ADAPTATION FUND

REQUEST FOR PROJECT/PROGRAMME FUNDING FROM THE ADAPTATION FUND

The annexed form should be completed and transmitted to the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat by email or fax.

Please type in the responses using the template provided. The instructions attached to the form provide guidance to filling out the template.

Please note that a project/programme must be fully prepared (i.e., fully appraised for feasibility) when the request is submitted. The final project/programme document resulting from the appraisal process should be attached to this request for funding.

Complete documentation should be sent to the email: submissions@adaptation-fund.org

ADAPTATION FUND

LOCALLY-LED ADAPTATION PROJECT/PROGRAMME PROPOSAL FOR SINGLE COUNTRY

PART I: PROJECT/PROGRAMME INFORMATION

Title of Project/Programme: ROOTS –
Restoring Our Original Trees and Shore
Nature-based, Community-Led forest restoration and Management

Country: Vanuatu

Thematic Focal Area: Ecosystem-based Adaptation / Nature-based Solutions (with a focus on forest restoration and management)

Type of Implementing Entity: *Regional Implementing Entity*

Implementing Entity: Pacific Community (SPC)

Executing Entities: Vanuatu Department of Forestry; Pacific Community (SPC)

Amount of Financing Requested: 5,000,000 U.S Dollars

Letter of Endorsement (LOE) signed: **Yes** ☐ ~~No~~ ☐

NOTE: The LOE should be signed by the Designated Authority (DA). The signatory DA must be on file with the Adaptation Fund. To find the DA currently on file check this page: https://www.adaptation-fund.org/apply-funding/designated-authorities

Stage of Submission:

☐ This proposal has been submitted before including at a different stage (pre-concept, concept, fully- developed proposal)
☐ This is the first submission ever of the proposal at any stage

In case of a resubmission, please indicate the last submission date: N/A.

Please note that fully-developed proposal documents should not exceed 100 pages for the main document, and 100 pages for the

1. Project / Programme Background and Context:

Provide brief information on the problem the proposed project/programme is aiming to solve. Outline the economic social, development and environmental context in which the project would operate.

Vanuatu, an archipelagic nation in the South Pacific, is among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. Its forests—including inland rainforests, transitional forests, and mangrove ecosystems—are crucial to the nation's resilience, providing essential ecosystem services such as water regulation, soil stabilization, biodiversity conservation, and cultural value. In 2020, Vanuatu had approximately 440,000 hectares of natural forest, covering about 37% of its land area.[1]

Climate Risks and Impact Linkage:
Vanuatu faces intensifying climate hazards, including cyclones, droughts, sea-level rise, and increased storm surges, as well as geophysical hazards such as earthquakes. These hazards are not only increasing in severity and frequency due to climate change, but are also having direct, compounding impacts on Vanuatu's forests and dependent communities. Recent analysis indicates a rising trend in the frequency of severe cyclones, with models projecting increased Category 4 and 5 events in the region by 2050[2]. Each event causes significant treefall, canopy loss, soil erosion, and disruption of forest regrowth. For example, Cyclone Pam (2015) and Cyclone Harold (2020) caused widespread windthrow and uprooting of native trees, exposing soils to further erosion and undermining natural regeneration[3]. Droughts, projected to increase in both intensity and length, further inhibit seedling survival, reduce forest growth, and contribute to forest dieback.

Reforestation and ecosystem restoration are effective adaptation interventions in this context. Reforesting with cyclone- and drought-resilient native species accelerates canopy recovery, stabilizes soils, restores watershed function, and reduces the vulnerability of both people and biodiversity to climate shocks. Restoration also mitigates the risk of invasive species proliferation, which often follows disturbance events.

In 2023 alone, Vanuatu lost 612 hectares of natural forest, resulting in approximately 499 kilotons of CO_2 emissions. Degradation is further exacerbated by the spread of invasive species such as *Merremia peltata* and *Cordia alliodora*, which impede natural regeneration and displace native biodiversity.

Climate Projections and Trends:
Sea-level rise projections indicate that Vanuatu could experience up to 0.7 meters of sea-level increase by 2100 under high-emission scenarios, intensifying the risk of coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion into mangrove forests[4]. Regional climate projections for Vanuatu indicate rising frequency of

[1] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020: Vanuatu Country Report*. Rome, 2020. Available at: https://fra-data.fao.org/VUT
[2] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), Working Group II: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, 2022. Chapter 2, Section 2.4.4 "Tropical Forests." https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/
[3] Government of Vanuatu (2020) / Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery: *Vanuatu Post-Disaster Needs Assessment: Tropical Cyclone Harold*.
[4] Australian Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO (2022). *Climate Change in the Pacific: Scientific Assessment and New*

very hot days and heat extremes; increased variability in rainfall; and a trend toward more intense or prolonged droughts in some emission pathways. These changes pose growing risks to forest ecosystems, agriculture, and dependent communities[5].

Adaptive Capacity and Social Dimensions:
Approximately 75% of Vanuatu's population lives in rural areas and depends heavily on forests for fuelwood, building materials, food, and income, making them particularly vulnerable to forest loss and climate stressors. Within this predominantly Indigenous population (94% Ni-Vanuatu), women and youth often bear a disproportionate share of these burdens, with women spending more time collecting fuelwood as forests degrade, and youth facing reduced livelihood prospects from declining forest resources[6]. Customary land tenure systems, while supporting community stewardship, can also limit coordinated restoration where land rights are unclear.

Initial Gender Assessment[7]

Context
Vanuatu's policy and legal frameworks reflect a strong commitment to advancing gender equality. International commitments include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration. On the national level, Vanuatu has mainstreamed gender equality in a multitude of sectors including land tenure, the economy, education, health, violence prevention, disability inclusion, and WASH (UN Women, 2022). Despite this framework, cultural norms and customary law (k*astom*) continue to drive unequal outcomes for women and girls. Land tenure and inheritance systems remain largely patrilineal, restricting women's decision-making power, with men holding primary rights over customary land and women only representing 30% of lease applicants (UN Women, 2022). These structural inequalities are reflected in economic participation where women's labour force participation remains lower than men's, with their work concentrated in informal and

Research.
[5] https://www.rccap.org/uploads/files/2c538622-72fe-4f3d-a927-7b3a7149e73f/Vanuatu%20Country%20Report%20Final.pdf

[6] Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), 2022. *Pacific Gender and Social Inclusion in Climate and Forest Policy – Regional Brief*.

[7] Brikke, Sarah (2008). Women's Perception of their Forest Resources in Espiritu Santo (Vanuatu). Open Access Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington. Thesis. https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.16992718.v1

FAO (1995). Non-Wood Forest Products in Vanuatu. In: Durst, P.B. & Bishop, A. (eds.), Beyond Timber: Social, Economic and Cultural Dimensions of Non-Wood Forest Products in Asia and the Pacific. FAO, Bangkok

Naupa, Anna. "Making the Invisible Seen: Putting Women's Rights on Vanuatu's Land Reform Agenda." In Kastom, Property and Ideology: Land Transformations in Melanesia, edited by Siobhan McDonnell, Matthew Allen, and Colin Filer, ANU Press, 2017, pp. 305-327.

UN Women. Gender Equality Brief for Vanuatu. Asia-Pacific. Ridgeway Information Ltd., for UN Women. 2022. 20 pages.

Vanuatu National Statistics Office. (2017). 2016 Post Pam Mini Census Report. Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.

unpaid roles. While women account for almost half of the population, only 17.5% of households were headed by women in 2016 (Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2017), highlighting the combined effects of customary norms and economic constraints on women's autonomy. Furthermore, gender-based violence (GBV) remains alarmingly high, with over 60% of ever-partnered women reporting physical, sexual, or emotional abuse (UN Women, 2022). Awareness of protective laws and access to justice or services against household GBV remain low, especially in rural areas. Health and hygiene challenges also disproportionately affect women, including high adolescent fertility rates, limited reproductive health services, and uneven WASH access. These intersecting inequalities mean that women's participation in decision-making, control over resources and access to services remain constrained despite legal and policy commitments.

Gender-Specific climate risks related to forest resources

In examining the GESI landscape as it relates to access to forestry resources there is a pattern of high involvement of women in labor and informal use of forest resources, but constrained power in land rights, formal decision-making, and control over benefits. While Vanuatu's Constitution and written laws do not explicitly discriminate against women in land ownership, customary laws and social norms often limit women's practical access and decision making (UNWomen, 2022). Customary systems vary throughout the country, with some islands being patrilineal while others are matrilineal. That being said, even in matrilineal systems, women often only hold the rights to decision making in name only and delegate that authority to male relatives (Naupa, 2017). So, while women are very active in forest-adjacent tasks such as gathering non-timber forest products, fuelwood, medicinal plants, etc. (FAO, 1995), generally, due to custom, women are often locked out of decision-making spaces when it comes to land use regardless of whether the system of inheritance is matrilineal or not.

In looking at use of forest resources, we see that in most rural areas, women depend substantially on non-wood forest products—such as tubers, fruits, nuts, fibers, thatch materials for homes, leaves for sauces, wild vegetables, medicinal plants. These are used for food, income, medicine, ceremonies, and construction (FAO, 1995). An in-depth GESI assessment will be used to ascertain exactly what species of plants are depended on, and the restoration planning will as a result protect the identified valued plants. Additionally, these identified valued plants will be integrated into the nursery component of the project to ensure these restored ecosystems continue to meet their needs.

Lastly, capacity-building training will be given to community members to ensure they are equipped with the proper knowledge to maintain these non-wood plants essential to daily life in the midst of an ever-changing climate. More than just a productive resource, for many women, forests are central to culture, learning, knowledge, social cohesion (Brikke, 2021). Thus, additionally these community-based trainings should also touch on preservation of traditional knowledge as it relates to the forests and their fruits, ensuring that particularly the younger generations of Ni-Vanuatu continue to hold and use this knowledge.

To ensure diverse needs are represented, forest restoration community governance groups will be established comprising of a range of demographics present. This way vulnerable groups will have a voice not only in how forests are restored but how they are managed as well. To ensure maximum engagement from all vulnerable groups, considerations for when, where, and how the meetings are run will be informed by the in-depth GESI assessment to be conducted once implementation sites are chosen.

Vanuatu is ranked #1 globally in the World Risk Index (2021) for disaster risk due to high exposure to risks like cyclones and earthquakes, as well as 64% of the population living within 1 km of the coast

(2009), heightening exposure (UNWomen, 2022). Within this context of high risk, women are often disproportionately impacted by disasters due to roles as caregivers, food providers, and water collectors (UNWomen, 2022).

To help account for this disproportionate impact of disasters, Vanuatu requires that community disaster preparedness and climate change committees are comprised of at least one-third women leaders (UNWomen, 2022). However, this hasn't been achieved yet. There are several structural and cultural barriers that explain why this gap between policy and reality persists, namely customary norms favoring male leadership, social norms looking at DRM as men's work, and women's heavy workloads leaving them with little time to attend committee meetings as well as training sessions (UNWomen, 2022). Once implementation sites have been selected, an in-depth GESI assessment will be conducted to ensure that these barriers are addressed to ensure women's active participation and leadership in community forest restoration and management alongside DRM.

These preliminary findings have directly informed project design. For example, Components 1 and 3 ensure women's and youth's participation in governance and monitoring; Component 2 integrates NWFPs valued by women into nurseries and restoration; and the Training of Trainers cascade explicitly targets women and youth to build equitable leadership. These measures will be refined through a comprehensive GESI assessment at the full proposal stage.

Barriers to Restoration:

Despite government efforts—such as the National Forest Policy (2013–2023), the Vanuatu Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy (2020-203) or the National REDD+ Strategy of Vanuatu—significant barriers remain. These include insufficient and unpredictable funding for large-scale restoration, limited technical capacity at community and provincial levels, unclear or contested land rights, lack of market incentives for sustainable management, and limited inclusion of traditional knowledge in restoration planning. Communities are often forced to prioritize immediate recovery after disasters, leaving little opportunity or resources for long-term forest and landscape rehabilitation.

Rationale for Intervention:

This project directly addresses the systemic barriers that have limited large-scale, sustained restoration in Vanuatu to date: unpredictable financing, limited technical capacity at community and provincial levels, and insufficient integration of customary governance and traditional knowledge into formal planning. These barriers are being intensified by climate risks—such as increasingly frequent cyclones, prolonged droughts, and soil erosion—which accelerate forest degradation and deepen community vulnerability. Despite strong local interest, past responses have often been fragmented or short-term, leaving communities exposed to repeated climate shocks.

To overcome these barriers, the project is designed to deliver targeted solutions that link directly to Vanuatu's context and urgent needs.It supports integrated, community-led forest and landscape restoration across Vanuatu's diverse ecosystems—including forests, farmlands, fallow lands, and grazing lands. By empowering local communities—including women and youth—with resources, training, and decision-making authority, the project not only restores forest health but also tackles the structural obstacles that have hindered previous efforts.

