

Social Assessment

The Leather Back Turtle– Waisurione, Wai-Hau Conservation Foundation Inc.

Malaita

Malaita is one of the largest islands in Solomon Islands, and is known also as “Big Malaita” or Marapaina. Other islands include South Malaita Island also called “Small Malaita” or “Maramasika”. The Population is 137,596 in 1999 national census. There has been no detailed researches carried out in Malaita so far, however, in terms of forest type

- a) Montane----- 6612 ha
- b) Hill-----354544 ha
- c) Lowland----- 20144 ha
- d) Freshwater and riverine----- 10705ha
- e) Saline swamp----- 9992ha
- f) Grass land and other non-forest area-----4016ha

Wai-Hau Conservation Foundation is located in ‘Aena’ura tribal land, an indigenous land. Wai-Hau conservation’s covers only Aena’ura tribal land except for the leather back turtle projects which covers other two tribal land namely Po’otori and Ausi tribal lands due to the geographical location which stretches across these three tribal lands. Decision making regarding land matters is done by ‘Araha ni mane council of chief’ the culturally recognized body in the whole of West Are’ are that deals with land issues. Decisions pertaining to the administration of Wai-Hau conservation are done by the executive of Wai-Hau conservation as a separate legal entity whom its members are from the three tribal groups. However, any project or activity undertaken by Wai-Hau that seems contradictory to the cultural values and norms of the Are’ are culture is often referred to the Araha ni mane council of chief. All tribal land groups speak the same language and inter –related in terms of ownership of the said tribal lands, a common analogy in Are’ are culture.

Wai-Hau is located more than 80 kilometers south of Auki, the capital of Malaita province. The most efficient mode of transportation is by public motor vehicle. Apart from the leatherback turtle Wai-Hau is also a home for the endemic Malaita Myzomela and Malaita white eye birds. There’s also an endemic bird species known as Malaita fantail but have not been found since 1982 research.

Potential positive and negative impacts

Positive

- *Increase population*
Leatherback turtle has been a major dietary item to local communities over the years causing decline of breeding population. Lack of proper framework and partnership from responsible stakeholders is also a major stumbling block. Since the start of the project in 2013, there has been wider awareness on the significant need to protect these species. In 2015 more than 500 eggs were protected under the program. With this proposed project, it is expected that more eggs and hatcheries will be protected thus increase the population over the long term.
- *Increase knowledge of species.*
Human attitude is an obvious draw back in the pursuit to protect these species particularly in Malaita cultures due to lack of scientific knowledge of the leatherback turtle. This project is an important step forward to educate our local people to collectively learn about their scientific significance to the bio-diversity and see the bigger picture and the global efforts to protecting and managing these species.
- *Technical skills for local people*
There are other associate trainings important for local people to undertake as part of the project. One of the important trainings is first aid training in case of emergency and accidents. Rangers will be working under harsh conditions and health services are poor in the rural areas. It is expected therefore that as part of this project first Aid training will be a priority. Local people will also develop skills and knowledge on how to use GPS and GIS related skills. This will indeed also help our local knowledge and utilize these skills in our proposed land demarcation project to manage and minimize impacts of land and environmental degradation to the turtles habitats along the 4.8 kilometer beach.
- *Promote ownership to protect the species*
The fact that Wai-Hau is a fully local organization directly located on project site is fundamental to the effort to protecting the species. The project will therefore promote sense of ownership and huge responsibility from the local people which will have a major positive impact and sustainability on the long term drive to protecting these species.
- *Capacity building*
The project is expected to build capacity and empower Wai-Hau Conservation staff and other local people on project management, financial reporting which will be fundamentally applicable to Wai-Hau's other ongoing and future projects like the mini-hydro project, rainfall data collection project, eco-tourism, organic farming

project and water supply project. The knowledge, skills and experiences gained from this project will be capitalized in other projects as part of Wai-Hau's broader development aspirations.

