

Social Assessment

19/05/2018

CEPF Grant 104007

BirdLife International

*Developing the capacity of communities to undertake conservation actions on Three
Key Biodiversity Areas in Vanuatu*

Tongoa/Laika KBA, West Ambrym KBA, Mt Tukasmera KBA

Grant Summary

1. BirdLife International
2. *Developing the capacity of communities to undertake conservation actions on Three Key Biodiversity Areas in Vanuatu*
3. Grant number 104007
4. Grant amount (US dollars) US\$97,610.50
5. 1st July, 2018 until 31st December 2019
6. Vanuatu
7. 19th May 2018

8. Indigenous People affected:

Vanuatu Environment Advocacy Network VEAN is a national, indigenous lead, NGO based in Port Vila, Vanuatu. BirdLife International and VEAN have worked together since April 2014. During this time we have improved the organisation structure of VEAN, worked together on sharing knowledge about conservation requirements in Vanuatu and have jointly undertaken on site activities at Kurumambe Tongoa, Luganville, Espiritu Santo and more recently on West Ambrym. VEAN have also expanded their operations and are now active participators in government biodiversity and conservation subjects.

BirdLife International and VEAN met with community representatives in Kurumambe, Tongoa in October 2014, as part of a CEPF project. There we discussed issues related to the priority species at this priority site. A representative from the community attended a workshop, run by BirdLife and VEAN in August 2015, where they proposed a small grant to resolve the issues highlighted for the Malau. They approached BirdLife and asked if we could provide the technical input and lead on a joint large application. The proposal followed very closely the plans that they had proposed, with some technical details that develop some innovative data collection techniques. Kurumambe is in the northern corner of the island of Tongoa, in the Shepherd Islands, part of the Shefa province in Vanuatu. Members of the community speak Bislama, some English and Nakamamaanga – the local language (one of two spoken on Tongoa). The community do not consider themselves as distinct, culturally, from other communities on Tongoa. The chief of the community has recently returned to Tongoa, having lived for a number of years in Port Vila, the headquarters of the Shefa Province and capital of Vanuatu. The community rely on gardening and wild forest harvesting for much of their resources, with both coconut and Kava production as prime sources of income. The village of Kurumamber also has access to both eggs from the Megapode colony and chicks from the Shearwater (Koroliku) colony on the adjacent island of Laika (also owned by the community). They have considerably more access to natural resources than other communities on the island. here is a non-sealed 4wd road that connects the villages on the island of Tongoa with each other, the island market, the shops and the local airport. The only electricity on the island is provided in the form of a generator and/or any solar panels. This will need to be considered when reviewing the findings from camera traps, etc. The community established a complete Tabu over the site, and employed rangers to police any activities. The rangers were rotated during the Tabu period so that all interested individuals took part and received a payment. There was no known incursion,

contravening the Tabu, into the site throughout the Tabu period – and no grievances raised by individuals within the community.

BirdLife International and VEAN met with community representatives in West Ambrym in November 2017, where the conservation of Namalao, the Vanuatu Megapode, was discussed. West Ambrym is serviced by an airport at Craig Cove, from where there is a unsealed road along the west coast, and inland to the central villages. The north coast can only be accessed by coast – or on foot. Craig Cove is a market town, no-one from here harvests megapode eggs, but eggs are sold in the local market. The inland villages supply to Craig Cove and beyond. Cash crops are primarily Coconut, but with some Kava and fishing. We met with the Area Secretary for West Ambrym, the local police officer – who was previously posted on Tongoa, and the elected Chief of Chiefs for Ambrym, Mr Jif Louis. The establishment of a sustainable harvesting committee was proposed for the area, which should include relevant stakeholders including from the village of Langilay, where regular egg-harvesting forms a significant component of the community income. There was general support for a project to further conservation measures for this and other species in the area. Some members of the communities discussed the importance of the species, from a cultural perspective. We consider that the relationship is sufficiently robust to progress to the next stage, establish a formal group, further develop our understanding of the megapodes in the area using both traditional and scientific ecological knowledge, and proposing conservation management options for the communities to consider. The Chief, a former teacher, learned how to use my GPS and spent a day visiting megapode colonies, and collected some initial information on their distribution. He has sent a letter to VEAN offering his, and the community support for a project.

