

CEPF Final Project Completion Report – EMI Small Grants

Please complete all fields and respond to all questions below.

Background Information

Organization Legal Name	<i>Eco-Lifelihood Development Associates</i>
Project Title	Community-based management of threats to wetland biodiversity at Lake Letas, Gaua Island, Vanuatu
Date of Report	30 June 2017
Report Author	Rolenas Tavue Baereleo, Josephine Rambay & Roger Jaensch.
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CEPF Region	East Melanesian Islands
Strategic Direction	1.3 Support local communities to design and implement locally relevant conservation actions that respond to major threats at priority sites.
Grant Amount	USD 20,000
Project Dates	1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017.

1. Implementation Partners for this Project
(please list each partner and explain how they were involved in the project)

Roger Jaensch of **Jaensch Ornithology & Conservation** participated in the project as an external advisor drawing on his considerable professional experience in wetland conservation and the Ramsar Convention, including in the Pacific Islands region. He helped EDA through the project initiation phase, made two (project-funded) visits to Vanuatu for the project including to the project site on Gaua Island (meeting key local stakeholders), supported the EDA project team on reporting and project management tasks, met with senior officials in the Vanuatu Government to discuss the process for Ramsar accession, and helped draft Ramsar-related documents.

Conservation Impacts

2. Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of CEPF's Ecosystem Profile for the East Melanesian Islands. For example, you may refer to the Strategic Directions that your project has contributed to.

Lake Letas on Gaua Island, Vanuatu, the largest freshwater lake in the Pacific Islands region outside of PNG, has a forest/shrub-covered catchment and abundant eels and prawns harvested by a small population of local people. However, as has occurred elsewhere in the region, invasive Tilapia fish may become established—deliberately or accidentally—to the detriment of this biodiversity and food resource. The CEPF project contributed to Strategic Direction 1.3 by raising awareness in the local community of the Tilapia threat, which led to their decision to ban import of Tilapia to Gaua Island; this

was reiterated by installation of a series of warning signs, created by the project, and information sessions delivered to local schools. Furthermore, through project-led discussions the local community decided to nominate the Lake as a Ramsar Site; the designation is in process, though subject to Vanuatu eventually acceding to the Ramsar Convention.

3. Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project against the expected results detailed in your approved proposal.

Expected result 1: Engagement with the land and resource owners of Lake Letas on their land, to build on their well-known desire for protection of the lake and its resources

- Four visits were made by the EDA team to Gaua Island, for meetings held between chiefs and other landowners.

Expected result 2: Raised awareness of the international values of the Lake and its biodiversity, potential for enhanced eco-tourism, and of potential major threats to those values and to subsistence harvests.

- Presentations were made on the national and international importance of the Lake and its resources, with a focus on eels and their ecological requirements. Threats to this biodiversity from possible introductions of exotic species such as Tilapia (widely established in Asia-Pacific) and over-harvesting were explained
- As well as to chiefs and landowners, presentations on this same topic were made to four schools close to the lake.
- Four custom-designed signs reiterating the threat of Tilapia were produced and transported to Gaua where they were installed at prominent sites for local people and visitors alike.

Expected result 3: Nomination of Lake Letas as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (subject to and central to the process of Vanuatu acceding to the Convention).

- The applicable landowners and chiefs agreed to nominate the Lake as a Ramsar Site and they and the Torba Provincial Government provided supporting letters.
- EDA prepared the nomination document and map, based on the already-agreed boundary of the Lake Letas Community Conservation Area (under national legislation) and a briefing paper for the Council of Ministers (Vanuatu cabinet).
- The process of accession to Ramsar is continuing in the Government system with impacted agencies providing their input to the briefing paper.

4. Please describe any successes and/or challenges faced towards achieving the expected short-term and long-term impacts of the project work.

Successes:

- Due to good organization by the EDA project team and excellent cooperation from local landholders and communities, schools and provincial and national officials, all planned activities on Gaua were concluded successfully and well within the project timeframe.

- In regard to the Ramsar Site nomination and accession to Ramsar by the Government of Vanuatu, the EDA team received good cooperation with officials and technical advisors throughout. This ensured the progress that was made and the final steps are largely out of public hands.

Challenges:

- Gaua Island is small and remote and has infrequent access via a regional airline, such that planning of visits requires some flexibility, e.g. if flights are cancelled due to bad weather or operational requirements.
- Communication with people living on Gaua is only partly possible by phone and to a few by email. This makes planning of visits to Gaua and attendance of key people at meetings challenging to achieve.
- (Also see item 6.) The major longer-term challenge was non-completion of the process of accession to the Ramsar Convention by the Government of Vanuatu, within the relatively short timeframe of the project. While this was not an expected certain outcome from the project, nevertheless it would have been a considerable advantage as landholders could have seen their desire for Ramsar Site status for the lake achieved sooner.
- The unexpected resignation of a key senior person and other changes in the hierarchy of the environment agency in Vanuatu during the project, was a temporary setback as the briefing process had to be completely revisited.