The proposed intervention takes a holistic, community-led and ecosystem-based approach that spans the full restoration continuum—from participatory planning and nursery establishment to restoration,

monitoring, and policy mainstreaming. By sequencing activities step by step, and front-loading critical preparatory tasks through the Project Formulation Grant (PFG), the project ensures readiness to move immediately into implementation with robust site assessments, safeguards, and local agreements already in place.

During the PFG phase, SPC will serve as both the Implementing Entity and the Executing Entity, working in close cooperation with the Department of Forestry. For full project implementation, SPC and DoF will act as co-Executing Entities, ensuring both fiduciary/technical oversight and strong national ownership of on-the-ground delivery.

Reforestation is prioritized as the most effective adaptation response for stabilizing soils, accelerating recovery after cyclone and drought impacts, and restoring critical ecosystem services that underpin food security, water supply, human health and disaster risk reduction. At the same time, the project directly responds to the barrier of "single-focus" restoration by going beyond tree planting to include soil regeneration, watershed protection, agroforestry, and invasive species management.

Key features of the project approach, and how they address identified barriers, are as follows:

- **Devolved leadership and decision-making**: Resources and authority are placed with community-based organisations and landowners, ensuring legitimacy and sustainability. (responds to the barrier of limited integration of customary governance).
- **Training of Trainers (ToT) cascade model**: Builds durable capacity within local institutions and communities, addressing chronic skills gaps while reducing reliance on external expertise. (responds to the barrier of limited technical capacity).
- **Integrated landscape focus**: Extends restoration across inland forests, coastal areas, and productive landscapes to deliver water security, food system resilience, and disaster risk reduction. (responds to the barrier of fragmented and short-term interventions).
- **Institutional strengthening and policy integration**: Anchors restoration in national and provincial strategies, while building the Department of Forests' role as the co-executing partner (responds to the barrier of weak institutional anchoring).
- **Knowledge generation and replication**: Establishes participatory monitoring and knowledge products to document lessons, enabling replication across Vanuatu and the Pacific (responds to the barrier of limited documentation and scaling mechanisms).

The strategy is fully aligned with Vanuatu's national adaptation priorities, including its National Forest Policy, National Adaptation Plan, and international commitments such as the UNFCCC. The inclusive approach ensures restoration extends beyond forests to encompass the full range of landscapes critical for livelihoods, social cohesion, and resilience.

Importantly, the project will work in close collaboration with other restoration partners and programmes already active in Vanuatu, ensuring complementarity with relevant partners including Nakau project, Live & Learn, the Kiwa Initiative and others. Site selection will explicitly take into account the footprint of these initiatives to avoid duplication, maximize synergies, and reinforce a coherent national approach to ecosystem restoration.

By combining community empowerment, robust technical oversight by SPC and DoF, collaboration with national partners, and a phased design that ensures readiness through the PFG, the project provides not only direct resilience benefits to vulnerable communities, but also a transformational model for scaling up Nature-based Solutions across the Pacific.

2. Project / Programme Objectives:

List the main objectives of the project/programme.
The project is designed to address the entire restoration continuum, including community engagement and participatory planning, soil regeneration, nursery establishment, seedling production and management, site selection, planting, invasive species management, watershed and catchment management, plantation establishment, benefit-sharing mechanisms, long-term maintenance, monitoring, adaptive management, ongoing training, and documentation and knowledge sharing—ensuring comprehensive, science-based, and sustainable landscape restoration.

In line with this holistic and integrated restoration approach, the project pursues the following main objectives:

Objective 1 - Restore, conserve, and sustainably manage Vanuatu's inland, transitional, and mangrove forests, as well as key water catchments, through community-led, nature-based solutions that strengthen ecosystem services, water security, biodiversity, and climate resilience, while addressing land degradation and invasive species.

Objective 2- Empower communities—including women, youth, and Indigenous groups—to lead the design, implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management of forest and landscape restoration through inclusive governance, participatory decision-making, capacity building (including robust Training of Trainers), and continuous knowledge exchange.

Objective 3 - Reduce climate vulnerability and disaster risk for rural and coastal populations by restoring forest cover, stabilizing soils, managing invasive species, and supporting climate-resilient livelihoods, while mainstreaming community-led, nature-based restoration into national and sub-national policies and planning frameworks to enable long-term impact, scaling up, and regional replication.

The project is designed to follow a clear sequence of activities—from participatory assessments and site planning, to nursery establishment, restoration, and monitoring—ensuring that interventions are evidence-based, community-driven, and technically sound.

3. Project / Programme Components and Financing[8]:

Fill in the table presenting the relationships among project components, activities, expected concrete outputs, and the corresponding budgets. If necessary, please refer to the attached instructions for a detailed description of each term.

For the case of a programme, individual components are likely to refer to specific sub- sets of stakeholders, regions and/or sectors that can be addressed through a set of well-defined interventions / projects.

[8] IE and EE fees calculator: https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/ie-and-ee-fees-calculator/

Project/Programme Components	Expected Concrete Outputs	Expected Outcomes	Amount (US$)
1. Capacity Building, Institutional Strengthening & Inclusive Planning	**Output 1.1**: Stakeholder mapping and engagement completed, with inclusive participation of women and youth. **Output 1.2**: Participatory vulnerability, ecosystem service, and baseline assessments completed and endorsed. **Output 1.3**: Community awareness, training sessions, and capacity-building delivered at provincial and local levels. **Output 1.4**: Participatory planning documents, including local adaptation and restoration action plans, developed and validated.	Increased local capacity, inclusive governance, and knowledge management systems for climate adaptation	480,000
2. Community-Led Restoration Implementation	**Output 2.1:** Land and site-access agreements (MoUs) formalized, and site specific land-use plans developed and endorsed. **Output 2.2:** Priority sites assessed and prepared for restoration (biophysical/tenure checks, site preparation, invasive removal as required). **Output 2.3:** Decentralized nurseries established and operational, with basic quality assurance for native species. **Output 2.4:** Seed technology and nursery management	Forests, landscapes, and catchments restored; ecosystem services, resilience, and food/livelihood security increased and sustained	3,300,000

	training delivered to community groups and Department of Forests staff. **Output 2.5:** Seedlings and cuttings produced and distributed to priority implementation sites. **Output 2.6:** Local groups mobilized and trained to implement and maintain restoration works. **Output 2.7:** Restoration activities implemented and monitored across inland forests, coastal areas, and agroforestry systems. **Output 2.8:** Maintenance and aftercare systems operational (e.g., weeding, replacement planting, watering schedules, firebreaks).		
3. Knowledge Sharing, Monitoring & Policy Mainstreaming	- Community monitoring teams established and functional - Monitoring data and learning products produced and disseminated - Knowledge products, case studies, and training manuals developed in local languages - Project lessons and NbS approaches integrated into national and local policies, including the updated 2030 Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy - Regional knowledge exchange and peer learning events organized	Adaptive management institutionalized; best practices and policy updated; regional impact and replication enabled	400,818

8. Project/Programme Execution cost (9.5%)	432,818
9. Total Project/Programme Cost	4,613,636
10. Project/Programme Cycle Management Fee charged by the Implementing Entity 8.5%)	386,364
Amount of Financing Requested	**5,000,000**[9]

4. Projected Calendar:

Indicate the dates of the following milestones for the proposed project/programme

Milestones	Expected Dates
Start of Project/Programme Implementation	January 2027
Mid-term Review (if planned)	June 2029
Project/Programme Closing	January 2032
Terminal Evaluation	June 2032

[9] *Budget figures are indicative and will be further refined during the development of the full project proposal, in close consultation with Vanuatu authorities and all relevant project partners. Final budget allocations will also depend on the implementation arrangements to be defined jointly with national stakeholders during project preparation, with an emphasis on maximizing direct investment at the local level.*

PART II: PROJECT / PROGRAMME JUSTIFICATION

A. Describe the project / programme components, particularly focusing on the concrete adaptation activities of the project, and how these activities contribute to climate resilience. For the case of a programme, show how the combination of individual projects will contribute to the overall increase in resilience. Specify how the project/programme enables devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level and gives local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritized, designed, implemented; how progress is monitored and how success is evaluated.

This project is structured around a suite of concrete, locally led adaptation activities that aim to restore, manage, and sustain forest ecosystems—including inland, transitional, and mangrove forests—in Vanuatu. The initiative directly responds to increasing climate risks such as droughts, floods, landslides, coastal erosion, and declining ecosystem services, all of which are exacerbated by climate change and disproportionately affect vulnerable island communities.

The project will be implemented at national and community level, targeting high-priority and high-exposure areas. The project anticipates working intensively in three to four high-priority sites, which will be selected through a transparent and participatory process using vulnerability mapping, stakeholder input, and technical assessments to ensure resources are focused where needs and potential for impact are greatest.

Based on available demographic data, it is anticipated that approximately 8,000–12,000 people will directly benefit from restoration activities at the selected sites, with an additional 30,000–40,000 people benefiting indirectly through improved catchment services, ecosystem functions, and replication. These estimates are preliminary and will be refined through PFG-supported assessments and validated during full proposal development in collaboration with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office and the Department of Forests.

Site selection will be carried out through a transparent and participatory process during project preparation and Component 1. This process, supported by the Project Formulation Grant (PFG), will include national and community-level consultations, participatory mapping, and vulnerability assessments. Preliminary criteria, to be jointly validated during community consultations, will include: (i) degree of ecosystem degradation and vulnerability, (ii) exposure of communities and livelihoods to climate risks, (iii) potential for recovery of key ecosystem services, (iv) readiness and willingness of communities to engage, with emphasis on women, youth, and customary landowners, and (v) opportunities for replication and scaling, and (vi) potential cooperation and complementarity with past and ongoing projects. SPC and the Department of Forests will jointly oversee this process to ensure transparency and alignment with national priorities.

The final number and geographic spread of sites will be confirmed in early project phases, in close consultation with national and local authorities. Activities are designed to produce visible, measurable, and verifiable results on the ground, while contributing to long-term resilience through a systems-based, community-driven approach.

The project's objective is fully aligned with the Adaptation Fund Results Framework, particularly Outcome 2 ("Strengthened institutional capacity to reduce risks associated with climate-induced socioeconomic and environmental losses") and Outcome 5 ("Increased ecosystem resilience in response to climate change and variability-induced stress").
The project will follow a phased, step-wise approach to ensure coherence and effectiveness of interventions. Participatory baseline assessments and vulnerability analyses (Component 1) will

provide the evidence base for prioritizing sites, restoration strategies, and benefit-sharing arrangements. Building on these assessments, site-specific restoration plans and technical protocols will be co-developed with communities and landowners, leading to the establishment of nurseries and resource preparation (Component 2). Once sites and resources are secured, large-scale, community-led restoration and agroforestry interventions will be implemented, focusing on the most vulnerable landscapes and catchments. These activities will then be supported by long-term maintenance, participatory monitoring, and adaptive management systems (Component 3). Finally, lessons and results will be institutionalized through policy mainstreaming and knowledge sharing at national and regional levels.

This causal pathway—assessments → planning → resource preparation → restoration → maintenance/monitoring → policy mainstreaming—ensures that each step directly informs the next, delivering sustained climate resilience impacts. A results chain diagram will also be developed during the full proposal stage to further illustrate these pathways.

Each project component is designed to generate outputs that feed directly into outcomes and collectively contribute to the project's overall impact of enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate change. For example:

- Participatory baseline and vulnerability assessments will generate site-specific risk and vulnerability profiles (Output), which will guide evidence-based prioritization of restoration sites and inform the design of restoration strategies (Outcome).

- Nursery establishment and resource preparation will produce high-quality planting materials and build local technical capacity (Output), providing the inputs and skills needed for effective restoration activities (Outcome).

- Community-led restoration, agroforestry, and soil regeneration interventions will result in restored hectares of forest, catchments, coastal areas, and productive landscapes (Output), directly improving soil stability and fertility, food and livelihood security, disaster risk reduction, and adaptive capacity (Outcome), while laying the foundation for long-term monitoring and management.

- Maintenance, monitoring, and adaptive management systems will deliver participatory monitoring data and support adaptive management decisions (Output), ensuring sustainability of restoration efforts and generating evidence to inform local and national decision-making (Outcome).

- Policy mainstreaming and knowledge sharing will generate policy briefs, updated strategies, and regional knowledge products (Output), drawing on monitoring evidence and lessons learned to drive systematic integration of NbS into policies and practices (Outcome).

Together, these outcomes contribute to a single project-level impact: strengthened resilience of Vanuatu's ecosystems and communities to climate hazards and long-term climate change.

Beyond ecosystem restoration, the project will strengthen economic resilience and livelihood diversification in participating communities. The process will begin with participatory livelihood assessments, undertaken in each selected site as part of baseline and vulnerability analyses. These assessments, facilitated by the Department of Forests, will map existing forest- and land-

based livelihoods—such as agroforestry, non-timber forest products, sustainable harvesting, and small-scale ecotourism—and identify potential opportunities.
Communities will then prioritize options using co-developed criteria, including adaptation relevance, feasibility, equity, and environmental sustainability. Decision-making power will rest with community-based committees established under Component 1, which will include women, youth, and customary landowners to ensure inclusive representation. During Component 2, these committees will manage budget allocations for pilot livelihood activities, with SPC and DoF providing technical backstopping to ensure that choices remain within the project's adaptation and forestry scope and comply with safeguards. This approach combines genuine community leadership with technical oversight, ensuring that livelihood diversification pathways are both locally relevant and aligned with the Adaptation Fund's mandate.

