



## ADAPTATION FUND

AFB/PPRC.36/Inf.31  
8-9 October 2025

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Adaptation Fund Board  
Project and Programme Review Committee  
Thirty-sixth Meeting  
Bonn, Germany, 8-9 October 2025

### **PROPOSAL FOR SINGLE COUNTRY LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION PROPOSAL FOR VANUATU**



ADAPTATION FUND

## ADAPTATION FUND BOARD SECRETARIAT TECHNICAL REVIEW OF PROJECT/PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

PROJECT/PROGRAMME CATEGORY: LLA Single country concept note

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**Country/Region:** Vanuatu  
**Project Title:** ROOTS – Restoring Our Original Trees and Shore – Nature-based, Community-Led forest restoration and Management  
**Thematic Focal Area:** Ecosystem-based Adaptation / Nature-based Solutions (with a focus on forest restoration and management)  
**Implementing Entity:** Pacific Community (SPC)  
**Executing Entities:** Vanuatu Department of Forests  
**AF Project ID:** AF00000455  
**IE Project ID:** **Requested Financing from Adaptation Fund (US Dollars):** 5,000,000  
**Reviewer and contact person:** Andrew Hollander **Co-reviewer(s):** Alyssa Gomes  
**IE Contact Person:**

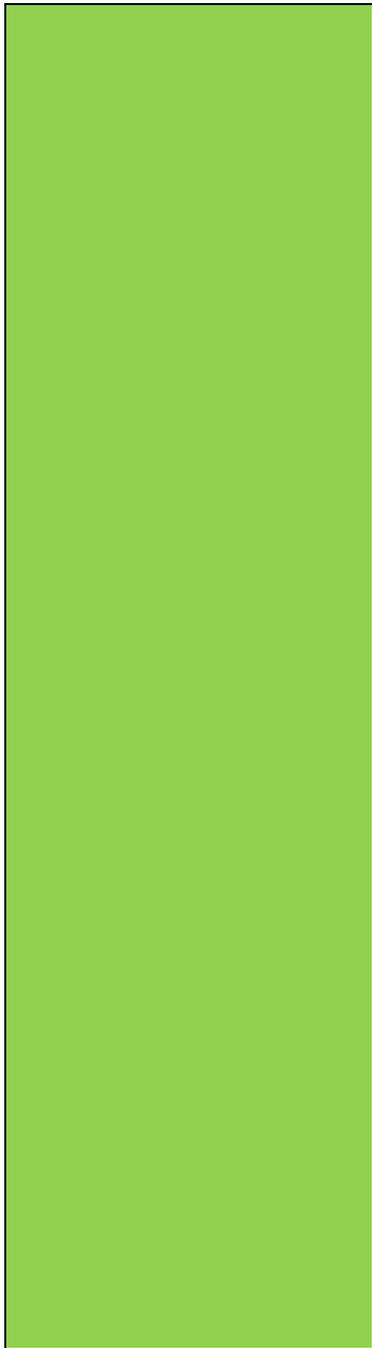
<b>Technical Summary:</b>	<p>The project “ROOTS – Restoring Our Original Trees and Shore – Nature-based, Community-Led forest restoration and Management” aims to address the entire restoration continuum, including community engagement and participatory planning, soil regeneration, nursery establishment, 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. This will be done through the three components below:</p> <p><u>Component 1:</u> Capacity Building, Institutional Strengthening &amp; Inclusive Planning (USD 450,000);</p> <p><u>Component 2:</u> Community-Led Restoration Implementation (USD 3,300,000);</p> <p><u>Component 3:</u> Knowledge Sharing, Monitoring &amp; Policy Mainstreaming (USD 362,637).</p> <p><u>Requested financing overview:</u>  Project/Programme Execution Cost: USD 432,818  Total Project/Programme Cost: USD 4,545,455  Implementing Fee: USD 454,545  Financing Requested: USD 5,000,0000</p>
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	<p>The proposal includes a request for a project formulation grant of USD 150,000</p> <p>The initial technical review raises several issues, such as insufficient detail on project causal pathways, project activity sequencing, locally led adaptation arrangements, gender considerations, and enhanced stakeholder engagement among others, as is discussed in the number of Clarification Requests (CRs) and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) raised in the review.</p>
Date:	August 20 <sup>th</sup> 2025

Review Criteria	Questions	Comments 1 <sup>st</sup> Review (August 20 <sup>th</sup> 2025)
Country Eligibility	1. Is the country party to the Kyoto Protocol and/or the Paris Agreement?	<b>Yes</b>
	2. Is the country a developing country particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change?	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>Vanuatu, an archipelagic nation in the South Pacific, is among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. Vanuatu faces intensifying climate hazards, including cyclones, droughts, sea-level rise, and increased storm surges.</p> <p><b><u>General feedback</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please review page numbers (as pages 3-5 appear to be missing)</li> <li>- Please number the paragraphs</li> <li>- Please review the concept note cover page as the Type of Implementing Entity should read: Regional Implementing Entity.</li> </ul>
Project Eligibility	1. Has the designated government authority for the Adaptation Fund endorsed the project/programme?	Yes, as per the Endorsement letter dated July 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2025. <b>However, the LoE has got the IE and the EE the wrong way around. Please check the LOE to ensure the IE and EE names are correctly mentioned for the implementation and execution functions.</b>

