

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Position Title	Social and Environment Safeguards Specialist
Type of Contract	Individual Contractor
Location	Honiara, Solomon Islands with travel to provinces (project sites)
Post Level	International Consultant
Expected Start Date	1 October 2026
Duration of Initial Contract:	60 days spread across 5 months

1. Context and Background

The biological diversity of Solomon Islands is critical to the people of Solomon Islands in that it has shaped human wellbeing for centuries. The predominantly subsistence lifestyle that characterizes the Solomon Islands economy is underpinned by the country's heavy reliance on its biological diversity. The importance of biodiversity as the basis for people's livelihood and wellbeing is therefore well understood and it is recognized that without biodiversity the country also loses its aesthetic, spiritual and educational values and significance, which are integral to our wellbeing and traditional way of life. Thus, the maintenance of watersheds, marine environment and water quality, soil retention and erosion control, provision of critical habitat for fauna, climate regulation, nutrient cycling and the pollination of plants are just a few of the essential ecological services that are essential to the islanders. Nonetheless, there is growing realization that the country's biodiversity is also under increasing pressure from multiple sources of threats, for example, from habitat loss, land degradation, overexploitation, invasive alien species and climate change. These pressures can be devastating for the health of the country's biodiversity and, therefore, its livelihood and wellbeing. The Solomon Islands Government together with UNDP and GEF has launched "*Safeguarding Solomon Islands endemic and globally threatened biodiversity and ecosystem services from key threats, particularly invasive alien species and unsustainable land use practices (SAFE project)*" in 2023. The objective of the SAFE project is to help the country safeguard its indigenous species and ecosystems from invasive species, halt land degradation and restore degraded areas, control unsustainable resource use and climate-induced risks through a holistic and integrated landscape-seascape management approach through effective government enabling and capacity, community participation and development of resilient blue/green livelihoods.

2. Project Description and Components

The SAFE project recognizes that the land and seascapes of the Solomon Islands underpin the lives and livelihoods of a large number of local communities and that implementation of a coherent and integrated strategy to promote prevention and management of invasive alien species, land and marine degradation and unsustainable use of its natural resources is an integral part of the solution. The project aims to ensure that Solomon Islands indigenous species and ecosystems are at reduced risk from invasive alien species, land degradation and unsustainable resource use because of effective government enabling and capacity, community participation and resilient blue/green livelihoods. This is to be achieved through four interrelated and mutually complementary Components that are focused on addressing barriers. The four Components of the project are:

Component 1: Enabling framework for safeguarding biodiversity, combating land degradation and securing a nature-based economy

Component 2: Comprehensive risk management approach to address IAS threats to biodiversity and land degradation

Component 3: Community-based integrated ecosystem management and threat reduction at land/seascape scale

Component 4: Knowledge management, awareness, M&E and gender mainstreaming

3. Objectives of the Consultancy

The consultancy will address the risk areas to ensure that the individual site-specific interventions implemented under the identified outputs seek to avoid minimise or mitigate risk through considerate design and practical management measures. The consultancy will also ensure compliance with national environmental legislation, as well as with UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES) in the context of the Project.

Specific Objectives:

- Develop Project procedures for Free, Prior and Informed Consent which can be implemented by the PMU for relevant identified on-the-ground interventions. FPIC protocols will align with any nationally developed guidelines and the UNDP SES.
- With reference to the requirements of the ESMF, develop up to four site specific and appropriately scoped **Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA)** and respective **Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMP)** to ensure on the ground interventions at the target sites do not lead to unintended consequences and are designed and implemented in an environmentally and socially responsive manner.
- Develop a **Livelihood Action Plan (LAP)** to determine management measures or actions as well as monitoring indicators. The LAP will follow the outline provided in Annex 4 of the ESMF.
- With reference to the requirements of the Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF), develop up to four site specific **Indigenous Peoples Plans (IPPs)** to assist in the mitigation and management of potential impacts to local indigenous peoples
- The consultancy aims to analyze, evaluate and propose measures to prevent, control, mitigate, restore and/or compensate the potential environmental and social impacts of the project so that the project complies with UNDP's SES and national legislation.
- Building on the Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework, develop a site-specific Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Strategy identifying affected and interested stakeholders, vulnerable or underrepresented groups, appropriate engagement methods, responsibilities, schedules, disclosure arrangements and feedback mechanisms. Provide for meaningful and culturally appropriate engagement throughout assessment, implementation and monitoring, including separate consultations where needed to enable participation by groups whose views may otherwise be underrepresented. Document how stakeholder feedback informs project design and mitigation measures, and identify any necessary updates to the existing Stakeholder Engagement Plan.
- Support the PMU in implementing the Consultation Strategy.