5. Were there any unexpected impacts of your project (positive or negative)?

Good progress with the Ramsar site nomination due to the CEPF project was among the several factors influencing the medium-term plan of the Vanuatu Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation to employ (budget permitting) a Wetlands Officer in 2018. This officer would support follow-up activities related to Ramsar and Ramsar Sites in Vanuatu.

In 2017, the **Ramsar Convention Bureau** in collaboration with IUCN established a Ramsar Regional Officer (Ms Solongo Khurelbaatar) for Oceania, based in Fiji, and her (Ramsar-funded) visit to Vanuatu and subsequent support was beneficial to progressing Ramsar-related aspects of the project—including follow-up with Vanuatu and Ramsar officials at regional meetings. This assistance was not in place at the time of the project application to CEPF but has been a bonus to the project.

6. If you did not complete any project components or activities, how did this affect the overall impact of the project?

It was clearly stated in the project application (Letter of Inquiry) as accepted by CEPF, that there could be no guarantee that accession by Vanuatu to the Ramsar Convention—a prerequisite to designation of a Ramsar Site in Vanuatu—would occur within the project timeframe. Such decisions are a sovereign matter for the Government of Vanuatu. At date of project completion, the necessary agreement to nominate Lake Letas as Vanuatu's first Ramsar Site, letters from landowners and others, the nomination document and map, and briefing material for the Council of Ministers (cabinet), had all been finished or provided through the CEPF project. This represents a

huge step forward compared to limited progress with accession over the previous 25 years or so during which Vanuatu has considered accession to Ramsar. However, the accession process is now in the hands of the Finance and Foreign Affairs agencies before moving to consideration by the Council of Ministers. It is possible that the landowners of Lake Letas may be anxious for their lake to be formally designated as a Ramsar Site but also likely they will be very familiar with the normal pace of government processes. EDA considers the overall impact of the project to have been highly positive and in line with the project intent.

Products/Deliverables

7. Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

Four durable signs, each promoting the importance of not introducing exotic Tilapia fish to Lake Letas (or Gaua Island as a whole), were produced using CEPF project funds and were installed on Gaua at key sites where local people and visitors would notice them.



One of the signs about to be erected on Gaua.

Documents that were produced or obtained during the CEPF project included:

- The Ramsar Information Sheet (nomination document) for Lake Letas
- The map of the proposed Ramsar site boundary
- Letters of endorsement from landowners and provincial government
- Draft briefing paper for the Council of Ministers.

As at present these are internal documents for the Government of Vanuatu, not yet in the public domain, it will be advisable for IUCN/CEPF to directly request copies of these from the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation.

CEPF Global Monitoring Data

Respond to the questions and complete the tables below. **If a question is not relevant to your project, please make an entry of 0 (zero) or n/a (not applicable).**

8. Did your organization complete the **CEPF Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT)** at the beginning and end of your project? **No.**

(Please submit the final CSTT document to IUCN Oceania if you have not already done so).

	Date	Composite Score
Baseline CSTT	n/a.	
Final CSTT	n/a.	

9. Please list any **Vulnerable, Endangered, or Critically Endangered species** conserved due to your project.

Once the Ramsar Site is officially designated at Lake Letas—which is awaiting accession to the Ramsar Convention by Vanuatu—the site will include habitat (the outflow river) for two species of eels, freshwater fish that are endemic to Vanuatu, two Gobies, and also a preliminary evidence of Australian Grebe which is endemic to Vanuatu and New Caledonia. There are also bird species that are endemic to Vanuatu happen to appear on the surrounding.

10. Hectares Under Improved Management

Project Results	Hectares*	Comments
11. Did your project strengthen the management of an existing protected area?	n/a.	n/a.
12. Did your project create a new protected area or expand an existing protected area?	8523	The project contributed indirectly to development of the Lake Letas Community Conservation Area and directly to development of the proposed Lake Letas Ramsar Site—which shares the same boundary. Final designation as a Ramsar Site is dependent on sovereign decisions of the Government of Vanuatu and its consideration of this matter is in progress.
13. Did your project strengthen the	18,725	Gaua Island (VUT7).

management of a key biodiversity area named in the CEPF Ecosystem Profile (hectares may be the same as questions above)		
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** Include total hectares from project inception to completion*

14. In relation to the questions above on protected areas, did your project complete a Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), or facilitate the completion of a METT by protected area authorities? **No.** If so, complete the table below. *(Note that there will often be more than one METT for an individual protected area.)*

Protected area	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score
n/a.						

