



Nakau Conservation Programme Solomon Islands
Babatana Rainforest Conservation Project,
Babatana Region, Choiseul Province

Annual Report 2023



Babatana Rainforest Conservation Project Annual Report 2023

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The Nakau Programme



Natural Resources Development Foundation

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Cover picture: University of Queensland social sciences student group on the way to visit the Sirebe PA in July 2023

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1 Summary

Project overview	
Reporting period	01/01/2023 – 31/12/2023
Geographical areas	Sirebe Customary land, Babatana region, Choiseul, Solomon Islands (project of the Nakau Conservation Programme Solomon Islands)
Technical specifications in use	Nakau approved approach Avoided forest degradation- Logged to protected forest (AFD- LtPF)

Project indicators	Historical (Jan 2015 – Dec 2022)	Added/ Issued this period (Jan 2023 – December 2023)	Total
No. smallholder households with PES agreements	n/a	n/a	n/a
No. community groups with PES agreements (where applicable)	1	1	1
Approximate number of households (by rights holder groups/families)	Primary: 27 Secondary: 46 Total: 73	0	Primary: 27 Secondary: 46 Total: 73
Area under management (ha) where PES agreements are in place	806.2	0	806.2
Total PES payments made to participants (AUD)	\$95,563.14	\$111,328.54	\$206,891.68
Total sum held in trust for future PES payments (AUD)	\$364,069.48	-11,624.29	352,445.19
Net PVCs issued	123,541	0	123,541
Allocation to Plan Vivo buffer (tCO ₂)	30,888	0	30,888
Sold PVCs at time of issuance	67,498	10296	77,794
Unsold Stock at time of Submission (PVC)	19,617	-10296	9,321
Net Plan Vivo Certificates (PVCs) issued to date			123,541
Net Plan Vivo Certificates requested for issuance			0
Net Plan Vivo Certificates available for future issuance (REDD only)			0
Total Net PVCs issued (including this report)			123,541

2 Project updates

2.1 Project owner key events

Sirebe tribal association annual general meeting (AGM).

The annual meeting was held on 30-31 August 2023 in the Tabasaru hall in Sasamungga. A detailed description of the meeting agenda and outcomes is provided in the *Sirebe annual general meeting report August 2023 (Annex 1.1)*

Plan Vivo educational visit

On 14 March 2023, three officers from the Plan Vivo standard, together with members from NRDF, visited the Nakau Babatana region to hold a PES education and awareness event with members from all participating tribes, including Sirebe. The agenda and outcomes of the event are described in the *Plan Vivo awareness visit March 2023 MoM (Annex 4.2)*

Visit of Gin Clear travel agent

Two members of Gin Clear (<https://www.gincleartravel.com/Travel>) , a company specialized in organizing fly-fishing trips, visited the Babatana area to scout the potential of the area to be included into the company's portfolio. The Kolombangara river offers good potential for fly and other fishing, and eco-tourism based on fishing could become a promising livelihood activity for Sirebe and other tribes within the catchment area of the Kolombangara River. Currently, there is no appropriate infrastructure in place to accommodate groups of visitors. A second and more formal scoping visit is planned for 2025.

East Rennell representatives look and learn trip to Babatana

Live and Learn Solomon Islands organized an educational/awareness visit for a group of representatives of the East Rennell world heritage site to the Babatana region and Sirebe forest carbon project, which was facilitated by NRDF and the Sirebe TA. The visit took place from 6-11 November 2023 and had the objective for East Rennell landowners to witness a) how protected areas affect land ownership, tenure and restrictions, b) how PA safeguards against commercial logging/mining and act as assurance to carbon standard and buyers, c) the commitment and work of land owners, PA management committee, forest rangers to carbon project development and implementation, d) how carbon benefits are shared and understand project governance arrangement and organizations, e) see first-hand benefits of carbon trade and livelihood projects and value of intact forest, water resources and biodiversity, f) how women are involved and what roles they play in the carbon project carbon trade. The visit included meetings with tribal associations, community company members, project beneficiaries and staff from NRDF. A site visit was conducted to the Sirebe PA as well. The group was very impressed and motivated to take back their experiences to their tribal groups in Rennell to strengthen their own conservation programme and PA and carbon project initiatives. The look and learn trip is reported in detail in the *East Rennell Look and Learn Trip 2023 Report (Annex 4.1)*.

