

**Social Assessment**

**07/05/17**

**CEPF Grant 66428**

**Grantee: The Vanuatu Environmental Science Society**

***Project Title: Conservation of the Endemic Flying Foxes of Torba and  
Temotu in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands***

**Project Location: Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands**

## **Grant Summary**

1. Grantee organization: The Vanuatu Environmental Science Society
2. Grant title: Conservation of the Endemic Flying Foxes of Torba and Temotu in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands
3. Grant number: 66428
4. Grant amount (US dollars): \$85,425.00
5. Proposed dates of grant: 01/06/2017 – 31/05/2019
6. Countries or territories where project will be undertaken: Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.
7. Date of preparation of this document: 07/05/17

## **8. Indigenous People affected:**

Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands are remote island nations in the South Pacific. Land is custom-owned and the majority of the rural population lives a subsistence lifestyle using the natural resources from their land. Most people living in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands still have a strong connection to the land and nature. The system of chiefly governance is still strong in many communities, although different in different areas. There is a long tradition of natural resource management using such mechanisms as 'tabu' areas. The level of education is poor in many rural areas with only a limited portion of the population achieving more than basic primary school education. This project will be working in the communities of the remote provinces of Torba and Temotu where infrastructure and access are limited. The fieldwork will take place on the islands of Mota with a population of close to 700 people, Vanuatu Lava with a population of nearly 3,000 in Vanuatu and on the islands Vanikoro with 1300 people and Nendo with over 5000 people living there. The population is divided into small villages mainly on the coastal fringe and there is a hierarchical system of chiefs and sub-chiefs throughout the island. This project will conduct field research in at least 2 different communities on each island.

## **9. Summary of the proposed project:**

In this project the VESS/ SICCP team will work along side the local communities on the islands of Mota and Vanuatu Lava in Vanuatu and Vanikoro and Nendo in the Solomon Islands to increase the knowledge of the endemic flying foxes on these islands. Fieldwork will be conducted by the research team and Species Recovery and Action Plans will be written including measures that the community members can implement to safeguard the future of these bats. Threats to the flying foxes including hunting pressure, will be assessed by conducting questionnaire surveys with the local communities surrounding the area.

## **10. Potential impacts:**

Flying foxes play an important role in the ecosystem and provide ecosystem services to the local human population such as seed dispersal. Giving the communities that live close to the flying foxes the tools to conserve them will increase the likelihood of the foxes remaining in the area performing those ecosystem services.

Local people in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands do hunt and consume flying foxes and the project may recommend a change to harvesting which could impact the communities.

Members of the community may be offended by the questions in the questionnaires or the questions may not be culturally appropriate.

## **11. Participatory preparation:**

During a visit by VESS team members to Mota and Vanuatu Lava in December 2016 the project was briefly discussed with chiefs and community conservation leaders. The leaders verbally expressed their consent for VESS to return to conduct research on the flying foxes. However the first activity in the project is to travel to Mota, Vanau Lava, Vanikoro and Nendo to discuss the project in more depth with the communities. At that time written consent from the community leaders and the provincial government will be obtained for the project. The research team will have a discussion with the local authorities and community leaders to establish if there are any animals or plants that it is tabu to capture or to take specimens from. They will also establish where there are tabu areas in the vicinity of the fieldwork sites and whether the research methodology needs to be modify to take into account these tabus. VESS will ensure that the each member of the team is aware, understands and respects the tabus.

## **12. Mitigation strategies:**

In regards to the hunting of flying foxes for food, the endemic and endangered flying foxes are not the only flying foxes to inhabit the areas and any harvest plans would not affect the hunting of these other ubiquitous flying foxes that have been listed on the IUCN Red List as least concern. Therefore any harvest plan or restrictions on the hunting of the endemic endangered species is unlikely to result in reduced food availability for the local population. However this assumption will be checked during the project and if it is found that the food security of people will be affected, the recommendations in the species recovery plans will include measures to replace the protein source derived from these threatened species with an alternative.

The questionnaires for the threat assessment will be adapted from questionnaires previously used for assessing threats to bats in the Solomon Islands. They will be approved by the UQ human ethics committee as well as leaders of target

communities (male and female), such as the Vanuatu Cultural Centre to confirm that only culturally appropriate questions are included in the questionnaires. During meetings at the beginning and end of the fieldwork the communities and local authorities will be invited to ask questions or raise any concerns they have about the project.

### **13. Monitoring and evaluation:**

The safeguards will be reviewed at least every six months throughout the project to ensure the mitigation measures are sufficient to guard against adverse effects and to identify any unforeseen detrimental impacts of the project. This review will be reported to the CEPF every six months.

### **14. Grievance mechanism:**

Indigenous Peoples and other local communities and stakeholders may raise a grievance at any time with VESS, SIPPC or CEPF about any issues relating to the project. During meetings with the communities at the beginning of the project community members will be informed about this possibility and contact information will be provided for the VESS and SICCP managers and the CEPF secretariat. VESS and SICCP will respond to grievances in writing within 15 working days of receipt. Claims will be filed, included in project monitoring, and a copy of any grievance will be provided to the CEPF Secretariat.

### **15. Budget:**

The cost of travel to the remote islands of Mota, Vanua Lava, Nendo and Vanikoro at the beginning of the project to obtain consent is US \$2,350.