4. Principal Activities

Scoped ESIA

As guided by the ESMF, the scoped Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) will be conducted for activities under Component 3 at each of the four demonstration sites:

- Reef Islands and Utupua – Temotu Province (48,244 ha, including 20,400 ha of PAs)
- Western Solomons (Shortland Islands, Roviana and Marovo Lagoons – Western Province) (89,134 ha, including 30,090 ha of PAs)

- San George and South Choiseul (75,713 ha, including 10,074 ha of PAs)
- Lau and North Malaita (39,970 ha including 6,200 of PAs)

The site-specific targeted ESIA shall include an evaluation of potential social and environmental risks as identified in the SESP, as well as any other risks that might be identified at the beginning of Project execution. To achieve this, the participating communities and stakeholders will be consulted, with strict adherence to the UNDP SES. Based on the risks identified in the SESP, the scoped/targeted ESIA shall assess potential issues related to:

- Livelihoods assessment: Financial incentive mechanisms (Outputs 3.3 and 3.4) such as small grants or the establishment of savings clubs can engage community support and assist the more marginalized groups. However, they also have the potential to cause conflict if they are mismanaged or change the current economic systems. This assessment will document the current socio-economic conditions within the demonstration land/seascapes, use of natural resources and any incentive mechanisms, based on thorough consultations with local communities. This assessment will need to consider the needs and preferences of the community and ensure that they fully understand the costs and benefits of potential project interventions.
- Assess labour and working conditions associated with project implementation, including workers engaged by implementing NGOs, contractors and community-based activities. Develop proportionate, site-specific labour management provisions addressing clear terms of employment, fair treatment and non-discrimination, worker rights, prevention of child and forced labour, and occupational health and safety. Specify requirements for risk assessments, induction and safety training, appropriate protective equipment, emergency preparedness and incident reporting. Establish an accessible and confidential worker grievance mechanism, with protection against retaliation, and define responsibilities for supervising and monitoring labour and safety requirements.
- Impacts on biodiversity values (valuable natural habitats, globally threatened or endemic species). The assessment for each demonstration site should include scoping, baseline studies, and impact analysis to examine the biodiversity attributes and ecosystem services likely to be affected by the project. The demonstration sites include legally protected areas (marine and terrestrial) which qualify as *critical habitats*.
- Screen proposed interventions and their areas of influence for potential effects on critical habitat and sensitive ecosystems, including protected areas, mangroves, coral reefs and habitats supporting threatened or endemic species. Where screening identifies potential effects on critical habitat, undertake a Critical Habitat Assessment consistent with the applicable UNDP SES requirements, using suitable biodiversity expertise and available ecological evidence supplemented by field assessment where necessary. Identify biodiversity values, direct and indirect impacts, alternatives and avoidance measures, and determine whether the proposed activities can meet the applicable requirements. Incorporate necessary measures into the ESMP and, where required, a Biodiversity Action Plan, clearly identifying activities that must be redesigned or must not proceed.
- Climate risks: confirm, at each demonstration site, the climate risk assessment conducted during the pre-screening phase.
- Risks to cultural heritage: During initial consultation with local stakeholders, a preliminary assessment of risks to cultural heritage was undertaken. The primary project component of concern for cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) risks is Component 3. Further assessment/identification of risk areas and vulnerable cultural heritage in each demonstration land/seascape will need to be undertaken during project implementation.
- Identification and assessment of potential risks relating to UXO at each of the proposed demonstration sites.

- Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups: Assess whether project activities may disproportionately affect women, youth, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, remote communities and female-headed households. Examine barriers to participation, access to project benefits, customary land and resource rights, and potential livelihood restrictions. Use appropriately disaggregated information and targeted consultations to identify differentiated impacts and incorporate inclusive mitigation and benefit-sharing measures into the ESMPs and relevant social management plans.
- Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH): Screen for SEAH risks associated with project activities, including interactions between project personnel, contractors, workers and communities, recruitment practices, and the allocation of livelihood support or other benefits. Recommend proportionate prevention and mitigation measures, including codes of conduct, awareness and training, safe and confidential reporting channels, and survivor-centred referral and response arrangements. Identify available support services and establish procedures that protect confidentiality, informed consent and individuals against retaliation. SEAH complaints shall be handled through designated confidential arrangements rather than ordinary community grievance mediation.
- Cumulative impacts: Assess how project activities may interact with existing or reasonably foreseeable logging, agricultural expansion, fishing pressures, infrastructure development and climate change within the relevant landscapes and seascapes. Define a proportionate geographical and temporal scope, identify combined effects on biodiversity, ecosystem services and community livelihoods, and recommend mitigation, coordination and monitoring measures within the project's responsibilities and influence.

Management of Impacts and Risks

Each scoped ESIA will require the development of ESMP, which will detail the avoidance and mitigation measures and actions required to address the project's potential and social environmental risks and impacts at the intervention site level. These ESMPs will be the outcome of the scoped ESIA's and will have the objective to be usable, helpful plans which can be implemented by the PMU to ensure effective management of risks and impacts at the activity level.

The ESMPs will include as a minimum:

- Practical and straightforward actions to implement mitigation measures for each identified risk and impact, including occupational risks and safety risks for communities.
- monitoring and reporting plans for communities and PMU.
- a summary of identified adverse social and environmental impacts and risks that could not be avoided or remain after impact minimization efforts.
- Livelihoods Action Plan (LAP – see indicative template in Annex 11.5 of the ESMF) as needed based on the outcomes of the scoped ESIA's.
- stakeholder engagement, and plans for stakeholder engagement during implementation of management measures.
- capacity development and training arrangements for the PMU and for communities, where appropriate.
- roles and responsibilities within the PMU and IA.
- implementation schedules, cost estimates and funding sources.

Impact management will adhere to the “mitigation hierarchy” model. Where possible, adverse impacts will be “designed out” – i.e., the design of project activities will be amended or adjusted to avoid the identified impacts. Where this is not possible, measures will be developed, in conjunction with stakeholders, to reduce, minimize, mitigate, or compensate for those impacts.

An indicative template is appended to the Project ESMF, outlining the required ESMP sections.

Grievance Redress Mechanism

Assess the existing project and community grievance mechanisms, including the accessibility of complaint channels for women, youth, persons with disabilities, elderly persons and remote communities.

Recommend practical improvements covering designated focal points, culturally appropriate and accessible reporting channels, acknowledgement and resolution timeframes, escalation procedures, confidentiality, protection against retaliation, and communication of outcomes to complainants. Develop a grievance register and reporting template, with arrangements for monitoring resolution and reporting anonymised grievance trends to the PMU.

Environmental and Social Management Plans

As an output of the ESIAs conducted at the four intervention areas, and Environmental and Social Management Plan will be developed for each site. The ESMP will provide a set of avoidance, mitigation, monitoring, and institutional measures – as well as actions needed to implement these measures – to achieve the desired social and environmental sustainability outcomes.

The ILSMS that are to be developed under Output 3.1, and informed by the subsequent site-specific ESIAs, will incorporate the necessary elements of an ESMP. Following UNDP SES requirements and international best practice, these ILSMS/ESMPs Will:

- Provide time-bound specific recommendations for avoiding adverse impacts, and where avoidance is not possible, for reducing, mitigating, and managing those impacts for all project activities.
- Further identify project activities that cannot take place until certain standards, requirements and mitigation measures are in place and carried out (complementing and updating what has already been identified in this draft ESMF).
- Develop site-specific management plans, as necessary and as required by the applicable UNDP SES. These will outline the management objectives, potential impacts, control activities and the environmental performance criteria against which projects will be evaluated (e.g. audited). Recommendations will be adopted and integrated into the project activities, monitoring and reporting framework and budget.
- Stakeholder engagement, including FPIC consultations with indigenous peoples (see below), and plans for stakeholder engagement during implementation of management measures.
- Outline actions to implement mitigation measures for each identified risk and impact.
- Provide a monitoring and reporting plan.
- Present a summary of identified adverse social and environmental impacts and any residual risks remaining after impact avoidance/mitigation/minimization.
- Present an implementation schedule, cost estimates and funding sources.