Visit from University of Queensland social sciences students' group

In July 2023, a group of 12 social sciences students and 3 supervisors from the University of Queensland, Australia, visited Sasamunga village. The group stayed for one week and participants were accommodated at people's village homes. The objective of the visit was for the students to learn about the Sirebe Rainforest Conservation Programme, to meet the people and experience village life and to learn about Solomon Islands and Choiseul indigenous culture and traditions. During the visit, the students were able to gain valuable insights into forest conservation management, visit the Sirebe PA and experience its nature and landscape, get to know local livelihoods and eat local food, and participate in community and cultural events. During the events, the students were able to engage in meaningful discussions and exchange ideas with tribal members of Sirebe and other projects. A description of the experiences during the trip is provided in the report "*Sirebe UQ student visit July 2023*" provided in Annex 4.

2.2 Project owner key activities

Women's development

As part of the women development, SBD 20,000 was released to the Sirebe Women saving club to support their programmes and individual livelihoods projects. Part of the money was allocated to the women saving club's loan account to facilitate providing women with small loans at a small interest rate (5%). The activities have not been separately reported in the AGM minutes in detail, but according to information from Linford the investments were made into women's livelihood activities such as small bakeries, shops and canteens. We will start trainings to improve the quality of reporting done by our partners.

Livelihood projects

The 4 main families Pitakaji, Asa (= Barobose), Pitatamae and Pitakoe are the primary rights holders of Sirebe customary land and therefore also are the primary project beneficiaries. Their members (162) represent 37% of the whole tribe (438 members), while the rest are secondary members (people from outside married into the tribe). All Sirebe tribal members, were engaged in the development of the Sirebe Tribal Association's business and benefit sharing plan, and have given their free, prior and informed consent to allocate 75% of the carbon revenue to the 4 primary rights holder families. The remaining 20% goes to the secondary right holder families and 5% to a women's development fund.

The main 4 family lines received benefits to further expand their existing infrastructure projects and re-invest into household income generating livelihoods activities. In summary the family lines reported their investments as follows:

Table 1: Overview of livelihood projects in Sirebe in 2023

Family line	Investments 2023
Pitakaji	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvement family canteen• Transport Sasamuqa Taro return and fuel.• Cultural ceremony for deceased mother
Asa	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hand tools and Ration for building house• Canteen extension and improvement

Family line	Investments 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family obligation an support for funeral
Pitatamae	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bakery projects (2)• House material completion• Toilet material set• Timber
Pitakoe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hardware materials• Bakery set• Canteen restocks• Family obligations

The above-mentioned livelihood projects are reported in the *Sirebe progress report June-Dec 2023 (Annex 3.1)*

Sirebe ranger station upgrade and maintenance

The Sirebe ranger station got a main upgrade by installing one water tank and the plumbing to finalize the toilet block, which is now ready for use. The compound surrounding the station was cleared from weeds.

Tanabo station upgrade

The Tanabo station leaf-hut and accommodation, kitchen and a new ablution block was completed to provide convenience for the Sirebe community and visitors. Tanabo station is a family operated business which supports the overall Sirebe project in providing accommodation for researchers, stakeholders, overseas visitors and functioning as a venue for meetings, workshops and trainings.

Sirebe PA maintenance

Forest monitoring transects and other tracks in the PA were maintained in 2023.

2.3 Challenges

Financial management

The Sirebe community company and tribal association still struggle in performing good financial management due to limited capacity. This is aggravated by the set back to open separate bank accounts (as per the project benefit-sharing model), now pending for over a year. Members continuously followed up with the BSP bank at Gizo, which is quite expensive, because it involves paying for return travel from Sasamungga to Gizo by boat. The situation is further exacerbated by the circumstance that the project operation is completely cash based, making bookkeeping paperwork very onerous and prone to errors. The cash expenses done in the community further cannot be reconciled as they only appear in the bookkeeping system, but not in bank statements.

NRDF and Nakau recognize the need to support the Sirebe TA to increase their capacity in business and financial management practice. In 2023, Nakau's business manager identified the gaps in this area and measures to best to address them. Since NRDF do not have the

capacity to provide this kind of support either, it was found necessary to engage external consultancy service. These would be able to provide the necessary specialized training and support to the Sirebe tribal association. These activities are planned to begin in 2024.

Documentation standards

The quality of project operational and financial documentation and reporting (progress reports, minutes of meetings) produced by the Sirebe tribal association, albeit improved compared with previous years, is still quite low. NRDF and the Sirebe TA are aware of this circumstance and willing to work together and continue to improve in this area. NRDF and the Sirebe TA management have started working on a plan that involves contracting consulting services to build the capacity of the Sirebe TA to improve their documentation and reporting standards.