	<p>2. Does the length of the proposal amount to no more than fifty (50) pages for the Concept note project document, including its annexes?</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> the proposal is 36 pages including LoE.</p>
	<p>3. Does the project / programme support concrete adaptation actions to assist the country and/or the local actors in addressing adaptive capacity to the adverse effects of climate change and build in climate resilience?</p>	<p><b>Needs clarification</b></p> <p>The proposed project supports concrete adaptation actions that aim to enhance Vanuatu's climate resilience by restoring, conserving, and sustainably managing forest ecosystems – including inland, transitional, and mangrove forests. The proposal takes a community-led approach to devolve leadership, decision-making, and resource management to local actors.</p> <p>While the overall approach is promising, several elements require further elaboration to assess how effectively the proposed actions will be translated into tangible outcomes:</p> <p><u>Adaptation Activities: Linkages and Phasing</u></p> <p>The proposal presents a range of adaptation activities set to take place under the three components of the project. However, as currently presented, the activities appear in isolation and lack a strong connection to each other, as well as a connection to the proposed outcomes of the project.</p> <p><b>CR1:</b> Please provide clearer articulation of the causal pathways and explicitly link activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term adaptation impacts.</p> <p>While acknowledging that some elements of the project will be designed and refined later through community-led processes, the proposal lacks significant detail on how it will take a phased approach and sequence proposed project activities. For example, participatory baseline and</p>

		<p>vulnerability assessments will be carried out under component 1, but it is unclear how the results of these processes will influence subsequent activities.</p> <p><b>CR2:</b> Please provide more information that demonstrates how the project will employ an overarching, step-wise approach that guides the sequencing of project activities.</p> <p><u>Capacity Building</u></p> <p>It is positive that capacity building, Training of Trainer models, and building local expertise are all integral elements of the project. The proposal highlights that these will be co-designed with local institutions and will work towards building adaptive capacity and ensuring that technical expertise is retained at the community level beyond the lifetime of the project.</p> <p><b>CR:3</b> Please provide additional information on the capacity building model and approach that explains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the roles and responsibilities related to capacity building and training for the project? (e.g. for SPC, the Department of Forests, and other partners).</li> <li>• How will SPC oversee and ensure the quality of capacity building if it is carried out by other partners?</li> </ul> <p><u>Project beneficiaries:</u></p> <p>The project is set to be implemented at national and community level, targeting high-priority and high-exposure areas. While it is anticipated that the project will work in three to four sites, the proposal states that the final number and geographic spread</p>
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of sites will be confirmed in the early project phase or during the development of the full proposal - with support from a Project Formulation Grant.

**CR4:** Please provide more information on the participatory processes, community engagement, and preliminary criteria that will be used to determine these sites.

**CR5:** Using the best available information available at this stage, please provide an indicative estimate of the number and/or type of direct beneficiaries expected to benefit from the adaptation actions (e.g., individuals, households, or communities) – noting this may be adjusted at a later stage.

**Project Formulation Grant (PFG)**

The proposal includes a request for a project formulation grant of USD 150,000. This will be used for:

1. Partner and stakeholder mapping, mobilization, and technical validation consultations;
2. Comprehensive site assessment and selection;
3. Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) and risk assessment;
4. Initial baseline data collection and MEL plan design;
5. Drafting the full proposal and supporting documents.

The PFG submission form also highlights that several PFG-supported activities are specifically designed to enable and strengthen devolved decision-making for locally led adaptation, such as:

- Participatory site selection and planning

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>workshops;</li> <li>• Mobilization of local committees and identification of site-level champions;</li> <li>• FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) processes and inclusive stakeholder consultations.</li> </ul> <p><b>CR6:</b> In the concept note, please acknowledge which activities will be supported by the PFG and how they will support the development of a Full Proposal. To avoid duplication, please also ensure that that the same activities are not listed under the main project components in the concept note as well as the PFG submission form (e.g. site selection).</p> <p><b>CR7:</b> Noting that the arrangements do not have to be the same for Project implementation and for PFG implementation, please clarify if the Pacific Community (SPC) is anticipated to be the Implementing Entity of the PFG, and the Vanuatu Department of Forestry is anticipated to be the Executing Entity of the PFG.</p> <p><b>CR8:</b> No Implementing Entity fee is listed in the PFG budget. Please also clarify that no Implementing Entity Fee is required for the PFG – which if included, must not exceed 8.5%.</p>
	<p>4. Does the project/programme enable devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level? Does it give 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.</p>	<p><b>Needs clarification</b></p> <p>One of the key strengths of the proposal is its emphasis on empowering local communities. The project aims to devolve decision-making, planning, implementation, and monitoring responsibilities to local institutions – including community-based organisations, customary landowners, and site-level committees.</p>



Yet, how these community-led processes will be implemented in practice requires further articulation.

The proposal states on page 18 that the project will build on and strengthen existing structures, rather than establish parallel or project-specific entities.

**CR9:** Please elaborate on the process for identifying and engaging with existing structures and local institutions. Please also provide details on which activities and decisions they will specifically influence and lead on.

**CR10:** In terms of roles and responsibilities, please provide additional information on which activities and decisions SPC and the Department of Forestry will specifically influence and lead on.

Component 2, “Community-Led Restoration Implementation”, of the project has the largest amount of budgeted financing (USD 3,300,000). The proposal states on page 13 that this component’s activities are fully community-led, with budget and decision-making responsibilities devolved to local community-based organisations and groups.

This strongly aligns with the first Principle for Locally-Led Adaptation which calls for direct access to finance and devolving decision-making. However, the concept note lacks detail on proposed financial management and how financing will be distributed to a local level.

**CR11:** Please provide preliminary information on the mechanism for distributing finance and how this will be implemented in practice:

- Provide a clear, detailed explanation of the proposed financing model.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify the roles and responsibilities anticipated for this model, as well as how financing will be distributed between and amongst the identified communities.</li> <li>• Detail how oversight, transparency, and accountability will be ensured throughout the financial allocation and disbursement process.</li> <li>• A diagram or flow chart would be very helpful to illustrate the proposed structure and demonstrate the path of funds from the project to the communities.</li> </ul>
	<p>5. Does the project / programme provide economic, social and environmental benefits, particularly to vulnerable communities, including gender considerations, while avoiding or mitigating negative impacts, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Fund? Does the project/programme address structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities, people who are displaced, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized ethnic groups?</p>	<p><b>Needs clarification</b></p> <p>The concept note outlines the project’s intent to deliver integrated economic, social, and environmental benefits to the most climate-vulnerable communities in Vanuatu. Page 15 states that it will address barriers to participation and ensure that women, youth, persons with disabilities, customary landowners, and other marginalized groups are actively involved and empowered.</p> <p>Some parts of the concept note require additional clarification to ensure that these elements are realised in practice.</p> <p><b>CR12:</b> The proposal highlights that the project has the potential to deliver widespread economic benefits and lists a number of different livelihood pathways, but lacks specific detail about how these will be implemented as part of the project. Please provide further information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The proposed process for identifying, prioritizing, and implementing specific opportunities for building economic resilience to the impacts of climate change;</li> </ul>

- How in practice communities will have decision-making power over the prioritized income diversification strategies;
- How to balance having community-led decision-making while ensuring that project activities still fall within the parameters of the project scope (i.e. aligned with adaptation and forestry).