VEAN helped with the establishment of TEAN - a similar umbrella-NGO of locally based CSOs in Tafea province - in early 2018. The initial meeting for TEAN indicated that there is considerable interest in the conservation of the Collared Petrel with a number of suggestions for both awareness-raising and immediate actions. The project area is on the slopes of Mount Tabwesawema. Kava and Coconut are the primary form of cash crop in the area, while over half the households in the Area Council are regular fishermen. In 2016, VEAN, along with Taule Taule a local CSO, met and interviewed a number of community members who continue to harvest Collared Petrel chicks for sale in the local markets, a short video was produced (<https://youtu.be/Gim-5z16MTI>). The enthusiasm of TEAN for developing a conservation plan for a globally threatened species on their doorstep, combined with the willingness of the harvesters to talk, on video, to VEAN and Taule Taule about their activities indicates that, if approached cautiously, we anticipate that there will be strong community support for a programme of work to consider conservation management within the KBA. We plan to do some more preliminary meetings with relevant stakeholders within the local community prior to activities on the ground, which, if agreed, we plan to start in 2019.

9. Summary of the proposed project: This section will describe what you plan to do and how you plan to do it, with a particular focus on activities implemented in areas inhabited and/or used by Indigenous People.

Liaison with the communities in all three sites will be undertaken primarily through VEAN - who will, in turn, work with locally-based CSOs to develop the aspects of each of the projects. Discussions will take place around a bowl of kava, and will most likely be undertaken in Bislama, Ideas/suggestions proposed by VEAN and BirdLife will be considered, revisited and discussed by the community and/or the conservation committee both at the time, and at later meetings. The BirdLife representative will be present at some of these meetings – to present findings and propose a range of options to consider. These will be discussed further in Bislama, with occasional requests to clarify issues. Agreement ultimately tends to be unanimously by the group - there is no majority decision within Vanuatu community decisions. If the group do not unanimously agree then the discussion continues, and alternatives considered, until all areas are discussed, points of contention modified and a unanimous position reached.

We will undertake some questionnaires of individuals in the local community who are active in harvesting megapode eggs or petrel chicks. We will undertake surveys to improve our knowledge of the numbers and distribution of the megapodes and petrels in the KBAs. We will report findings back to the local conservation committees and propose plans to conserve the species through a sustainable harvesting approach, using local measures, such as a Tabu. We will capture the decisions that the conservation committees make regarding conservation actions and modify conservation plans accordingly. All these activities will be discussed with the conservation committee, who will then present to the wider community at an open meeting. Only after this process will any activity get underway. Wherever possible members of the local community will be employed as guides, trackers, etc.

10. Potential impacts: This section will assess expected project impacts (both positive and negative) on Indigenous People.

The immediate concern is that the harvesting of megapode eggs at West Ambrym and Tongoa is reducing the populations – harvesting is considered to be the biggest pressure on the megapode population. Clearly, it is likely that conservation actions will focus on reducing the number of eggs harvested. This will have an immediate, short term effect on some members of the indigenous community – who rely on harvesting as a livelihood or as a source of protein. However, it will have a long term benefit if it maintains a healthy population of megapodes from which a proportion of eggs can be harvested.

Similarly, the harvesting of Collared Petrel chicks appears to be of a magnitude that would impact on population levels of this species. In the short term, any livelihood lost through imposed reduction in the harvesting of chicks may be balanced by funding for these harvesters as trackers/guides/rangers to help us get a better understanding of the numbers present. Harvesting levels appear to be very high, either the population of Petrels being harvesting is much larger than previously thought, or the harvesters are locating the majority of burrows. It is clear that these hunters are skilled at locating burrows, and their knowledge will be essential for us to get a better understanding of the size of the colony in the area.

11. Participatory preparation: This section will describe the participation of affected communities during the project design process (i.e. prior to submission of the full proposal), and explain how Free, Prior and Informed Consent was obtained.

The community at Kurumambe came forward to develop a proposal 9 months after VEAN and BirdLife had raised the possibility in a workshop ran in conjunction with Live and Learn. The community voluntarily enforced a more restrictive Tabu than we proposed and have proactively ensured that the Tabu was policed effectively. BirdLife and VEAN provide suggestions to the committee – who act accordingly. We have now moved to the next step of maintaining a partial Tabu, combined with monitored harvesting of eggs, which the community are co-ordinating.

Within Mt Tukumera the local NGO TEAN have highlighted opportunities and have expressed interest in getting started on conservation action plans as soon as possible. Here BirdLife and VEAN will urge caution to ensure that we don't alienate the traditional harvesters from the local NGO as we suspect that the harvesters will be our most important allies on site. Accordingly we will need to find a middle ground where there is a restriction but not a complete cessation of harvesting within the area. Providing an alternative income source for the harvesters may help with this – the short term option of providing a guiding service in the hills will help. It has to be accepted that there is a strong tradition of harvesting within the local community and that a sustainable harvest is the most likely form of agreement for all parties.

