

Social Assessment

Empowering the People of Temotu to Protect their Significant Biodiversity

OceansWatch

Introduction

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 Temotu, 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)
- Temotu Province 2
- Tikopia
- Tinakula
- Utupua
- Vanikoro (including Banie and Tevai)

The population of around 20,000 is quite diverse for the small land area encompassed. The Santa Cruz Islanders are predominantly Melanesian.

Indigenous groups in the project area

This project addresses the Key Biodiversity Areas, chosen by CEPF as priority sites, of Nendo and Vanikoro. Both of these are volcanic island groups. They are covered in forest and have adjacent reefs that support small communities of indigenous customary owners, who are concerned about their natural resources.

Nendo

This Key Biodiversity Area has a total area of 20,172 Ha of which 19,869 ha are land areas. Located at Nendo is 40 km (25 mi.) long and 22 km (14 mi.) wide. Its land area is 505.5 km² (195 sq. mi.). The highest point on the island is 549 m (1,801 ft.) above sea level.

The two small islands of Malo and Nibanga (also called *Tōmotu Neo* and *Tōmotu Noi*), lie about 1 km (0.6 mi.) distant: Malo to the northwest, Nibanga to the southeast.

Lata, located in the north-western part of the island, is its chief town and the provincial capital. The population is 553 inhabitants (2007)

Nendo's population is somewhat over 5000. Most indigenous Nendo people are speakers of Natügu, but there are also about 200 speakers of the related Nanggu language (both members of the Reefs – Santa Cruz languages family). Speakers of other Temotu province languages are also present, for example the other Reefs – Santa Cruz language Äiwoo and the Polynesian outlier language Vaeakau-Taumako.

There are small villages around the coast of Nendo with more on the North coast than the South.

The communities of Mateone, Nepu, Balo, Mateboi, Nepa and Pala lie within the sheltered Graciosa Bay in an area they locally call Bottom Bay. They make up a population of about 200-500 people and the children go to the Mona School.

Community members are customary landowners 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.

In Carlisle Bay the communities are Kala Bay, Lueieve, Temotu Elo, Temotu Laki, Luene. The population is between 200-500 people. Some of these have settled relatively recently, returning to ancestral land from Fenualoa Island in the Reef Island which is now overpopulated. They claim customary ownership of a large area of the highland including the river basins of the Luetombo and Luenei rivers. These highlands rise up to 537M.

Vanikoro

Vanikoro is an island from the Santa Cruz group, located 118 km to the Southeast of the main Santa Cruz group.

The name *Vanikoro* is always used as though it referred to a single island, due to both its geophysical and cultural unity. However, technically it is a group of several nearby islands surrounded by a single belt of coral reef. Only the two major islands are inhabited: the bigger one Banie, and the smaller one Tevai. Other, uninhabited islets in the Vanikoro group include Manieve, Nomianu and Nanunga. The total area of the Vanikoro group is 173 km².

The 1300 inhabitants of Vanikoro consist of two different populations, who tend to live separately. The Melanesian majority, about 800 people, are the descendants of the original population of Vanikoro. A minority of about 500 individuals are of Polynesian descent; for the last few centuries they have established settlements on the southern coast of Banie, even though they still preserve close links with Tikopia, an island lying 200 km eastwards, which they identify as their origin.

The three languages spoken by the Melanesian population of Vanikoro are all Oceanic, of the Temotu subgroup.^[2]

There are small villages all the way round the coast of Banie and this island has been extensively logged.

We will be working with the community on Tevai Island (~22sqKm) which is the second island in size of the Vanikoro group. It is located northeast of the main island and has never been logged. Tevai has currently only one inhabited village, Buma. It rises to 488 m and has numerous rivers 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 geography of the Banie and Tevai islands is the same with steep forest covered volcanic soil rising to 814 and 513 respectively and they are separated by a narrow channel. The people of Buma interact with communities on the mainland for some church events, the high school and the health clinic. Some of the communities on Banie are closer to and have easier access to some parts of Tevai than the islanders, although these villages of Numbuko, Usili and Kiavano have been settled relatively recently we will also consult with them.

Other communities

As we sail from Nendo to Vanikoro and/or on our return we will stop for a short time in Utupua. Utupua and Tinakula have noted more recent sightings of the Santa Cruz Ground Dove than Nendo. We have been invited to assist Nembaio and Tanibili villages on Utupua with management of their marine resources but to date we have not managed to reach this community due to time constraints. This would first be an introductory meeting but if there is interest and we have not located any Santa Cruz ground doves elsewhere we may return. We may also visit Tinakula, but there is no community and no anchorage on this active volcanic island. The Temotu Provincial assembly have expressed their interest in Tinakula becoming a protected area.

Potential project impacts on the Indigenous People

Positive Impacts

Supporting subsistence livelihoods

The people of all three of the areas of Buma, Graciosa Bay and Carlisle Bay traditionally lived by subsistence farming and hunting, depending on their forest and marine resources. They are all concerned about diminishing marine resources and the threat of logging on their forest areas.

