



Honiara City Environmental and Social Diagnostic Study Site Assessment, West Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands

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IFC works with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) on the Accessing Land for Tourism Investment Facilitation (ALTIF) project, part of MCC's 2022–2026 Solomon Islands Threshold Program, that builds on the foundational work in Western Province conducted by IFC between 2017 and 2021. This partnership aims to facilitate private sector investment in tourism in the country, create jobs, and boost the local economy.



Introduction

In 2021, International Finance Corporation (IFC) reviewed 70 sites as part of an Environmental and Social Diagnostic Study (ESDS) in the Western Province of Solomon Islands to support tourism sector development. In 2025, IFC assessed 31 additional sites in Guadalcanal and Central Provinces. Later that year, a new site in Honiara city, located in West Guadalcanal, was identified for its tourism potential as part of a 'hub and spoke' ¹ approach, and assessed for environmental, social, and natural hazard risks.

Updated Methodology

The assessment of the Honiara hub site applied the updated methodology used for Guadalcanal and Central Provinces, adapting it to its urban environment with broader definitions presented in Table 1. The site score is evaluated using a direct linear scale: scores ranging from 7 to 10 correspond to High risk, 4–6 denotes Moderate risk, and scores below 4 are classified as Low risk.

Table 1 Risk Definitions

Risk	Definition
Terrestrial biodiversity	Abundance and diversity of life on land, including flora, fauna, and vegetation communities, including freshwater ecosystems and species.
Marine biodiversity	Presence, health and diversity of seagrasses, coral reefs, fish, and marine life.
Presence of people	<p>A permanent or temporary population living on or nearby the site, identified by dwellings or structures located directly on-site or within neighboring sites. It encompasses people accessing and using the site for non-commercial activities, such as social gatherings, sports, and beach access.</p> <p>The presence of people risk highlights potential resettlement, but also considers populations located near the site who may not require resettlement, but have greater exposure to transmissions of diseases, gender-based violence, exploitation and additional pressures on resources, such as electricity and water.</p> <p>In an urban setting, construction and operational activities can change the dynamics of the surrounding community, just as they do in rural areas. However, the risk of impacts is likely to be lower in cities or urban areas because residents have better access to support services like hospitals, police, schools, and established infrastructure. In rural or remote island settings, social impacts may not be monitored nor impacts addressed as effectively due to resource constraints and isolation.</p> <p>Social challenges from urban development can generally be avoided or minimized by following town planning rules. Zoning and planning rules limit impacts on people from noise ², vibration, odor or dust ³. Impacts from construction and operation of tourism businesses are generally manageable when activities are located more than 200 meters from residences. If sensitive groups or individuals (known as "receptors") are situated closer than 200 meters, additional planning and design measures are necessary to mitigate these impacts.</p>
Presence of livelihoods	Livelihoods on-site include markets, gardens, shell collecting, reefs used for subsistence and artisanal fishing, boat launch areas, copra, coconut plantations, fruit trees, or the presence of other activities as sources of income and livelihoods.

Risk	Definition
Presence of cultural heritage	Location and significance of areas of cultural heritage to the site and the hub. Includes identification of any <i>Tabu</i> sites or areas important to the community and/or protected by relevant authorities, including shipwreck dive sites.
Potential for UXO	Level of risk of potential exposure to unexploded ordnance (UXO).
Community cohesion	Any community conflict observed or described in communities near or on the site, including evidence of previous unrest, strength of governance, incidence of crime, and access to the justice system if a crime committed. This was not provided a risk rating for the purpose of this assessment, but any potential risks are flagged within the site assessment profile.
Indigenous people	A risk rating was not assigned for Indigenous people as the vast majority of people living on or near individual sites are Indigenous to that area. If Indigenous people's presence was accounted for in the risk ratings, it is likely that most sites would be considered as high risk for development. Any potential sensitivities around Indigenous people or people local to the area – including land claim disputes, community cohesion concerns or cultural heritage management – have been included in qualitative descriptions in the site profile.
Presence of infrastructure	The distance between each site and the closest medical facility and transport hub (airport and ferry terminals) has been individually assessed with data provided in each site profile.
Coastal vulnerability	Vulnerability to coastal inundation and erosion through low-lying terrain or exposure to storm surges.
Sea level rise	Site elevation and the capacity for shelter and to retreat in case of storm surges and sea level rises.