The exact content of the ESMP will be determined based on the findings of the ESIA, will commensurate with the identified risks and impacts. The Consultant shall liaise with the PMU and the UNDP SES TA to verify the required content of the ESMP following the impact assessment process. Specific management plans that may need to be integrated into the ESMP are described in the ESMF and include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Livelihood Action Plan (LAP)
- Labor Management Procedure (LMP)
- Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)
- Health and Safety Plan (HSP)

Disclosure and documentation of feedback

Support the PMU and UNDP to disclose draft ESIAs, ESMPs and associated safeguard plans before finalisation and before implementation of the relevant activities, in accordance with applicable disclosure requirements. Prepare accessible summaries in languages and formats appropriate to affected communities, provide reasonable opportunities for review and feedback, and document disclosure dates, methods and stakeholders reached. Include a consultation and response matrix in the final reports

explaining how comments were addressed or why particular recommendations were not incorporated. Protect personal information and confidential or sensitive material during disclosure.

Monitoring and compliance tracking

Include an actionable monitoring matrix in each ESMP linking every mitigation action to measurable indicators, baseline information where relevant, targets or compliance criteria, verification methods, monitoring and reporting frequency, responsible parties, implementation timelines and estimated costs. Define arrangements for community participation, contractor and NGO compliance checks, incident reporting, corrective actions and escalation of unresolved issues. Provide practical monitoring and reporting templates for use by the PMU and Provincial Project Coordinators.

Livelihood Action Plan (LAP)

In the full project design document, financial incentive mechanisms and diversification of livelihoods have been planned so as not to negatively affect existing economic systems. Instead, they have been designed to ensure additional benefits to the community, with emphasis on empowering and including marginalized groups and individuals.

To ensure effective management of any livelihood-related issues that may eventuate during the implementation of the project, a Livelihood Action Plan will be developed in Year 1 of the project's implementation (see Annex 4- Indicative Outline of a LAP). It shall seek to determine management measures /actions as well as monitoring indicators for any livelihood-related activities/mitigation measures. The LAP will be informed by other associated project initiatives such as the ESIs and ILSMS that will be undertaken at each of the project's demonstration land/seascapes associated with Component 3.

Gender Action Plan (GAP)

The gender analysis and gender mainstreaming action plan (GAP) was prepared at the project design stage based on primarily consultations with project sites' women and men, government and other key stakeholders conducting fieldwork. The fieldwork was carried out on the project sites whereas the data was gathered from a combination of Honiara-based key informant interviews and field visits to communities on the project sites. The consultant will review the plan and develop a comprehensive GAP for the project to ensure gender mainstreaming across the project implementation.

Indigenous Peoples Plan

An IPPF has been developed for the Project. Once the project sites and affected communities are precisely defined during project inception, the IPPF will need to be developed into a robust Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP) to assist in the mitigation and management of potential impacts to local indigenous peoples.

A full IPP (see outline in ESMF) should be developed for each of the four demonstration sites under Component 3. The initial list of 'downstream' project activities that should not commence until suitable FPIC and IPP are in place includes:

- Output 3.1. Integrated land/seascape management plans with strong community governance developed and implemented over 82,000 ha of land/seascapes, using traditional and other knowledge to reduce threats from IAS, land degradation and unsustainable resource use.
- Output 3.3. Smallholder farmers supported to implement innovative agricultural practices for sustainable land management that deliver LDN, protect ecosystem services, reduce threats from IAS and improve incomes, including through demonstration of model farms.
- Output 3.4. Diversified resilient livelihoods options co-developed with communities to support ecosystem services provision, species and habitat recovery and the emergence of new blue/green business opportunities (e.g., food, ecotourism, handicrafts, circular economy), particularly for women and youth.

The Indigenous Peoples Plan will define how best to engage with indigenous peoples and to ensure they benefit equally from the project's positive impacts. It is required for projects that may affect the rights, lands, territories, and resources of indigenous peoples. The IPP is based on the findings of the social and environmental assessment and needs to be developed with full, effective, and meaningful participation of potentially affected indigenous peoples.

