



CEPF Social Assessment

Live & Learn Environmental Education

Project: Education for Biodiversity Conservation in Key Priority Sites

1. Indigenous Peoples in the project area

The project will be implemented in four sites, East Rennell (Solomon Islands), Gaua, Santo Mountain Chain and Tongoa-Laika (Vanuatu). All beneficiaries of the project intervention are indigenous people, being of Melanesian descent in the Vanuatu sites and of Polynesian descent in East Rennell (Solomon Islands).

Despite the diverse nature of the project sites, there are a number of commonalities with respect to social context. Land in each target hotspot is under customary ownership. This means customary processes / rules determine ownership or rights to use and access land and resources. Customary governance systems vary significantly from place to place, but in each site customary land ownership is acknowledged in common law (enshrined in the constitutions of each country). Actual land boundaries are typically not surveyed or registered in any national database.

Systems of customary governance and law remain strong in each location, and these have the most significant influence on land and resource rights and access. The head of a clan and tribe is the Chief (male) and within each Island and province there is a chiefly council system. Individuals within communities often have 'secondary rights' to do certain things on their land, such as build a house. Customary leaders still maintain control over 'big' decisions relating to the land. Hence local decision-making (and hence actions to support conservation outcomes) is highly localized and the central government has only a moderate influence (e.g. establishing formal laws for biodiversity protection is problematic because enforcement is not possible). However enforcement of local customary laws is far more achievable.

Indigenous peoples within the project areas rely upon rural livelihoods of small-scale subsistence cash-based agriculture and small-scale forestry and fishing. They share similar challenges to development, including low levels of education, lack of infrastructure and remoteness (e.g. difficulties in accessing markets).

Distinct indigenous languages are spoken at each separate site targeted by this action. However the majority of people also speak Bislama (Vanuatu) and Solomons Pijin (Solomon Islands).

Expected project impacts (both positive and negative)

The project is expected to have positive impacts on Indigenous people living in each project site and these are embedded into the project design. Expected results include increasing indigenous leaders awareness of local biodiversity issues and enhancing their ability to make informed decisions in relation to development and conservation. The project will also increase the capacity of teachers to provide indigenous students with education about biodiversity conservation, by delivering teacher training and provision of teaching resources.

The main potential negative impact could be unrealistic expectations regarding alternative income generation from sustainable developments. Unrealistic expectations could result in disengagement with future efforts to progress conservation at the key biodiversity sites. When delivering the project it will be important to ensure expectations are realistic and to avoid allowing misconceptions about the projects scope to develop.

Free, prior and informed consent

This project will assist to build the capacity of local indigenous organizations e.g. Council of Chiefs to make informed decisions that take biodiversity conservation and value into account. Hence this project can be seen as an empowering process that may enable FPIC to take place.

Live & Learn will not be involved in on-ground works and will not directly make any decisions regarding land and resource use, access or rights. However the project will enable community members and leaders to engage in more informed decision-making regarding future activities or developments.

Prior to undertaking activities Live & Learn will contact stakeholders to seek permission to come to the communities (e.g. via telephone calls). Stakeholders will include Provincial Government and local customary leaders (chiefs), and the schools that are targeted by the action. Live & Learn will share the objectives of the work and seek to visit communities at appropriate times (taking local activities into account) and ensuring appropriate people are involved and mandate the visit. We will not visit communities if they do not agree or if our presence could disrupt local events (e.g. harvesting or ceremony).

Measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits

Live & Learn will take care to explain the scope of the project and to ensure that community expectations are realistic with respect to Live & Learn and the project outcomes. Participant's expectations will be regularly checked and the project scope reiterated where necessary.

The project will work within the social context of the remote Pacific Island communities by acknowledging and involving the key customary leaders. We also recognize the role of local ecological knowledge and custom in understanding conservation threats and finding solutions. Furthermore, our local facilitators understand the importance of land to people's livelihoods, which must be a foremost consideration when planning any conservation intervention.

Our educational approach is very participatory, and makes use of local ecological knowledge and responds to local people's needs and concerns. For example, education will commence with an exploration of how local people use and value biodiversity, rather than importing a foreign conservation perspective. Hence Live & Learn will avoid pushing inappropriate ideas and ideology on local people, and will instead build upon local strengths and perspectives.

Different indigenous languages are spoken at each site, however people also speak Bislama (Vanuatu) and Solomons Pijin (Solomon Islands). All Live & Learn personnel working on this project are Indigenous people and are fluent in Bislama and/or Pijin, and one staff member can also speak the local Indigenous language in East Rennell.

Live & Learn personnel working on the project are Indigenous Ni-Vanuatu or Solomon Islanders, and are fluent in Bislama and/or Solomon Islands Pijin. With respect to East Rennell, staff member Mr Haikiu Baiabe is also a local indigenous person from this site. Haikiu has previously provided other staff and consultants with guidance to ensure that work with local communities is culturally appropriate and that local protocols are respected, Haikiu will continue to provide this support through this project. In Vanuatu, our team leader Dr Andrina Thomas is also an Indigenous woman from Santo, where she holds a chiefly title.

Monitoring

Social impact monitoring is built into the project design. The activities will involve designing a short survey to be conducted with a selection of community representatives chosen to adequately reflect community diversity. The questions will be based on the 'most significant change methodology' and address expected and unexpected positive and negative changes that have occurred in the communities as a result of the project.

Selection of community representatives for social impact monitoring will ensure an equitable balance of men and women. Findings will be compiled into a brief report for reporting purposes and provided to CEPF on twice during the 12-month project period. Findings will be used to assess any unplanned negative impacts and allow the project design to be adapted if required.

Grievance mechanism

Indigenous Peoples and other local communities and stakeholders may raise a grievance at all times Live & Learn and CEPF about any issues relating to the project. During workshops and meetings the communities will be informed about this possibility and contact information will be provided for the Live & Learn Country Manager and the CEPF secretariat.

Live & Learn will respond to grievances in writing within 15 working days of receipt. Claims will be filed, included in project monitoring, and a copy of any grievance will be provided to the CEPF Secretariat.