The set of criteria to rate each risk and weightings used is presented in Table 2. The overall risk rating assigned to the site serves as a general indicator of risk, but it should not be viewed in isolation. To gain a comprehensive understanding of specific risks or critical issues (red flags) at each site, it is important to also review the detailed information provided in the site assessment profile.

Overall risk rating

The final risk assessment for the Honiara site resulted in an overall classification of Low risk.

- 1 The approach envisions a main resort in Honiara with potential satellite resorts in other provinces.
- 2 Environmental noise guidelines (such as from the World Health Organization (WHO) and local planning rules) aim for noise measurements of 55 dB(A) or lower at residential "receptors" (sensitive groups or individuals). For tourism projects, this often translates to a buffer of 50-200 meters depending on specific activities.
- 3 Though Solomon Islands lacks formal ambient air standards, practical dispersion modelling and WHO guidelines (such as particulate matter or PM2.5 limits) are often used and suggest receptors near tourism-related vehicles or generator emissions should be at least 100 meters away.

Table 2 Weighting and Measurement of Environmental, Social, and Natural Hazard Risks

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS	WEIGHTING	MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUE	RATING		
	40%		LOW (SCORE OF 1 – 3)	MEDIUM (SCORE OF 4 – 6)	HIGH (SCORE OF 7 – 10)
Terrestrial biodiversity	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site observations International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)/ Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) databases where relevant Where available, information based on discussions with species experts, local biodiversity specialists, or communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly disturbed/modified environment Represents low ecological value Examples include active coconut plantations, residential/or housing areas, agricultural land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderately disturbed environment Examples include former or abandoned coconut plantations with heavy secondary growth forest or former logged areas with strong secondary growth present Threatened species may be present Within 10km of Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively undisturbed environment, such as primary forest with relatively limited impact from human activities Threatened species likely to be present.
Marine biodiversity	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site observations of reef directly adjacent to site Presence of informal marine management areas, such as Community-Based Management Areas (CBMA) Information based on discussions with communities and fisheries officers IUCN/IBAT databases where relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine areas close to urban centers Ecosystem health compromised through pollution and/or over-fishing Shallow reef areas with no adjacent deep water Visibly stressed marine environment Low ecological diversity and health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine ecosystems relatively intact Some evidence of human impact Areas less than 5km from nearest village Moderate extent of reef, mangroves or seagrass with visible indicators of stress or impact Areas where adjacent land use (for example, logging) will likely impact marine ecosystem health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive seagrass beds in good health Well established and healthy mangrove areas Healthy reef ecosystems with wide fish diversity (little impact from fishing) Extensive reef systems with documented rich biodiversity Threatened species likely to be present Feeding areas for significant numbers of sea turtles Sea turtle nesting areas Sea bird roosting or nesting areas.
SOCIAL RISKS	WEIGHTING	MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUE	RATING		
	40%		LOW (SCORE OF 1 – 3)	MEDIUM (SCORE OF 4 – 6)	HIGH (SCORE OF 7 – 10)
Presence of people	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of people provides information on the presence of housing and structures, and potential for resettlement Site observations Discussions with communities Aerial photos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No known communities, families or individuals occupying or using the site for living purposes (excluding caretakers) Nearest community is more than 10 kilometers from the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 10 houses, buildings or shelters in one discrete area of the site Moderate size permanent population (less than 50 people) Nearest community is more than 5 kilometers from the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 10 houses or buildings or shelters scattered throughout the site Large permanent population (more than 50 people) Nearest community is within 5 kilometers of the site.
