

SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

In Search of the Makira Moorhen

A CEPF project implemented by Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership

1. **Identify Indigenous Peoples in the Project Area.**

The Kahua District covers the Eastern districts in Makira – there are around 100 communities spread both along the coastline and also up the rivers into the interior of the island. These communities are resource-rich but cash-poor. The social structure, vulnerability and relationships of the communities with the surrounding land (ecosystem service assessments) has been assessed through a number of studies^{3,4&6}. The communities are represented at the regional level by the Kahua Association, formed in 2005 and legally registered under the Charitable Trust Act. The Kahua Association has received funds from the EU for capacity building and various other measures, and also co-ordinated the Early Childhood programme in the district. The association formed a number of committees including Economic Development, Conservation, Traditional Culture (Chiefs), Women, Youth, Ecumenical Values. However, funding is no longer available and many of the office-bearers on these committees have now moved on to other ventures.

2. **Assessment of expected Project Impacts on the community.**

Negative Impacts. The project actors will be present in the District for only a short period of time. It is likely that the biggest negative impact is that expectations are raised among the local community, which the project is not able to fulfil.

Positive Impacts. The project will provide funds, commensurate with previous surveys, for the assistance of the naturalist, and the trackers as part of the survey. This will be in line with previous surveys. The project will employ someone from the Kahua District to act as Project Co-ordinator. This person will be invited to attend a training programme in Honiara (funded through the CEPF Capacity for Conservation Project) in July 2015 – and lead in the preparation of a subsequent Lol to CEPF and/or other donors.

3. **Describe how free, prior and informed consultations have been carried out with affected communities during design of the project (ie prior to the submission of the proposal).**

The details of the Lol are based on the recommendations of Daniel Wagatoka, a spokesperson for, and former employee of, the Kahua Association. BirdLife International have been in discussions with Daniel and Roger James, formerly of CI Makira, since 2011. SICCP and BirdLife International finally met Daniel on Monday 1st December, 2014 just prior to the flight to Kirakira and had a stimulating discussion about the survey expectations.

SICCP and BirdLife International met with representatives of the Kahua Association on 4th December. Those present included Thomas Weape (Assistant Chair of the Kahua Association and Premiere for Makira District), Thomas Bea, Economist, Jelet Mae Community Hall owner, Evalyn, Chair of Womens Group and Jack, the police representative. The discussion was full,

frank and honest. There is clearly a difference of opinion over the mission of the association – which has handicapped progress. Of particular issue is the perception that Conservation work hasn't benefited the communities, a number of people have come and gone and nothing has come from it. A considerable sum of money had been obtained through the EU programme, had raised expectations among the communities which hadn't been met.

SICCP and BirdLife met with the District forestry officer Prescott Philemon, and the District Agricultural Officer, Carlos in Kirakira on the 1st December, and asked if there were any Kahua folk in town who might be interested to discuss the project. SICCP met with 2 employees of World Vision from Kahua, while Carlos introduced 2 community representatives. Their discussions indicated that the communities are not 100% supportive of the Kahua Association, and that the project should ensure that the communities involved are kept up-to-date with the survey directly, do not consider the Kahua Association to be the sole recipients of the information. The community representatives were intrigued as to why we were looking for a bird – but one of them was convinced that he regularly heard, and had occasionally seen, the bird when hunting in the uplands. When asked, he agreed that the location that had been identified was as good a place to start as any – he felt that they were distributed throughout the upland plateau. The reps did note that Tammy Davies had searched, and failed to find, the bird (this isn't true, Tammy had never attempted to search for the bird, but did ask questions about it when interviewing communities about environmental change). They also helped out when Chris Filardi and colleagues searched the upland areas a few years earlier. The community reps confirmed that it was likely that all communities were already aware of the likelihood of a bird survey happening. The Chiefs was not the only means of communication in the district.

From these discussions it can be concluded that

- the Kahua Association is not effectively representing the communities at this time, and that it will be important to develop a strong partnership directly with those communities that the project will directly affect.
- While there was disquiet over the way the funds for the EU project were dispersed there was no question that the information that Daniel provided regarding the Moorhen, and the best locations, was accurate.
- It will be useful to affirm the reporting and feedback processes undertaken by previous surveys, in particular those listed in the references. The discussion while talking to the Office bearers suggested that the research findings had little impact on the current discussions. One future potential avenue is to revisit the earlier findings and see whether communities are in agreement with the recommendations.

