

## **Social Assessment**

**Project Title:** Rapid Biodiversity Assessment of the Guadalcanal Watersheds

**Organization:** The University of the South Pacific: Institute of Applied Sciences

**Application Code:** 64282

As noted in CEPF feedback from the LoI submitted for this proposal, our work will involve extensive interactions with indigenous people with sovereign control over key areas within the Guadalcanal Watersheds Priority Area. In response to CEPF feedback, we have prepared the following Social Assessment in parallel with Proposal No. 64276, *Advancing and Conservation Strategy for the Uplands of Guadalcanal*, to outline our plans to comply with CEPF's Safeguard Policy on Indigenous Peoples.

## **Indigenous Peoples**

The work we are proposing seeks to provide biological information that can inform the co-creation of community-managed protected area design in the Guadalcanal Watersheds CEPF Priority Area, and provide collaboration and capacity development opportunities for Solomon national biologists and resource management practitioners.

As stated in other components of the proposal, this survey work will be carried out in partnership with AMNH-led community engagement and protected areas design work within and adjacent to the Tina River Hydropower Development Project (TRHDP) site in the heart of the Guadalcanal Watersheds Priority Area. As noted in CEPF Proposal No. 64276, TRHDP assessment work provides a solid baseline for patterns of indigenous occupancy and resource use within the project area, and has established free and open prior consent to engaging in the process of developing a protected area in the upper Tina River catchment.

The TRHDP study area consists of over 30 villages and hamlets of mainly indigenous people originating from the central Guadalcanal mountain lands, and

several settler villages made up of people originating from South Guadalcanal/Weather Coast.

The Bahomea villages and their component hamlets are mainly stretched out alongside the Ngalimbiu River and lower-mid sections of the Tina River (two focal drainages for upper catchment survey work), and are often only hundreds of meters apart. In some cases it is hard to distinguish where one hamlet ends and another begins (e.g. Antioch and Valesala). Most hamlets in the study area are connected together by walking tracks and in some cases by dirt roads, which are prone to becoming impassable during wet weather. In recent years, settlements have been established along the main Bahomea access road and logging track that runs up the ridge that marks the left side of the Tina Valley.

Settlements range in size from two-house hamlets with one extended family, up to villages with dozens of houses and over a hundred residents. These larger villages tend to be arranged around a village square/green with a substantial church, and perhaps a meeting-house and other facilities.

The details of various villages with customary linkage to focal drainages are provided in the Baseline Social and Ecological Assessment of the Tina River Hydropower Development Project\*, are described similarly to here in CEPF Proposal No. 64276. Roughan et al (2011) and Entura (2012) both provide a history of the settlement of the Tina River area, which includes a large proportion of landholders with linkage to adjacent drainages in the Guadalcanal Watersheds. While these accounts differ in some respects, and do not cover all potential communities involved in survey work we propose here, they agree on aspects relevant to the proposed work and illustrate the basic composition and history of villages within the Guadalcanal Watersheds more broadly:

- The present-day indigenous inhabitants of Malango Ward and in particular the proposed project area are closely related and have common ancestors.
- The originating communities lay at the base of Mount Popomanaseu, and

were variously named Sasahakama, Belana, Tuhurutolu, and Malukuna.

- Since WW2 and the establishment of Honiara city, there have been successive waves (or chains) of migration down from the villages of the central mountains to the foothills to the north in order that people could be closer to modern services and employment, to be safer from landslides and other natural disasters, and to protect clan lands from intrusion inland by squatters and others.
- In these moves, people from different originating Malango villages stayed together and settled in different areas: the people from Belana and Tuhurutolu settled in the Tina river/Bahomea area, the people from Malukuna settled in the Malango area, and people from Sasahakama settled in the Gold Ridge area and on the Toni River.
- There has been some subsequent movement from the north back up the main ridges of Malango Ward as areas have been opened up by logging roads, and possibly to avoid exposure to ethnic conflict.
- Mixed in with the indigenous Malango-speaking communities are more recent arrivals of people from the Weather Coast who sought refuge locally from natural disasters, poverty, and conflict, and moved to find employment in the plantations and foreign owned resource industries.
- Since the 1980s there has also been unauthorised settlement on Malango lands by migrants from Malaita and elsewhere that were drawn to Honiara for employment.
- The ethnic tensions of the late 1990s and early 2000's displaced the non-indigenous settlers, including many hundreds working in the (now GPPOL) palm plantation, and squatters, resulting and a major reduction in the population of the Malango and West Ghaobata wards.
- With the subsidence of the ethnic tensions, people from the Weather

Coast have returned to the Bahomea area, and squatters are again moving on the government and alienated lands within Malango Ward.

- Today, the mountainous interior of Malango Ward, as with other catchments focal to proposed surveys, is essentially unpopulated apart from periodic expeditions by the traditional owners for hunting and camping, and to reconnect with customary homelands. The indigenous people of the Tina area are therefore aware of the locations of their key originating villages and important cultural sites. Since membership of particular clans is claimed through kinship connection with people from successive historic settlements and originating places, knowledge of such places is crucially important for establishing identity and land and resource rights.
- Original migrants from these upland villages can be still found among the older residents of most villages across the Guadalcanal Watersheds, and these individuals have knowledge of the sequence of migration and village creation within given catchments. A number of stories of such movements were recorded during TRHDP social impact assessment fieldwork, which can guide the underpinnings of social engagement through our survey work.

