIC is a welcome one and will likely include a real example from a course field visit and then an exercise relevant to their planned project site.