The first activity listed under Component 2 on page 13 is “Identify and secure access to land for nurseries, planting sites, and demonstrations plots, formalizing agreements (e.g. MoUs, land-use agreements) with landowners and communities.”

**CR13:** To gain a stronger picture of the contextual environment that the project is operating in, please provide more information in the concept note on:

- An overview of the land ownership system in Vanuata, as it relates to forestry and proposed project activities;
- The proposed project approach for engaging with landowners and communities;

It is positive that the concept note states that during the full proposal development stage, the project will incorporate a comprehensive gender and social inclusion assessment. However, please note that a preliminary gender analysis is required at the concept note stage to inform the eventual design and further planning stages of the measure.

**CAR1:** Please include an initial gender assessment to demonstrate how gender considerations have been incorporated into the project design. Please provide information on how the unique concerns of women and youth were incorporated into project design.

		<p><i>At the fully developed proposal stage, please include an in-depth gender analysis and gender action plan that includes disaggregated data for women, youth, indigenous peoples, and marginalized groups, and provides specific strategies to address their unique vulnerabilities.</i></p>
	<p>6. Is the project / programme cost effective?</p>	<p><b>Yes, with clarification</b></p> <p>The concept note states that the project design already incorporates several features to maximise cost-effectiveness, sustainability and value for money. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Devolving decision-making and financial management;</li> <li>- Building on and strengthening existing structures;</li> <li>- Adopting a Training of Trainers (ToT) model;</li> <li>- Leveraging in-kind contributions;</li> <li>- Phasing investments.</li> </ul> <p>The concept note makes a brief comparison between the project approach and other adaptation options, such as large-scale grey infrastructure (pages 15 + 18).</p> <p>The concept note also explains that 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, with support from the PFG.</p> <p><b>CR14:</b> If the intention is that the planned cost-effectiveness assessment will be developed with support of the PFG, please ensure that this is included within the PFG submission form.</p>

	<p>7. Is the project / programme consistent with national, sub-national or local sustainable development strategies, national, sub-national or local development plans, poverty reduction strategies, national communications and adaptation programs of action and other relevant instruments?</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>The concept note provides a comprehensive overview of relevant policy frameworks, and provides rationale for how the proposed project is aligned and supportive of each.</p> <p>Please also <u>double-check the accuracy of the dates</u> for some of the policy frameworks. For example, the proposal states that the Vanuatu NAP was published in 2022, while the UNFCCC database indicates that the NAP is still under development. Similarly, the proposal states that Vanuata’s NDC was communicated in 2020. The UNFCCC database indicates that the Revised and Enhanced NDC was communicated in 2022, and it appears from the Vanuata Department of Climate Change website, that the NDC 3.0 is under development and a draft is currently publicly available for consultation (accessible as of August 2025).</p>
	<p>8. Does the project / programme meet the relevant national technical standards, where applicable, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Fund? Does the project provide support to local actors and build their capacities to comply with the standards?</p>	<p><b>Needs Clarification</b></p> <p>The concept note states that all project activities will adhere to Vanuatu’s national legal and technical frameworks, including environmental assessment requirements under the Environmental Protection and Conservation Act (CAP283), national standards for reforestation and nursery practices, forest management guidelines, and where applicable, building codes for any physical infrastructure. However, the concept note falls short of providing information on how the project will specifically do so.</p> <p><b>CR15:</b> Please provide more information on how the project will take steps to comply and monitor compliance for each of the frameworks listed above, as well as information on any authorization/clearance that may be required for</p>

		<p>project implementation. If further details will be included in the fully developed proposal stage following additional consultations, please clarify this in the concept note.</p> <p><b>CR16:</b> The concept note states on page 21 that capacity building for standards compliance will be undertaken for local actors and implementing partners. Please ensure this is also reflected as an activity under the project components.</p>
	<p>9. Is there duplication of project / programme with other funding sources? Does the project enhance collaboration across sectors and enhance efficiencies and good practice?</p>	<p><b>Needs Clarification</b></p> <p>The concept note provides a list of identified relevant projects and programmes in Vanuatu and briefly describes the approach of each. It also outlines overarching potential areas of complementarity with relevant projects and programmes.</p> <p>Furthermore, the concept note states on page 23 that during development of the full proposal, the project will collaborate with relevant government and non-government actors to validate the mapping of existing and planned interventions.</p> <p><b>CR17:</b> To ensure there are no duplications and promote complementarity, please provide clarifications on a few further areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have lessons from any of the identified projects and programmes been utilized to influence the design of this project, and will deeper analysis be carried out at the full proposal stage?</li> <li>- Do any of the identified projects and programmes have a community-led or locally-led adaptation component? If yes, are there lessons to be learned? If</li> </ul>

