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## 6. Recommendations and Conclusions

### 6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

This report was developed as a high-level landscape study and site-screening tool to inform relevant government agencies in Solomon Islands and Western Province, potential and current tourism investors and developers, and other relevant stakeholders such as NGOs, CSOs, and local communities of the E&S situation and associated risks and opportunities for tourism development in province. This includes an indication of the low, moderate, and high-risk areas for tourism development from an E&S perspective.

This section outlines overarching recommendations from this assessment in growing the tourism sector in Western Province. More detailed, specific recommendations and opportunities are included the Risks and Recommended Actions Matrix in section 5.2.

#### 6.1.1 ENHANCEMENT OF THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND ENVIRONMENT

This study has provided specific recommendations for updating existing policies, taking into account the local E&S contexts, challenges, and anticipated risks to and from tourism development.

**Table 16: Recommendations for Policy Frameworks**

Existing Policies	Recommendations
<i>Environment Act 1998</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop cost-recovery mechanisms, from project developers, for ESIA reviews and monitoring compliance with Environmental Management Plans. This approach may assist with providing more resources to strengthen E&amp;S outcomes on projects.</li> <li>• Strengthen the MECDM's statutory obligations and powers to monitor projects' adherence to the <i>Environment Act</i> and environmental protection.</li> <li>• Include additional and/or more specific provisions on the management and disposal of hazardous materials, waste, and pesticides. Resorts or hotels may be using chemicals for their pools and gardens, which could have a negative impact on the local environment, such as contaminated water running off to beaches.</li> </ul>
<i>Forest Resources and Timber Utilization Act 1991</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the Ministry of Forestry's statutory obligations and enforcement powers to monitor adherence to the <i>Forest Resources and Timber Utilization Act</i> and forestry permits.</li> </ul>
<i>Land and Titles Act 1968</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decentralize powers from the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey to enable processing at the provincial land-titles office. This would make registering titles for customary landowners more accessible and less costly.</li> <li>• Digitize land records to increase efficiency and transparency.</li> </ul>
<i>Town and Country Planning Act 1979</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider special provisions to encourage an appropriate type of tourism development (to be defined by the SIG) in Western Province.</li> <li>• The Western Provincial Government should weigh the appropriateness of allowing casinos in the province.</li> </ul>
<i>Wildlife Protection and Management Act 1998 and (Amendment) Bill 2016 and Protected Areas Act 2010</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the statutory obligations and powers of the MECDM's Conservation Department to monitor adherence to the <i>Wildlife Protection and Management Act</i> and improve biodiversity protection.</li> <li>• Align the <i>Protected Areas Act 2010</i> with the <i>Fisheries Act 2015</i> to minimize duplication/confusion of MPAs between the two acts.</li> </ul>
<i>Fisheries Act 2015</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources' capacity to monitor compliance of the <i>Fisheries Act</i> for coastal fisheries.</li> <li>• Impose limits on the catch size and quantity as well as fishing periods on customary fisheries to encourage sustainable harvesting practices. Currently, customary fishing rights are unfettered.</li> </ul>
<i>Safety at Work Act 1982</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the statutory obligations and powers of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labor and Immigration (Labor Division) to enforce the <i>Safety at Work Act</i> to drive a cultural change in the workplace.</li> </ul>
<i>Labour Act 1996</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider raising the minimum age of employment to 14 to align with the International Labour Standards on Child Labour such as ILO's C138 – Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).</li> <li>• Considering that new tourism businesses may be foreign-owned, the SIG and Western Provincial Government will need to update the <i>Labour Act 1996</i> to integrate anti-discriminatory labor policies and additional provisions on the protection of local communities.</li> <li>• Additional provisions and/or safeguards on the protection of women, children, disabled people, and other vulnerable groups should be created and/or amended into existing policy.</li> <li>• Authorized provincial government personnel can conduct regular and/or spot checks on tourism establishments to evaluate if there are labor violations or if employees are being provided with a conducive work environment.</li> </ul>
<i>Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau Act 1996</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the continued development of tourism infrastructure, such as wharves, jetties, and transportation hubs, and conservation initiatives across the province.</li> </ul>

### 6.1.2 CAPACITY BUILDING

Both the SIG and the Western Provincial Government have limited technical and financial capacity (in terms of staff, equipment, and vehicles) in delivering public services and goods as well as in monitoring the implementation and enforcement of policies.