### **Potential Impacts and Mitigation Strategies**

Proposed project activities might cause potential challenges for communities, particularly relating to the integration of this survey work into social engagement in the protected areas design process under CEPF Proposal No. 64276.

However, in the overall impact measures and assessment process for the TRHDP, which has already carried out rudimentary survey work in the more complex social environments of the lower catchments, the Impact and Measures Matrix presents the development of a forest reserve or protected area in the upper catchment – an ultimate goal of the surveys proposed here – is presented as a key Proposed Mitigation and Compensation action throughout. Nonetheless

there are set of potential impacts of the specific actions of community engagement under this project that may negatively influence local, indigenous communities.

The following table summarizes several primary potential impacts of associating survey work with broader social engagement and protected areas design and links them to exemplary Mitigation strategies. These parallel impacts and mitigation under Proposal No. 64276.

Impact	Proposed Mitigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely insufficient capacity and lack of expertis among Bahomea House of Chiefs, village groups, and other local organizations to deal with project planning, deliberations about land ownership, mitigation measures, and management etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of administrative support for BHOC by project and/or donors, including training for administrative officers, and provision of independent legal advice through linkage with the Public Solicitor’s Office (as AMNH/SICCP has done for the last 8 years in communities across the Solomons).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for dominance over local affairs by the SIG/project and contractors, and disempowerment of local organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with TRHDP established project community consultative council for Bahomea, with representation on a geographical basis, to liaise with developers and contractors.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for marginalization of down-catchment Ghaobata and settler communities in planning and impacts management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement ongoing, particaptory communication in consultation Ghaobata and settler communities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for community breakdown over conflicts relating to resource ownership, compensation, and access to benefits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The churches and existing civil societies should be involved in conflict avoidance and resolution where required. TRDHP and development agencies can assist by providing specialist training to all project participants who act on this role in the Tina area. Landowners Advocacy Legal Support Unit (LALSU) to partner as has been done over the last 8 years across AMNH SICCP programs.</li> </ul>

The proposed project aims to provide biological information that can guide co-creation or reinforcement of self-governing local community bodies that can formulate common rules for managing and utilizing collective natural resources

and distributing resulting benefits from protected areas management. Possible impacts in addition to the types presented above include: 1) altered management regimes limit access to natural resources; or 2) autonomy over resource use decisions may be altered or diluted in the wake of newly acquired biological information in the survey sites.

Additional mitigation will be achieved through a participatory, co-creative approach to balancing rapid surveys (with minimal direct impacts) with their indirect linkage to protected areas management and its implications for local community cultural and economic values or interests. This may be achieved by:

- Providing equitable access to conservation activities that can generate income, including but not limited to the trialing of the financial potential of research as an enterprise and development of a plan for establishing the Tina River Research and Education Center;
- Leverage resource development benefits sharing agreements to compensate opportunity costs of PA management;
- Provide technical support to the design and legal recognition of resource management plans associated with Protected Areas design;

### **Community Participation and Consultation**

As noted in CEPF Proposal No. 64276, all communities with customary ties to the Tina, Toni, and Ngalimbiu Rivers have been fully consulted during the TRHDP Social Assessment Process and we will continue this process to ensure that our activities are clearly understood and consented to.

Should we gain full consent to work in the Itina River catchment, community participation will follow the time-tested models of community engagement and co-creation of community-driven conservation initiatives employed by AMNH, SICCP, and other partners over the past decade throughout the Solomons.

In all areas to be potentially targeted by our survey work that are not within the TRHDP project area, we will rely on participatory investigation and rapid social assessment for each site to generate initial information about relevant community

issues, attitudes toward this survey work, and broader issues surrounding protected areas establishment.

### **Monitoring Plan**

With community baseline surveys completed by TRHDP, our monitoring will ensure that protocols set by World Bank and TRHDP project teams are continued in specific reference to our survey activities both within the TRHDP project area and adjacent drainages within the Guadalcanal Watersheds.

Monitoring and evaluation strategy will include a basic metric of success and impact, formative evaluation that proceeds through the project period, and a summative evaluation process. Formative evaluation questions are designed to allow mid-course corrections through an internal adaptive management process carried out by the project senior staff; thus, the formative evaluation process involves asking hard questions about activity design and implementation.

Evaluation of success will also involve tracking the development of community-based agreements to conserve discrete areas of biodiversity importance and then assessing progress toward conservation objectives and compliance with social safeguards via annual auditing of basic social and biological parameters. Community satisfaction PA development and implementation will also be measured directly through basic surveys and indirectly via assessments of compliance with project social and ecological stipulations (e.g. ban on commercial logging agreements with outside parties).

### **Grievance Mechanism**

Free, Prior and Informed Consent with the local communities is a guiding principle of the TRHDP and will be carried forward in consistent ways in this project both within and adjacent to the current project area. Because we are working within the social and geographic context of a larger World Bank and Solomon Islands government process, for social consistency, grievance mechanisms will follow the stipulated grievance mechanisms in place under World Bank standards via the TRHDP project implementation.

In areas targeted by our survey work that are not within the TRHDP project area, we will rely on participatory investigation and rapid social assessment for each site to generate initial information about relevant community issues, attitudes toward this survey work, and broader issues surrounding protected areas establishment. This work will then guide the establishment of grievance mechanisms in keeping with those established by the World Bank and SIG in TRHDP villages, many of which have ties to adjacent watersheds of interest to our survey plans.