



CEPF Social Assessment

Live & Learn Environmental Education

Project: Strengthening Governance and Management Needs of Communities in East Rennell

1. Indigenous Peoples in the project area

East Rennell is populated by indigenous Solomon Islanders of people of Polynesian descent. There are four villages within East Rennell: Hutuna, Tegano, Niupani and Tebaitahe. Estimates vary, but it appears that between 500 and 800 people live in these communities. Members of the four communities come from 13 tribes, each of which has a chief. The 13 chiefs make up the Council of Chiefs. In some tribes, the position of chief is hereditary, and in others the chief is appointed. The head of the Council of Chiefs is the Paramount Chief. The chiefs have significant power in East Rennell communities, although some people have commented that their authority is often not respected by the younger generations.

Like most land in Solomon Islands, land in East Rennell is under customary ownership. However, in East Rennell the rules regulating land ownership are different to those in many other parts of Solomon Islands. In East Rennell, some land has been allocated by chiefs or first born males to individuals (males) within the communities. These individuals have the right to do certain things on their land, such as build a house. Therefore, a form of individual ownership exists in East Rennell.

However, the East Rennell chiefs or first-born males still maintain control over ‘big’ decisions relating to the land. As a result, the form of individual ownership that exists in East Rennell is not akin to the concept of individual ownership of land in the common law system. In East Rennell, males in the community have been allocated land and own that land as individuals. However, they do not have complete control over what happens on that land, particularly in relation to decisions about development and funding.

Most land in East Rennell is passed down from males to their sons and nephews. However, some land has been passed down to females, and some land has been gifted to other relatives. There appears to be different opinions about whether females and people who have been gifted land are ‘true’ landowners.

2. Expected project impacts (both positive and negative)

The project is expected to have positive impacts on Indigenous people living in East Rennell and these are embedded into the project design. Expected results include fostering a stronger connection between the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association (LTWHSA - comprised of indigenous members with an indigenous board) and the customary leaders, represented through the East Rennell Council of Chiefs. The rationale for the approach is to ensure decisions made by the LTWHSA relating to conservation fully account for indigenous peoples needs and concerns, and are therefore more likely to be supported and effective.

The project contributes to the longer-term impacts of protecting the World Heritage Site from threats including logging. This aligns closely with local indigenous peoples aspirations that have been assessed through previous Live & Learn work, most recently through consultations undertaken within the Protected Areas Project in 2013.

The main potential negative impact is the failure to meet expectations regarding livelihood opportunities from the World Heritage Site. Live & Learn understand that expectations have been raised in the past and have not been adequately met. Unrealistic expectations could result in disengagement with the project or further efforts to progress protection of the unique values of East Rennell. When delivering the project it will be important to ensure expectations are realistic and to avoid allowing misconceptions about the projects scope to develop.

3. Free, prior and informed consent

This project will assist to build the capacity of local indigenous organizations (the LTWHSA) and the Council of Chiefs to make decisions regarding conservation interventions. This step can be seen as an empowering process enabling 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 the LTWHSA to consult with communities regarding decisions about whether or not to register the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site as a Protected Area under the Protected Areas Act 2010. The Act contains provisions for FPIC including the requirement that all people 'with rights and interests in the land' must agree before the area can be declared as a Protected Area. Which people have rights and interests in the land is a question of customary law. In addition, the Protected Areas law says that the four East Rennell communities must each reach a 'consensus' in support of a Protected Area before they can make an application. The law does not state how the community must reach a consensus, for example whether 100% agreement or majority agreement is required. Hence this requirement provides a safeguard for indigenous rights to FPIC for activities potentially leading from, but beyond the scope of this project.

4. Measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits

The project is not expected to have adverse impacts on the people living in East Rennell. Project aims include ensuring indigenous peoples needs and concerns are well aligned so that decisions made by the LTWHSA (itself an indigenous organisation), and that the LTWHSA is mandated and supported through locally appropriate custom governance arrangements, such as the authority of chiefs. The participation of local indigenous people including customary leaders and the general community (including youth and women) will ensure adverse impacts are avoided and the benefits are culturally appropriate.

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, the project and the LTWHSA. This will be achieved by not limiting work to workshops with the LTWHSA and Council of Chiefs. Activities will also include community meetings with the general community to ensure people have a good understanding of the project.

Live & Learn personnel working on the project are Indigenous Solomon Islanders, including Haikiu Baiabe who is an indigenous person from Rennell–Bellona. 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.

5. 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 community as a result of the project. Findings will be compiled into a brief report for reporting purposes and to allow the project design to be adapted if required.

6. 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.