		<p>no, could learnings from this project feed into others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will the existence of these identified projects and programmes, and their beneficiaries, be a considering factor when carrying out the site selection process for this project?</li> </ul>
	<p>10. Does the project / programme have a learning and knowledge management component to capture and feedback lessons, in particular managing traditional and/or indigenous knowledge, where relevant? Does it contribute to building and institutionalizing local capabilities?</p>	<p><b>Yes with a clarification</b></p> <p>Component 3 of the project focuses on Knowledge Sharing, Monitoring, and Policy Mainstreaming. The project will also embed mechanisms for knowledge capture and adaptive learning, promote local capacity building, and prioritise the integration and protection of traditional and indigenous knowledge. However, the concept note lacks detail on how this will be implemented.</p> <p><b>CR18:</b> Please clarify the roles and responsibilities anticipated for the project activities related to learning and knowledge management.</p>
	<p>11. Has a consultative process taken place, and has it involved and encouraged all key stakeholders, and vulnerable groups, to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions? Did the consultative process consider and address gender-based, economic and other inequalities in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Fund?</p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p>It is positive that in developing this concept note, national and technical consultations were held which can work towards ensuring that the overall project objectives are aligned with national priorities and project activities are technically sound.</p> <p>However, there is little indication of participation by community-based organisations, local institutions, women’s networks, youth, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable populations. Although the proposal expresses a commitment to gender equity and social inclusion, it does not describe how these</p>

		<p>considerations shaped the current project design. Participatory consultations are largely deferred to the full proposal stage, which limits opportunities for communities and civil society to shape the project from the outset.</p> <p><b>CAR2:</b> Please present the outcomes of any preliminary consultations with communities including gender groups that may have taken place. For the fully developed proposal stage please explain the process where marginalized and vulnerable groups will be consulted, so that their interests or concerns can be taken into account for project design.</p>
	<p>12. Is the requested financing justified on the basis of full cost of adaptation reasoning?</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>The concept note provides justification that all requested funds will be allocated to adaptation-specific activities which will support Vanuatu’s most climate-vulnerable communities and critical ecosystems to withstand and adapt to the accelerating impacts of climate change.</p> <p>A baseline scenario is provided in qualitative terms to illustrate what would occur without the requested funding. This is contrasted against the project scenario, which provides adaptation measures that go beyond development alone.</p> <p>The proposed project activities will be implemented independently of any co-financing.</p>
	<p>13. Is the project / program aligned with AF’s results framework?</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b></p> <p>The concept note specifies project alignment with the Adaptation Fund Strategic Results Framework in the table found in Part III, Section A. <b>CAR3:</b> Please also include, when describing the components, how they are aligned with the Adaptation Fund’s Strategic Results Framework.</p>

	<p>14. Has the sustainability of the project/programme outcomes been taken into account when designing the project? Does the project/programme support long-term development of local governance processes, and improve the capacity of local institutions to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions over the long term?</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>The concept note appropriately considers the sustainability of project outcomes. This includes a strong emphasis on the sustainability of local governance and institutional strengthening, ensuring technical expertise is retained in communities, environmental sustainability, and economic sustainability.</p> <p>Furthermore, as a proof-of-concept, it is proposed that successful implementation of the project could lead to the project model being scaled across national and regional levels.</p>
	<p>15. Does the project / programme provide an overview of environmental and social impacts / risks identified, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Fund?</p>	<p><b>Needs corrective action</b></p> <p>Based on a preliminary screening, the project has been classified as Category B.</p> <p><b>CR19:</b> Please ensure that the concept note explicitly acknowledges that risk findings are preliminary and will require further elaboration during the full proposal stage.</p> <p>The Checklist of Environmental and Social Principles mixes the identification of potential risks with perceived positive impacts and proposed mitigation measures. A risk assessment should focus solely on identifying potential direct, indirect, transboundary, and cumulative risks associated with the project, without incorporating mitigation strategies or perceived benefits at this stage.</p> <p><b>CAR4:</b> Please revise the checklist to focus solely on identifying potential risks under each principle without including positive impacts or mitigation measures.</p>

Resource Availability	1. Is the requested project / programme funding within the size for LLA single country grants?	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>The requested financing is USD 5,000,000.</p>
	2. Is the Implementing Entity Management Fee at or below 8.5% per cent of the total project/programme budget before the fee?	<p><b>No.</b></p> <p>The Implementing Entity Management Fee (USD 454,545) is 10% of the total project budget before the fee, which exceeds the cap of 8.5%.</p> <p><b>CAR5:</b> Pleas ensure that the Implementing Entity Management fee is at or below 8.5% of the total project budget before the fee.</p> <p>The proposal requests a Project Formulation Grant (PFG) of USD 150,000, which is appropriate for a single-country project with a total budget of USD 5 million. No associated PFG fee has been included in the PFG budget.</p>
	3. Are the Project/Programme Execution Costs at or below 9.5% per cent of the total project/programme budget (including the fee)?	<p><b>Unclear,</b></p> <p>As <b>CAR5</b> above will affect the overall project budgeting, compliance with the Project Execution Cost cap will be assessed once CAR5 has been corrected.</p>
Eligibility of IE	1. Is the project/programme submitted through an eligible Implementing Entity that has been accredited by the Board?	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>SPC is an AF accredited Regional Implementing Entity. SPC's accreditation is valid until 25<sup>th</sup> August 2026.</p>





## 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](mailto: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:** *International development organization*

**Implementing Entity:** Pacific Community (SPC)

**Executing Entities:** Vanuatu Department of Forests

**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 annexes.**

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

### **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<sup>2</sup>. 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<sup>3</sup>. 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<sub>2</sub> 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<sup>4</sup>. Downscaled regional climate models anticipate an increase in the

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>2</sup> 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/>

<sup>3</sup> Government of Vanuatu (2020) / Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery: *Vanuatu Post-Disaster Needs Assessment: Tropical Cyclone Harold*.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO (2022). *Climate Change in the Pacific: Scientific Assessment and New Research*.

number of days above 35°C, greater rainfall variability, and an increased risk of prolonged droughts, which further threaten both forest and agricultural landscapes.

**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. Women, youth, and Indigenous groups 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<sup>5</sup>. Customary land tenure systems, while supporting community stewardship, can also limit coordinated restoration where land rights are unclear.

