

A lush tropical forest scene with sunlight filtering through the dense canopy of green trees and ferns. The text is overlaid in white, centered in the upper half of the image.

Challenges for the Pacific: Biodiversity Assessments & Management in EIAs

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i. Limited Data & Access

- Insufficient data for baseline Biodiversity Assessment from the PICs.
- Most PICs lack taxonomic/ecological data to inform the Biodiversity Assessments/ Reports.
- Limited access to data/ Data Sharing between Ministries, NGOs, Research Institutions, and to users. Consent to accessing available data is usually a long process.

ii. Limited In-country Expertise

- Limited technical in-country expertise in the field of Taxonomy, Ecology, Conservation/ Biodiversity to undertake Biodiversity Assessments for EIAs.
- Need to register all qualified national consultants for EIA Biodiversity Assessment to ensure quality of reports meet required standards & guidelines.
- Need for EIA technical review committee within the regulatory authorities to be well qualified to make sound recommendations on the reports submitted.

iii. Limited Enforcement & Monitoring

- Need for strict enforcement by the national regulatory authorities to ensure compliance to regulations and standards are met.
- Monitoring plan as recommended in the EMMP for bio-physical assessments are undertaken as scheduled.
- Need for personnel to be identified with costs budgeted for on-site visits, monitoring and reporting.

iv. Biodiversity Studies must consider:

- seasonality, breeding or migratory seasons for these assessments (flora & fauna)
- thorough assessments on conservation value and ecosystem services
- with Climate Change having an impact on PICs, the need to integrate the impacts of CC as well in Biodiversity Assessments such as ENM/ SDM that predicts distribution patterns for either threatened or invasive species under various current and future climate scenarios to ensure appropriate mitigative measures are considered
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) or local knowledge e.g. in Fiji, the presence of species that are of cultural significance or “totems”

v. Lack of Community/ Resource Owners Involvement

- Need for the resource owners/ local communities to be better informed and educated on the EIA process and in decision making.
- Limited participation in Biodiversity Assessments and monitoring/reporting .
- On-site training for local parataxonomists by technical experts in the team often not considered when surveys are conducted.

VINAKA!!!