

**Social Safeguard Regarding Indigenous Peoples Document**

**Date : 1 April 2016**

**CEPF Grant 65963**

**Grantee: Wildlife Conservation Society Papua New Guinea Program**

***Project Title:*** Saving Sea Turtles and Promoting Food Security and Sustainable Development on Mussau Island in Papua New Guinea

**Project Location**

Mussau Island, New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea

The proposed WCS project “*Saving sea-turtles on Mussau island through improved marine and terrestrial food security*” is planning to take place on Mussau Island, New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea.

(i) *Background and Identification of Indigenous People in the project areas*

The Mussau Islands (also known as the St Matthias group) are politically part of New Ireland Province and are a small and geographically distinct part of the Bismark Archipelago. The communities of Mussau are matrilineal and speak a single language known as Mussau-Emira, of which 5,000 speakers are thought to exist and of which 3,500 are estimated to be in the island group at any given time. The islanders abandoned their traditional culture upon conversion by the Seventh Day Adventist mission church in the 1930s. The inhabitants of the region are dispersed around the coast of the main island in the form of small villages. The local economy is oriented toward semi-traditional subsistence gardening and marine exploitation, with some cash-cropping of copra. Shifting cultivation continues to be limited to the periphery of the main island. The islanders remain entirely self-sufficient for all their basic needs, with there being no place to buy basic provisions of any type at any of the communities we visited during our surveys of 2014. As Seventh Day Adventists, the population follows the dietary laws of Leviticus, in which the consumption of shellfish, fish without scales, pigs, turtles, coconut crabs, fruit bats and cuscus, are prohibited.

Prior to the initial community engagement work undertaken for the 2014 biodiversity surveys (CEPF grant 64357) WCS had no previous contact with the communities on Mussau, although, WCS had on occasion, been invited to the island. Beyond periodic ongoing interactions with the Seventh Day Adventist ministry, historic logging operations, past exploratory and archaeological expeditions, and sporadic visits from boat based tourism (especially bird watchers), the islanders have no regular exposure to outsiders. In the lead up to WCS securing consent to work on the island (CEPF grant 64357) some communities refused due to suspicion of our motives and a legacy of misunderstandings and a lack of community engagement by prior outside groups. For the communities who consented to our work at the villages of Lolieng (north-western coast) and Nae (south-eastern coast) and with whom we engaged this represented their first encounter with a conservation organization. The current project (CEPF grant 65963) will address the specific concerns highlighted by these two communities which were recorded in the Participatory Rural Appraisals Process (i.e.the impact of turtle herbivory on the seaweed *Caulerpa*, and crop damage caused by feral pigs).

The social context of Mussau Island, particularly the religious aspects, will dictate how the project is undertaken. All project staff must respect the island observation of a Sabbath which extends from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday - during which no work can be done. Seventh Day Adventists religious institutions on the island continue to be the back bone of the community and will likely form the foundation of any future community based organization.

As well as working with clans, WCS also attempts to ensure that a representative cross section of the communities are engaged in the project and aims particularly to make sure that women (who are often isolated from the traditional decision making processes) are involved in community meetings and discussions.

(ii) *Expected project impacts*

Potential positive impacts of the proposed project include the following:

- 1) Interventions to control turtle-herbivory result in the seaweed food resource *Caulerpa* spp. being enhanced, thereby improving food security and sustainability, and lessening human-turtle conflict.
- 2) The development of a Mussau community based organization through an agricultural project focused on improving village garden productivity. The community based organization becomes recognizable and trusted by the communities, and is in a position to undertake small-scale donor funded projects on behalf of the islanders in the future.
- 3) Improved garden productivity allows pig fencing to become cost and labor effective for the villagers. The degree and frequency of pig damage to gardens is lessened.
- 4) The long-term control options for pig control on the island are investigated and represented to the community and community based organization as future options to consider.
- 5) WCS work on the Mussau Island also represents a short-term income generating opportunity for local communities via the hire and use of local field assistants, and cooks. Catering costs will be paid directly to women involved ensuring distribution of benefits to both sexes. Fresh food will be purchased locally and thereby be of benefit to the local economy.

