

Social Assessment

Date: 02 May 2017

CEPF Grant: ESSI 66412

Grantee: ESSI

**Project Title: Conservation Planning and Awareness Building for two Vulnerable
Amphibians in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville**

Project Location: Solomon Islands and Bougainville

Grant Summary

1. **Grantee organization.** Ecological Solutions – Solomon Islands
2. **Grant title.** Conservation Planning and Awareness Building for two Vulnerable Amphibians in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville
3. **Grant number** ESSI 66412
4. **Grant amount (US dollars).** \$72,825
5. **Proposed dates of grant.** June 2017 – July 2018
6. **Countries or territories where project will be undertaken.** Solomon Islands, Bougainville (Autonomous Region of Bougainville)
7. **Date of preparation of this document.** 02 May 2017
8. **Indigenous People affected:** This section will describe the Indigenous People in the project area.

This project primarily involves field surveys for frogs in several sites within the Solomon Islands and Bougainville. It will also involve local community conservation awareness raising through workshops and frog taxonomy and field survey techniques training for local guides and/or KBA rangers in each site. The 17 proposed field sites are located on locally owned land on Choiseul, Kolombangara, Isabel, Guadalcanal, Vangunu, Gatokae and Bougainville. In many cases, ESSI and/or Patrick Pikacha (while working for Conservation International or the University of Queensland) has already worked with the local communities on other projects in the proposed survey sites and has established good relationships with these communities. In other areas, particularly Bougainville, we know the sites in which we need to work, but have not finalized the details of the local communities at this point. We will ensure that we contact all local communities prior to starting any field work, obtain formal permission from the communities, provincial councils and government and forward this information to CEPF. We will not commence any work without approval from CEPF.

Bougainville – we will work with The Kainake Project, and communities involved in the Kunuua Plains and Mt Balbi KBA. We have been in contact with Junior Novera who will be conducting tribal meetings in June and organizing community meetings. Junior has agreed to present our proposed plan of work to the local communities and help facilitate government approval. After these meetings, we will be able to confirm the local communities with which we will work and obtain formal consent before starting any work (from communities, government and CEPF). We will update this Social Assessment with the details of the local community when they are finalized.

Choiseul – the work will be done with 17 tribes within ESSI’s core sites in the proposed project area of the Mt Maetambe-Kolombangara River Corridor. ESSI has worked with these communities for several years now on different projects and has a good working relationship with all of them. The tribes include; Koloma, Ngava, Vumba, Qoza, Kona, Sarelata, Paleka, Kumbongava, Bantongo, Jito, Siporae, Sikipozo, Padezaka, Matakale, Vasiluku, Sirebe, Vuri. We will confirm the sites after the first consultation meeting with our local partners, stakeholders and the communities within the project site.

Gatokae – we will work with Mbiche and Peava village who own land with ridge and montane forests. We have a long relationship (10+ years) with these communities that began with Patrick Pikacha’s work with Conservation International in 2006, through to various projects in partnership with Dr. Chris Filardi (formerly of American Museum of Natural History), and the University of Queensland.

Guadalcanal – we will work with landowners of Mt Galego, West Guadalcanal, and/or the Uluna tribe of Central Guadalcanal. Patrick Pikacha has been working with the Uluna tribe for 9 years. This work commenced with a series of conservation awareness discussions regarding the conservation value of the environment in the area in 2008. ESSI worked with landowners of Mt Galego, West Guadalcanal during the successful ranger field course in 2015. The field component of the ranger training was conducted on community land in Mt Galego.

Isabel – we plan to work with communities of West Maringe District, and the villages of Popoheo, Hovikoilo, Sogolona and Kolosori. Our contact here is Priestley Haburu, a respected elder of the West Maringe District and respected journalist and business person.

Vangunu – we will survey lands owned by Zaira communities, and Cheke Village, North Vangunu. Zaira is a core field site of our partnership efforts with SICCP, and the University of Queensland. ESSI is in constant contact with Rev. Green Jino, the tribal leader in Zaira. Cheke village on north Vangunu, is the home village of Patrick Pikacha. We will conduct surveys in forested areas that are traditionally owned by the Ilumu tribe.

Kolombangara – we will be working with the Hunda, Kuzi and Kaza communities on Kolombangara in collaboration with KIBCA, a local NGO on Kolombangara. KIBCA manages the area of Kolombangara above 400 m above sea level as a 19,400 ha conservation reserve. We will survey sites on Kolombangara with KIBCA rangers and local community members. ESSI and Patrick Pikacha have been working with KIBCA since its formation in 2008 and local communities on Kolombangara since 2005.