The project will build on and strengthen existing governance structures and local institutions rather than creating parallel systems. During the PFG phase, participatory mapping will identify relevant institutions at community, provincial, and national levels, including community-based organisations (CBOs), customary landowner groups, women's and youth associations, provincial councils, and technical bodies such as Department of Forestry provincial offices.
Engagement will be structured through consultations and participatory planning workshops to confirm their roles and responsibilities.

Community-level institutions will co-lead site selection, restoration planning, nursery management, and participatory monitoring. Provincial authorities will coordinate across sites, integrate activities into local development and land-use plans, and support oversight. National authorities (Department of Forestry, Department of Climate Change) will provide technical guidance, policy alignment, and quality assurance.

To avoid duplication and maximize impact, the project will work closely with relevant partners and programmes already active in Vanuatu, including Nakau (community-based forest carbon and livelihood programmes) and Live & Learn's Climate Resilient Islands initiative, as well as initiatives under the Kiwa Initiative such as PEBACC+ or the Vanuatu Coastal Adaptation Project (VCAP).

At the regional level, the project will leverage SPC's convening role through the Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature-based Solutions (NbS) Working Group (30+ organisations, 60+ experts) and SPC's Land Resources Division networks. By anchoring implementation within these structures and partnerships, the project will ensure coherence, complementarity, and national ownership.

Key adaptation activities include :

- Participatory baseline assessments and vulnerability analyses that combine scientific data and traditional knowledge to identify priority areas for restoration and ensure interventions are tailored to local needs and climate risks.

- Inclusive stakeholder mapping, consultations, and planning workshops, where community members—including women, youth, customary landowners, chiefs and local communities[10]—jointly select sites, design interventions, and determine benefit-sharing

[10] In the context of Vanuatu, "Indigenous groups" refers to the Ni-Vanuatu population, who are native to the islands and comprise 99% of the total population. For the purposes of this project, the terms "local communities," "customary landowners," and "Ni-Vanuatu" are used interchangeably, reflecting the sociocultural realities and legal status of land ownership and governance in Vanuatu.

arrangements, ensuring social equity and legitimacy.

- Establishment and management of decentralized nurseries for native and climate-resilient species, supporting large-scale forest restoration and building local technical expertise in nursery management and propagation.

- Community-led forest restoration and agroforestry implementation, using best-practice Nature-based Solutions (NbS) adapted to Vanuatu's diverse forest ecosystems and local contexts. Restoration activities are managed by trained local groups, with an emphasis on water catchments and areas most exposed to climate hazards.

- Development of inclusive maintenance, aftercare, and adaptive management systems that enable ongoing stewardship, invasive species control, fire prevention, and responsive action as conditions change.

- Deployment of community monitoring teams, trained through a robust Training of Trainers model, to regularly track forest health, biodiversity, soil and water condition, and the delivery of ecosystem services. This data supports adaptive management and transparent reporting.

These activities are operationalized through three main mutually reinforcing components:

Component 1: Capacity Building, Institutional Strengthening & Inclusive Planning

Description:
This component establishes a strong foundation for locally led restoration by empowering communities and stakeholders through participatory planning, building institutional and technical capacity, and ensuring activities are shaped by robust baseline data, gender/social inclusion, and local knowledge. It explicitly invests in local leadership, safeguards, and community-driven grievance redress.

Capacity building will follow a Training of Trainers (ToT) cascade model, institutionalized through the Vanuatu Department of Forests (DoF) and SPC as co-Executing Entities, working with community-based organizations. SPC will provide overall technical support and quality assurance, ensuring all training modules meet international standards on NbS and safeguards. The DoF will lead national coordination, mobilize provincial offices, and co-deliver technical training, embedding it into national forestry and restoration programmes. Community-based organizations and local trainers will be responsible for cascading knowledge at site level, conducting peer-to-peer training and embedding skills within communities. Oversight will be maintained through regular joint supervision missions (SPC–DoF), standardized training materials, and participatory evaluation of training effectiveness. This approach ensures quality control while building long-term, community-owned expertise that continues beyond the project's lifespan.

Key Activities:

For Output 1.1: Stakeholder mapping and engagement completed

- Map stakeholders and conduct inclusive consultations (including women, youth, customary landowners, and local government) to ensure broad participation, ownership, and leadership.
- Map and engage existing institutions and networks (CBOs, customary groups, provincial councils, DoF provincial offices, women's/youth associations).
- Conduct participatory consultations to confirm roles and decision-making responsibilities at community, provincial, and national levels.
- Formalise cooperation with partners such as Nakau, Live & Learn, SPREP, Vanuatu Coastal Adaptation Project (VCAP) and other key relevant projects, programmes and partners to harmonise approaches and avoid duplication.

For Output 1.2: Participatory vulnerability, ecosystem service, and baseline assessments completed and endorsed

- Design and conduct a Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment and an Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) assessment at project inception; use findings to inform activity design, targets, indicators, and monitoring frameworks.
- Carry out participatory baseline and vulnerability assessments (ecological, social, soil, land use, threats, traditional knowledge, climate risk, food security, ecosystem services).
- Conduct cost–benefit analysis (CBA) and feasibility assessments of restoration and livelihood options, building capacity of national and community stakeholders to use these tools in planning and decision-making.
- Conduct legal and regulatory review to map required permits/authorizations (e.g., EIAs, forestry permits, land-use agreements) and establish compliance-monitoring protocols, with results integrated into planning and safeguards.

For Output 1.3: Community awareness, training sessions, and capacity-building delivered

- Deliver targeted community training and awareness sessions on Nature-based Solutions, climate adaptation, forest restoration, and sustainable resource management, with a comprehensive Training of Trainers (ToT) programme for local leaders, CBOs, and technical focal points (covering restoration, monitoring, ESS/GESI, and grievance handling, incorporating traditional knowledge and practices where appropriate).
- Deliver training and capacity building for local actors and implementing partners on compliance with national legal frameworks, the project's Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS), Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), gender and social inclusion standards, and monitoring and reporting requirements.
- Establish, train, and operationalize a community-level Grievance Redress Mechanism

(GRM), ensuring accessibility for women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.

For Output 1.4: Participatory planning documents developed and validated

- Facilitate participatory planning workshops to define site selection, priority interventions, benefit-sharing arrangements, and local management/decision-making structures.
- Complete site mapping and prioritization during project preparation, focusing on 3–4 high-priority sites with the greatest threats and restoration potential, using transparent criteria co-developed with national and local authorities.
- Support the establishment or strengthening of community-based organizations (CBOs) and local committees, providing them with resources and leadership training to lead project planning, implementation, monitoring, and decision-making at site level.

Alignment with the Adaptation Fund's Strategic Results Framework:
This component aligns with Outcome 2 (*Strengthened institutional capacity to reduce risks associated with climate-induced socioeconomic and environmental losses*) by building the technical and institutional capacity of the Department of Forestry, provincial authorities, and community-based organisations to plan, manage, and monitor restoration. It also contributes to Outcome 3 (*Strengthened awareness and ownership of adaptation and climate risk reduction processes at local level*) through participatory planning processes, inclusive consultations, and training that empower communities—including women, youth, and customary leaders—to take leadership roles in restoration and safeguards compliance. By embedding the ESMS, FPIC, and GESI approaches, this component ensures that climate risk reduction and adaptation processes are locally owned and institutionally sustained.

Component 2: Community-Led Restoration Implementation

Description:
This component drives the on-the-ground delivery of restoration and sustainable management of forests and landscapes. Activities are fully community-led, with budget and decision-making responsibilities devolved to local CBOs/groups. The focus is on nursery development, planting, agroforestry, invasive species management, and ongoing maintenance, with robust support for sustainability and local ownership beyond the project period.

Key Activities:

For Output 2.1: Land and site-access agreements formalized, and land-use plans endorsed

- Identify and secure access to land for nurseries, planting sites, and demonstration plots, formalizing agreements (e.g., MoUs, land-use agreements) with landowners and communities.
- Develop site-specific restoration and Nature-based Solution (NbS) implementation plans and technical protocols (including native species selection, propagation, restoration, and local/traditional knowledge).

For Output 2.2: Priority sites assessed and prepared for restoration

- Assess and prepare sites (biophysical/tenure checks, soil assessments, invasive removal, and site preparation for planting).

For Output 2.3: Decentralized nurseries established and operational

- Establish or strengthen decentralized nurseries (inland, coastal, mangrove).
- Demonstrate best practices for substrate and site preparation.

For Output 2.4: Seed technology and nursery management training delivered

- Train community members in nursery management, seed collection and storage, propagation, and invasive species control (through ToT cascade).

For Output 2.5: Seedlings and cuttings produced and distributed

- Produce high-quality planting materials (seedlings, cuttings) tailored to planned interventions.

For Output 2.6: Local groups mobilized and trained

- Mobilize and train local groups for planting and restoration, with ToT graduates cascading knowledge throughout the communities.

For Output 2.7: Restoration activities implemented and monitored

- Implement inland restoration, assisted natural regeneration, agroforestry demonstration plots, and coastal/mangrove restoration using best-practice, locally adapted NbS techniques.

For Output 2.8: Maintenance and aftercare systems operational

- Set up inclusive maintenance and aftercare systems (watering, weeding, fire and invasive species control, enrichment planting).
- Deliver hands-on training in adaptive, community-based forest management.

Cross-cutting activities contributing to Outputs 2.6–2.8

- Conduct participatory livelihood assessments in each site, mapping existing and potential income sources linked to forests and restoration, drawing on the Family Farm Teams (FFT) approach to ensure equitable contributions and benefit-sharing among all household members, including women and youth.
- Support community committees to prioritize and select livelihood diversification strategies using agreed criteria (adaptation relevance, feasibility, equity, environmental sustainability).
- Jointly develop sustainability and exit strategies with local actors (e.g., community management agreements, revolving funds, business models for nurseries and restoration) to ensure restoration, monitoring, and livelihoods continue after project completion.

Alignment with the Adaptation Fund's Strategic Results Framework:
This component directly contributes to **Outcome 4** (Increased adaptive capacity within relevant

development and natural resource sectors) by piloting forest and landscape restoration practices that increase resilience of agriculture, water, and forestry systems. It supports Outcome 5 (Increased ecosystem resilience in response to climate change and variability-induced stress) through large-scale reforestation, soil stabilization, and watershed restoration, helping ecosystems recover from cyclones, droughts, and invasive species pressure. Finally, it contributes to Outcome 6 (Diversified and strengthened livelihoods and sources of income for vulnerable people in targeted areas) by supporting communities to develop climate-resilient livelihood options, such as agroforestry diversification, sustainable non-timber forest products, and small-scale eco-tourism. Together, these activities reduce vulnerability while strengthening both ecosystems and livelihoods.

Component 3: Knowledge Sharing, Monitoring & Policy Mainstreaming

Description:
This component ensures that project lessons, technical advances, and innovations are institutionalized and upscaled. It builds systems for robust monitoring, learning, and policy integration, including all necessary E&S and gender safeguards, and creates pathways for regional knowledge sharing and replication.

Key Activities:

For Output 3.1: Community-based monitoring systems established and functional

- Develop and operationalize participatory monitoring systems, with regular data collection and analysis on ecological, social, and safeguard (ESS/GESI/FPIC) indicators.
- Train community monitoring teams in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL), and budget for ongoing compliance/risk tracking (including FPIC, grievances, and cultural elements) using accessible, adapted tools and templates.

For Output 3.2: Monitoring data, learning products, and knowledge products produced and disseminated

- Produce and disseminate user-friendly monitoring and learning products for adaptive management and transparent reporting.
- Document and disseminate lessons learned, case studies, and best practices in accessible formats and local languages, ensuring broad uptake by practitioners, policymakers, and communities.

For Output 3.3: Lessons and NbS approaches integrated into national and provincial policies

- Provide technical assistance to integrate forest and landscape restoration approaches (NbS) and project lessons into national and local policies—including supporting the review and update of Vanuatu's 2030 Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy.
- Deliver targeted capacity building for government, provincial, and customary authorities to enhance mainstreaming of restoration and NbS across all relevant sectors.

- Develop or update forestry and restoration guidelines (if none exist), ensuring alignment with NbS principles, safeguards, and customary knowledge, and facilitate their endorsement by the Department of Forests.

For Output 3.4: Regional knowledge exchange and peer-learning events implemented

- Establish and operationalize a national restoration network to coordinate restoration efforts, facilitate resource/lesson sharing among stakeholders, and provide a scalable platform for upscaling effective practices at national and regional levels.
- Facilitate ongoing knowledge exchange, peer learning, and regional cooperation on restoration and NbS with other Pacific forestry countries and initiatives.