Potential negative impacts of the proposed project include the following:

- 1) The selection of field assistants, cooks, trial gardens, and houses for accommodation has the potential to raise jealousies and complaints amongst individuals or households who feel they are not equally benefitting from the project. WCS will work closely with representatives from all major clans in open meetings to try and minimize the risk of such grievances, and to ensure an equitable split of income opportunities through the development of a benefit sharing mechanism. Payment for services will also occur in a public space directly with the people involved to ensure transparency.
- 2) While WCS's experience to date of working with clans and resource mapping has been positive, it also has the potential to uncover or re-energize clan disputes that have been dormant for a number of years. Work by the community engagement teams will investigate this risk and make it clear that it is the communities own responsibility to resolve such issues. If such disputes cause major issues then the project will temporarily or fully withdraw from the site until these are resolved.

*(iii) Procurement of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC)*

WCS PNG has adopted the FPIC process as one of its key community engagement principles and we are well practiced in undertaking this approach at all of our project sites. While we have made every effort to develop a proposal that addresses prior community concerns revealed through our previous Participatory Rural Appraisal the community is entirely within their rights not to consent. The CEPF has recognized that due to the remote nature of Mussau Island the consent process cannot be undertaken without funding and that funds for the full the project will only be released upon consent. As such the first component of the project (on which the whole project will be contingent) will be to send a WCS community engagement team to the communities of Nae and Lolieng to explain the proposed projects to the communities through public meetings and individual visits to clans. WCS will answer any questions the clans and individuals may have and then seek final consent through a public meeting. The communities' consent will then be documented through a signing ceremony with WCS and the ward councilors at each village.

*(iv) Measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits*

WCS understands that for anyone to be able to have any interaction with the forests or seas in PNG they will have to work with local people who are the resource owners. WCS staff follow a standardized protocol created specifically for community engagement in PNG which outlines all steps of community engagement from entry to exit.

WCS works to train local based Community Facilitators (CFs) to undertake the vital work of working with local communities, ensuring that community expectations match the outcomes that conservation projects can realistically deliver. The major role of the CFs is to act as a cultural liaison by which they attempt understanding community and private sentiment and articulate community concerns, misunderstandings, and communication gaps to WCS staff, and in-turn they disseminate explanations of our project, vision and goals to the community both in formal and informal settings. This process helps establish a mutual understanding of the process and of expected outcomes, it also allows any misunderstandings to be address at the soonest possible moment. Community facilitators are locals from neighboring communities and have a education up to secondary school level. Because CFs are from neighboring communities they have a natural understanding of local culture they can advise the WCS community engagement officers on best social approaches while in the field.

In order to avoid unequal distribution of project benefits during the FPIC process WCS staff and CFs will outline the terms under which community participation is expected. These terms include the need for equal representation of clans and gender in terms of local assistance, and benefit sharing. A discussion on how equal representation and benefit sharing will be maintained will take place at the meeting and an agreement between WCS and community will be made. Most likely equal this will be achieved through a roster mechanism.

(v) *Monitoring impacts*

The WCS community engagement protocol requires WCS staff to conduct a community meeting each time they visit a village to introduce the project, the staff and activities associated with it. This provides an open opportunity for the community members to ask questions for clarifications. These meetings are an opportunity for WCS to repatriate initial findings while listening to community comments and concerns including any grievances (see below). All community meetings will seek gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups including the elderly, disabled, and youth. All community meetings have sign in sheets and the data is disaggregated by gender so that WCS's performance in terms of inclusiveness can be monitored. Records of the disaggregated data will be sent to CEPF.

(vi) *Grievance mechanism*

WCS has extensive experience working with the people in the island communities in New Ireland Province. At all community meetings WCS staff will ask for people to voice any concerns. Past experience suggests that grievances may also be brought up by community leaders in private meetings, or will be uncovered by CFs in informal meetings with community members. Members of the community engagement team, CFs, and project leaders will be in dialogue with the community to resolve this in an as amicable manner as possible. Under most circumstances WCS will undertake participatory community meetings to resolve the issue.

WCS does not get involved in disputes/grievances that are outside the project area and do not involved the organization, and such grievances will be dealt with by local authorities through accepted process and norms. WCS's experience of working in PNG indicates that the best way to avoid grievance is to carefully manage expectations of what WCS and the project can deliver, and this should be adequately covered by the FPIC and community processes described above. All grievances and their outcomes be recorded and relayed back to the CEPF.