Cultural obligations

The Sirebe Tribe has been through some hardships after 2 leaders of the 4 family lines passed away in quick succession. In 2022 Chief Aasa passed and in April 2023 his brother Chief Warren Pitatamae died from sickness. Funerals, cultural ceremonies and other cultural obligations and support play a very important part in the lives of the Sirebe people. In consequence, the project was put on a hold for several months out of respect for the deceased. Many of the ongoing project activities (e.g management meetings, infrastructure projects or forest monitoring activities) were halted or cancelled. Apart from the delays in project activities in 2023, almost a third of the annual expenses was used to fund the cultural obligations.

Women's participation

Women's participation in the Sirebe project entities such as the tribal association is still limited. In 2023, there are 3 women out of 12 members in the Sirebe tribal association. Nakau and NRDF recognize this shortcoming and strive to increase the gender balance in the project entities in a culturally sensitive manner, for instance through mainstreaming gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) into the NCP-SI methodology and project development.

2.4 Project developments

Change in the Sirebe tribal association members

There was a significant change in the Sirebe tribal association during the reporting period. During the annual general meeting held on 30 August 2023, the Sirebe TA chairman Mr Bartholomew Qalo announced his retirement due to age and health restrictions. Mr. Thomson Poloso had previously been proposed for the chair position by Mr Bartholomew, due to his qualification and experience as a public officer. The nominee was forwarded by the executive TA members and, during the AGM, was elected for the position by consensus decision (all TA members voted by hand in his favour). The association further appointed Mr. Bartholomew as vice-Chairman as they wanted to keep him in an advisory role.

First Sirebe tribal association annual general meeting

The annual general meeting itself was a milestone for the Sirebe tribe and the project, as it was the first time that Sirebe tribal members from the wider region came together in such an event. The importance of this unique event was well appreciated by all, and members are looking forward to participating in annual meetings in the future. Such meeting could never be realized without the financial support from the forest carbon project.

Table 2: Document updates

PDD (including technical specifications) document version:		
PDD section	Date change	Short description of update
n/a	n/a	n/a

Table 3: Progress against corrective actions

Document	Corrective action	Activity against this
No pending corrective actions in reporting period		

Table 4: Updates to project risk assessment

Document	Update on operational risk	Mitigation measures
Sirebe project PDD	n/a	n/a

2.5 Future Developments

Extension of women's savings clubs

The Sirebe TA and women's saving clubs will also encourage women from the Sirebe tribe that reside in 3 other villages (Koloe village in North Choiseul, Saqigae village in the North-West Choiseul and Sene village in South Choiseul) to establish their own women savings clubs so they can access financial support for women's development.

De-registration of the Sirebe community company

It was decided that the community company, as the entity created to administer the carbon business, will be de-registered due to continuous difficulties to establish the company's financial structure under the local partner bank in Gizo. The Sirebe tribal association (TA) has been shown to be a more suitable organizational form for a community-led project, because a) the TA is designed to govern the carbon project on behalf of all tribal members (while the community company operates through trustees), and b) a non-for-profit organization is a better fit for the Sirebe carbon business model and financial flows into the community. No progress to de-register the Sirebe community company was made in 2023, the process is scheduled to start with the assistance of a business consultant in 2024/2025.

After de-registration, the roles and responsibilities regarding the financial and operational management of the carbon project will be fully transferred to the tribal association. This shift does not create additional work or capacity needs, but represents a change in governance structure and shift in the allocation of responsibilities that will be expected to create efficiencies by reducing costs (taxes) and paperwork (i.e reporting requirements to the company registry).

Staff capacity

Understanding the gaps and weaknesses of the project, the Sirebe TA is planning to increase the project staff capacity in the coming years. Besides appointing more administrative staff the project, it is also looking at increasing capacity building through training of existing staff and sending tribe members to the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) to obtain specific skills and knowledge so they can be employed in the project.

3 Project activities

3.1 Project activities generating Plan Vivo certificates

Table 5: Project activity summary

Name of technical specification	Area (Ha)	No smallholder households	No Community Groups
Avoided forest degradation- Logged to protected forest (AFT0LtPF)	806.2	73	1

3.2 Project activities in addition to those generating Plan Vivo certificates

There are no additional project activities

4 Plan Vivo certificate issuance submission

4.1 Contractual statement

There is no PVC issuance request made during the 2023 reporting period. The issuance of PVCs from the previous verification period 2020-2022 will occur retrospectively after the next verification in 2025. The credits generated in the reporting period 2023 will be issued as part of the upcoming verification period 2023-2025, likely in 2026 or 2027.

4.2 Sales of Plan Vivo certificates

Table 6: Sales of Plan Vivo certificates from commencement of the project until the end of current reporting period.

