

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
ENABLING ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

Country: Solomon Islands

Project Title: National Biodiversity Strategy, Action Plan and First National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity

GEF Focal Area: Biodiversity

Country Eligibility: Ratified the CBD on 3 October 1995

Proposed GEF Financing: US\$ 123,000

Government Contribution: In kind and personnel

GEF Implementing Agency: UNEP

National Executing Agency: Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation

GEF Operational Focal Point: Director of Environment & Conservation, Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation

CBD Focal Point: Director of Environment & Conservation, Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation

Estimated Starting Date: September 1996

Project Duration: 9 months

I. Background/Context:

Solomon Islands is a group of islands in the south-west Pacific (north-west of Australia, west of Papua New Guinea) consisting of a double chain of 6 major islands with about 992 smaller islands, atolls and reefs. This archipelago is located within Melanesia, which is the area including Papua New Guinea and the Phillipines. Melanesia represents one of the world's major centres of biological diversity.

This biodiversity is to a large extent still unknown. For example, of the Solomon Islands' flora, only the trees have been studied in detail, and more recently the ferns and orchids. It is however known that there is a high level of endemism within the plants, more so than in the Galapagos Islands. The birds are the most studied animal group, with over 200 species

having been identified. There are 52 known species of mammals, 73 reptiles, 17 species of native frogs and 2000 fish species. There is also a high level of endemism in the fauna with a large number of species found only in the Solomon Islands.

One of the major issues relating to conservation in Solomon Islands is customary ownership of land. Land ownership is constitutionally limited to indigenous Solomon Islanders. Approximately 87 % of land is owned by customary tribal groups with the balance 13 % owned by the Government. Due to this extra-ordinary situation, where so little of the land is owned by the Government, **the success of any proposal for conservation of an area depends on the support and agreement of the customary owners rather than the Government.**

Ownership of land gives social roots, status and power. Land represents at once a spiritual relationship and one which denotes group and individual identity in Solomon islands. Consequently, it is unlikely that communities would be keen to alienate their customary landholdings. **It is therefore most likely that the customary landowners will remain owners of any land designated for conservation.**

84 % of Solomon Islands is classified as forest. The most widespread human influences on the forest are subsistence agriculture, commercial logging and commercial plantations including coconut and palm oil. Comparison of aerial photography prior to 1972 and recent satellite imagery shows a doubling of the area of land under shifting cultivation over the last 20 years. Commercial agricultural products include copra, cocoa, palm oil & kernels, and some livestock including cattle, pigs and poultry.

The rapidly expanding population (presently estimated at 330,000 with a growth rate of 3.5%) and the increasing transition from a subsistence to a mixed economy, has increased pressures on the natural resources of the Solomon Islands, in turn increasing the risks of rapid extinctions of unique plant and animal species.

There have been several efforts to conserve this unique biodiversity. A biodiversity country study was prepared in 1992 with assistance from Australia and UNEP and a national environmental management strategy (NEMS) study was also undertaken with assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), IUCN and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). UNDP/GEF and Australia have funded also the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP) which included Solomon Islands. These various activities have allowed for the accumulation of information which will serve as important input into the NBSAP.

II Project Objectives and Short Description:

The principal objective of the project is to assist the Government of Solomon Islands (GoSI) formulate the strategies & actions for the protection of its biodiversity in accordance with Article 6 of the CBD as translated in Decision 11/7 of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP2). The NBSAP will provide an opportunity to put Solomon Islands' existing policy instruments and measures aimed at sustainable management of

biological resources in a more comprehensive and committing framework with full community involvement, and to identify remaining gaps. The preparation of the first national report to the CBD will enable Solomon Islands to meet the obligations under Article 26 of the Convention as stipulated in Decision II/17 adopted by COP2.

Due to the land ownership system prevailing in the country, it is obvious that the success of any conservation measures will depend on the support and agreement of the customary land owners. To this effect, consultations will be held with all customary tribal groups to explain the objectives of the NBSAP, discuss and consult with them on the major issues and seek their input and consensus on options to meet the objectives of the CBD. Some of the past and ongoing biodiversity related programmes in the country have identified methodologies to gain support for conservation from customary tribal groups and these methodologies will be useful in conducting the above consultations. These consultations will then be followed by a national workshop at which representatives of all stakeholders will be invited in order to discuss and validate the content of the NBSAP. The completed NBSAP will then be disseminated widely and a national report to the COP will be prepared within the time frame stipulated in Decision II/17 of COP2.