To address the capacity gaps, the following actions are recommended:

- Technical training across all aspects of E&S safeguards to enable more robust reviews of ESIs and associated management plans.
- Monitoring, compliance, and enforcement across multiple sectors, including:
  - Forestry/logging
  - Coastal and customary fisheries
  - Protected areas/biodiversity protection
  - Biosecurity
  - E&S safeguards
  - Labor
  - Work Safety
  - Maritime safety
  - First aid

In cooperation with NGOs, CSOs, and training institutions, the SIG and the Western Provincial Government could provide technical and vocational training in local communities, including:

- Small business/enterprise
- Agricultural production
- Aquaculture
- Tourism hospitality
- Guiding
- Health and safety
- Preparation and management of energy and waste facilities

### 6.1.3 USE OF THE ESDS

#### For the SIG

This report can be used by the SIG, the Western Provincial Government, and other government agencies to aid tourism-development planning. The following are key recommendations on how this study can be used:

- The SIG can refer to the analysis of risks and specific recommendations (section 5) to inform policy development priorities and strategic development plans.
- The SIG can consider incorporating the requirement for landscape studies to be included in investment regulations.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and the MECDM can use this study as a reference for incorporating tourism activities as a means to improve conservation and management of fishing and forestry resources, as well as key biodiversity areas. This also includes strengthening compliance monitoring and enforcement initiatives to improve biodiversity projection outcomes.

The MECDM can use the findings to inform a strategic environmental assessment framework for the tourism sector.

The findings of this report can be used to develop business cases to seek donor budget support and/or private sector investments to support initiatives for tourism development in Western Province.

Data from this study can be incorporated into tourism-mapping investment guides and materials for investors developed by relevant ministries.

The Western Provincial Government can use the study as a reference to produce a Tourism Development Plan that will develop the sector appropriately while addressing E&S safeguards and other key development risks.

#### For Tourism Developers and Investors

Investors and developers can use this study to plan their tourism development projects, activities, or establishments by referring to the individual site risks identified. The study sheds light on the business requirements and challenges, particularly regarding access to customary land and natural resources. It also explains the social and cultural context of operating a tourism business in Western Province, so investors can plan the size and nature of their businesses and activities accordingly.

## Other Relevant Stakeholders

Local communities may use this study to learn about the opportunities and risks of tourism development that may affect them.

For NGOs and CSOs, the study identifies data gaps that are summarized below. This could help them update datasets to inform tourism development planning and augment their programs in Western Province.

### 6.1.4 ASSESSMENT TO ADDRESS INFORMATION GAPS

The following are recommendations for further environmental and social diagnostic studies or assessments to support tourism development. These investigations can be undertaken by donors, research institutes, academic organizations, or NGOs. Some examples include:

- Improving the accessibility and quality of spatial data:
  - High-resolution topographical survey (mapping 1 m contours) to assist with development planning, hazard mapping (flood and tsunami), and disaster planning
  - Bathymetric surveys to assist with navigation, maritime planning, and infrastructure development
  - Updated mapping and documenting key biodiversity areas and both marine and terrestrial habitats, including detailed species ordinances
  - Updating land surveys (site-boundary surveys) to assist with land transaction and leasing
  - Recording and registering cultural and *tabu* sites, including detailed mapping with support from local communities
- Strengthening marine-resource monitoring, such as monitoring species abundance and size to assess fish stocks, biosecurity, and invasive species.
- Assessing training needs to identify areas that should be strengthened within the SIG to better support tourism development.

## 6.2 Conclusions

Western Province is relatively undeveloped in terms of tourism infrastructure, and this represents an opportunity to develop a unique tourism experience.

## 6.2.1 GENERAL

Developers and investors with an interest in developing a tourism offering in the study corridor should be aware of the range of E&S risks. However, if identified early such as through this study, many of these risks can be mitigated through thorough planning, due diligence, sound community and regulator engagement, good site design, and the adoption of good international industry practices in project development.

## 6.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

In summary, the environmental risks mostly relate to the safeguarding of sensitive marine and terrestrial biodiversity areas and ecosystem services. While many of the areas across the corridor have been affected by human activity, some remain relatively untouched. The risk ratings for areas cover the spectrum from low to high. Subject to EIA and government approvals and permits, development could proceed in low-to-moderate-risk areas with minimal incremental impact on biodiversity or ecosystem services.

Although high-risk sites can still be developed, they will likely require detailed site characterizations to develop robust EIAs. If the EIA shows that development will not bring significant and long-term impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services, then stringent controls and management plans will be required to manage risks. The positive aspect is that some of these locations may prove attractive for tourists to experience the pristine environment.

## 6.2.3 SOCIAL RISKS

The social risks of developing the tourism sector is complex and should be navigated carefully by investors and developers to ensure a successful outcome.

Some key social risks that investors may encounter include government transparency and accountability, land tenure and access, labor and workforce, and gathering support from the local communities. Managing social risks can be complicated and time-consuming. Through early and genuine engagement with stakeholders and local communities, such risks can be avoided or minimized. Current tourism operators in the province shared that a participatory approach allowing the local community to get involved in the development of the tourism establishment is best. Some locations may also be more complex to develop due to underlying community and political factors. As such, robust social due diligence is recommended.