- *Partnership with other stakeholders and other associated associations*
Conservation demands broader partnership with key stakeholders, local communities, local governments, National government through line Ministries, NGOs and donor partners. In rural settings lack of partnerships with key stakeholders has been a missing link. This project will indeed build persistent partnership with the key stakeholders mentioned above so that essential programs are directly implemented at the rural level and local people are empowered in the sustainability of the monitoring and recovery plan of the leatherback turtle. Also vital informations on conservation are directly disclosed to the rural communities to drive the effort in protecting these species.
- *Tourism product*
One of the long term plans is to promote eco-tourism with current Wai-Hau conservation programs as an alternative mean of income since the natural resources is the ultimate source of livelihood to our rural people. In 2015, more than 15 tourists from USA, Australia, Japan and New Zealand visited Wai-Hau to see the leatherback breeding process and other environment needs bringing considerable incomes to unemployed youths. This project will therefore further promote the leatherback as one of its key tourism product in the not too distant future.
- *Next generation- change attitude*
In a recent community awareness done by Wai-Hau and TNC, children and youths top the highest number of the population in our rural communities. With more awareness under this project, more children and young people will be involved and well informed of the importance of the project and the connection to biodiversity. Essentially the bigger picture of conserving these species and the Wai-Hau's broader conservation aspirations is embedded in the new generation who will become the change actors to protect these species in the long term.

Negative

- *Imbalance of family responsibilities*
More men were involved in the project in the last two years as Rangers and coordinators. Most of the tasks were undertaken at night. There has been some concern with regards to men's daily support and responsibility towards their families as they often spend most part of the day recovering from the night shifts. Thus women often shoulder some of the men's responsibilities like animal herding and gardening creating an imbalance of roles and responsibilities in the family.

- *Health and safety*
Rangers are often work in undesirable weather conditions without safety gears including cold winds, rain and high tides which are inevitable due to the natural setting of Wai-Hau beach. Tiredness and pneumonia are often experienced by rangers during the course of the project.
- *Threats from human poachers*
Protecting the leather back which is highly regarded as dietary object especially the eggs by villagers for many years has been a real challenge. Threats from human poachers to rangers are mildly experienced causing community differences at one instance.

1. Consultation with concerned communities

Consultation either formal or informal has been a core responsibility since the project started 2 years ago. In a separate project undertaken in partnership with TNC, Global Green Grant from the USA and the Ministry of environment and Conservation, consultation was undertaken in 4 different communities, Hauhui, Paunanu'u, Wairaha and Waisurione villages in 2011. The consultation focuses on what is conservation, why it is important to conserve the environment and the leatherback turtles and what are the benefits of conservation to the global environment and local communities. The outcome of this consultation was the development of Wai-Hau Conservation Foundation broader Management plan which have not been fully rolled implemented as an implementation management measure taken by the management .Also the recognition of Wai-Hau Conservation by the Ministry of Conservation and environment under its annual work plan and budgetary support in the form of solar project and others. Despite it has been a learning curve and a huge success for all the communities, there is still an ongoing need to undertake regular consultations with the local communities. The approach now is to bring community leaders, church leaders and women from each community to Wai-Hau and undergo a broader consultation. They will then return to their communities and promote by public announcement and notices of the project expectations from the communities. This will attract more community support and political will towards the project.

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

Land boundary dispute is one of the issues that is quite unpredictable and may surface any time since the project area covers 3 tribal lands. With initial consultation at the end of 2015 with key land owners, a decision was made and agreed that rangers will be recruited from the 3 tribal lands who will become key players of the project. These

rangers will undertake intensive trainings and be responsible to carry out duties as required under the project in each tribal land but subject to management under Wai-Hau conservation as the project implementer for prudent management and reporting of the project progress.

On the family responsibility front, it is proposed that women will be considered for the role of rangers subject to their approval to allow for fair share of family responsibility. Equally to promote more women participation towards the project and other community projects to alleviate the stigma of women being the inferior figures in community developments in our societies. Safety and health at work will be also highly considered and will be taken into consideration for this project.