5. Deliverables and Payment Schedule

The following reports must be submitted by the contractual party and received to the satisfaction of UNDP:

- First Report: Work plan developed in discussion with SES Focal Point RCC and PMU.
- Second Report: Consultation Strategy and FPIC procedure to be used to prepare the scoped ESIAs and the IPPs. Stakeholder mapping and arrangements for ongoing engagement and disclosure; assessment of existing grievance mechanisms; and proposed GRM improvements, procedures and reporting templates.
- Third report(s): Up to four draft site specific scoped ESIAs and their respective ESMPs. These reports will include results of the public consultation and disclosure process. Draft ESIAs and ESMPs shall incorporate differentiated impacts on vulnerable groups, labour and occupational health and safety provisions, SEAH risk assessment and mitigation, critical habitat screening and assessment where required, cumulative impact assessment, and an ESMP monitoring and compliance matrix.
- Fourth Report: Draft LAP, GAP and IPPs.
- Fifth Report: Final versions of ESIA, ESMP, LAP and IPPs. Final safeguard instruments shall include the final GAP, relevant management provisions and monitoring templates, disclosure records, and a consolidated stakeholder consultation and response matrix demonstrating how feedback and review comments have been addressed.

All reports must be submitted to UNDP in an electronic file. The report must include a cover page, main document, and all annexes.

The tentative timeline for the deliverables is stated below:

Deliverable	Deadline for deliverable (days after signing the contract)	Payment schedule
1: Workplan	1 week after contract signing (est 3 days)	10%
2: Consultation Strategy and FPIC procedure Stakeholder mapping and arrangements for ongoing engagement and disclosure; assessment of existing grievance mechanisms; and proposed GRM improvements, procedures and reporting templates.	3 weeks after contract signing (est 4 days)	10%
3: 4 x Draft Scoped ESIAs and ESMP Draft ESIAs and ESMPs shall incorporate differentiated impacts on vulnerable groups, labour and occupational health and safety provisions, SEAH risk assessment and mitigation, critical habitat screening and assessment where	12 weeks after contract signing (33 days)	30%

required, cumulative impact assessment, and an ESMP monitoring and compliance matrix.		
4: Draft LAP, GAP and IPPs	18 weeks after contract signing (15 days)	30%
5: Final versions of ESIAs, ESMPs, LAP and IPPs Final safeguard instruments shall include the final GAP, relevant management provisions and monitoring templates, disclosure records, and a consolidated stakeholder consultation and response matrix demonstrating how feedback and review comments have been addressed.	2 weeks after receiving review comments (5 days)	20%

6. Institutional Arrangements

The consultant will report to the SAFE project manager and UNDP RCC TL. The consultant is expected to work closely under the guidance of the SES focal point at UNDP for the assignment. If/when required, s/he is expected to also report to the UNDP-GEF RTA.

7. Duty Station and duration of the assignment

The duty station of the assignment: Honiara with visits to the project sites in Malaita, Isabel, Choiseul, Temotu and Western province. The duration of the assignment is 60 days between 01-Oct 2026 to 28 Feb 2027.

8. Qualifications and Experience

Academic Qualifications:

- Master's degree OR higher in Social Sciences and/or Environmental studies with emphasis on Social & Environmental assessments, community development, sociology, anthropology, law, or related field.

Experience and skills:

- A minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in Environmental & Social Safeguard risk assessment, mitigation, and monitoring involving international donors.
- Demonstrated experience in carrying out gender-sensitive consultations with local communities, protection of cultural heritage, and/or community engagement.
- Proven experience in conducting comprehensive policy, regulatory, and legislative analysis to recommend and inform policy reforms.
- Proven experience in conducting SES assessments, with strong analytical skills and the ability to synthesize relevant environmental and social risk data for the development of associated management measures.
- Good working knowledge of UNDP Social and Environmental (SES) and Safeguard policies.
- Analytical capacity and ability to synthesize relevant collected data and findings for the preparation of quality analysis for the project proposal.

- Experience in international development work with the WB, ADB and UN/UNDP is an asset.

Competencies:

- Technical skills in writing, editing, and ability to write quickly, clearly, and concisely in English
- Analytical capacity and ability to synthesize relevant collected data and findings for the preparation of quality analysis for the project proposal.
- Ability to deliver on time as committed and be responsive to all communications from UNDP.

Language:

- Excellent oral and written communication skills in English.