

**Social Assessment for the
CEPF grant to OceansWatch for the project
“Protecting Areas of Significant Biodiversity in the Temotu Province”**

This document has been prepared because the project will involve activities in areas with Indigenous Peoples. It will demonstrate how the project will comply with CEPF’s Safeguard Policy on Indigenous Peoples.

This project focuses on communities in the Temotu Province. OceansWatch visited 2 of the project communities in 2013 and 2014 and the other project community in 2014.

Temotu

Temotu is the easternmost province of the Solomon Islands. It has been identified as part of the eco-corridor that also includes islands in Vanuatu. The province was formerly known as Santa Cruz Islands Province. It consists, essentially, of two chains of islands which run parallel to each other from the northwest to the southeast. The islands or island groups which make up the province are:

- Anuta
- Duff Islands (including Taumako)
- Fatutaka
- Lomlom
- Malo
- Matema
- Reef Islands (including Fenualoa, Makalom, Nalongo and Nupani, Nifiloli, Nukapu, Patteson Shoal, Pigeon Island and Pileni)
- Santa Cruz Islands (including the large island Nendö)
- Tikopia
- Tinakula
- Utupua
- Vanikoro (including Banie and Tevai)

The population of around 24,000 is quite diverse for the small land area encompassed. The Santa Cruz Islanders are predominantly Melanesian.

Identify Indigenous groups in the project area.

This project addresses the Key Biodiversity Areas, chosen by CEPF as priority sites, of Nendo and Vanikoro. Both these are volcanic island groups. They are covered in forest and have adjacent reefs. The islands support small communities of indigenous customary owners, who are concerned about their natural resources. We also plan to work on the uninhabited island of Tinakula, its customary land owners live on Malo Island, adjacent to Nendo.

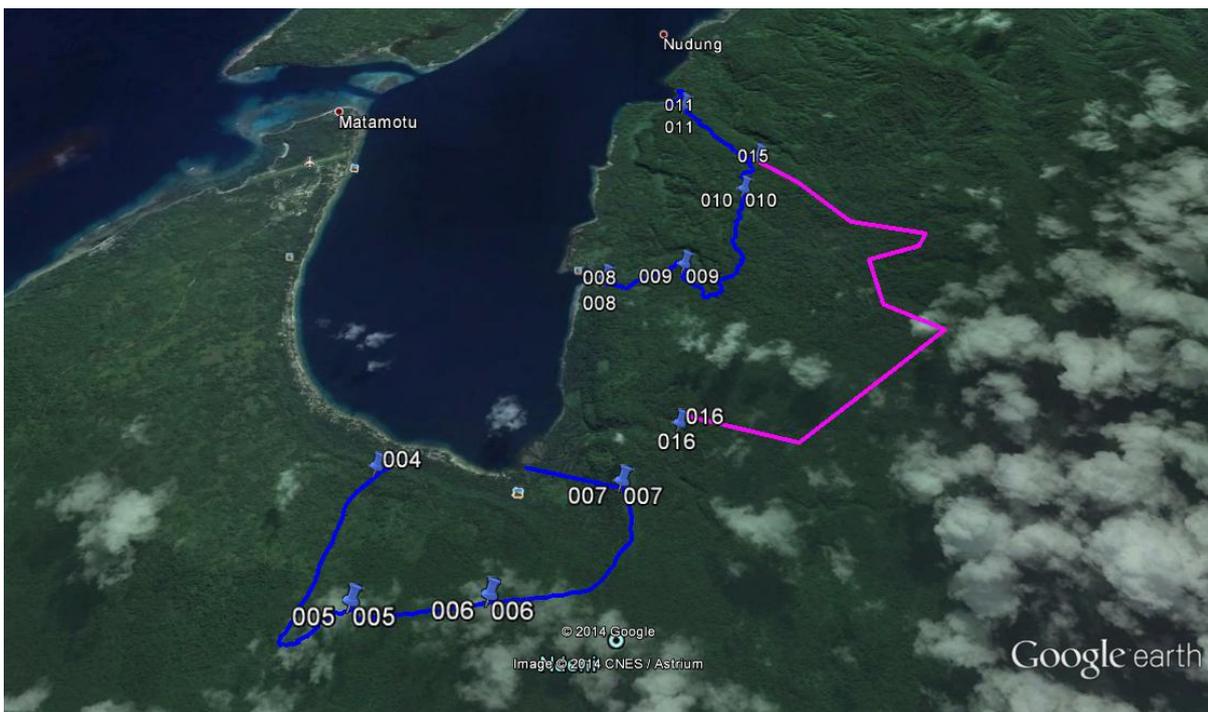
Nendo

On Nendo we work mainly with the village of Pala. Pala is one of several communities located within the sheltered Graciosa Bay in an area they locally call Bottom Bay. Other villages here are:

Mateone, Nepu, Balo, Mateboi and Nepa; these villages make up a population of ~500 people whose children go to the Mona School.