Date	Buyer	No of PVCs	Price per PVC (AUD)*	Total sale amount (AUD)*	STA share of sale amount (AUD)*	% STA sale share
7/9/2021	Myclimate	52,269				60%
5/9/2021	Henry Cookson	400				60%
25/11/2021	Carbon	100				60%

Date	Buyer	No of PVCs	Price per PVC (AUD)*	Total sale amount (AUD)*	STA share of sale amount (AUD)*	% STA sale share
	Technologies					
15/2/2022	Simon Bennett	20				60%
23/3/2022	Ekos	1,879				60%
12/5/2022	Ekos	3,669				60%
23/9/2022	Swire Shipping	1,047				60%
22/8/2022	Ekos	709				60%
1/6/2022	Ekos	918				60%
22/8/2022	Ekos	2,404				60%
31/10/2022	Ekos	4,083				60%
31/7/2023	Ekos	10,296				60%
Total		77,794				60%

* Pricing reported for internal monitoring purposes only. Pricing information will be removed from the final published document

5 Monitoring results

The following section presents the progress of the forest monitoring activities carried out in the 2023 reporting period. Forest monitoring involves field patrolling to detect of forest cover loss and to collect data on ecosystem indicators. The field monitoring for 2023 was delayed due to unforeseeable circumstances and was carried out in January 2024. The detailed results are presented in the forest monitoring activity report provided in Annex 2.

5.1 Forest monitoring

Table 7: Overview of 2023 Sirebe forest field monitoring results

Progress Indicator	Monitoring results 2023
Number of rangers involved in forest monitoring	11
Number of forest monitoring field trips	1
Number of field monitoring days	5
Length of monitored transects (m)	46,283
Number of forest cover loss incidents detected	0
Area of forest cover loss detected (ha)	0
Activities causing forest cover loss and areas	n/a

5.2 Maintaining commitments

No project participants have been resigned or removed from the project

5.3 Livelihood monitoring

There was no livelihood monitoring carried out in the reporting period. Livelihood monitoring is carried out near the project verification.

5.4 Environmental and biodiversity monitoring

Table 8: Overview of 2023 Sirebe ecosystem monitoring results

Progress Indicator	Monitoring results 2023
Number of field trips	1
Number of rangers involved in ecosystem monitoring	11
Number of field monitoring days	5
Length of monitored transects (m)	46,283
Number of key species detected	7
Number of key species observations	46
Number of total species detected	22
Number of total species observations	115

6 Impacts

6.1 Evidence of outcomes

Forest monitoring

Forest field and remote sensing monitoring results provide evidence that the forest conservation management has been effective and there has been no forest cover loss in the Sirebe PA and EFA in the reporting period.

Table 9: Remote sensing forest cover change assessment

Carbon Indicator	Monitoring results 2023
Number of forest cover loss incidents detected	0
Area of forest cover loss detected (ha)	0
Activities causing forest cover loss and areas	n/a

Livelihood monitoring

Livelihood impacts have been evaluated at the last verification in 2022. The next analysis of project impacts on Sirebe community livelihoods will occur near the next verification, scheduled for 2026 or 2027

Ecosystem monitoring

Table 10: Ecosystem monitoring results in 2023

Key species name	Number of observations 2022	Number of observations 2023	Difference
Rosewood (<i>Pterocarpus indicus</i>)	1	13	+12
Blyth's hornbill (<i>Aceros plicatus</i>)	24	15	-9
Eclectus parrot	1	3	+2

Key species name	Number of observations 2022	Number of observations 2023	Difference
Rosewood (<i>Pterocarpus indicus</i>)	1	13	+12
(<i>Eclectus polychloros</i>)			
Solomon leaf frog (<i>Cornufer guentheri</i>)	2	4	+2
Solomon giant tree frog (<i>Cornufer hedigeri</i>)	0	6	+6
Solomon Islands skink (<i>Corucia zebrata</i>)	3	3	0
Flying fox (<i>Pteropus spp.</i>)	4	2	-2
Total number of key species	6	7	+1
Total number of species observations	35	46	+11

The results of ecosystem monitoring was compared between the first in 2022, and the reporting period. The number of detected key species has increased from 6 to 7 while the number of key species observations has increased from 35 to 46 between 2022 and 2023. The higher number of detected species and observations indicates that the Sirebe rangers are becoming more familiar with the ecosystem monitoring field procedures and that the quality of ecosystem monitoring is improving.