Presence of livelihoods	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of gardens or crops on-site Presence of fishing or livelihood activities based on marine or terrestrial resources Site observations and review of aerial photos for used or unused gardens/crops Estimate area based on aerial and Land Use Pac Geo layer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No presence of resources or activities used as a source of income of livelihoods on-site or nearby reefs No formal boat landing or storage located on-site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned cropping, plantation or gardening land, or less than 30 percent of site occupied by crops or gardens Small reef located nearby used for subsistence or artisanal fishing Area used for collection of one resource (firewood or shells, for example) Boat landing may be present, but not regularly utilized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crops/gardens occupying 30 percent of site or more Large or multiple reefs located adjacent to site used for commercial, subsistence and artisanal fishing Area used extensively for collection of multiple resources Large or frequently used boat landing.
Presence of cultural heritage	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data from site visits documenting areas of site that are used for family graves, WWII relic or battle sites, cultural sites <i>Tabu</i> or <i>Kastom</i> sites or animist sites that are considered important by local community Includes traditional resource collection areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No historical or cultural sites confirmed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One site identified of unknown, low or moderate significance to community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than one site identified of unknown, low or moderate significance to community or one site of high significance to community.
Potential for UXO	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UXO likelihood of presence based on WWII battle histories, and studies undertaken to assess UXO risk Data from police unit documenting and responding to UXO discoveries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No records of UXO located in the area No recorded conflict within the immediate vicinity of the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No records of UXO identified, but the site is within 10km of known battlefields, occupied sites, training areas, or sunken warships; where there is a moderate possibility that UXO may be encountered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed UXO discoveries in vicinity of the site Historical documentation of battles in WWII includes multiple bombings and heavy fighting An area is also considered high risk if it was an occupied site which was subject to intense conflict and multiple air raids or is recorded as an area with ammunition dumps.
NATURAL HAZARDS	WEIGHTING	MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUE	RATING		
	20%		LOW (SCORE OF 1 – 3)	MEDIUM (SCORE OF 4 – 6)	HIGH (SCORE OF 7 – 10)
Coastal vulnerability	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site observations Evidence at site observations of erosion Percentage of site within 50m of shallow to medium depth reef IUCN/IBAT Reef Mapping Aerial photos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheltered locations, within lagoon or island group. Unlikely to be affected by storm surges No evidence of erosion 60 percent or more of site perimeter surrounded by shallow or medium depth reef. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somewhat sheltered from storm surge. Exposed location within lagoon environment No evidence of erosion 30-60 percent of site perimeter surrounded by shallow or medium depth reef. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reef fringe islands, exposed to weather events, low elevation above sea level Evidence of erosion Less than 30 percent of site perimeter surrounded by shallow or medium depth reef.
Sea level rise	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-quantitative: Percentage of site over 1m above sea level based upon site observations and aerial photos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70 percent or more of site area more than 1m above sea level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-70 percent of site area over 1m more than sea level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-70 percent of site area less than 1m above sea level.

SITE IDENTIFIER #: 33

PARCEL IDENTIFIER: 194-014-0038

Honiara Hub Site

West Guadalcanal

LOW
OVERALL RISK RATING

SITE



SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is oriented north-northeast and has a rock sea wall along a section of its coastline. Both neighboring properties also have sea walls for protection from waves and storm surges. A flat reef borders the west side of the coastline, while the east side features a gently sloping reef that offers less coastal protection. Some construction and vehicle refuse has been used to bolster seawall protection along neighboring boundaries. The site is generally flat, with an elevation of approximately 1 meter above sea level at the coastal edge, rising gradually towards the southern boundary along the Tandai Highway.