Achieving the outcome that is protecting the leatherbacks, eggs and hatcheries from poachers and natural calamities is also equally important. There has been a lot of leaning experiences from the past implementations. One of the proposed measures identified is to have a designated hatchery site where eggs can be relocated to for proper monitoring. As part of the approach, rangers will undergo trainings in other parts of the country who have undertaken the same approach.

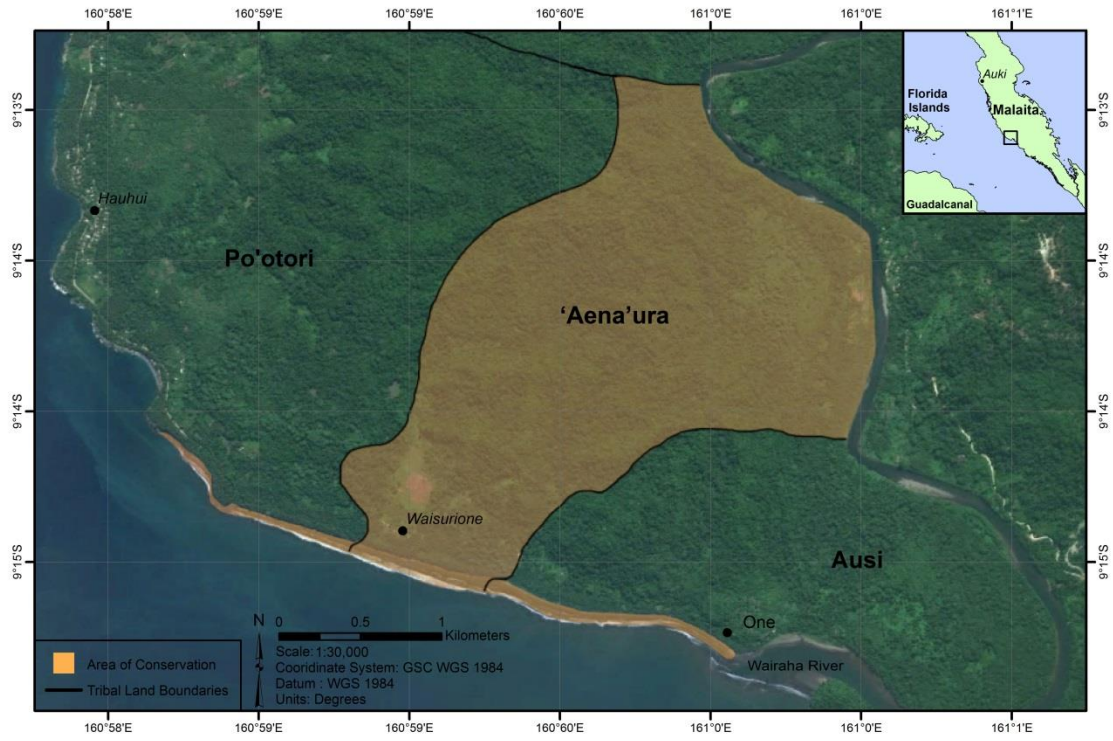
3. Monitoring

Project monitoring will be done on quarterly basis. This include disclose of progressive financial report of the project and any relevant data related to the project to be presented by the Chairman of Wai-Hau Conservation as the overall accountable officer of the project.

4. Grievance mechanisms

Grievances or any issues related specifically to the management of the project from any stakeholder will be discussed with Wai-Hau Conservation Executive. Any possible land issues will be discussed with Wai-Hau management or in extreme cases forwarded to Araha ni mane council of Chief. Araha ni Mane council of chief is the ultimate traditional body responsible for solving land matters in West Are'are region. Any grievances raised with the project team or third party contact will be documented on paper and communicated to the CEPF Secretariat and the Regional Implementation Team at IUCN within 15 days, together with a plan for remedial action (if any required). The Regional Implementation Team can be contacted via phone on +679-331-9084 or email on cepfeastmelanesia@iucn.org and lysa.wini@iucn.org or via post on c/- CEPF Regional Implementation Team, PMB 5 Ma'afu St, Suva, Fiji.

5. Map of the Wai-Hau Conservation and the project site



Source: Wai-Hau Conservation Foundation, 2014