Alignment with the Adaptation Fund's Strategic Results Framework:
This component contributes to **Outcome 7** (*Improved integration of climate-resilience strategies into country development plans*) by ensuring that lessons from restoration and community-led adaptation feed directly into national forestry, land-use, and climate policy processes. It also supports Outcome 8 (*Strengthened capacity for adaptive management, learning, and knowledge-sharing*) through participatory monitoring systems, knowledge products, and regional exchanges via SPC's NbS Working Group and Land Resources Division networks. By linking field-level evidence with national and regional platforms, this component ensures that project results inform broader adaptation planning and strengthen long-term capacity for adaptive management.

Contribution to Climate Resilience:

These activities work synergistically to increase Vanuatu's resilience to climate change by restoring degraded forests and water catchments, stabilizing soils, protecting watersheds, and improving biodiversity and ecosystem function. They also reduce the exposure and sensitivity of rural and coastal populations to climate hazards, strengthen food and water security, and provide alternative, climate-resilient sources of income.

Local Leadership, Empowerment, and Sustainability:

From the outset, the project devolves decision-making, planning, implementation, and monitoring responsibilities to local institutions—including community-based organizations (CBOs), customary landowners, and site-level committees. Local actors will be supported through tailored training, participatory governance structures, and ongoing technical assistance to ensure they can effectively lead and sustain restoration efforts. The project will work closely with communities to jointly develop sustainability and exit strategies—such as community management agreements, income-generating activities, and business models for nurseries and restoration—ensuring that restoration outcomes and improved livelihoods can be maintained, adapted, and scaled after project completion. The use of the Training of Trainers (ToT) approach ensures that expertise and leadership are built and retained within communities and local institutions, supporting ongoing adaptation and resilience long beyond the life of the project.

Direct Access and Participatory Monitoring:

Throughout the project, communities have a direct role not only in defining and executing activities but also in collecting, analyzing, and using data for adaptive management. Success is evaluated through a participatory monitoring and learning framework, with regular feedback loops to ensure that project benefits are equitably shared, and interventions remain relevant to changing local contexts.

In summary, the project is designed as a transformative pilot—devolving leadership, decision-making, and resource management to the community level at a scale not previously attempted in Vanuatu's forest sector. This integrated approach leverages community leadership and devolved governance to deliver tangible, scalable adaptation benefits, fully aligning with Vanuatu's priorities and the Adaptation Fund's requirements for locally led adaptation. The project will serve as a model for replication across the Pacific.

B. Describe how the project / programme provides economic, social and environmental benefits, with particular reference to the most vulnerable communities, and vulnerable groups within communities, including gender considerations. Describe how the project / programme will avoid or mitigate negative impacts, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Adaptation Fund. In particular, specify how the project/programme is addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities, people who are displaced, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized ethnic groups.

This project is designed to deliver integrated economic, social, and environmental benefits to the most climate-vulnerable communities in Vanuatu. In full alignment with the Adaptation Fund's Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy, the project actively addresses barriers to participation and ensures that women, youth, persons with disabilities, customary landowners, and other marginalized groups are actively included and empowered. Through participatory planning, inclusive governance, tailored training, and community-driven decision-making structures, the project enables these groups not only to benefit from restoration and livelihood improvements, but also to lead and sustain these outcomes over the long term.

Economically, the project enhances community resilience by restoring and sustainably managing forests and water catchments that support livelihoods, food security, and disaster risk reduction. Activities such as reforestation, soil stabilization, and watershed protection reduce the financial burden of climate-related losses, particularly in rural and coastal areas where households have limited capacity to recover from shocks. By promoting ecosystem-based approaches over costly grey infrastructure, the project also helps reduce public spending over the long term. Local economic resilience is further strengthened through the establishment of community-managed nurseries, support for agroforestry and nature-based enterprises, and the provision of technical skills in restoration, propagation, and monitoring—creating opportunities for income diversification and self-reliance.

Social benefits are generated through participatory and inclusive processes that ensure that traditionally excluded groups—especially women, youth, people with disabilities, and rural communities—are not only beneficiaries but active decision-makers throughout the project. This will be achieved by conducting targeted outreach and capacity-building sessions, reserving seats for these groups in local project committees and planning workshops, and providing dedicated leadership and skills training to enable their meaningful engagement in all decision-making and monitoring processes.

Community planning processes, Training of Trainers (ToT) models, and inclusive monitoring frameworks help build agency, leadership, and social cohesion. Education and awareness activities will be delivered in local languages and formats that are accessible to all, ensuring broad-based understanding and engagement.

All interventions will be guided by best practices in social inclusion and ecosystem management, and will be informed by indigenous and local knowledge, traditional land stewardship approaches, and customary practices. This integration of traditional knowledge ensures that restoration strategies are locally relevant, culturally appropriate, and more likely to be sustained and owned by communities over the long term.

Environmentally, the project restores and enhances forest ecosystems, including critical inland, transitional, and mangrove zones, contributing to increased biodiversity, improved soil health, enhanced carbon sequestration, and protection against climate hazards such as droughts, floods, and cyclones. Mangrove restoration in coastal areas supports fisheries and food security, while inland reforestation improves catchment health and agricultural resilience. Invasive species control and fire management activities will further protect ecosystem services that underpin human wellbeing.

Gender equality and social inclusion are integrated throughout the project lifecycle. A gender and social inclusion assessment will be undertaken early in the implementation phase to identify and address barriers to participation, influence, and benefits. Quotas or minimum targets - determined in consultation with key stakeholders and informed by the findings of the gender and social inclusion assessment- will be applied to ensure meaningful representation of women and youth in planning bodies, training sessions, and field teams. Activities will be designed with sensitivity to time constraints, caregiving responsibilities, and mobility challenges, ensuring that women and other marginalized groups can engage fully and equitably. Indigenous and customary knowledge systems will be respected and integrated into project design, with benefits distributed in a culturally appropriate and inclusive manner.

The project also includes **robust safeguards** to avoid and mitigate negative impacts. All proposed activities will be screened against the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund, with a participatory environmental and social impact assessment conducted during the design phase. A grievance redress mechanism will be established at the community level, adapted to local norms and languages. The project will avoid any activities that could result in involuntary resettlement, environmental degradation, or the marginalization of vulnerable groups. Where risks are identified—such as the potential exclusion of certain stakeholders, increased workloads for women, or unintended ecological impacts—appropriate mitigation strategies will be developed and applied, and progress will be tracked through participatory monitoring.

By devolving decision-making authority and technical capacity to the lowest appropriate level (community level), and by creating inclusive spaces for marginalized voices, the project proactively addresses structural inequalities. It promotes access to decision-making processes, tailored training, and benefit-sharing mechanisms that empower women, Indigenous communities, youth, and others who have been historically excluded from formal adaptation processes.

In summary, the project advances climate-resilient development in Vanuatu by delivering tangible, measurable benefits that are economically viable, socially just, and environmentally sound.

Through an integrated approach grounded in equity, safeguards, and participatory governance, the project contributes to long-term resilience while ensuring that no one is left behind.

C. Describe or provide an analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the proposed project / programme., focusing on the implementation and execution arrangements, in particular the mechanism which will provide more direct access to finance.

While a detailed quantitative cost-effectiveness analysis will be conducted during the full proposal development if the Project formulation Grant is granted, the project design already incorporates several features to maximize cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and value for money.

The selected scope and approach focus on community-driven, nature-based adaptation interventions that are demonstrably more cost-effective in the Pacific context than conventional engineered alternatives. For example, mangrove restoration for coastal protection has consistently proven to deliver better long-term value than hard infrastructure such as seawalls, especially when factoring in co-benefits such as fisheries enhancement, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity recovery. Similarly, forest restoration and agroforestry reduce vulnerability to floods and droughts at a fraction of the cost of large-scale irrigation or engineered slope stabilization works.

Investing in local capacity, leadership, and inclusive governance structures increases opportunities for local ownership of adaptation solutions, builds skills and social capital within communities, and reduces long-term dependency on external technical assistance or donor support. By empowering local actors to drive restoration, monitoring, and sustainable livelihoods, the project creates systems that are self-sustaining, adaptable, and replicable. This approach improves return on investment and ensures that benefits continue well beyond the project's operational period. The activities proposed are further grounded in the robust needs assessment conducted under the PPIN project, ensuring that interventions are fit-for-purpose and directly address identified local priorities.

The project's implementation and execution arrangements will be defined in close partnership with national authorities and key project partners. The aim is to maximize local coordination, capacity, and ownership by placing most technical project positions directly within Vanuatu—including within the Department of Forestry (DoF) as the national co-Executing Entity. This approach will enhance day-to-day collaboration, knowledge transfer, and local leadership of restoration activities. The Pacific Community (SPC), as the Regional Implementing Entity, will also act as a co-Executing Entity alongside DoF. SPC will retain overall responsibility for fiduciary oversight, procurement, safeguards, and reporting to the Adaptation Fund, while DoF will lead operational management, provincial mobilisation, and forestry technical implementation. These arrangements are specifically designed to strengthen direct access to finance and decision-making by local actors—a key driver of both effectiveness and efficiency. In collaboration with national partners and community organizations, SPC and DoF as co-Executing Entities will facilitate rapid and equitable financial flows to the local level, minimizing bureaucratic delays and avoiding high-cost intermediaries.

Key mechanisms for enhancing cost-effectiveness and direct access to finance include:

- **Devolving decision-making and financial management** to community groups and local institutions wherever feasible, enabling more targeted and context-specific investments and reducing administrative overhead.

- **Building on and strengthening existing structures** (e.g., local nurseries, customary governance, community monitoring groups) rather than establishing parallel or project-specific entities, which improves efficiency and promotes sustainability beyond the life of the project.

- **Adopting a Training of Trainers (ToT) model** that creates local capacity for ongoing restoration and monitoring, thus reducing costs for future scaling-up and replication.

- **Leveraging in-kind contributions** from local communities —including land, time commitments, and locally available raw materials— as well as from government agencies, and partners to reduce direct financial outlays while increasing ownership and sustainability.

- **Phasing investments** so that initial resources focus on capacity building and infrastructure (nurseries, training, planning), with subsequent allocations determined by participatory assessments and real-time monitoring of results, ensuring that funds are directed to activities with the highest impact.

Compared to other adaptation options, such as large-scale grey infrastructure or externally managed environmental programs, this locally led and ecosystem-based model ensures that resources are primarily invested in concrete, on-the-ground actions that generate measurable adaptation benefits and multiple co-benefits for livelihoods, food security, biodiversity, and climate mitigation.

This approach also allows for replication and scalability at low incremental cost, as trained local actors and restored systems can serve as demonstration sites and technical hubs for neighboring communities.

In sum, the project provides a cost-effective pathway to adaptation that is tailored to the realities of Vanuatu—small, dispersed islands with limited fiscal space and high exposure to climate risks. The combination of community ownership, nature-based approaches, and direct access to resources delivers both short-term adaptation outcomes and long-term resilience, while minimizing financial inefficiencies and maximizing sustainability.

A comprehensive cost-effectiveness assessment—including a comparative analysis of adaptation options, and quantification of cost per hectare restored and per beneficiary reached—will be completed as part of the full proposal development if the Project Formulation Grant is granted.

D. Describe how the project / programme is consistent with national, sub-national and local sustainable development strategies, including, where appropriate, national adaptation plan (NAP), national, sub- national or local development plans, poverty reduction strategies, national communications, or national adaptation programs of action, or other relevant instruments, where they exist.

The proposed project is fully aligned with Vanuatu's national, sub-national, and local sustainable development and climate adaptation strategies. Specifically, the project supports the following frameworks:

National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030 (“The People’s Plan”)

- The project contributes directly to Environment Goal 4 (“A nation which utilises and sustainably manages our natural resources”) and Society Goal 1 (“A just, inclusive and equitable society”), as well as the economic, environmental, and social policy objectives set out in the People’s Plan.

Vanuatu National Forest Policy (2013–2023) & draft updates

- The project operationalizes the National Forest Policy’s objectives of restoring degraded forests, enhancing community-based management, building local capacity, and integrating traditional knowledge with modern forestry practices.

- The project’s focus on sustainable forest management, catchment restoration, and invasive species control is fully consistent with the policy’s stated actions and priorities.

Vanuatu Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy (2020–2030)

- The project is fully aligned with the objectives and approaches of the Vanuatu Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy (FLRS), which aims to restore ecological processes, improve biodiversity, and strengthen resilience to environmental change through participatory, landscape-scale interventions.

- The project contributes to FLRS priorities such as restoring degraded lands, protecting climate-sensitive ecosystems, and empowering local communities as primary stewards of restoration efforts, as well as establishing permanent monitoring and learning systems to support adaptive management and upscaling of effective practices.

National REDD+ Strategy of Vanuatu (2021)

- The project directly supports the National REDD+ Strategy’s vision to safeguard and restore forest landscapes, facilitate climate- and forest-friendly production systems, build resilience in forest-based communities, and promote sustainable livelihoods.

- Activities such as afforestation, reforestation, agroforestry, and sustainable land management are designed to address both direct and underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, while promoting inclusive, community-based management and benefit-sharing in line with the REDD+ strategy’s enabling interventions and safeguards.