- 9. Summary of the proposed project:** This section will describe what you plan to do and how you plan to do it, with a particular focus on activities implemented in areas inhabited and/or used by Indigenous People.

We plan to conduct targeted field surveys for two endangered frog species in 17 sites on 7 islands. We will conduct visual and acoustic surveys along fixed transects in each site. We will take photographs and audio recordings to verify species identification and record habitat and microhabitat preferences. No voucher specimens of any species will be collected from any site.

In some sites, depending on survey results, we will establish long-term monitoring transects for the two species. We will use and train local guides in monitoring and surveying techniques and taxonomy. We will also collect ethnobiological information on the frog species, e.g. local names, uses (food, medicine), etc.

We will also conduct community awareness workshops in the communities – these will include village meetings and at local schools. Data collected will be used to develop recovery plans for species conservation.

- 10. Potential impacts:** This section will assess expected project impacts (both positive and negative) on Indigenous People.

Expected positive impacts:

The benefits of this project will be improving taxonomic knowledge, and appreciation of frogs and biodiversity values among local communities (listed above). Community and KBA rangers will be upskilled in survey methods using training manuals and frog field guides thereby improving their knowledge of conservation management of their natural resources.

Potential negative impacts

One of the major challenges in the Solomon Islands with regards to any development or project is dealing with traditional land ownership conflicts. This arises because almost 90% of land in the Solomon Islands is customary owned, which is a form of private land ownership. Certain tribes or an extended family collectively own land, with different levels of ownership – primary or secondary. Decisions on land development or access agreements to enter particular areas are made by primary owners. Secondary

owners have free access to the use of the land for gardening or subsistence purposes. Only in rare cases is land inherited by individuals. Conflicts over traditional land ownership can fall under a number of scenarios. (1) Land can be free from disputes give the collective consensus of tribal members to the terms stipulated in any agreement. (2) There may be a land dispute in which case the traditional house of chiefs or the courts of Solomon Islands hold a land hearing and determine who the true owners are. (3) In some instances, a tribe may be engaged with a certain project, and other related tribes may raise grievances or present a dispute over who owns the land. It is this third scenario where traditional land conflicts are most likely to have an impact on projects.

Community consultation during which a clear definition of the project aim and objectives is stipulated for all to understand is paramount to the project's success. Our plan of action is to meet with all parties, villagers, landowners, and national and provincial governments to explain the project and its benefits and obtain formal permission from all relevant stakeholders prior to commencing work. Field engagements will depend on the agreements made with landholders. This project will exclude areas where conflicts over land are present.

To date, ESSI has had no serious issues working with these communities and the smaller issues that arose were resolved through clear and transparent negotiations and discussions. In most cases, any issues that arose were due to poor communication of the project and its aims. Once these issues were clarified, they were easily settled to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. We have learned from previous projects and do not anticipate any issues with this proposed project.

11. Participatory preparation: This section will describe the participation of affected communities during the project design process (i.e. prior to submission of the full proposal), and explain how Free, Prior and Informed Consent was obtained.

As previously mentioned, ESSI has worked with many of the communities involved in this project on other conservation related projects and activities. This project has been discussed informally with several landowning communities (e.g. Choisuel, Kolombangara, Vangunu) by ESSI staff members in the field and will be discussed formally in June when Patrick Pikacha visits the Solomon Islands. As the proposed work fits in with many of the previous and ongoing ESSI projects in the Solomon Islands, we will follow the community consultation protocols we have successfully used for the other projects.

We are currently involved in conservation and resource management projects in partnership with SICCP, KIBCA, and University of Queensland on Vangunu, Gatokae, Kolombangara, and the general New Georgia islands network. This has been ongoing for the past 10 years, funded mainly under the MacArthur project. The communities, here have benefited from this continuous engagement, particularly in the assistance of legal documentations and research data when opposing logging concessions. Before our surveys begin, we will contact head rangers, managers, and the community leaders and inform them of our proposed project. Given our current good relationships with many of the communities and the low/no impact nature of our project plan we do not anticipate any issues obtaining permission. Upon being granted permission, and ensuring we do not clash with other ongoing activities, we will further request that rangers/guides and porters participate in the field surveys to be trained in taxonomy and field survey techniques.

As previously mentioned, we will not collect any specimens during these surveys. We will use non-lethal means to collect data: photography, film and audio acoustic recordings for calls. The photographs will be used to update the frog field guide, and be used in awareness posters. The film footage and the calls will be used to produce a documentary on threatened species in the Solomon Islands with the two frog species as flagship species. Copies of the field guide, posters, other awareness materials and the documentary will be given to all participating communities at the end of the project. All the data collected with these means will be included in the final report that will be submitted to CEPF and also made available on ESSI the website.