With the encroachment of western influence and a cash economy they all need access to a small cash income which can help them pay for school fees, medical costs and fuel for boats and other goods and food items.

The people of Buma have depended for their cash income on the Beche de Mere and Trochus harvest. Since the severe reduction in sea cucumber numbers the government has closed this harvest and so they are now solely dependent on Trochus, a resource that is diminishing. Vanikoro is many miles from any other island and the ship from Honiara which

carries people and goods only comes about once a month and it is not a reliable service, not refrigerated and does not dock anywhere near the village.

By providing the equipment and training for them to produce cold-pressed coconut oil we are providing them with a small income that will take the pressure off their resources. Coconuts are one resource that they have in the community in excess of their needs. The copra price is currently so low that the pick-up boats no longer visit. The women in these communities know how to make this product and so there is only a bit of training 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 is a very positive impact as it engages them in the conservation aspects of the project and ensures the whole community is engaged and supportive.

The people in the communities in Nendo have the advantage of being within an hour's walk from Lata. The growth of Lata as Provincial capital has enabled them to sell foods at the Lata market and gain a small cash income in this way. The people in the Carlisle Bay area are within a safe boat ride from Lata and can also access the Provincial capital to buy and sell some more hardy vegetables.

We have decided to focus our livelihood support project in Buma, however we will certainly endeavour to understand more about the economies of the two Nendo communities.

Education

We will provide school classes in environmental education, including field work, 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. They are very engaged by films and they make up the largest percentage of the population.

Knowledge generation

The technical baseline data and information collected in our surveys will identify the biodiversity in these key biodiversity areas. It 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 cooperative 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

As in the west different people in the communities have different interests some like fishing, some like culture, some gardening and some the forest and hunting. In the past it was more common for the members of the community to go hunting and they have some amazing bows and arrows but it is obvious that these do not get used much these days as they are often broken. These days they engage more in opportunistic hunting. The older people still retain the forest lore and some of the youth are still hungry to learn and engage in the forest. Our Forest Guardian training honours their traditional knowledge and adds to it some qualitative and quantitative methodologies so they can understand the value of biodiversity and how it relates to their ethno-ecology.

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. In the Solomon Islands there is 32% malnutrition (more predominant in these isolated rural communities) and 32% obesity (more predominated in the urban areas) and the associated health problems of each. We mitigate exposing them too much by living away from the communities on the yachts and the boats we use are not superyachts.

As a result of our baseline studies we may conclude that any hunting of the Endangered Vanikoro or Temotu flying-fox is unsustainable. They may come to recognise that in the longer term, prevention or regulation of hunting such species should be enforced. This could negatively affect some households by reducing protein availability.

Identifying customary boundaries can have negative consequences as there may be multiple claims and misunderstandings. In the reef islands where we have encountered misunderstandings of boundary lines, in their customary marine areas, identifying these has been achieved through meetings of Chiefs and a willingness to have agreement. As there are larger areas of bush than coral reef and they are less visited, it may be more or less of an issue. Conflicts may arise if there are seen to be benefits over ownership of the land especially if there was any monetary benefits. We prefer to mitigate against this by providing the non cash positive impacts as listed above.

Prior consultation with indigenous communities

We have had meetings in Buma with the chiefs and traditional land owners of the whole island and many women attended as they were interested in our coconut oil project. We had a Buma local, who works for World Vision in Lata, come with us to translate. Some of the

men have discussed with us their knowledge and relationship with the local flying fox. They have a proposed terrestrial protected area and are interested in implementing a ridge to reef management plan.

On Nendo we have introduced the project with the Provincial assembly and they are very keen for us to work on this island. In Nendo to date we have relied on our Pijin to communicate. When we return for our initial consultations we will ensure we have a local language speaker of Natügu with us to translate.

In Carlisle Bay, which is not far from Dedeu village, where the last Temotu flying fox was collected from, we have set up a VHF communication station. This community has expressed an interest in engaging with us to help manage their resources but we have not had extensive consultations. One of the directors of OceansWatch Solomon Islands, our in country partners, has family connections with one of the larger customary land owners in this community.

In Graciosa Bay we have visited one of the communities on several occasions. We have got to know some of the local villagers through trading over the last four years that we have been visiting this location. We have been invited by one of the chiefs to engage with the community in the management of their resources and we will conduct more extensive stakeholder consultation at the commencement of the project.

We do know that all communities are really interested in protecting their forests and natural resources after hearing about the negative impacts of what has taken place previously in communities that have allowed logging companies to log the forests

Measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits

1. We only visit communities where we have been invited to visit.
2. We require 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 which everyone working with us must read and sign.
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.
7. On our departure from the community we get these village elders to sign off our Social Safeguard Report. This is a form that is used to monitor our conduct in the community and report any grievances they have noted and also advise us on the positive outcomes of our engagement.

All the conservation work that we do will come first from their desire to work with us to help them protect their resources for the future. We will educate them about the impacts of logging and mining on other communities and empower them 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 within two weeks as well as responding in a suitable manner as explained above.