Vanuatu NDC Forestry Sector Investment Strategy

- The project is closely linked to the Vanuatu NDC Forestry Sector Investment Strategy, supporting key priorities for mitigation and adaptation, including large-scale reforestation, forest and landscape restoration, and agroforestry development.
- By targeting increased forest cover, improved land management, and enhanced carbon sequestration, the project contributes to the achievement of Vanuatu’s enhanced NDC commitments under the Paris Agreement, while mobilizing investment, technical assistance, and capacity building as outlined in the Investment Strategy.

Vanuatu National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA, 2007) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP, 2022)

- The project supports the NAPA's priority adaptation interventions for the forestry sector, including reforestation, watershed management, and enhancing resilience to climate-induced hazards.

- The project's locally led, nature-based solutions approach is fully consistent with the NAP, which prioritizes ecosystem-based adaptation, integrated water and land management, community participation, and the strengthening of local capacity.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs, 2020)

- The project contributes directly to Vanuatu's commitments under the Paris Agreement to increase forest cover, enhance ecosystem resilience, and promote community-based adaptation measures.

- It specifically supports NDC targets for afforestation/reforestation, biodiversity conservation, and building resilience in climate-vulnerable communities.

Vanuatu National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP, 2018)

- The project advances NBSAP objectives for restoring degraded habitats, enhancing community-based conservation, and promoting the sustainable use of biodiversity resources, including forests and catchments.

Provincial and Local Area Plans

- The project will work directly with provincial governments and local area councils to ensure activities are tailored to local development and land-use plans, respecting customary land tenure and promoting inclusive, participatory governance at the community level.

National Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change Policy (2016–2030)

- The project's focus on ecosystem restoration, catchment protection, and reducing climate and disaster risk is fully aligned with this policy's strategic priorities for integrated risk reduction and resilience building.

Gender and Social Inclusion Policies

- The project is consistent with the Vanuatu National Gender Equality Policy (2020–2030), by actively promoting the participation and leadership of women, youth, people with disabilities, and marginalized groups in climate adaptation and resource management.

Vanuatu Biosecurity Policy 2016-2030

The project contributes to or complements Vanuatu's efforts on its biosecurity policy particularly in thematic areas covering plant health), pesticide and industrial chemicals management, GEDSI, climate change and linkages with national, regional and international stakeholders.

E. Describe how the project / programme meets relevant national technical standards, where applicable, such as standards for environmental assessment, building codes, etc., and complies with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund.
Also describe, as needed, how the project/programme will provide support to local actors and build their capacities to comply with the standards.

The project is fully committed to meeting all relevant national technical standards and complying with the Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) of the Adaptation Fund throughout planning, implementation, and monitoring. A strong focus is placed on ensuring that local institutions and communities are equipped to understand and meet these standards in a practical and inclusive manner.

The project will ensure full compliance with Vanuatu's regulatory frameworks and the Adaptation Fund's Environmental and Social Policy. During the project formulation phase, an **Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS)** will be carried out to identify required authorizations and clearances—such as environmental impact assessments, forestry permits, and land-use consents—and to design draft compliance-monitoring protocols. These arrangements will be refined during the full proposal stage following consultations with national authorities, ensuring transparency, accountability, and adherence to both national and international standards.

Compliance with National Technical Standards:
All project activities will adhere to Vanuatu's national legal and technical frameworks, including environmental assessment requirements under the Environmental Protection and Conservation Act [CAP 283], national standards for reforestation and nursery practices, forest management guidelines, and, where applicable, building codes for any physical infrastructure.
Prior to implementation of restoration or infrastructure activities, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) or Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) will be conducted as required by Vanuatu's Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation (DEPC).
Project activities will also respect all customary land tenure systems and ensure Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of affected landowners and communities.

Compliance with Adaptation Fund ESP:
The project has been screened against the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund. Safeguards will be integrated through:

- Participatory environmental and social risk assessment during project preparation and site selection;
- Avoidance of involuntary resettlement or significant adverse impacts on habitats and vulnerable groups;
- Grievance redress mechanisms at the community level, with clear procedures for raising and resolving concerns;
- Ongoing monitoring and reporting of environmental and social impacts, including gender and inclusion indicators;
- Ensuring equitable benefit sharing and respect for human rights, Indigenous rights, and cultural heritage.

Capacity Building for Standards Compliance:
Recognizing that technical standards and safeguards are essential for effective, sustainable outcomes, the project will provide tailored support and capacity building for local actors and implementing partners to ensure full compliance. This includes:

- Training programs for local government, community leaders, and partner organizations on national regulations
- Development and dissemination of user-friendly implementation tools (e.g., step-by-step guides, checklists, and protocols in local languages) covering nursery management, agroforestry safety, EIA procedures, and gender-responsive engagement;
- Technical support and oversight provided by SPC and national experts throughout the project cycle to assist with environmental compliance and safeguard application;
- Integration of compliance and safeguards into all Training of Trainers (ToT) modules, enabling knowledge transfer to community-level practitioners.
- Learning exchanges, peer-peer learning and best practices shared between different communities.

By embedding national technical standards and international best practice throughout the project cycle, and by building the capacity of local actors to comply, the project not only ensures regulatory compliance but also strengthens long-term sustainability and local ownership.

F. Describe if there is duplication of project / programme with other funding sources, if any. Decribe how the project/programme will ensure coordination of different initiatives, sub-projects and small grants towards a common goal, enhances collaboration across sectors and outlines how activities avoid duplication and enhance efficiencies and good practice.

This project is carefully designed to complement and build upon existing Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and forest restoration initiatives in Vanuatu, while addressing critical gaps in community-led, large-scale restoration and locally driven adaptation. Preliminary mapping and engagement with the NDA indicate no duplication of funding or activities. Rather, the project is positioned to maximize synergy, coordination, and value for money by aligning with ongoing initiatives and contributing to a coherent national approach to ecosystem-based adaptation.

The design of this project will be informed by lessons from ongoing and past initiatives in Vanuatu and the wider Pacific, such as the Kiwa Initiative, Live & Learn's Climate Resilient Islands (CRI) Programme, Nakau's community-based forest carbon programmes, MACBLUE, PEBACC+ or Vanuatu Coastal Adaptation Project. These initiatives demonstrate the importance of community-led governance, early engagement with customary landowners, and integration of livelihood options to strengthen resilience. Building on these lessons, the project ensures that community-based committees are central to decision-making and that restoration is closely linked with sustainable livelihoods.

Potential areas of cooperation have been identified with live & learn and nakau, whose complementary experience and networks offer strategic added value for this project.

Live & Learn (Climate Resilient Islands – CRI Programme): Works directly with communities and customary landowners in Vanuatu to strengthen resilience through restoration, sustainable livelihoods, and governance support, with established baselines, resilience plans, and facilitation mechanisms in place.

- ***Linkages with this project****:* CRI's sites and knowledge products provide a ready platform to align and scale restoration activities.
- ***Potential cooperation areas****:* community facilitation, participatory planning, integration of resilience planning into restoration sites, and knowledge exchange.
- ***Added value****:* ensures stronger mainstreaming of project activities into national programmes, avoids duplication, and leverages proven methodologies for community-led adaptation.

Nakau: A regional mechanism enabling communities to access carbon finance through conservation and restoration. In Vanuatu, Nakau operates at sites such as Loru and Vunausi, pioneering approaches that link restoration, customary governance, and carbon standards.

- *Linkages with this project:* experience aligns with the project's focus on long-term sustainability and linking restoration with climate finance.
- *Potential cooperation areas:* carbon-compatible restoration models; support to early years of carbon projects (high labour costs, low credit volumes); and equitable benefit-sharing models.
- *Added value:* enhances technical credibility, creates opportunities for carbon-linked finance, and ensures interventions are compatible with international standards, strengthening sustainability and scaling potential.

Vanuatu Coastal Adaptation Project (VCAP, Phase II): Implemented by the Department of Climate Change with UNDP support, VCAP focuses on strengthening resilience in vulnerable coastal zones through ecosystem-based adaptation, biodiversity conservation, land degradation control, and improved climate information systems (e.g., AWS and river gauges). It works at community and provincial levels, with strong links to national strategies and policy frameworks.

- *Linkages with this project:* VCAP's ridge-to-reef approach and community adaptation mechanisms overlap with the proposed forest and landscape restoration activities, particularly in vulnerable watersheds and coastal catchments. Its monitoring systems and governance structures complement the project's restoration and adaptation interventions.
- *Potential cooperation areas:* aligning restoration sites with VCAP's target provinces; joint use of vulnerability assessments and monitoring systems; harmonized safeguards and gender approaches; coordination on community-based planning and grants mechanisms; and knowledge sharing across ridge-to-reef interventions.

- *Added value:* ensures complementarity between forest restoration and coastal adaptation; leverages VCAP's established data, governance structures, and community networks; avoids duplication; and creates stronger pathways for national policy integration and replication across the Pacific.

PEBACC+ (Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change Plus, implemented by SPREP): In Vanuatu, PEBACC+ builds on the original PEBACC project by piloting ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) interventions in priority landscapes and seascapes, strengthening national capacity to mainstream EbA into policies, and producing tools and case studies for replication across the Pacific.

- *Linkages with this project:* PEBACC+ has established EbA demonstration sites, methodologies, and partnerships with national institutions (including the Department of Forestry and Department of Environment). These align with the project's forest restoration and NbS objectives.
- *Potential cooperation areas:* harmonizing EbA and restoration guidelines; building on PEBACC+ demonstration sites for scaling; joint development of policy briefs and mainstreaming tools; and leveraging SPREP's regional platform for knowledge dissemination.
- *Added value:* ensures stronger alignment with regional EbA standards, avoids duplication of pilot efforts, and strengthens the scientific and policy basis for NbS in Vanuatu, enhancing credibility and opportunities for replication.

MACBLUE (Managing Coastal Aquifer Resources and Blue Economy, EU-funded): MACBLUE supports Vanuatu and other Pacific Island countries to sustainably manage coastal aquifers, protect groundwater resources, and link water security with climate adaptation and blue economy opportunities. In Vanuatu, it emphasizes hydrological monitoring, integrated water resource management, and capacity building for national institutions.

- *Linkages with this project:* MACBLUE's focus on aquifer and groundwater protection directly complements restoration interventions in upland forests and catchments, which are critical for recharge and water regulation.
- *Potential cooperation areas:* coordinated watershed and aquifer management planning; integration of hydrological monitoring data into restoration site planning; joint awareness-raising on the forest–water nexus; and alignment of policy messages on water security and NbS.
- *Added value:* ensures forest restoration contributes directly to water security outcomes, leverages MACBLUE's technical expertise in hydrology and aquifer management, and strengthens multi-sectoral cooperation across forestry, water, and climate adaptation agendas.

Overall, collaboration with live & learn and nakau will reinforce national synergies, better mainstreaming of activities into policy frameworks, and greater community impact. these partnerships bring trusted community networks (through cri), technical expertise in restoration and carbon finance (through nakau), and strong links with the department of forestry (through both).

At the full proposal stage, a deeper mapping and analysis of complementarities will be undertaken with national partners to identify additional linkages and ensure coherence with other investments. Where relevant, lessons from other projects with community-led adaptation approaches will be incorporated into project design, and conversely, experiences generated through this project will be shared to strengthen collective learning and scaling across Vanuatu and the Pacific. During the project formalation phase, these potential partnerships with Live & Learn and Nakau will be further developed and formalised to ensure complementarity, avoid duplication, and embed the project within Vanuatu's broader locally led adaptation and restoration strategies.

Identified Relevant Projects and Programmes in Vanuatu

- **Kiwa Initiative**
  - ✓ **PEBACC+ (SPREP):** Ecosystem-based adaptation and urban tree planting in Port Vila and Tanna.
  - ✓ **LAMACCA Ecosystem Restoration Project (South Malekula):** Community-led ecosystem and forest restoration, including coastal protection and coral reef rehabilitation.

- **MACBLUE (SPREP / EU / AFD)**
  - ✓ Focused on blue carbon, mangrove ecosystem management, and policy development for coastal and marine NbS.

- **PPIN – Promoting Pacific Islands Nature-based Solutions**
  - ✓ Led by SPC in partnership with IUCN, SPREP, and GGGI, under MFAT funding.
  - ✓ Focused on regional and national NbS capacity-building, with pilots and mainstreaming support in Vanuatu.

- **Live & Learn – Climate Resilient Islands (CRI) Programme**

  ✓ Works with communities and customary landowners to strengthen resilience through ecosystem restoration, agroforestry, and community-based governance.
  ✓ Established community baselines, resilience plans, and facilitation networks in partnership with the Department of Forestry and provincial authorities.

- **Nakau – Community-Based Forest Carbon Programmes**

  ✓ Active in Vanuatu at sites such as Loru and Vunausi, linking restoration and conservation to international carbon standards.
  ✓ Provides technical expertise on benefit-sharing models and supports communities

to access long-term carbon finance through forest conservation and restoration.

- **FAO/GEF Forestry and Protected Area Management Project (GEFPAS-FPAM)**
  - ✓ Supporting improved forest governance and protected area management in Vanuatu and other Pacific countries.