12. Mitigation strategies: This section will outline measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits.

Land settlement through clear and concise agreements is a pre-requisite to sustain any project. Traditional land ownership conflict and disputes are very common in Solomon Islands, and Melanesia. Land dispute can spring up from various factors, including:

1. Improper dialogue with various tribes who might hold ownership over the land.
2. Unclear understanding of the objective of the project.
3. Unspecified written or agreed upon Terms and Conditions on the usage of the land.
4. The wrong identification of the true land owners.

On Choiseul Island people have adopted a sound land tenure system and methodology that can be applied to identify the true landowner(s). We will work closely with the Lauru Land Conference of Tribal

Community office to identify and meet with all the chiefs and the traditional landowners of the areas identified within the proposed project.

On Isabel Island we will work with landowners, and NGOs such as The Nature Conservancy to identify landowners prior to conducting the surveys.

On Vangunu, Gatokae, and Kolombangara Islands, we will work through the SICCP network, and KIBCA (Kolombangara), and rangers and leaders of Zaira, Cheke, Chubikopi, (Vangunu Island), and Biche Villages (Gatokae Island). We have invested long term relationships with these communities, having conducted ranger trainings within these sites, have supported extensive surveys here, and continue to engage with SICCP, and the American Museum of Natural History through a Biocultural Project here.

We will confirm the appropriate measures for Bougainville in conjunction with Junior Novera and The Kainake Project when the project is discussed with local land owning communities and the Bougainville government.

Should landownerships disputes or conflicts arise, we will then refer the conflicting parties to the to the respective house of chiefs and representative community leaders or cease activities and promptly meet with disputing communities, or raise any matters.

13. Monitoring and evaluation: This section will explain how compliance with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples will be monitored, and reported to CEPF and/or the Regional Implementation Team. Monitoring and evaluation methodologies should be adapted to the local context, indicators, and capacity.

An open dialogue will be maintained prior to and throughout project implementation to ensure culturally appropriate protocols are followed at all times during field work. To engender community support for the project and the subsequent long-term monitoring and species recovery plan, we will use local community representatives and/or KBA rangers to help with the data collection and help monitor the long-term transects post-project.

By working alongside local NGOs and communities, we can engage in conversations regarding any grievances from individuals when present in the field or receive grievances conveyed back through existing provincial, community or NGO structures.

14. Grievance mechanism: All projects that trigger a safeguard are required to provide local communities and other interested stakeholders with means by which they may raise a grievance with the grantee, the relevant Regional Implementation Team, the CEPF Secretariat or the World Bank. Affected local communities should be informed of the objectives of the grant and the existence of a grievance mechanism. Contact information of the grantee, the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director should be made publicly available, through posters, signboards, public notices or other appropriate means in local language(s). Grievances raised with the grantee should be communicated to the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days, together with a proposed response. If the claimant is still not satisfied following the response, the grievance may be submitted directly to the CEPF Executive Director via the dedicated email account (cepfexecutive@conservation.org) or by mail. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Secretariat, the grievance may be submitted to the World Bank at the local World Bank office. Please describe the grievance mechanism that you will use for your project, and how you will ensure that stakeholders are aware of it.

As in all community situations in the Solomon Islands, and elsewhere in the Pacific, all individuals within a community have the opportunity to raise concerns regarding any grievances through local community meetings. If the community supports the grievance, then the project team will assess how efficiently it can work if circumstances change and whether it will need to modify activities.

Information about the ESSI team members, and contact information for local partners on each island will be made available to all the communities and chiefs of each tribe during meetings in local language through pamphlets/or posters used to describe the projects objectives. All stakeholders will be clearly informed of the existence of the grievance mechanism and the various avenues available. All the tribes will be informed that if they have any grievances that they are uncomfortable raising directly with the ESSI team then they can take their grievance to community chiefs, provincial councils or the government. We will also provide the contact details of the Suva-based CEPF Regional Implementation team to submit their grievances if they are not satisfied/comfortable with any of the other avenues.

Our team will record and document any grievances or traditional land dispute encountered during this project term. All the grievances encountered will be included as an appendix in our project reports to CEPF. We will also provide a social safeguard quarterly report that is in accordance to CEPF social safeguard policies.

15. Budget: This section will summarize dedicated costs related to compliance with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples. These costs should be incorporated into the budget of the CEPF grant and/or covered by co-financing.

The associated costs are included into the CEPF budget. They will be incorporated with the community awareness materials in relation to the project.