The site owned by Solomon Islands National Provident Fund (SINPF) currently contains six buildings (three each permanent and semi-permanent), with only the security building currently occupied. The largest building has been vacant since 2023. Additional facilities include three outdoor sports courts and a small field used for sports and recreation. Prior to the stop notice issued in August 2025 by the SINPF Board prohibiting public access and use of site, community members routinely used the courts, grass area, and picnic shelters for local events. The coastline was also accessed through the site for fishing, diving, boat storage and recreation. Storage containers are present. There are no gardens, markets, or businesses operating on-site.

A stormwater pipe channels road run-off through the site with discharge into the sea at the northeast corner. Wastewater from the buildings is released to the sea through a separate discharge pipe. An undersea data cable runs along the eastern edge of the site, protected by a designated zone indicated on marine charts and the land title. Although the site is privately-owned, the Tandai House of Chiefs has made a city-wide claim to ownership of coastal areas up to the high-tide mark. To date, this claim has not affected marine structures such as wharves or jetties, but the issue remains unresolved. Both neighboring sites are currently under development, including construction of further tourism accommodation at the existing Coral Sea Resort.

The property supports common vegetation, including several large palm trees, but no protected species habitats were identified. The marine environment has moderate to low ecological value due to overfishing and pollution, while the seafloor consists of coral rubble flats and some hard stony coral further offshore. The area is considered high risk for unexploded ordnance (UXO) due to its location in Iron Bottom Sound, a former WWII conflict zone. However, most of the site itself (80-85%) has undergone UXO clearance except for the three sporting courts¹. A UXO detonation occurred within 500 meters of the site in 2025.

SITE LOCATION



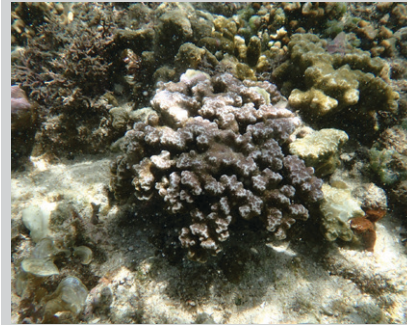
BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE



SEA WALLS



MARINE LIFE



COMMUNITY SPACES



ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

Terrestrial biodiversity	1
Marine biodiversity	1

SOCIAL RISKS

Presence of people	7
Presence of livelihoods	4
Potential for UXO	8
Presence of cultural heritage	2

NATURAL HAZARD RISKS

Coastal vulnerability	4
Sea level rise	5

COORDINATES

-9.429249, 159.949264

SITE AREA (ha)

1.5

CURRENT OCCUPATION OF SITE

Security guards live on-site as caretakers. No business operates from the existing buildings. Prior to the stop notice prohibition, the site was used for community events, sports and coastal access.

DISTANCE TO NEAREST HOSPITAL / CLINIC

Honiara hospital (10 kilometers).

CURRENT LAND USE

Public access prohibited since August 2025.

DISTANCE TO NEAREST AIRPORT / PORT

Honiara (10 kilometers).

SERVICES AVAILABLE

Underground power, water, public stormwater and sewage pipes from sanitation facilities at the site. An undersea cable lands on the eastern corner of the site.

OTHER SITE RISKS

No other site hazards noted.

ADJACENT LAND USE

Commercial and office operations, along with land development on neighboring sites.

SITE ACCESS

The site interfaces with the Tandai Highway. Access via road to ferries and international airport.

PROTECTED / MANAGED AREAS

One Marine Protected Area (Komarindi) is 40 kilometers north of the site.

COMMUNITY COHESION

Land owned by SINPF. Of note, the Tandai House of Chiefs has a general ongoing claim of ownership of Honiara coastal areas up to the high tide water mark.

¹ The survey did not include the three courts because their surfaces, made of reinforced concrete and steel rebars, could cause magnetic interference that makes it difficult to detect unexploded ordnance (UXO) especially, those that are small and deeply located. Any further UXO surveys of the site would need to take this into account.

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