- **Endospermum medullosum (Whitewood) Management and Processing Project**
  - ✓ Focused on enhancing propagation, sustainable harvesting, and value-chain development of a climate-resilient timber species.

- **Aniwa Community Reforestation Project (Department of Forests)**
  - ✓ Small-scale, community-led forest restoration initiative with a strong focus on local engagement and technical capacity-building.

- **Climate Resilient by Nature Programme**
  - ✓ *Ni-Vanuatu Women Leading Solutions to Climate Change:* Women-led ecosystem restoration and adaptation.
  - ✓ *NbS for Forests and People:* Forest and catchment restoration with a strong community-based approach.

- **GEF 6/FAO – Ecosystem Restoration and Sustainable Land Management in Tongoa**
  - ✓ *Focused on ecosystem restoration, reforestation, and the promotion of sustainable land management practices on Tongoa Island, strengthening local capacity and resilience to land degradation and climate change.*

- **GEF/UNDP – VCAP 2 (Adaptation to Climate Change in the Coastal Zones of Vanuatu)**
  - ✓ *Large-scale adaptation project targeting coastal communities; includes integrated approaches to coastal protection, ecosystem restoration, and strengthening of local governance and climate-resilient livelihoods.*

Potential areas of complementarity include:

- Alignment of monitoring and evaluation frameworks, indicators, and NbS standards;
- Coordination of capacity-building and training activities, particularly for community-based forest management and restoration;
- Knowledge exchange and joint technical guidance, including on ecosystem restoration, benefit-sharing models, and participatory planning;
- Collaborative site selection and sequencing to avoid geographic and thematic overlap, while expanding coverage to underserved communities or ecosystems.
- Collaboration with Live & Learn's Climate Resilient Islands (CRI) programme to leverage existing community baselines, resilience plans, and facilitation networks, ensuring strong

mainstreaming into national systems;

- Partnership with Nakau to align restoration activities with carbon methodologies, explore carbon-compatible restoration models, and support equitable benefit-sharing and access to long-term climate finance.

- Coordination with the Vanuatu Coastal Adaptation Project (VCAP II) to align ridge-to-reef approaches, share vulnerability assessments and monitoring systems, and integrate safeguards and gender-responsive planning;

- Engagement with PEBACC+ to harmonize EbA and restoration approaches, build on demonstration sites, and scale policy integration of ecosystem-based adaptation;

- Linkages with MACBLUE to connect forest and watershed restoration with aquifer recharge and water security, aligning hydrological monitoring and joint awareness on the forest–water nexus.

SPC, as a regional implementing entity with strong thematic expertise and longstanding partnerships in Vanuatu, is well-positioned to lead and facilitate coordination. Its direct engagement with national authorities, technical partners, and community-based organisations ensures visibility across ongoing programmes and the ability to integrate complementary efforts from the outset. Coordination will also benefit from the active participation of national institutions, such as the Department of Forests and the Department of Climate Change, which are jointly involved in the planning and implementation of many relevant initiatives.

To further ensure complementarity and avoid duplication, the project will:

- Collaborate with relevant government and non-government actors to validate the mapping of existing and planned interventions during the full proposal stage;

- Establish or strengthen a national NbS and restoration coordination platform, allowing for ongoing dialogue, information sharing, and joint planning;

- Promote the harmonisation of tools, protocols, and outreach strategies with other initiatives to reduce inefficiencies and amplify impact.

- These coordination mechanisms, along with SPC's leadership and in-country networks, will be formalized during the full proposal development, including the identification of entry points for collaboration, joint knowledge-sharing strategies, and planning for complementary investments.

This project will not duplicate existing efforts but will instead act as a strategic catalyst to scale, harmonize, and sustain NbS investments across Vanuatu. Through alignment with national priorities and robust coordination with ongoing initiatives, it will contribute to a more efficient, inclusive, and impactful adaptation response.

G. If applicable, describe the learning and knowledge management component to capture and disseminate lessons learned and how this contributes to building and institutionalizing local capabilities. Provide details on managing traditional and/or indigenous knowledge, where relevant.

A dedicated learning and knowledge management component is central to this project's design, ensuring that lessons learned, innovations, and community-led practices are systematically captured, analysed, disseminated, and institutionalised to inform adaptive management and long-term scaling. The project is explicitly conceived as a demonstration initiative, laying the foundation for replication and upscaling across all ten forestry countries and territories in the Pacific region.

Knowledge Capture and Adaptive Learning Mechanisms

The project will adopt a Results-Based Management (RBM) approach, embedding learning into all stages of implementation through:

- Participatory monitoring and evaluation systems at community and landscape levels, enabling the routine collection of quantitative and qualitative data from all stakeholders—including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalised groups.
- Community reflection workshops, after-action reviews, and landscape-level learning exchanges, timed with key implementation milestones, to surface emerging lessons, challenges, and adaptive strategies.
- Use of learning indicators linked to the project's outputs and outcomes to track progress on knowledge generation, uptake, and impact—supporting real-time adjustment and strategic learning.

Dissemination Tools and Knowledge Products

To ensure broad visibility and application of project-generated knowledge, the following dissemination tools and platforms will be used:

- Development of knowledge products such as case studies, technical manuals, policy briefs, multimedia stories, short videos, and restoration toolkits, all tailored for different audiences and translated into local languages where appropriate.
- Distribution through national and regional knowledge platforms, including the Department of Forests, SPC portals, the PIRT NbS Working Group, and others.
- Engagement with media and communication channels, including newsletters, community radio, social media, and dedicated project webpage to document and share ongoing lessons, progress updates, and milestone events.

Institutionalisation and Local Capacity Building

The project will prioritise the embedding of learning processes and tools within local institutions, ensuring continuity beyond the project's timeframe:

- Training materials and knowledge products will be institutionalised within local government departments, customary authorities, and community-based organisations.

- The Training of Trainers (ToT) model will enable the continued delivery of capacity-building and peer mentoring at the community level.

- Opportunities for cross-project and cross-sectoral learning will be actively pursued, including through collaboration with other NbS initiatives, regional exchanges, and shared learning events.

Integration and Protection of Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge

Respectful and ethical integration of traditional knowledge is central to the project's learning approach:

- Engagement of customary landowners and Indigenous leaders will follow Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles.

- Traditional ecological knowledge—covering areas such as forest and watershed management, species selection, and climate forecasting—will be integrated with scientific knowledge in restoration protocols and monitoring systems.

- The project will support community storytelling, participatory mapping, and knowledge documentation activities, ensuring community ownership and recognition of intellectual property rights.

Catalysing Regional Upscaling

This project serves as a proof-of-concept for scaling Nature-based Solutions across the Pacific. It will:

- Package and share its methodologies, tools, and results to inform future proposals, donor programmes, and national policies in the region.

- Facilitate regional exchange visits, joint workshops, and engagement in Pacific-wide forums to promote regional learning and knowledge transfer.

- Contribute insights and practices to the development of coordinated regional approaches to NbS and forest restoration, aligned with national and regional climate adaptation strategies.

The project's knowledge management component not only empowers local actors with the tools and knowledge they need to sustain and replicate successful practices but also supports the institutionalisation of learning and the creation of a regional knowledge base to advance ecosystem-based adaptation at scale across the Pacific.

H. Describe the consultative process, including the list of stakeholders consulted, undertaken during project preparation, with particular reference to vulnerable groups, including gender considerations, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Adaptation Fund. Provide details on how the consultative process considered and addressed gender-based, economic and other inequalities and encouraged vulnerable and marginalized individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.

The concept for this project was developed through a robust initial consultation process involving key national and regional stakeholders, with a particular focus on forestry authorities and technical partners in Vanuatu and across the Pacific. While direct community consultations will be undertaken during full proposal development, this concept note reflects the outcomes of multiple engagement efforts with those institutions currently responsible for forest restoration, environmental policy, and land resource management in Vanuatu.

Initial Consultations and Stakeholders Engaged

The project design draws on extensive consultations and needs assessments carried out at both national and regional levels. This includes the PPIN project's capacity building needs assessment for forestry in Vanuatu, wide-ranging engagement with all Pacific forestry countries during the design of Phase II of the Kiwa Initiative's technical assistance, and the comprehensive regional needs assessment on forest and coastal restoration conducted by SPC's Land Resources and Climate Change and Sustainability Divisions in early 2025. Together, these processes involved detailed technical consultations with forestry departments, senior technical officers, and other key practitioners across 10 Pacific Island Countries and Territories—including Vanuatu—to identify restoration priorities, capacity gaps, and enabling conditions.

In Vanuatu, the consultation included direct engagement with the Department of Forestry—and staff responsible for native species propagation, nursery operations, and restoration site management. This work was complemented by a separate in-country needs assessment conducted under the Pacific Islands Promote Nature-based Solutions (PPIN) project, which focused on Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu. These assessments highlighted gaps in training, tools, and institutional coordination that are now addressed in the project design.

In addition, Vanuatu's participation in the Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (PHOAFS) meeting, organised by SPC in June 2025, provided a platform for high-level dialogue with government stakeholders. The discussions held during that regional forum, including with the Vanuatu Department of Forests and Department of Climate Change, further reinforced the strategic alignment of this project with national restoration goals and climate adaptation priorities.

While the concept was informed primarily through engagement with technical and institutional partners, direct consultations with community representatives—including women's groups, youth, and people with disabilities—are planned for the full proposal phase, contingent on securing the Project Formulation Grant

Gender and Social Inclusion Considerations

Throughout the assessments and dialogue to date, emphasis has been placed on identifying structural barriers to inclusion in forest restoration—especially regarding the role of women, youth,

Indigenous people, and persons with disabilities. Stakeholders consistently raised the need for gender-responsive training, culturally relevant outreach materials, and mechanisms to ensure equitable access to benefits. These priorities have been integrated into the project's design, with inclusive participation, leadership quotas, and benefit-sharing principles proposed as core operational features.

During the full proposal development stage, the project will incorporate a comprehensive gender and social inclusion assessment to inform the design of all components. FPIC protocols will be systematically applied, and the differentiated needs and capacities of vulnerable groups will be actively explored and addressed.

Community-Level Engagement – Planned Next Steps

While this concept note was developed through national and technical consultations, a thorough community-level consultative process is planned for the proposal development stage and will continue throughout the project implementation. Communities, landowners, and local groups will not only be consulted but actively co-design project activities through participatory planning workshops, site visits, and benefit-sharing negotiations. Marginalized and underrepresented groups will be specifically targeted through tailored outreach and supported participation mechanisms.

This process will include:

- Public meetings and dialogue forums at community level (ensuring gender balance and accessibility);
- Focus group discussions with women, youth, and customary leaders;
- Mapping of local knowledge, priorities and threats through participatory tools;
- Validation of project design elements (site selection, nursery management, restoration methods, etc.) with target communities.

Consultations will also be held with implementers of complementary national and regional initiatives and relevant thematic experts to coordinate strategies, ensure alignment, and jointly address gaps identified in other NbS and restoration efforts.

The project concept reflects broad-based input from national and regional stakeholders, with a strong foundation of evidence from recent needs assessments and technical dialogues. It is grounded in the lived realities of those implementing restoration at scale in Vanuatu and beyond. Moving forward, the project will ensure inclusive, gender-responsive, and locally led consultations to refine and deliver an effective, equitable adaptation response fully aligned with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Adaptation Fund.

I. Provide justification for funding requested, focusing on the full cost of adaptation reasoning.

The requested funding represents the full cost of adaptation required to enable Vanuatu's most climate-vulnerable communities and critical ecosystems to withstand and adapt to the accelerating impacts of climate change. In the absence of external support, communities and local authorities lack the resources, technical capacity, and institutional frameworks to implement the integrated, community-driven forest restoration and adaptation activities proposed by this project.

Without Adaptation Funding:

- Degraded forests and catchments would continue to deteriorate, further reducing water availability, destabilising soils, and increasing the risk of landslides, drought, flooding, and cyclone impacts.
- Vulnerable communities—including women, youth, and Indigenous groups—would remain exposed to food and water insecurity, deteriorating natural resource bases, and disaster-related loss of livelihoods, infrastructure, and human life.
- Local and Indigenous knowledge systems, which provide important low-cost solutions, would remain underutilised and unintegrated in formal planning processes due to lack of documentation, recognition, and capacity.
- Vanuatu would fall short of its national adaptation goals, including those articulated in its National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly on forest restoration, climate-resilient livelihoods, and biodiversity protection.

With Adaptation Funding (Full Cost of Adaptation):

Adaptation Fund resources will directly finance the **incremental adaptation costs** required to implement, sustain, and scale community-led climate resilience actions. Funding will:

- Establish the enabling environment—knowledge, tools, governance mechanisms, and financial resources—for local communities to plan and implement climate-resilient forest and catchment restoration at scale.
- Support inclusive, gender-responsive, and locally led adaptation actions rooted in best-practice Nature-based Solutions and traditional knowledge.
- Cover the costs of restoring degraded ecosystems, establishing and maintaining decentralized nurseries, developing restoration protocols, and supporting resilient agroforestry systems in priority areas.
- Provide training, institutional capacity-building, and technical support for participatory planning, monitoring, and adaptive management.
- Address specific barriers that communities cannot overcome alone, including: upfront investment in nurseries and planting materials, design of legal frameworks for benefit-

sharing, and the establishment of monitoring systems and knowledge platforms.

