

Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions

Sustainable management of ngali nut trees and threatened flying-foxes in the Solomon Islands

The University of Queensland

Background

In our 2014-2015 CEPF project Status and Conservation of the Solomon Islands' Most Threatened Endemic Terrestrial Vertebrates we clarified the range, status, habitat preference, and current threats of the endangered New Georgia Monkey-faced bat, and collected data on these traits of the Makira flying-fox. In our 2015-2016 projects (funded by Lube Bat Conservancy and Bat Conservation International) we have been assessing the distribution, status and threats to two endangered monkey-faced bats on Guadalcanal. We consequently have unique, specialist knowledge of these species and their conservation requirements.

This project aims to develop species recovery and management plans for five species of monkey-faced bat and the Makira flying-fox. We will also aim to develop conservation and management recommendations for ngali nut (*Canarium indicum*), a plant species that is important for monkey-faced bat conservation (as food and roosting sites) and a valuable food resource for people throughout the country. This tree is flagged as a provisional priority species in need of control of exploitation in the EMI ecosystem profile.

Local communities rely on forests, because three quarters of people in the region survive by shifting subsistence agriculture and harvesting wild food plants, many of which are likely to be pollinated and dispersed by bats. People also hunt flying foxes, which can be an important source of protein in some areas, particularly for communities on Makira. Forests also contain historic former villages with ngali nut groves, which are valuable to both landowners and wildlife because of their cultural significance and high density of fruit, nuts and old trees with hollows. Since 1998, much of the Solomon Islands has been commercially logged and these resources are being lost.

This project will not involve involuntary resettlement of people. The amount of involuntary restriction of resources used by people will be very minimal in scope, limited to six species of naturally uncommon flying-foxes. Our past research suggests that these species do not form a common or essential part of people's diets, but that other factors are the major contributors to their decline (e.g. logging). The project will work to prevent unsustainable hunting of these species, but will also seek to preserve natural resource use that is legal and sustainable.

Plans for Participatory Implementation

The project will fully engage with people in target communities so that they can understand how best to manage six species of flying-fox and one plant species, alongside the government and other stakeholders. This project will not necessarily restrict access to these resources but will work with communities with the aim of identifying and establishing sustainable management practices. If current hunting and harvest regimes are identified as unsustainable, voluntary agreements will be sought

to minimise exploitation of priority species in favour of alternate, sustainable resources.

Impact mitigation and assistance to affected groups

No groups are expected to be adversely affected by this project. However, informal discussions with village and community leaders and/or voluntary village forums will provide opportunities to highlight and discuss issues, and reach agreements as to their resolution. The project will provide a platform for local communities to voice any complaints they may have about activities undertaken during the project implementation period. This will enable periodic assessments of whether mitigation measures are necessary and adaptations to project implementation need to be considered.

Mechanisms to monitor safeguard issues

The project chief investigator Tyrone Lavery has worked within Solomon Islands for the past six years and has developed relationships with the communities involved in the project.

In the Solomon Islands, there is a process of hierarchical discussions led by customary landowners and the local community that must be adhered to before anyone who is not an owner can work in forests (or to visit them for any purpose), even in cases of a simple observational visit to a site. Talks begin with the council of village chiefs and often also church leaders, who then take the proposal to a meeting of the whole community where permission and terms (payments etc) are freely discussed. Relatives of community members who live outside the area but consider that they may also have a claim to the land on which the work is planned also have rights to comment. These discussions can therefore take some time. Discussions can be conducted in village forums or more typically occur in an informal setting – in people's houses or communal areas within villages. They can take time, typically some ideas are proposed and time is given for discussion participants to consider the proposal and respond with any concerns. The time required for this can vary between from immediate response, to several days or more.

Several of the participants in the proposed project are indigenous to the Solomon Islands and the specific sites where we propose to conduct the project. Participants in this project have developed associations with the affected communities over many years. Communities in this project are happy for the project to occur and have given consent, including clear terms of access, verbally (we can obtain copies in writing if needed).

Involuntary restrictions highlighted in community discussions will be flagged and the project will document mitigation measures taken. Subsequent community discussions will be used to assess if the issue has been dealt with appropriately

Grievance mechanisms

People will be encouraged to register any grievances: 1) Through village and community leaders and contacts, and 2) Directly at community forums. Dispute resolution between local groups will include the local village chief or council of chiefs (the usual accepted channel). Any grievances raised with the project team or

third-party contact will be communicated to the CEPF Secretariat and the Regional Implementation Team at IUCN within 14 days, together with a plan for remedial action (if any required).