15. Direct Beneficiaries: Training and Education

<i>Did your project provide training or education for . . .</i>	Male	Female	Total	Brief Description
16. Adults for community leadership or resource management positions	0	0	0	n/a.
17. Adults for livelihoods or increased income	0	0	0	n/a.
18. School-aged children			140	See below.
19. Other: see below			50	See below.

18, 19. The project provided training and education on natural resource management for chiefs, villagers, members of the management committee of the Community Conservation Area, and school-aged children, in relation to values as a Ramsar Site and to exclusion of exotic Tilapia fish from the site and island as well as strategies of eco-Tourism. At the end of each training there are copies of brochures that contain the dangers of the exotic Tilapia were handed out to each schools.

20. Please list the name and approximate population size of any “community” that benefited from the project.

Community name	Population size	Surrounding district	Surrounding province	Country
Gaua Island	1500 people	Gaua Island	Torba	Vanuatu

If you marked "Other", please provide details on the nature of the Community Characteristic and Socioeconomic Benefit

Socioeconomic benefits of the project have come into effect but may not have been fully realized during the project term:

The communities of Gaua Island will benefit from the project because they have made a strong commitment to exclude exotic Tilapia fish from the island and have multiple warning signs in place as a reminder to themselves and as a warning to visitors. This outcome will sustain food security in terms of Gaua's subsistence harvest of large eels and prawns from Lake Letas, which could decline or end if Tilapia were introduced to the lake.

The communities will also benefit in terms of increased income from existing and potential future eco-tourism ventures, due the protection of Lake Letas as a Community Conservation Area and hopefully in time also as a Ramsar Site. The higher profile of the site due to these designations will likely attract more visitors and Vanuatu government and NGOs are likely to invest more support to eco-tourism development.

Lessons Learned

Please describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider any lessons that would inform future projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.

22. Project Design Process (*aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)

No comments.

23. Project Implementation (*aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)

The project originally was to support three visits to Gaua by the EDA team. Careful control of expenditure enabled four visits to be made, which was valuable to help reinforce the project delivery on-site and to keep local stakeholders informed.

Allocation of a portion of the project budget (wages) to engage a part-time finance officer, without detracting from implementation of project work by EDA, was considered important to ensuring timely financial reporting to IUCN and addressing of questions raised. Otherwise expecting capable but busy EDA personnel to include this in their workloads would have been less effective.

Having an external advisor for the project was valuable to help EDA, as a small-scale ni-Vanuatu NGO, navigate wordy legal documents (the contract agreement) and liaise with other external supporters such as the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

24. Describe any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community

The wide scope and complexity of requirements expected of a ni-Vanuatu NGO under the CEPF project administration system was very challenging at times. As a locally-based organization (IUCN in Suva) was in place to act as a go-between, surely the expectations of the grantee could have been simplified and reduced.

Sustainability/Replication

25. Please summarize the success or challenges in ensuring that the project will be sustained or replicated in the future.

Awareness of the threat of Tilapia to Lake Letas on biodiversity and indigenous food resources from the lake, is now well established on Gaua as a result of the project. Four permanent signs will sustain this awareness. Eventual designation of the Ramsar Site should reinforce awareness. This knowledge is also likely to be reiterated at the schools visited during the project, by teachers of subsequent classes of children. Furthermore, the eventual Ramsar Site designation should help reinforce the rules for sustainable resource use and ecotourism, as established separately by the Management Committee of the Lake Letes Community Conservation Area.

26. Please summarize any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability of your project work.

No comments.

Safeguards

Please provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies for this project.

This may be attached in the form of an updated Social Safeguards document.

The project focused directly on providing environmental outcomes and protecting food security through exclusion of invasive species.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

27. Please use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF.

No further comments.

Additional Funding

Please provide:

28. details of any additional funding that supported this project

29. details of any further funding secured for this project, your organization, or the region, as a result of CEPF's investment in this project

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
JOC	A	USD 7000	See below.
JOC	A	USD 3000	See below.

* Categorize the type of funding as:

- A *Project Co-Financing (other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)*
- B *Grantee and Partner Leveraging (other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project)*
- C *Regional/Portfolio Leveraging (other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project)*

USD 7,000. This amount comprises professional time contributed (unfunded) and business expenses incurred by the applicant, JOC, in a visit to Vanuatu 25-30 May 2015 to discuss the project with Vanuatu Government agencies and other stakeholders. During the consultations, drafts of the present application and letter of inquiry were developed. Further refinement and liaison subsequently occurred remotely, also at the applicant's expense.

USD 3,000 is the value of the discount to the applicant JOC's professional fee rate applied to this new project, for the project duration.

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our website, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

Please include your full contact details below if different from what has already been provided:

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