Pala community members are customary landowners of an area of about 2000 ha including primary coastal, upland and cloud forest. People grow food using shifting agriculture near the village. They have access to the highlands via the Luembalele river and then by a forest track. Pala community is Melanesian.

Originally we were going to survey an additional area on Nendo (Carlisle Bay) but our scientist decided that there was sufficient accessible forest in the Graciosa Bay area and the target species were identified there.



Survey tracks undertaken for Mako and Santa Cruz Shrikebill in 2014; 04-07 Gardens and secondary forest, 08-016 mainly primary forest with some secondary. Maps are courtesy of Google.

Vanikoro

Vanikoro is an island group in the Santa Cruz group, located 118 km to the Southeast of Nendo. Only the two major islands are inhabited: the bigger one Banie, and the smaller one Tevai. The total area of the Vanikoro group is 173 km².

We will be working with the Buma community on Tevai Island (~22sqKm) which is the second island in size of the Vanikoro group. Tevai is located northeast of the main island. It rises to 488M and has numerous streams and dark red volcanic soil. There are gardens in the areas accessible to the village and some coconut plantations but there are large areas which are practically untouched.

The people of Buma interact with communities on the mainland for some church events, the high school and the health clinic. Close to Tevai on Banie are the very small villages of Numbuko, Usili and Kiavano that been settled relatively recently by people from Buma.



On Banie there are 3 customary wards. The Chief of Teanu, Chief Chris from Buma, with whom we have an excellent relationship with, claims customary ownership of the third of Banie where they speak Teanu. In 2015 we plan to survey the mainland to confirm the presence of the Vanikoro flying fox and will establish relationships with the other Melanesian communities in this area.

Tinakula

We work with the customary landowners of Tinakula Island who now live in a village called Minivi, on the north east coast of Malo. They were relocated to Minivi village by the Temotu Government when Tinakula erupted in 1971. Malo (also called *Tōmotu Neo*) lies about 1 km to the northwest of Nendo. Minivi residents often visit Tinakula to hunt chickens, doves, crabs, etc. Sometimes people stay for extended periods on Tinakula fattening pigs that are boated back to Lata and subsequently on to the Honiara market. The Minivi community is of Polynesian decent.

Potential project impacts on the Indigenous People

Positive Impacts

Supporting subsistence livelihoods

The people of Buma have depended for their cash income on Green Snail, Sea Cucumber, Trochus and occasional milling. Since the severe reduction in sea cucumber numbers all over the Solomon Islands the government has closed this harvest, so the community are now dependent on Trochus and milling. Green Snail can no longer be found. Trochus numbers are diminishing rapidly due to over harvesting and the milling is ad hoc with no sustainable management plan.

By providing the equipment and training for the Buma Sustainable Development Association to produce Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) we are providing them with a small income that will take the pressure off the other unmanaged resources. Coconuts are one resource that they have in the community in excess of their needs. The women in these communities know how to make this product and so the training we provide is required to show them what is needed in terms of quality for a Western market. The benefits of this livelihood component are: the providing of training, building skill capacity, enhancing social cohesion and providing cash income. In addition, their enthusiasm for this aspect of the project has a very positive impact as it engages them in the conservation aspects and ensures the whole community is engaged and supportive. A trial set of equipment was provided to Buma women in 2014. Training was given and the women have subsequently produced ~90 litres of VCO. We are now confident that the women are enthusiastic

and capable of moving onto phase 2 of this project which will provide some automation to allow greater production.

Pala and Minivi communities have similar socio-economic situations to Buma. We have discussed the virgin coconut oil program with the Pala and Minivi communities, both of whom have ample coconut trees for VCO production. We shall trial the VCO program in these villages in 2015.

Education

We will provide school classes in environmental education in the local schools closest to each of the three communities we are working with. These schools are small and usually the whole school attends our classes. We will have prepared PowerPoints and show films on forest conservation and the consequences of logging.

We will provide introductory conservation materials and introduce ideas through games in the kindergartens. We believe change happens slowly and that it is this age group 2-5yrs that are the most likely to fully endorse the concepts of conservation and sustainable resource management.

Reports

Our reports will promote the need for protection of the forests from industrial logging and mining. This information will be provided to communities in a way that is accessible to them and will be presented to them verbally with translation too. This benefits the people as they are acknowledged as having resources that are valuable and they will be advised on how to manage these for the future.

Capacity building and social cohesion

Supporting the communities to form conservation committees and the women's coconut oil Associations helps develop enhanced social cohesion that is so important in these communities. Since communal sharing has been undone by the introduction of the cash economy, competition has become more of a feature in communities than cooperation. Empowering community bodies can have a positive influence on the communities to build their capacity to work together.