III Operational Criteria:

i) Coverage without duplication:

The NBSAP will make use of existing capacity and information. The data and information available from the Biodiversity Country Study (Australia/UNEP), the National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS) study (ADB, IUCN, SPREP) and the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme - SPBCP (UNDP/GEF/Australia) will be a valuable asset. The NEMS study included a wide range of background papers including a comprehensive "State of the Environment" report, all of which would be useful in the preparation of the NBSAP.

ii) Appropriate overall sequencing of activities:

The project will be conducted over a period of 9 months as reflected in the schedule shown in the following table.

	Activity/Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Formation of Inter-agency Task Force & Planning Team	x								
2	Training of Planning Team & Orientation of Consultants in BD Analysis & Planning and on preparation of the national report to the COP	x								
3	Workshops with Customary Tribal Groups and other Stakeholders on Identification & Analysis of options		x	x	x					
4	Drafting of NBSAP				x	x	x			
5	National Workshop to discuss the draft NBSAP							x		
6	Finalization of NBSAP								x	
7	Printing & Publication of NBSAP								x	x
8	Preparation of First National Report to COP									x

iii) Best practice:

The methodology for the implementation of this project will be based on "Guidelines for Biodiversity Planning" (WRI/UNEP/IUCN 1995). The lessons learned from UNEP projects in Solomon Islands and other countries on biodiversity country studies and biodiversity data management and networking will be fully utilized. Data from projects executed by UNDP, IUCN and others in the Solomon Islands will also be made use of. The First National Report to the CBD will be based on the information contained in the country study, the NEMS study and the progress achieved in preparing

the NBSAP. This report will be done in the time frame stipulated in Decision II/17 of COP 2.

iv) Cost effectiveness and consistency of approach and procedures:

The cost effectiveness of this proposal is based on maximum reliance on existing information and capacity developed in the course of the Australia/UNEP biodiversity country study project (Australia funded the project while UNEP provided technical assistance), the National Environment Management Strategy (NEMS) study (ADB, IUCN, SPREP) and the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (UNDP/GEF/Australia). Under these projects, Solomon Islands has already completed the compilation of reports covering: a survey of habitat diversity in Solomon Islands, state-of-the-art reports on the main groups of biota in Solomon Islands, a number of studies on the socio-economic aspects of biodiversity, feasibility studies on institutions that are required to support and maintain implementation of conservation programmes, the methodologies to gain support for conservation from customary tribal groups who own 87% of the land, etc.

IV Institutional Framework:

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Forests, Environment & Conservation (MFEC) will coordinate the execution of this project. This body is responsible for setting national environmental policies and their implementation, including conservation of heritage. In this, it is supported by several groups of national non-governmental societies with the participation of the communities, in addition to all agencies concerned with environmental affairs in the country. A Task Force comprised of representatives of all communities and tribal groups, relevant government ministries, NGOs and the private sector will have the overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this project. It will designate a core group (Planning Team) drawing upon appropriate expertise to lead the planning and execution of the project.

V Project Financing**Solomon Islands NBSAP Project Budget (US\$)**

Activity	Product	Process	Total
1. Assessment of Existing Information	0	0	0
2. Identification and analysis of options - Training for Planning Team	10,000	59,000	69,000

TABLE A: Dimensions of Enabling Activities (Standard Activity Matrix), Solomon Islands NBSAP

Enabling Activity	Output	Capacity Building		Public Participation *1	Comments - See footnote
		Institutional Strengthening	Training		
Stocktaking of existing information	Australia/UNEP; UNDP/GEF/Australia (SPBCP); ADB,IUCN,SPREP (NEMS)				*2
Identification and Analysis of Options to meet the objectives of the CBD - strategies for conservation - strategies for sustainable use - strategies for benefit sharing	NEMS/SPBCP, x NEMS, x NEMS, x		X X X	X X X	*3
Planning and Preparation of NBSAP - national strategy - national action plan	X X		X X	X X	*4
Preparation of the First National Report - First National Report	X		X	X	*4

x : to be achieved under this project

- *1 Landownership in Solomon Islands is constitutionally limited to indigenous Solomon Islanders. Almost 87 % of the land is owned by customary tribal groups with only the balance 13 % owned by the Government. As so little land is owned by the government, the success of any proposal for conservation of an area is most likely to involve at least some customary landholdings and will therefore depend on the support and agreement of the customary landowners.
- *2 Solomon Islands has already carried out a Biodiversity Country Study with funding from Australia and technical assistance from UNEP. It has also carried out several studies in biodiversity under the National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS) study supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Data on biodiversity has also been collected under the UNDP/GEF/Australia supported South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP).
- *3 Some of the activities cited above have attempted a preliminary identification and analysis of strategies for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Solomon Islands. All this work will be fully integrated into the NBSAP.
- *4 A training session for the Project Planning Team in biodiversity analysis and planning as well as in the use of the WRI/UNEP/IUCN Guidelines and in the preparation of the national report to the COP will be conducted at the onset of the project.