THE PRELIMINARY STUDY
ON
THE PROJECT FOR
IMPROVEMENT OF WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS
IN
HONIARA AND PROVINCIAL CENTERS
IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

SUMMARY REPORT
ON
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

SEPTEMBER 2007

SOWA CONSULTANTS INC.
NOBUYUKI NAKAZAWA
1. BACKGROUND

The Government of the Solomon Islands made a request for Grant Aid on the Project for Improvement of Water Supply Systems in Honiara and Provincial Centers in Auki and Water Quality Crisis in Noro and Proposal Seeking Emergency Assistance (hereinafter referred to as “the Project”) to the Government of Japan. The Government of Japan entrusted the study to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (hereinafter referred to as "JICA"), the official agency implementing the Japanese Government’s technical assistance and expediting proper execution of Japan’s Grant Aid. Hence, JICA decided to conduct a Preliminary Study and sent the Preliminary Study Team (hereinafter referred to as "the Team"), headed by Mr. Hiroshi IZAKI, Grant Aid Management Department, JICA headquarter.

This report was a summary of the environmental and social consideration study conducted from 24 July 2007 to 24 August 2007 based on the JICA Guideline for Environmental and Social Considerations (April 2004).

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Project is to improve the health and living standard of the people who live in the project site through construction and improvement of water supply facilities in Honiara and Auki cities. The major project components requested are as follows;

2.1 City of Honiara

- Groundwater development
- Construction of water treatment facilities
- Construction of pumping stations
- Construction of water distribution reservoirs
- Construction of water transmission and distribution mains

2.2 Provincial Centers in Auki

- Groundwater development
2.3 Provincial Centers in Noro

- Water salination inspection due to the seawater intrusion by the earthquake occurred in April 2007

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 EIA SYSTEM

Environmental Impact Assessment System (hereinafter referred to as "EIA") is controlled by the Environmental Conservation Division (hereinafter referred to as "ECD") based on the Environmental Act established in 1998. According to this act, any developer who proposes to carry out any applications for prescribed development in Solomon Islands shall make application to the Director in such form as may be approved by the Minister. On receipt of the application, the ECD director shall advise the developer to submit a development application accompanied by a public environmental report (hereinafter referred to as "PER") as Initial Environmental Examination, together with any additional requirements, if the project has expected negative impacts on environment.

Regarding the Project, Solomon Islands Water Authority (hereinafter referred to as "SIWA") submitted the application letter and PER to ECD in January 2006. Responding to this application, ECD is supposed to permit the Project without any requirements, including stakeholder meeting, EIA, and counter measures by October 2007.

3.2 LAND OWNERSHIP IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

The national territory of Solomon Islands is classified into three groups, Town, Alienated Land, and Customary Land. Town is the area directly controlled by the government and its area is owned by the government. The people living here have to lease their own land from the government based on the long term lease agreement with the Department of Lands, responsible organization to control the land leasehold. Alienated Land is the land acquired by the Solomon native people from the indigenous people (hereinafter referred to as "the Tribe"). This alienated land is legally controlled by the government. On the other hand, Customary Land is the land owned by the Tribes and is controlled by many Tribes according to the customary law. The Customary Land covers about 90% of the whole land of the Solomon Islands.
Many conflicts have occurred due to the land boundary and/or the land lease agreement among the Tribes, the government, and the developers, since the start of the large scale development of the coco plantation based on the 1800s colony management policy of England. For the Project, some project sites have the interests in the customary lands. Therefore, the environmental and social considerations for the Tribes would be important to proceed with the Project.

3.3 SITE SURVEY

The site survey was conducted jointly with the staff of the Department of Lands and SIWA referring the land registration map of the project candidate sites which had been roughly selected in the Study for Rehabilitation and Improvement of Solomon Islands Water Authority’s Water Supply and Sewerage Systems (JICA, June 2006). The results of the site survey are shown below:

3.3.1 City of Honiara

There is no natural environmental conservation area, including virgin forest, precious ecosystem and species, and national park, around all project sites. With regard to social impact, there is no place to newly secure the land for the construction within the Tribal area. However, it was supposed that the land securement of the construction site from the landowner and lease holder might cause the conflicts to happen, because the land registration system of Solomon Islands does not work well. Some people do not register their land in case of the alienated land and the land re-lease to other people. Moreover, there exist the illegal land uses, such as inhabitants and small general stores without the land lease agreements. Therefore, in case of selecting the project sites and the pipeline route of the water transmission and distribution mains, which have long distance, the careful examination should be required considering the above.

3.3.2 Provincial Centers in Auki

Although all planned bore fields are located within the governmental land, some parts are occupied by the individual leased lands. These leased lands were not used as residential area or agricultural field. Careful negotiations with leaseholders to secure the lands would be required considering the land re-lease to other people.
3.3.3 Provincial Centers in Noro

The water quality inspection by the portable equipment and the hearing from the inhabitants were conducted. According to the residents, the salinity increase of the supplied water was confirmed as a matter of fact for a few months since the earthquake occurred in 2nd April 2007. Recently, the salinity was returned to normal level. The field inspection at some points showed the normal values as the supplied water.

3.3.4 STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Nowadays, some grant aid projects sponsored by JICA and Asian Development Bank were suspended due to the land issues in Solomon Islands. As noted earlier, the land registration/ownership system is very complicated and vague. In order to proceed with the Project smoothly, it is important to understand the land registration/ownership system in Solomon Islands and to reinforce the transparency and the accountability for the Project to the stakeholders. In this meaning, stakeholder meeting must be one of the most important countermeasures. Considering the stakeholders of the Project, the land owner of the Konglai spring, which spring supplies approximately 50% of the total volume of water to Honiara city, is the most important people, because the Konglai spring maintains its status as the major water resource in Honiara city after the Project completion in the future.

Targeting at the Konglai Tribe, the stakeholder meeting was held by SIWA at the Tajellu village near the Konglai spring in 18 August 2007. Total number of 28 persons including a Tribal leader and 3 sub-leaders attended to the meeting. SIWA, at first, explained the content and the significance of the Project and then launched into the discussion. The major questions from the Tribe side were the relationship between the Konglai spring and the Project. SIWA explained that the Konglai spring maintains its status as the major water resources after the Project completion. Nobody presented an objection to the Project.

SIWA intends to have a stakeholder meeting with all stakeholders according to the time table.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

PER submitted to ECD in January 2006 does not describe any countermeasures against the negative impacts of the Project, including air and water pollutions, noise
and vibration, and social problems. Therefore, the following recommendations should be planed and implemented in order to proceed with the Project smoothly:

4.2.1 Land Securement

SIWA should secure the lands of the construction sites without the conflicts against the stakeholders. Sustaining the communication with the stakeholders must be one of the most effective measures to avoid the conflicts before and after continuing with construction efforts. By the continuous communication, SIWA will be able to achieve their accountability and increase the transparency of the Project. As the result of such efforts, the land securement risk is deemed to be decreased.

4.2.2 Pollution Prevention

There is no natural environmental conservation area around all sites. However, some sites are located close to the households and the sensitive facilities such as school and church. To minimize the negative impacts on them, the construction sites should be carefully selected and the mitigation measures against air pollution and noise and vibration generated by earth work vehicles should be planed and implemented. Noise and vibration generated from the pumping station under the operation phase should be monitored and then taken the adequate countermeasures if the households are located closed to the site.

Under the construction phase, several kinds of pollutants, including drilling mud, waste soil, and machine oil would be generated from the construction site. Adequate countermeasures should be planed and implemented.