6.2 Payments for ecosystem services

Summary of PES by year

Table 111 below summarizes the payments made to date and separate payments from previous reporting periods from ongoing payments in the current reporting period. The table further summarizes the total value of withheld payments due to participants' failure to achieve monitoring targets. All payments have been made in line with the terms of PES agreements signed.

Table 11: Summary of payments made and held in trust

Reporting year (1 Jan – 31 Dec)	Total previous payments (AUD)	Total ongoing payments (AUD)	Total payments (AUD)	Total payments held in trust (AUD)
01/15 – 12/19	0	0	0	0
01/20 – 12/22	0	95,563.14	95,563.14	364,069.48
01/23 – 12/23	95,563.14	111,328.54	206,891.68	352,445.19
			Total payments + Total held in trust since project start	AUD 559,336.87

6.3 Ongoing participation

Recruitment

Mr Thomson Poloso was elected as the new Chairman of the Sirebe tribal association at the annual general meeting on 30 August 2023.

Project potential

Table 12: Details of potential project participants

Wider engagement	
No smallholder households with <i>plan vivos</i>	0
No community groups with <i>plan vivos</i>	0
Approximate number of households (or individuals) in these community groups (if known)	0

Community participation

Event	Description
Sirebe tribal association annual general meeting	The annual meeting was held on 30-31 August 2023 in the Tabasaru hall in Sasamunga. A detailed description of the meeting agenda and outcomes is provided in the <i>Sirebe annual general meeting report August 2023 (Annex 1.1)</i> .
Sirebe community company trustees meeting	A meeting of Sirebe community company trustees was held on 30/01/2023 to discuss the opening of project bank accounts. The minutes of meeting are provided in Annex 1.2
Sirebe tribal association management meeting	A meeting was held on 01 June 2023 that involved members of the Sirebe tribal association and community company. The objective of the meeting was to present and discuss progress and financials related to community projects in Q4 2022. The meeting minutes are provided in Annex 1.3
Sirebe tribal association management meeting	A meeting was held on 23 June 2023 that involved members of the Sirebe tribal association and community company. The objective of the meeting was to present information on the Sirebe project governance bodies (TA, CC and PAMC) and on the timeline and procedures of the upcoming project audit. The meeting minutes are provided in Annex 1.4

Capacity building

Plan Vivo educational visit

The objective of the visit from Plan Vivo officers described in section 2.1, apart from visiting the sites and meeting the project owners personally, was to educate community members and raise awareness about carbon trading, the voluntary carbon market, and the role of carbon standards such as Plan Vivo. The agenda and outcomes of the event are described in the *Plan Vivo awareness visit March 2023 MoM (Annex 4.2)*

East Rennell representatives look and learn trip to Babatana

Live and Learn Solomon Islands organized an educational/awareness visit for representatives of the East Rennell world heritage site to the Babatana region and Sirebe forest carbon project from 6-11 November 2023. Although the main purpose of the visit was to increase the visitors knowledge about forest carbon projects, it also offered an exchange of experiences regarding forest conservation between the Rennellese and Babatana groups. The look and learn trip is reported in detail in the *East Rennell Look and Learn Trip 2023 Report (Annex 4.1)*.

6.4 Project operating costs

Allocation of costs

The table below summarizes the project-related expenses of the Sirebe TA during the reporting period 01/01/2023- 31/12/2023. The expenses come out of 60% share of 2023 PVC sales received by the TA, as shown in table 6 and table 11. There is a positive balance of AUD 16,512.54 between the 2023 payments from credit sales and the expenditures, which is held by the STA.

Table 13: Allocation of project costs for the financial year 2023

Expense	Narrative	Amount (SBD)	Amount (AUD)	Contribution from sale of PVCs	Contribution from other sources
Benefit payments	Payments made for family or community projects (e.g. infrastructure, sanitation, women's savings clubs) or family benefits (e.g. for school fees, cultural events). For detailed breakdown, see Annex 5	SBD 359,170	AUD 64,650	100%	0%
Operational expenses	Payments made to operate the project such as allowances, accommodation and consumables. For detailed breakdown, see Annex 5.	SBD 167,591	AUD 30,166	100%	0%
Total Expenditures		SBD 526,761	AUD 94,816	100%	0%
Balance	Balance between payments and expenditures that is held by the STA at the end of the reporting period		AUD 16,512.54		

7 Annexes

Annex 1 **Sirebe project meeting records**

Supplied as a separate document

Annex 2 **Sirebe forest monitoring data and reports**

Supplied as a separate document

Annex 3 **Sirebe tribal association reports**

Supplied as a separate document

Annex 4 **Sirebe capacity building records**

Supplied as a separate document

Annex 5 **Sirebe project financial records**

Supplied as a separate document