Incremental Value and Non-Duplication:

All requested funds are allocated to adaptation-specific activities, targeting the incremental costs that go beyond baseline development needs. The project has been carefully designed to avoid duplication and instead complement other donor-funded or government-led efforts. As described in Section F, mapping of initiatives has already been undertaken to ensure alignment and synergy.

Although some activities (e.g., community mobilisation, local training, nursery development) might also appear in development programmes, in this project they are specifically tailored to deliver concrete climate adaptation outcomes and have been framed accordingly. The proposed activities will be implemented independently of any co-financing, ensuring that Adaptation Fund outcomes and outputs are achieved regardless of contributions from other sources.

Catalytic Impact:

This project is expected to generate sustained and measurable adaptation benefits. These include reduced climate-related losses, improved food and water security, healthier ecosystems, and more resilient livelihoods. In addition, the project will create institutional, technical, and knowledge assets that can be leveraged for wider regional replication and policy influence.

By supporting this demonstration initiative, the Adaptation Fund will catalyse transformational change—positioning Vanuatu as a regional leader in community-led, nature-based forest restoration and management and helping to build a blueprint for resilience across other Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

J. Describe how the sustainability of the project/programme outcomes has been taken into account when designing the project / programme. In particular, describe how the project/programme supports long-term development of local governance processes, and improves the capacity of local institutions (including through simpler access modalities), and how it can ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions, facilitate and manage adaptation initiatives over the long term without being dependent on project-based donor funding.

Sustainability has been a core principle in the design of this project. Every component is structured to ensure that the benefits—environmental, social, and institutional—extend well beyond the project lifecycle, enabling communities and local institutions to independently sustain, manage, and expand climate adaptation actions over time. The project strengthens systems, capacities, and partnerships that are essential for long-term resilience, reducing reliance on project-based donor funding.

Institutional and Governance Sustainability

The project places local governance and institutional strengthening at its core, aiming to embed climate adaptation and forest restoration into existing structures rather than creating parallel systems. Sustainability will be supported through:

- Strengthening of customary and local governance mechanisms for land and natural

resource management, including inclusive benefit-sharing models and participatory land-use planning.

- Support to national and provincial government institutions—particularly the Department of Forests and Department of Climate Change—to embed Nature-based Solutions (NbS) into policy, planning, and budgeting processes.

- Establishment or reinforcement of multi-stakeholder coordination platforms (e.g., NbS/Restoration Committees) that ensure long-term dialogue, strategic planning, and coordinated investments across sectors and partners.

By building the capacity of duty bearers and decision-makers, the project creates the enabling environment required for Vanuatu to institutionalize climate adaptation and ecosystem restoration beyond the project's duration.

Capacity Strengthening and Local Ownership

A robust Training of Trainers (ToT) model ensures that technical expertise is retained at the community level and can be mobilized after the project ends. Local actors will be trained in:

- Nursery establishment and management
- Site-specific restoration and ecosystem management
- Participatory monitoring and adaptive management
- Family Farm Teams (FFT) approaches for equitable household and community resource management
- Environmental and social safeguard compliance
- Governance and facilitation of inclusive planning

These trainings will be co-designed with local institutions and embedded within provincial and customary governance processes. By fostering peer-to-peer learning networks, the project helps create a cadre of local restoration champions, capable of continuing and expanding activities independently.

Environmental Sustainability

The project focuses on the restoration and sustainable management of critical inland, transitional, and mangrove forests—ecosystems that are foundational to long-term resilience. Activities are designed to:

- Restore ecological function and biodiversity
- Reduce erosion, fire risk, and water stress
- Reinforce natural buffers against extreme climate events

Only native and climate-resilient species will be used, and planting designs will incorporate long-term ecological principles. Post-planting maintenance systems (e.g., invasive species control, fire breaks, enrichment planting) will be community-led and included in site management plans, with resource allocations where necessary.

Economic and Financial Sustainability

The project invests in income-generating and cost-saving ecosystem services by:

- Promoting agroforestry and food security in tandem with restoration
- Reducing disaster-related losses and costs to households
- Strengthening access to local water sources through catchment protection

Where possible, the project will explore and build awareness around blended finance options and sustainable financing mechanisms for post-project continuation, such as:

- Integration into national and provincial climate budgets
- Exploring small-scale ecotourism or PES (Payment for Ecosystem Services) models
- Creating local business cases for sustaining nurseries and restoration enterprises

While donor support kick-starts the intervention, sustainability is embedded through community ownership, capacity, and alignment with long-term national priorities.

Replication and Scaling Potential

As a proof-of-concept, this project is intentionally designed for scaling across Vanuatu and the wider Pacific region. The methodologies, training modules, planning tools, and governance models developed under this project will be documented, refined, and disseminated for use by other provinces and countries. Lessons learned will feed into regional platforms.

By embedding adaptation into the institutional fabric of Vanuatu, and by equipping local actors with the knowledge, tools, and leadership roles to continue implementation, this project establishes a strong foundation for sustainable, locally driven resilience. Its multi-dimensional sustainability strategy ensures that the impacts will be enduring, equitable, and scalable, transforming not just landscapes but the systems and capacities that support them.

K. Provide an overview of the environmental and social impacts and risks identified as being relevant to the project / programme.

This project is designed as a large-scale, community-driven Nature-based Solution (NbS) for climate adaptation, forest restoration, and improved ecosystem services. It is expected to deliver significant positive environmental and social impacts, particularly for vulnerable communities in rural, inland, and coastal areas of Vanuatu. At the same time, the project acknowledges the need to proactively manage a set of moderate, site-specific risks, in full compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) and Gender Policy of the Adaptation Fund.

Based on preliminary screening, the project has been classified as a Category B initiative. It may involve moderate and manageable environmental and social risks that are site-specific, reversible, and can be effectively mitigated. It does not involve any activities with significant, irreversible, or widespread adverse impacts, and therefore does not fall under Category A.

Positive Environmental and Social Impacts
The project is expected to generate broad, long-term benefits for both ecosystems and communities, including:

- Restoration of degraded forests (inland, transitional, and mangrove) leading to improved biodiversity, enhanced soil health, regulation of freshwater flows, and strengthened climate resilience at the landscape scale.

- Protection and enhancement of ecosystem services, supporting local food production, water security, and reduced disaster risks, especially in vulnerable areas exposed to cyclones, drought, and landslides.

- Empowerment of local actors, with a strong emphasis on participatory governance, gender equity, and the inclusion of women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities in decision-making, implementation, and benefit-sharing.

- Revitalization of traditional knowledge systems and cultural values through respectful integration into restoration planning and monitoring processes.

Potential Environmental and Social Risks and Mitigation Measures
Note: Risk identification presented at the concept note stage is preliminary. A comprehensive Environmental and Social Risk Assessment will be undertaken during the full proposal stage, including more detailed analysis of direct, indirect, transboundary, and cumulative risks. Final risk categorization and mitigation measures will be presented in the full proposal.

While overall risks are low to moderate, the following have been identified through initial screening:

- Disturbance to soil and vegetation during nursery establishment or planting may lead to short-term degradation. Mitigation: use of site-appropriate NbS best practices, native species only, minimal site clearing, and continuous field-level monitoring.

- Land tenure disputes or unclear resource rights could arise during site selection. Mitigation: application of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), participatory land use agreements, and inclusive consultations with customary landowners and traditional authorities.

- Social exclusion risks, particularly for women, youth, persons with disabilities, or other marginalised groups. Mitigation: clear inclusion targets, use of gender and social inclusion strategies, trained local facilitators, and community monitoring of participation and benefits.

- Temporary restrictions on land access or labor availability due to restoration activities. Mitigation: community scheduling that respects seasonal livelihood cycles, equitable

benefit-sharing mechanisms, and compensation or alternative arrangements where necessary.

- Undervaluing of customary institutions or Indigenous knowledge. Mitigation: dedicated engagement with Indigenous leaders, documentation and respectful integration of traditional knowledge, and active promotion of customary governance as a project strength.

- Grievances or disputes related to benefits, roles, or project outcomes. Mitigation: establishment of accessible, transparent community-level grievance redress mechanisms, with clear timelines and culturally appropriate channels for dispute resolution.

Screening and Safeguard Compliance
All project activities will undergo a structured environmental and social screening process using the Adaptation Fund's ESP checklist. Where appropriate, site-specific Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) will be developed, particularly in areas with sensitive ecosystems or complex land tenure arrangements.

An initial screening conducted during project preparation confirms that:

- No physical displacement or involuntary resettlement is anticipated.
- No critical habitats will be adversely impacted.
- All restoration activities will enhance rather than diminish ecosystem function.
- Gender and Indigenous inclusion risks are moderate but addressable with appropriate safeguards.

The project will establish ongoing monitoring mechanisms—including community-level reporting and feedback loops—to ensure that risks are identified early and managed effectively throughout implementation.

This project is inherently aligned with the principles of environmental protection, social equity, and cultural respect, given its design as an NbS-based, community-driven restoration programme. While it carries low to moderate risks, these are well understood and can be managed through robust safeguards and inclusive governance mechanisms. In doing so, the project is expected to become a model of socially and environmentally responsible adaptation—generating net benefits for both people and nature in a climate-challenged context.

As a Nature-based Solution, all restoration interventions will be aligned with the IUCN Global Standard for NbS to ensure positive environmental and social outcomes, minimize risks, and reinforce sustainability and equity across project sites.

Note: The risks identified in this checklist are preliminary and will be elaborated further during the Project Formulation Grant and full proposal stage, including detailed analysis of direct, indirect, transboundary, and cumulative risks. At this stage, the checklist focuses solely on identifying potential risks, without mitigation measures or positive impacts.

Checklist of environmental and social principles	No further assessment required for compliance	Potential impacts and risks – further assessment and management required for compliance
Compliance with the Law	Preliminary screening indicates that the project is consistent with Vanuatu's national laws, policies, and international conventions, including those on forestry, land, environment, and customary tenure.	Potential risk of non-compliance with specific legal requirements (e.g., EIAs, forestry permits, land-use agreements) once sites are selected..
Access and Equity	The project is designed to provide fair, equitable access to activities, resources, and benefits for all community members—regardless of gender, age, ability, or social status—through participatory, transparent processes.	Potential risk that marginalized groups (e.g., women, youth, people with disabilities) may face barriers to participation or equitable benefit-sharing.
Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups	The project respects the rights and cultural values of all community members, and will ensure that no activities infringe upon or discriminate against marginalized or vulnerable groups (including people with disabilities, women, youth)	Potential risk that vulnerable groups could be unintentionally excluded from decision-making or benefit distribution.
Human Rights	The project is not expected to infringe on fundamental human rights.	Potential risk of inadvertent restrictions on access to resources or participation rights if engagement processes are inadequate.
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	The project mainstreams gender equality by ensuring meaningful representation, participation, and leadership of women and youth in all planning and implementation bodies.	Potential risk that women and youth may have limited influence if not adequately supported in decision-making structures.
Core Labour Rights	The project is expected to comply with Vanuatu's labour laws and standards.	Potential risk of labour rights violations (e.g., unsafe working conditions, informal labour use) if not effectively monitored.
Indigenous Peoples	The Ni-Vanuatu population is recognized as indigenous, and customary land tenure will be respected.	*Potential risk of disputes with customary landowners or lack of broad community support if FPIC is not effectively obtained.*
Involuntary Resettlement	The project does not anticipate involuntary resettlement.	Potential risk of land-use conflicts or economic displacement if land agreements are unclear, even without physical relocation.

Protection of Natural Habitats	Restoration activities are designed to enhance and rehabilitate natural habitats.	Potential risk that restoration activities could disturb sensitive habitats if site selection and design are not carefully managed.
Conservation of Biological Diversity	The project will prioritize native species and management of invasives.	Potential risk of introducing non-native species or failing to adequately control invasive species, with impacts on native biodiversity.
Climate Change	The project directly supports climate adaptation and mitigation through ecosystem-based measures.	Potential risk that project activities (e.g., vehicle use, equipment) could generate localized emissions; restoration outcomes could be undermined by extreme events or prolonged drought.
Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency	Project design includes resource-efficient practices for nurseries, planting, and agroforestry.	Potential risk of pollution from chemical use (e.g., invasive species control) or inefficient resource use
Public Health	No negative public health impacts are anticipated	Potential risk of accidental introduction of pests or disease vectors, or health risks from unsafe agrochemical use.
Physical and Cultural Heritage	Project sites will be screened to avoid known cultural heritage areas.	Potential risk of disturbing undocumented cultural or spiritual sites during restoration or nursery establishment.
Lands and Soil Conservation	Restoration and agroforestry activities are designed to promote soil conservation, fertility, and sustainable land management.	Potential risk of erosion or soil degradation if land preparation or planting is poorly managed.