**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 responds directly to these urgent needs by supporting 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, youth, and Indigenous leaders—with resources, training, and decision-making authority, the project seeks to restore landscape and forest health, enhance ecosystem services, and build adaptive capacity to withstand future climate risks.

The specific communities and geographic sites for project intervention will be identified through a transparent, participatory selection process, either as part of Component 1 of the project or, if awarded, during the Project Formulation Grant phase. The Project Formulation Grant will enable the team to conduct comprehensive preliminary assessments, mobilize partners, and lay the groundwork for the project. This preparatory work will ensure that, upon project approval, implementation can begin immediately with selected communities, allowing more time and resources to be devoted directly to on-the-ground restoration activities. This process will be conducted in close partnership with the Vanuatu Department of Forests and relevant national and local authorities, using site assessments and vulnerability mapping to prioritize the most climate-vulnerable and degraded areas. To maximize impact and learning, the project will focus on a limited number of qualitative sites with high potential for successful restoration, upscaling, and replication elsewhere in Vanuatu. Community selection and engagement will be transparent, inclusive, and guided by clear criteria to ensure the project delivers both deep and scalable benefits.

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<sup>5</sup> Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), 2022. *Pacific Gender and Social Inclusion in Climate and Forest Policy – Regional Brief*.

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, and disaster risk reduction. 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.

#### 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.

#### Project / Programme Components and Financing<sup>6</sup>:

*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.*

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<sup>6</sup> 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\$)
<b>1. Capacity Building, Institutional Strengthening &amp; Inclusive Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stakeholder mapping and engagement reports developed</li> <li>- Participatory vulnerability and baseline assessments completed</li> <li>- Community awareness and training sessions delivered</li> <li>- Participatory planning documents, including local adaptation action plans, developed, validated, and endorsed by stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p>Increased local capacity, inclusive governance, and knowledge management systems for climate adaptation</p>	<p>450,000</p>
<b>2. Community-Led Restoration Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Land/site access agreements (MoUs) formalized</li> <li>- Decentralized nurseries established and operational</li> <li>- Sites assessed and prepared</li> <li>- Seedlings and cuttings produced and distributed</li> <li>- Local groups mobilized and trained</li> <li>- Restoration activities (inland, coastal, and agroforestry) implemented and monitored</li> <li>- Maintenance and aftercare systems operational</li> </ul>	<p>Forests, landscapes, and catchments restored; ecosystem services, resilience, and food/livelihood security increased and sustained</p>	<p>3,300,000</p>
<b>3. Knowledge Sharing, Monitoring &amp; Policy Mainstreaming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community monitoring teams established and functional</li> <li>- Monitoring data and learning products produced and disseminated</li> <li>- Knowledge products, case studies, and training manuals developed in local languages</li> </ul>	<p>Adaptive management institutionalized; best practices and policy updated; regional impact and replication enabled</p>	<p>362,637</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project lessons and NbS approaches integrated into national and local policies, including the updated 2030 Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy</li> <li>- Regional knowledge exchange and peer learning events organized</li> </ul>		
8. Project/Programme Execution cost (9.5%)			432,818
9. Total Project/Programme Cost			4,545,455
10. Project/Programme Cycle Management Fee charged by the Implementing Entity 10%)			454,545
<b>Amount of Financing Requested</b>			<b>5,000,000<sup>7</sup></b>

#### Projected Calendar:

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

Milestones	Expected Dates
<b>Start of Project/Programme Implementation</b>	October 2026
<b>Mid-term Review (if planned)</b>	March 2029
<b>Project/Programme Closing</b>	September 2031
<b>Terminal Evaluation</b>	December 2031

<sup>7</sup> 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. 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").

### **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<sup>8</sup>—jointly select sites, design interventions, and determine benefit-sharing 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

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

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.

#### **Key Activities:**

- 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.
- Establish, train, and operationalize a community-level Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), ensuring accessibility for women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.
- Map stakeholders and conduct inclusive consultations (including women, youth, customary landowners, and local government) to ensure broad participation, ownership, and leadership.
- Carry out participatory baseline and vulnerability assessments (ecological, social, soil, land use, threats, traditional knowledge, climate risk, food security, ecosystem services).
- 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).
- 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.

## **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:**

- 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).
- Establish or strengthen decentralized nurseries (inland, coastal, mangrove); assess/prepare soils; and demonstrate best practices for substrate and site preparation.
- Train community members in nursery management, seed collection and storage, propagation, and invasive species control (through ToT cascade).
- Produce high-quality planting materials (seedlings, cuttings) tailored to planned interventions.
- Mobilize and train local groups for planting and restoration, with ToT graduates cascading knowledge throughout the communities.
- Implement inland restoration, assisted natural regeneration, agroforestry demonstration plots, and coastal/mangrove restoration, using best-practice, locally adapted NbS techniques.
- Set up inclusive maintenance and aftercare systems (watering, weeding, fire and invasive species control, enrichment planting), and deliver hands-on training in adaptive, community-based forest management.
- 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.

## **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:**

- Develop and operationalize participatory monitoring systems, with regular data collection and analysis on ecological, social, and safeguard (ESS/GESI/FPIC) indicators; produce and disseminate user-friendly monitoring and learning products for adaptive management and transparent reporting.
- Train community monitoring teams in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL), and budget for ongoing compliance/risk tracking (including for FPIC, grievances, and cultural elements) using accessible, adapted tools and templates.
- Document and disseminate lessons learned, case studies, and best practices in accessible formats and local languages, ensuring broad uptake by practitioners, policymakers, and communities.
- 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.
- 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.

### **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 Indigenous 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 more detailed 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—potentially within the Department of Forestry itself. 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, proposes to retain overall responsibility for project management and fiduciary oversight, while empowering national stakeholders and partners to lead technical implementation and decision-making. 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 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 neighbouring 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.

- 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.

#### **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. Describe 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.

