

1. Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

The SIG aims to develop its tourism sector, particularly in Western Province. There are, however, several barriers for tourism developers to enter the market and invest in the sector.

This study aims to identify a balanced, equitable, and sustainable development pathway for tourism in the province over the short to medium term. It gives investors an overview of the potential E&S risks, impacts, and opportunities, with a focus on a tourism corridor. It also provides recommendations on how investors, SIG ministries, and the Western Provincial Government could reduce potential risks and impacts to realize the tourism development opportunities.

1.1.1 ASSOCIATED PROJECTS AND WIDER PROGRAM

The SIG recognizes tourism as a key industry that can form the foundation of sustainable development by creating job opportunities, stimulate the growth of small and medium enterprises, and contribute to government revenue.

In 2018, IFC completed a needs assessment for tourism development in Western Province detailing key aspects inhibiting the sector's growth (Western Province Tourism Investment Needs Assessment (WPTINA) report (IFC 2018). The assessment identified five strategies:

- Strengthening accommodation supply
- Improving access and transport connectivity
- Enhancing destination offers and experiences
- Stimulating and converting market demand
- Preparing host communities

The assessment prioritizes strategies 1 to 3, while strategies 4 and 5 are considered important to progress alongside the other strategies by development partners.

IFC commissioned engagements with over 90+ stakeholders throughout Solomon Islands, including travel industry representatives and tourism investors, to develop the assessment.

To strengthen accommodation supply, a sub-strategy is to map and assess E&S risks of development near gateway cities of Western Province to support the preparation of a long list of sites that meet investment needs. Alongside the needs assessment, IFC has been working with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT) to conduct a survey of registered land and associated land titles in the province, considering that one of the key challenges to tourism development is the availability of land.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report aims to inform key stakeholders of potential landscape-level E&S risks and opportunities for tourism development across the study corridor and identified sites. It sets out the methodology and process undertaken to identify and assess these risks and opportunities as well as outlines a set of recommendations to address them.