4. **Lists of Project Activities as they relate to the communities.**

Awareness-raising meetings. These are planned, prior to the first survey, between the two surveys and after the final survey. The meetings will be undertaken, initially with the communities at the two villages where the survey work will be based – as recommended by the Kahua Association. There is little point in undertaking these meetings at all 100 communities as the survey will not impact there. These meetings will be facilitated by a project co-ordinator from the Kahua District who will be employed for the project, along with a representative of

SICCP. If following the first survey, in July, credible information on the continued presence of Makira moorhen elsewhere in the Kahua District becomes known, then the possibility of moving the 2nd survey to the new area will be discussed with the Kahua Association, and also with the appropriate local community representatives.

Informing all communities. The Chiefs meet regularly, and it is through this that most formal communication occurs across the communities. The project will keep the Chiefs informed of the project progress at those meetings most appropriate for the timing as above – ie at meetings between April 2016 and December 2016. The project will also use this format to request up-to-date information on sightings of the Makira Moorhen and/or Solomys Bush Rat. Information for the Chiefs will be provided by the Project Co-ordinator and, if present, by a representative of SICCP.

Undertaking Field Surveys. Two overseas experts will take part in the first survey. They will be based in the high ground above Manukia and Naghatari in East Makira and will be accompanied by a Naturalist from the Kahua District. A previous, Rufford-funded, project trained two community people to be naturalists at least one of whom is currently in the district. SICCP will, in addition, ascertain whether any students from Kahua have recently graduated in a Biological or Environmental Science course from the National University of Solomon Islands. The project will also employ 3 trackers/guides/hunters for the 2 week duration of the July survey. Only one overseas person will be involved in each survey and will rely on the local naturalist as the support. Again, 3 trackers/guides/hunters will provide support for the survey team in October.

Emergency Evacuation. Should a surveyor become ill, break a leg or otherwise become incapacitated then there will be a need to stretcher them off the hill and transport them to the Hospital in Kirakira. The Project Co-ordinator will lead on this process, and will agree with the SICCP representative the various processes that need to be taken into consideration should this event occur.

Findings and next steps. The project will discuss with the affected communities the results from the survey, the implications and the next steps both in the search for, and conservation of, the Makira Moorhen but also the well-being of the communities. The project will be very careful not to raise expectations – but will discuss the conclusions with the Kahua Association, assess them against other viewpoints and agree jointly a way forward to develop a partnership between SICCP and an association of communities in the region. A LoI will have been drafted by the project co-ordinator in time for the August 2015 deadline. This may provide an opportunity to raise further funds to undertake the next steps of the survey.

5. **Outline measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits.**

The project co-ordinator will ensure that the communities directly associated with the survey will be kept informed of any findings, that these findings will likely percolate through to the rest of the community and will reinforce the findings by talking directly with the Chiefs.

As mentioned previously, the project has to be careful not to raise expectations, and yet have a plausible justification for undertaking a survey of a CR bird that hasn't been seen, officially, for 50+ years.

The project hopes to use as many folk from the communities as possible, one to act as a co-ordinator, one to develop their knowledge/skills as a naturalist and several to receive some wages for portering, tracking, etc.

6. How communities will be consulted, and involved, in the Project.

The project has been discussed with representatives of the Kahua Association and, also, individual community representatives. Conclusions from these meetings have been used to reformat the survey so that it includes more representatives from the local community (for capacity building purposes). This will ensure that the local communities most closely associated with the project sites will be kept informed about activities through village meetings before, during and after the survey and that any opportunity for other sightings to be validated will be considered, eg using an exemplar photograph captured with a mobile phone camera.

7. Detail a grievance mechanism.

Any grievances that community individuals might have can be reported, at any time, to the project co-ordinator. There will also be an opportunity to air any grievances publicly, or in private, during each of the workshops. These grievances will be documented and given a full and fair hearing by the project co-ordinator along with staff representatives at SICCP. If appropriate, the grievance will be addressed as soon as possible. Where the situation is a bit more complicated then the grievance will be raised with representatives of the Kahua Association to jointly agree on a course of action to address the grievance. As mentioned previously, it is very important not to raise expectations from this survey. Grievances that do not relate to the survey will be forwarded to the Kahua Association for due consideration.