Several ongoing or recently completed projects—funded through regional initiatives such as the Kiwa Initiative, MACBLUE, GEF/FAO, the Climate Resilient by Nature Programme, and others—are actively supporting NbS, forest protection, and community-based adaptation in different parts of Vanuatu. These include projects led or supported by SPREP, IUCN, GGGI, FAO, local NGOs, and the Government of Vanuatu.

#### **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.
- **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.

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
- 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**

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.

<b>Checklist of environmental and social principles</b>	<b>No further assessment required for compliance</b>	<b>Potential impacts and risks – further assessment and management required for compliance</b>
<b><i>Compliance with the Law</i></b>	Project activities will comply with all relevant Vanuatu national laws, policies, and international conventions, including those on forestry, land, environment, and customary tenure. Alignment will be ensured with legal frameworks for resource management and environmental protection.	Minor. Once the final project sites are selected, an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) will be conducted to ensure full legal compliance and to align with Adaptation Fund ESP principles.
<b><i>Access and Equity</i></b>	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.	Minor. Targeted measures (e.g., outreach, inclusive planning) will be implemented to ensure vulnerable groups, including women and youth, are not excluded. Guidance will be provided in the ESMP.

<b><i>Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups</i></b>	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)	Minor. Continuous consultation and participatory planning will be maintained to avoid exclusion or unintended negative impacts on vulnerable groups.
<b><i>Human Rights</i></b>	The project upholds fundamental human rights and is not expected to infringe on any rights. Activities are designed to enhance rights to participation, natural resources, and a healthy environment.	Minor. Ongoing stakeholder engagement and monitoring will help prevent any inadvertent human rights violations.
<b><i>Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment</i></b>	The project mainstreams gender equality by ensuring meaningful representation and leadership of women and youth in all planning and implementation bodies, as informed by a gender and social inclusion assessment.	Minor. Activities will be monitored for gender impacts, and gender-sensitive indicators will be integrated into MEL systems.
<b><i>Core Labour Rights</i></b>	All project activities will comply with Vanuatu's labour laws. No child or forced labour will be permitted; occupational health and safety standards will be enforced.	Minor. Project MEL will include monitoring of labour standards throughout implementation.
<b><i>Indigenous Peoples</i></b>	The entire Ni-Vanuatu population is considered indigenous; the project will fully respect customary land tenure, traditional knowledge, and community governance structures.	Minor. Broad community support will be ensured; robust documentation of stakeholder engagement and FPIC will be maintained.
<b><i>Involuntary Resettlement</i></b>	The project will avoid any activities that could result in involuntary resettlement or loss of livelihoods. No relocation or displacement is anticipated.	N/A
<b><i>Protection of Natural Habitats</i></b>	Restoration activities are designed to enhance and rehabilitate natural habitats. Project protocols prohibit conversion or degradation of critical habitats.	Minor. An ESIA will confirm that all interventions avoid negative impacts on high-conservation-value habitats; any risks will be managed through the ESMP.
<b><i>Conservation of Biological Diversity</i></b>	The project prioritizes restoration of native forest and biodiversity. No introduction of invasive species is planned; management of existing invasives is a project objective.	Minor. All planting material will be screened, and ESIA/ESMP will address any risks to native biodiversity or protected species.
<b><i>Climate Change</i></b>	The project directly supports climate adaptation and mitigation through ecosystem restoration, soil stabilization, and increased carbon sequestration.	Minor. Small, localized GHG emissions may arise from project vehicles or equipment; mitigation measures (efficient practices, renewables where feasible) will be applied.
<b><i>Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency</i></b>	Project design includes resource-efficient practices for nurseries, planting, and agroforestry; no	Minor. Any use of chemicals (e.g., for invasive species control) will be strictly monitored and managed in line with

	significant pollution is expected	national standards and AF safeguards.
<b><i>Public Health</i></b>	No negative public health impacts are anticipated; improved forest cover and resource management should have co-benefits for health.	Minor. Monitoring will ensure no accidental introduction of disease vectors or contamination through project activities.
<b><i>Physical and Cultural Heritage</i></b>	Project sites will be screened to avoid impacts on known or suspected cultural heritage areas; local knowledge and customs will be integrated into project design.	Minor. If sites of cultural significance are identified, activities will be adjusted and managed in consultation with affected communities.
<b><i>Lands and Soil Conservation</i></b>	Restoration and agroforestry activities are designed to promote soil conservation, fertility, and sustainable land management.	Minor. Continuous monitoring and technical support will ensure restoration activities avoid soil erosion, degradation, or unsustainable land-use practices.

## PART III: IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

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

Project Objective(s) <sup>1</sup>	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of community-based organizations (CBOs) and site-level committees leading project activities</li> <li>• Number of local actors trained and engaged in restoration, monitoring, and governance</li> </ul>	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area (ha) of forests and catchments restored or under improved management</li> <li>• Number of communities with restored or improved ecosystem services</li> </ul>	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of vulnerable people with increased resilience and reduced climate risk</li> <li>• Number of national/subnational policies updated to integrate NbS and community-led restoration</li> </ul>	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people (by gender) trained in restoration, monitoring, and adaptive management</li> </ul>	Output 2.1: Strengthened capacity of national and sub-	2.1.1 No. of staff trained to respond to, and mitigate impacts of, climate-	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of community-based organizations and local committees established and operational</li> <li>• Number of participatory adaptation action plans developed and validated by stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p>national centres and networks to respond rapidly to extreme weather events</p> <p>Output 3.2: Strengthened capacity of national and sub-national stakeholders and entities to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning</p>	<p>related events (by gender)</p> <p>3.2.2 No. of tools and guidelines developed (thematic, sectoral, institutional) and shared with relevant stakeholders</p>	
<p>Forests, landscapes, and catchments restored; ecosystem services, resilience, and food/livelihood security increased and sustained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hectares of forests, landscapes, and catchments restored or under improved management</li> <li>• Number of native seedlings planted and survived after 2 years</li> <li>• Number of communities benefiting from improved ecosystem services and reduced climate risk</li> </ul>	<p>Output 5: Vulnerable ecosystem services and natural resource assets strengthened in response to climate change impacts, including variability</p>	<p>5.1. Number of natural resource assets created, maintained, or improved to withstand conditions resulting from climate variability and change (by type and scale)</p>	
<p>Adaptive management institutionalized; best practices and policy updated; regional impact and replication enabled</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of policies and strategies updated to integrate adaptive management and community-led NbS</li> <li>• Number of knowledge products, best practices, and lessons learned disseminated at national and regional levels</li> <li>• Number of regional peer learning/exchange events held</li> </ul>	<p>Output 7: Improved integration of climate-resilience strategies into country development plans</p> <p>Output 3.2: Strengthened capacity to capture and disseminate knowledge</p>	<p>7.1. No. of policies introduced or adjusted to address climate change risks (by sector)</p> <p>3.2.2 No. of tools and guidelines developed and shared</p>	