BirdLife and VEAN discussed megapode egg harvesting in West Ambrym. Harvesting is declining over much of the area, but remains intensive around one community for whom the income generated from selling eggs at the market in Craig Cove is a significant proportion of the total income. The majority of communities were interested in developing a sustainable harvesting plan, but were somewhat cynical as similar proposals had been proposed previously with little follow up actions - the Protected Area listed for the site is one case in point. The local chief proved to be particularly interested in supporting the project and was happy to take a GPS and plot nesting colonies during our visit.

12. Mitigation strategies: This section will outline measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits.

Sustainable harvesting plans inevitably mean less harvesting in the short term (compared with no plan) – but regular and continued harvesting into the long term. Where possible we will employ the harvesters as guides/trackers to help with the fieldwork and questionnaires to provide a short term buffer for any income lost from the restricted harvesting. This option may not be appropriate in certain sites, however, and we will need to identify circumstances where restricted harvesting will have minimal impact on incomes.

It must be stressed that all decisions will be made by the community representatives. Our role is to provide options and indicate the likelihood of success of the various options. A complete tabu might work in the short term but is unlikely to survive for long. Accordingly we must identify whether timed tabus (no harvesting for 3 months of the year, for example) or site tabus (no harvesting within a certain area) or a combination of the two are the most realistic long term solutions.

13. Monitoring and evaluation: This section will explain how compliance with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples will be monitored, and reported to CEPF and/or the Regional

Implementation Team. Monitoring and evaluation methodologies should be adapted to the local context, indicators, and capacity.

All projects that trigger a safeguard must provide local communities and other relevant stakeholders with a means to raise a grievance with the grantee, the relevant Regional Implementation Team, the CEPF Secretariat or the World Bank.

Traditionally, any grievance held by an individual within a community is raised at a community meetings. If that meeting is not thought to have satisfactorily resolved the grievance then the complainant can escalate to the next tier of local government. If the local chief at the community meeting is at all concerned about the grievance then they will raise it with the conservation committee who will, in turn, determine a way around the grievance, either by modifying a Tabu or provide an alternative approach. If the committee is at all concerned about an aspect of a tabu then they are unlikely to enforce that tabu. This is how community conservation agreements are reached. It is only as a last resort that a complainant would take a grievance out of this community process and to an outside body, or individual.

In order to identify any potential areas of grievance we will continue with our previously successful approach of providing VEAN with the task of being the initial access point should an individual wish to take their grievance to an outside body. Whenever on site VEAN will be available for discussion with any community member, over a cup of coffee, or a bowl of Kava, to listen to and acknowledge any grievances that the member might have. When VEAN is away from the study area then a phone number is available, or the VEAN office in Port Vila is available for anyone to drop-in and have a discussion. Note that the grievance is likely to be voiced in either the local language or Bislama– it is unlikely to be voiced in French or English. Any grievances raised by individuals from the communities will be reported by VEAN to the Grantee project manager – and a response proposed. Any incident of grievance that we become aware of are forwarded to the national RIT coordinator and reported through the 6monthly technical reports by the project manager.

Compliance with this plan will be achieved by:

- Consulting with the community, provincial and central government about the project and accommodating their concerns and needs in the project design and its implementation. This may include updating this safeguard plan, if necessary.
- Employing those people most likely to be affected by any tabus in the implementation of this project.
- Making known contacts for the project and how they can be reached
- Sharing the results from the survey with the communities, provincial and central government and including this feedback in the final recommendations to each community.
- Making the final documents available to all stakeholders.

These activities are recognized in the project workplan and will be reported accordingly to CEPF.

14. **Grievance mechanism:** The grievance mechanism must include, at a minimum, the following elements.

- Email and telephone contact information for the sub-grantee organization, VEAN. Lai Sakita, laisakita@gmail.com,
- Email and telephone contact information for the Grantee organization, BirdLife International, Mark O'Brien, +679 879 4419, mark.obrien@birdlife.org,
- Email and telephone contact information for the CEPF Regional Implementation Team, Vatumaraga Molisa, vatumaraga.molisa@ext.iucn.org, Helen Pippard, +679 331 9084, helen.pippard@iucn.org
- Email and telephone contact information for the local World Bank office, ADB Liaison Office Level 5, Reserve Bank Building Rue Emile Mercet, PO Box 3221, Tel +678 25581.
- The email of the CEPF Executive Director: cepfexecutive@conservation.org
- Information about the project purpose, activities, timeline and key contacts (including for grievances) will be shared with communities in West Ambrym, Kurumambe Tongoa and Mt Tukasmera, Tanna, central and provincial government through project consultations led by VEAN. These will be face to face meetings and project reference documents will also be shared with government partners and conservation committees. VEAN will be the initial recipient of grievances and we will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days.
- If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, then we will provide them with the opportunity to submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at cepfexecutive@conservation.org or by surface mail. If the claimant is still not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Executive Director, they may submit the grievance to the World Bank at the local World Bank office.