A positive impact to working with communities to develop written constitutions is that it allows them to understand different ways of working together and of making decisions. We honour and use their traditional methods of decision making and this empowers them and makes them realize that their ways are as effective as Western methods.

Training

During our 2015 trip Temotu resident Nelson Nyiede will travel with us. Nelson is a science teacher who is currently doing a part time BSc focusing on biology. We have worked with Nelson for 4 years. He is the chairman of the joint conservation committee for Fenualoa Island and a keen advocate of our work. Nelson is a trained Reef Guardian. Our plan is for Nelson to train in all aspects of our work to build the capacity of OceansWatch Solomon Islands to be able run its own projects in future years.

Identifying and marking traditional land ownership

Issues around customary land ownership can be both positive and negative. The positive benefits are seen when there is agreement and the rightful traditional land owners are acknowledged and this can provide benefit in terms of confirming their ownership and pride in the land.

Negative impacts

All exposure to western culture can potentially move communities further from being sustainable to ones that desire western consumer goods and foods. We mitigate exposing the communities too much to our inevitable western influence by being careful how we dress or use expensive equipment.

Identifying customary boundaries can have negative consequences as there may be multiple claims and misunderstandings. Identifying boundaries has been achieved through meetings of Chiefs, often facilitated by a local Honourable (member of Temotu Provincial Government). Conflicts may arise if there are seen to be benefits over ownership of the land, especially if these are monetary benefits.

We do foresee that other villages could be jealous of the assistance we are offering to Buma, Pala and Minivi. In order to mitigate this we are working with the local government representatives so that they are fully aware of our program and can explain it to other villages. We have told them that any village may apply for our assistance after going through a full village meeting. They are then requested to send us a letter asking for assistance that is endorsed by the chief and local MP. We have encountered and dealt with this issue in Fenualoa where 4 of the 5 villages are now working with us. We hope to expand our work throughout Temotu in the future so that all villages can benefit from engaging with us.

Prior consultation with indigenous communities

We engaged with Buma in 2013 during which full stakeholders meetings were undertaken. In 2014 full stakeholder meetings were also held with the communities of Buma, Pala and Minivi. Up to 75 people attended each meeting. Chris Bone usually presents in Pijin or can assist Dr Pierce by translating for him. We always seek support from local speakers too as we find that some of the women in particular do not speak pijin. We have always informed the Temotu Provincial Government (TPG) about our work through annual presentations at the start and end of our time in Temotu each year.

In Pala we have worked closely with Titus Godfrey and elder Banabas Meioko.

The community members at Buma that we specifically engaged with were Chief Chris and guides Joseph Garmou, Basil Polau and Patrick Obulou. We also work closely with all the women in the village through our VCO program, with many youths and men through our Reef Guardian program and with men and women's groups with our Climate Change program.

The customary landowners that we engaged with for Tinakula were Chief Paul and village elder Tom and guides Nicholas Kawalo and Brian Steven.

Measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits

1. We only visit communities where we have been invited to visit.
2. We ask for a written invitation signed by the chief and endorsed by the local government representative.
3. On our first visit we ensure we are accompanied by a local person that has mana in the community. This person introduces us and translates into local language for us at the initial introductory community meeting.
4. We ensure that all stakeholders are present at the initial community meeting, especially women.
5. We have a Community Engagement Policy document that addresses how we engage with communities and a Code of Conduct to guide our volunteers on appropriate behaviour and dress code etc.
6. On our first visit we work with a male and female village elder to give us cultural guidance and feedback on our community engagement.

All the conservation work that we do will come first from the communities desire to work with us to help them protect their resources for the future. We will provide education about the impacts of logging, mining and unsustainable resource use which will empower communities where we engage to want to prevent that happening to their own resources. They will be fully involved in helping design the surveying program and the dissemination of the results and future possibilities that arise from them.

Grievance mechanism

Our work is primarily people focussed and we work hard to ensure grievances are avoided. We are aware that we are working in a different culture and that sometimes people are upset. If this happens we will:

1. Depending on the nature of the grievance it is customary in the Solomon Islands to offer a gift to recompense the community for poor conduct. We would also offer apology and ensure the misdemeanour was not repeated.
2. For serious upset we would request a community meeting and ask how we could resolve the situation.
3. We will give the chief or suitable person in each community a means by which he can contact the CEPF Regional Implementation Team at IUCN. This would be in the event that any of the communities have a grievance they are uncomfortable to share with us but want to inform you.
4. In addition we will keep a full record of any verbal or written grievances received and we will communicate with the CEPF Secretariat as soon as internet is available as well as responding in a suitable manner as explained above.

Since its inception OceansWatch has only had one complaint about its behavior. This was about some women volunteers who wore too short shorts. Our code was updated to be more specific on this point and a personal apology was given by OceansWatch director Chris Bone.