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

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

### A. Record of endorsement on behalf of the government

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 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](mailto:dirks@spc.int)

Project Contact Person: Mr. Kunal Singh

Tel. +679 8741145

And Email: [kunals@spc.int](mailto:kunals@spc.int)

GOVERNMENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF VANUATU MINISTRY  
OF CLIMATE CHANGE  
ADAPTATION, METEOROLOGY,  
GEO-HAZARDS, ENVIRONMENT &  
ENERGY & NDMO  
PMB 9074, PORT VILA  
VANUATU



GOUVERNEMENT DE LA  
RÉPUBLIQUE DE VANUATU  
MINISTÈRE DE L'ADAPTATION AU  
CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE, LA  
MÉTÉOROLOGIE, LES RISQUES  
GÉOLOGIQUES, ENVIRONNEMENT &  
ENERGIE & NDMO  
SPR 9074, PORT-VILA, VANUATU

TEL : (678) 22068

FAX : (678) 22068

Ref: MoCC/NAB Sec/DG/AF/140725#2

July 14<sup>th</sup> 2025

By Email: [Secretariat@Adaptation-Fund.org](mailto:Secretariat@Adaptation-Fund.org)  
The Adaptation Fund Board  
c/o Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat

Dear Secretariat,

**Endorsement for Restoring our original trees and shore (ROOTS) – Nature-based, community-led forest restoration and management Project:**

1. In my capacity as the designated authority for the Adaptation Fund in Vanuatu, I confirm that the above national project proposal is in accordance with the Vanuatu Government's national priorities in implementing adaptation activities to reduce adverse impacts of, and risks, posed by climate change.
2. The outcome of the proposal complements key areas of Vanuatu's National Forest Policy (2013-2023), National Adaptation Plan 2022, Nationally Determined Contributions 2020 and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2018.
3. Accordingly, I am pleased to endorse the above project proposal with support from the Adaptation Fund. If approved, the project will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries, and Biosecurity (MALFFB)/Department of Forestry and executed by the Pacific Community (SPC).
4. Please note that this Letter of Endorsement ('LOE') applies to the Concept Note only. We will issue a subsequent LOE to the accredited entity for the implementation of the project upon receipt of a Full Funding proposal.
5. For any enquiries, please contact Mr. Godfrey Bome on email via [gbome@vanuatu.gov.vu](mailto:gbome@vanuatu.gov.vu) or by phone on +678 7653723.

Yours sincerely

Mr. David Gibson  
Designated Authority, Adaptation Fund  
Director General, Ministry of Climate Change





**Revised PFG Submission Form**  
**Project Formulation Grant (PFG)**

**Submission Date:** 30 July 2025

**Adaptation Fund Project ID:**

**Country/ies:** Vanuatu

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

**Type of IE (NIE/RIE/MIE):** RIE

**Implementing Entity:** Pacific Community (SPC)

**Executing Entity/ies:** Vanuatu Department of Forestry

**A. Project Preparation Timeframe**

<b>Start date of PFG</b>	September 2025
<b>Completion date of PFG</b>	April 2026

**B. Proposed Project Preparation Activities (\$)**

<b>List of Proposed Project Preparation Activities</b>	<b>Output of the PFG Activities</b>	<b>US\$ Amount</b>	<b>Budget note</b>
<b>1. Partner and stakeholder mapping, mobilisation, and technical validation consultations</b> (identification, outreach, small-group technical meetings and validation)	Stakeholder and partner mapping and engagement report; summary of consultations;	\$15,000	Includes costs for targeted outreach, travel for consultations, technical meetings, expert facilitators, venue hire, and feedback documentation.
<b>2. Comprehensive site assessment and selection</b> (field missions, participatory mapping, validation workshops)	Site pre-feasibility and assessment report; vulnerability maps; consultation summaries; selected priority sites	\$40,000	Covers consultant fees, travel and subsistence (airfare, accommodation, per diems), data collection materials, GIS/mapping supplies, workshop costs, and report writing.
<b>3. Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) and</b>	Completed ESMS/ESIA, FPIC documentation, Gender	\$30,000	Consultant time for ESMS/ESIA; field visits, workshops for FPIC and

<b>risk assessment</b> (including FPIC, gender/social assessment, legal review)	& Social Inclusion Assessment		social inclusion, legal review (local expert input), translation, and reporting.
<b>4. Initial baseline data collection and MEL plan design</b>	Baseline indicator database, draft MEL plan and reporting tools	\$20,000	Field staff/consultants for data collection, travel costs, data entry, database/tool development, and MEL planning meetings.
<b>5. Drafting of the full proposal and supporting documents</b>	Full AF proposal, annexes, budget, workplan, risk register, safeguards	\$45,000	Expert/consultant time for drafting, stakeholder review meetings, internal quality assurance, editing, and printing.
<b>Total Project Formulation Grant</b>		\$150,000	

Please describe below each of the PFG activities and provide justifications for their need and for the amount of funding required:

**1. Partner and stakeholder mapping, mobilisation, and technical validation consultations (identification, outreach, small-group technical meetings and validation)**

This activity is critical to ensure early and inclusive engagement of all relevant stakeholders—including government agencies, community organizations, technical partners, and NGOs—across national and local levels. Effective mapping, outreach, and validation consultations will build broad support, clarify roles, and help align project design with community priorities. The process will also identify existing initiatives to avoid duplication, and secure local ownership.