PART III: IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

A. Demonstrate how the project/programme aligns with the Results Framework of the Adaptation Fund

Project Objective(s)[1]	Project Objective Indicator(s)	Fund Outcome	Fund Outcome Indicator	Grant Amount (USD)
Empower communities—including women, youth, and Indigenous groups—to lead the design, implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management of forest and landscape restoration through inclusive governance, participatory decision-making, capacity building, and continuous knowledge exchange.	• Number of community-based organizations (CBOs) and site-level committees leading project activities • Number of local actors trained and engaged in restoration, monitoring, and governance	Outcome 2: Strengthened institutional capacity to reduce risks associated with climate-induced socioeconomic and environmental losses	2.1 Capacity of staff to respond to, and mitigate impacts of, climate-related events from targeted institutions increased	
Restore, conserve, and sustainably manage Vanuatu's inland, transitional, and mangrove forests, as well as key water catchments, through community-led, nature-based solutions that strengthen ecosystem services, water security, biodiversity, and climate resilience, while addressing land degradation and invasive species.	• Area (ha) of forests and catchments restored or under improved management • Number of communities with restored or improved ecosystem services	Outcome 5: Increased ecosystem resilience in response to climate change and variability-induced stress	5. Ecosystem services and natural resource assets maintained or improved under climate change and variability-induced stress	
Reduce climate vulnerability and disaster risk for rural and coastal populations by restoring forest cover, stabilizing soils, managing invasive species, and supporting climate-resilient livelihoods, while mainstreaming community-led, nature-based restoration into national and sub-national policies to enable long-term impact, scaling up, and regional replication.	• Number of vulnerable people with increased resilience and reduced climate risk • Number of national/subnational policies updated to integrate NbS and community-led restoration	Outcome 7: Improved policies and regulations that promote and enforce resilience measures	7. Climate change priorities are integrated into national development strategy	
Project Outcome(s)	**Project Outcome Indicator(s)**	**Fund Output**	**Fund Output Indicator**	**Grant Amount (USD)**
Increased local capacity, inclusive governance, and knowledge management systems for climate adaptation	• Number of people (by gender) trained in restoration, monitoring, and adaptive management	Output 2.1: Strengthened capacity of national and sub-	2.1.1 No. of staff trained to respond to, and mitigate impacts of, climate-	

	• Number of community-based organizations and local committees established and operational • Number of participatory adaptation action plans developed and validated by stakeholders	national centres and networks to respond rapidly to extreme weather events Output 3.2: Strengthened capacity of national and sub-national stakeholders and entities to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning	related events (by gender) 3.2.2 No. of tools and guidelines developed (thematic, sectoral, institutional) and shared with relevant stakeholders	
Forests, landscapes, and catchments restored; ecosystem services, resilience, and food/livelihood security increased and sustained	• Hectares of forests, landscapes, and catchments restored or under improved management • Number of native seedlings planted and survived after 2 years • Number of communities benefiting from improved ecosystem services and reduced climate risk	Output 5: Vulnerable ecosystem services and natural resource assets strengthened in response to climate change impacts, including variability	5.1. Number of natural resource assets created, maintained, or improved to withstand conditions resulting from climate variability and change (by type and scale)	
Adaptive management institutionalized; best practices and policy updated; regional impact and replication enabled	• Number of policies and strategies updated to integrate adaptive management and community-led NbS • Number of knowledge products, best practices, and lessons learned disseminated at national and regional levels • Number of regional peer learning/exchange events held	Output 7: Improved integration of climate-resilience strategies into country development plans Output 3.2: Strengthened capacity to capture and disseminate knowledge	7.1. No. of policies introduced or adjusted to address climate change risks (by sector) 3.2.2 No. of tools and guidelines developed and shared	

[1] The AF utilized OECD/DAC terminology for its results framework. Project proponents may use different terminology but the overall principle should still apply

B. Foreseen Implementation Arrangements

Institutional Roles

Implementing Entity (IE):
The Pacific Community (SPC), through its Climate Finance Unit, will act as the Implementing Entity. SPC will be in charge of overall fiduciary and administrative oversight of the project, including:

- Fiduciary management and reporting to the Adaptation Fund;
- Ensuring alignment with SPC's procurement processes and requirements;
- Oversight of financial management;
- Ensuring monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) activities are undertaken in accordance with AF standards and SPC systems.

Executing Entities (EEs):
The project will use a **co-executing modality**, recognising the complementary mandates and capacities of SPC CCES and the Vanuatu Department of Forestry (DoF).

- **Vanuatu Department of Forestry (DoF):** DoF will lead operational management of the project and day-to-day implementation of restoration activities, including site selection, nursery establishment, reforestation, soil and watershed management, invasive species control, and livelihood diversification. DoF will ensure that activities are carried out in alignment with Vanuatu's national forest policies, the National Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy 2030, and other relevant climate and development strategies. DoF's deep knowledge of national context and provincial networks ensures strong ownership and legitimacy of project interventions.

- **SPC CCES Division:** In agreement with the Government of Vanuatu, SPC will also act as co-Executing Entity. SPC will provide technical backstopping and advisory support across NbS design and application, environmental and social safeguards (ESS/GESI/FPIC), and policy mainstreaming. SPC will also support procurement where national systems face bottlenecks, ensuring procurement in compliance with SPC's policies, which have been deemed consistent with AF standards. SPC's co-execution role will ensure international best practice is embedded into all restoration activities and that lessons from across the Pacific are incorporated into the Vanuatu project.

Institutional Advantage of SPC as IE and co-EE
SPC's comparative advantage lies in its:

- Extensive relationships with Pacific governments, administrations, and agencies;
- Broad technical mandate covering climate change, NbS, forestry, biodiversity, gender, and social inclusion;
- Dedicated expertise in climate finance and safeguards through its CCES division;
- Large funding base and implementation experience with multi-lateral and bilateral donors;
- 75+ years of operational presence across 22 Pacific Island countries and territories;
- Staffing that includes a high proportion of Pacific Islanders, ensuring contextual knowledge and regional ownership;
- Longstanding presence in Vanuatu across multiple sectors, providing a trusted platform for national implementation.

Project Management Structure
A Project Management Unit (PMU) will be jointly supported by the Vanuatu Department of Forestry (DoF) and SPC to ensure strong national ownership combined with robust fiduciary and technical oversight.

- **National PMU (within DoF):** Based in Port Vila and at selected provincial offices, the national team will include a **National Project Coordinator**, Technical Officers, an M&E Officer, and an Environmental and Gender Safeguards Officer. The National Coordinator, embedded in the Department of Forestry, will oversee day-to-day implementation in Vanuatu, liaise with provincial authorities and communities, supervise technical staff, and ensure activities align with national forestry policies and strategies. The team will also be responsible for ESS/GESI screening of site-level interventions and for supporting participatory monitoring systems.

- **Project Manager (within SPC):** A Project Manager will be based within SPC (CCES or LRD Division) to lead overall project management, procurement, and quality assurance. This role will ensure compliance with Adaptation Fund policies, provide technical backstopping, and coordinate reporting obligations. The Project Manager will work in close partnership with the National Coordinator to align regional expertise and fiduciary standards with national execution.

- **SPC Support Team (Suva/Noumea):** SPC will designate additional staff to provide fiduciary management, procurement support, technical advice, and policy mainstreaming support. These staff will work closely with both the Project Manager and the National PMU to ensure timely procurement, fiduciary obligations are met, and technical advice reflects international best practice.

Project Governance Structure

A **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** will be established during the inception phase. The PSC will be co-chaired by the Director of Forestry and SPC, and include representatives from relevant government ministries (Environment, Climate Change, Agriculture, Finance), civil society, customary landowner groups, women's and youth representatives, and community-based organisations. SPC and other technical partners will participate as members/observers.
The PSC will provide:

- Strategic guidance and implementation oversight;
- Review of progress and evaluation reports, and recommendations for improved implementation;
- Guidance on cross-cutting issues requiring consensus across stakeholders;
- Oversight of institutional strengthening activities to ensure alignment with national policies;
- Endorsement of the project's administrative, financial, and operations manual;
- Approval of Annual Work Plans and Budgets (AWPB).

Procurement, and Technical Backstopping

- **Procurement:** Where needed, SPC will support procurement of goods, services, and materials in compliance with SPC's procurement policy, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and adherence

to AF standards. Subsidiary agreements will define specific procurement responsibilities between SPC and DoF.

- **Technical backstopping:** SPC will provide advisory support in restoration methods, nursery practices, invasive species control, and agroforestry systems, as well as in the application of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) principles and standards to ensure interventions deliver climate, biodiversity, and livelihood benefits. SPC will also lead on ESS/GESI and safeguards monitoring. This will be complemented by DoF's technical knowledge and networks at national and community levels, ensuring NbS approaches are context-specific and grounded in local priorities.

Learning and Knowledge Management

Learning and knowledge management will be embedded as a cross-cutting function throughout the project, with clearly defined roles across SPC, the Department of Forestry (DoF), and community partners. SPC, as Implementing Entity and co-Executing Entity, will coordinate the overall knowledge management strategy, ensuring alignment with regional platforms such as the Pacific NbS Hub and the PIRT NbS Working Group. SPC will also lead quality assurance of knowledge products, manage technical backstopping, and facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges across Pacific Island Countries to ensure regional reach and impact.

At the national level, the Department of Forestry will take responsibility for capturing, synthesising, and disseminating project lessons to inform policy updates (including the 2030 Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy) and to share across relevant ministries, provincial governments, and national coordination platforms.

At the community level, CBOs and site-level committees will play a central role in documenting practices, innovations, and lessons from restoration interventions, feeding into participatory monitoring frameworks and co-producing knowledge products such as case studies, videos, and local guidelines. Training will be provided to strengthen community capacities in documentation and communication, ensuring that communities are not only contributors of information but co-creators of knowledge. All lessons will be disseminated in accessible formats and local languages to maximise uptake and support wider replication of effective practices.

Financing Mechanism

At concept note stage, the financing model remains indicative and will be refined further during the PFG and full proposal stages in consultation with the Government of Vanuatu. The intention is to establish a devolved financing mechanism that brings resources as close as possible to communities while maintaining strong fiduciary controls and oversight.

Under this arrangement, funds will flow from the Adaptation Fund to SPC, in its role as Implementing Entity and co-Executing Entity. SPC will be responsible for fiduciary management, compliance with AF requirements, and quality assurance of disbursements. From SPC, resources will be transferred in tranches to the Department of Forestry, acting as national co-Executing Entity, based on approved workplans and budgets validated through the Project Steering Committee. The Department of Forestry will then channel funds to its provincial offices and to community-based organisations through accountable agreements that are co-signed with customary landowners and provincial authorities. These agreements will cover specific restoration activities, such as nursery establishment, planting, maintenance, and livelihood diversification initiatives.

Oversight, transparency, and accountability will be ensured through multiple layers. Annual Work Plans and Budgets will be reviewed and approved by the Project Steering Committee, which will provide a joint platform for decision-making. Tranche disbursements will be tied to progress reports on both

technical and financial performance, verified jointly by SPC and DoF. At the community level, monitoring committees will be established to review both progress and expenditures, providing local accountability. Independent audits and spot checks will form part of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework, and a grievance redress mechanism will be in place to address any concerns around financial flows or benefit-sharing.

At the full proposal stage, this financing mechanism will be further elaborated and supported with a diagram showing the pathway of funds: from the Adaptation Fund to SPC, then to the Department of Forestry, and subsequently to provincial offices and community-based entities that directly implement restoration activities. This model is designed to balance efficiency with accountability—ensuring resources reach those restoring forests and landscapes on the ground, while safeguarding fiduciary standards through SPC's oversight and DoF's national mandate.

PART IV: ENDORSEMENT BY GOVERNMENT AND CERTIFICATION BY THE IMPLEMENTING ENTITY

A. Record of endorsement on behalf of the government[11]

Provide the name and position of the government official and indicate date of endorsement. If this is a regional project/programme, list the endorsing officials of all the participating countries. The endorsement letter(s) should be attached as an annex to the project/programme proposal. Please attach the endorsement letter(s) with this template; add as many participating governments if a regional project/programme:

Mr. David Gibson, Director General, *Ministry of Climate Change, Vanuatu*	Date*: 14/07/2025*

B. Implementing Entity certification

Provide the name and signature of the Implementing Entity Coordinator and the date of signature. Provide also the project/programme contact person's name, telephone number and email address.

I certify that this proposal has been prepared in accordance with guidelines provided by the Adaptation Fund Board, and prevailing National Development and Adaptation Plans and subject to the approval by the Adaptation Fund Board, commit to implementing the project/programme in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and the Gender Policy of the Adaptation Fund and on the understanding that the Implementing Entity will be fully (legally and financially) responsible for the implementation of this project/programme.	
Dirk Snyman, Climate Finance Coordinator *Signature:*  Implementing Entity Coordinator	
Date: *30/07/2025*	Tel. +678 26 20 00 and email: dirks@spc.int
Project Contact Person: Mr. Kunal Singh	
Tel. +679 8741145 And Email: kunals@spc.int	

[11] Each Party shall designate and communicate to the secretariat the authority that will endorse on behalf of the national government the projects and programmes proposed by the implementing entities.