*Amount:* \$15,000 – This covers travel, meetings, targeted outreach, expert facilitation, venue hire, and the documentation required to secure meaningful input and commitment from all partners.

**2. Comprehensive site assessment and selection (field missions, participatory mapping, validation workshops)**

Thorough and participatory site assessment is foundational for impact and cost-effectiveness. This work will combine ecological and social assessments, participatory mapping, field missions, and stakeholder workshops to identify and prioritize project intervention sites. Site pre-feasibility studies ensure technical and social suitability, maximize restoration potential, and help focus resources on areas with the highest vulnerability and opportunity for scaling.

*Amount:* \$40,000 – Covers consultant fees, travel (including to remote islands), mapping/GIS, field supplies, workshop facilitation, and preparation of selection reports and maps.

**3. Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) and risk assessment (including FPIC, gender/social assessment, legal review)**

Early and robust safeguards are essential for compliance with Adaptation Fund policy, managing risks, and ensuring that interventions are equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. This includes a draft ESMS/ESIA, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) documentation, gender and social assessments, and legal reviews. These will inform design, monitoring, and mitigation strategies throughout the project, while ensuring broad community support and adherence to national/international requirements.

*Amount:* \$30,000 – Reflects specialist consultant and legal input, fieldwork, translation, community consultations, and reporting.

#### **4. Initial baseline data collection and MEL plan design**

Accurate baseline data is essential for tracking change, demonstrating results, and enabling adaptive management. This activity will gather ecological, social, and climate data at each selected site, and develop a participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan, with tools and indicators tailored for local implementation and reporting.

*Amount:* \$20,000 – Supports field staff/consultant time, travel, data collection and management, and collaborative MEL planning sessions.

#### **5. Drafting of the full proposal and supporting documents**

A strong, detailed, and fully compliant proposal is key for AF approval and timely project launch. This task includes drafting the full proposal and all supporting documents (annexes, budgets, workplans, risk registers, and safeguard documents), ensuring that inputs from all previous activities and stakeholder feedback are integrated.

*Amount:* \$45,000 — Reflects the intensive expert/consultant time, stakeholder review process, and multi-stage editing, quality assurance, and production for a high-quality submission.

#### **Total Project Formulation Grant: \$150,000**

*The requested budget is appropriate for the depth and complexity of work required to prepare an ambitious, community-driven forest and landscape restoration proposal for Vanuatu, and is aligned with Adaptation Fund guidance. These activities are costed based on local rates, anticipated field costs, and the scope of work needed to deliver a high-quality, implementation-ready full proposal.*

#### **For LLA Projects only:**

If requesting additional funding for LLA projects to enable devolving decision making to the local level, please specify the activities that would directly serve to enable devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level and enable local actors to make informed decisions on how adaptation actions are defined, prioritized, designed, and implemented:

Please provide justifications for their need and for the amount of additional funding required:

Several PFG activities are specifically designed to enable and strengthen devolved decision-making for locally led adaptation:

- **Participatory site selection and planning workshops** ensure communities and local stakeholders actively define, prioritize, and validate intervention sites and activities.
- **Mobilization of local committees and identification of site-level champions** will empower community-based groups to participate in, and eventually oversee, project planning, monitoring, and benefit-sharing frameworks.
- **FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) processes and inclusive stakeholder consultations** will guarantee that local knowledge, priorities, and voices—including those of women, youth, and vulnerable groups—directly shape the final project design.
- **Preparation of local governance and benefit-sharing agreements** will set the foundation for direct community management of restoration activities.

#### **Justification for additional funding:**

The Project Formulation Grant is essential for ensuring that the ROOTS project meets the highest standards for locally led adaptation under the Adaptation Fund's Locally Led Adaptation window. All PFG activities are designed to devolve decision-making to the community level from the earliest stages.

Through participatory site selection in close partnership with Vanuatu Department of Forestry, early establishment of pilot sites, and comprehensive baseline and safeguard assessments, the PFG will empower local actors to set project priorities and implementation modalities. The deliverables—such as detailed site selection reports, stakeholder engagement records, a preliminary Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) and Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), gender analysis, and a draft Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework—will directly enable the rapid launch of implementation activities upon approval of the full proposal.

The outputs of the PFG are closely aligned with Components 1–3 of the concept note, ensuring continuity and a direct line from formulation to implementation. The PFG will also support the development of scalable tools, protocols, and lessons that will contribute to broader upscaling of restoration efforts in Vanuatu and the Pacific region. Additional resources are necessary to support the expanded scope and depth of local consultations and the organization of inclusive planning and decision-making workshops. These activities ensure that, once implementation begins, communities are fully prepared and have a strong sense of ownership, facilitating direct local leadership throughout the project cycle.

A preliminary Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) and Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) will be developed under the PFG and finalized in the full proposal, ensuring robust safeguards and compliance with Adaptation Fund policy from project inception.

**C. Implementing Entity**

This request has been prepared in accordance with the Adaptation Fund Board’s procedures and meets the Adaptation Fund’s criteria for project identification and formulation

Implementing Entity Coordinator, IE Name	Signature	Date (Month, day, year)	Project Contact Person (s)	Telephone	Email Address
Dirk Snyman, Pacific Community (SPC)		June 27, 2025	Mr. Ludovic Branlant (NbS Adviser - SPC) – <a href="mailto:ludovicb@spc.int">ludovicb@spc.int</a>	+687 26 20 00	dirks@spc.int