

# **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS – BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

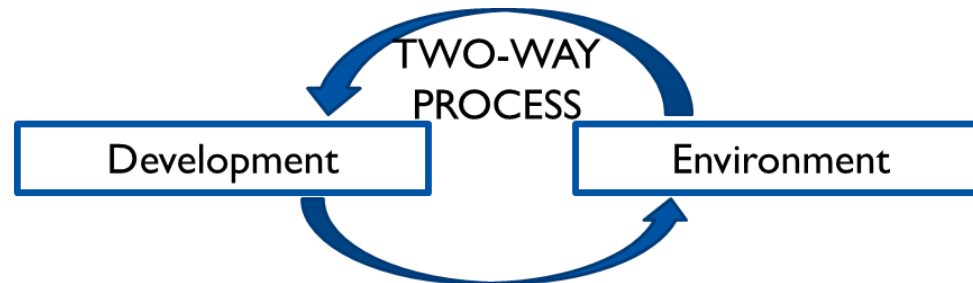
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**SOLOMON ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP**  
**18<sup>TH</sup> – 22<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2024**

# EIA AS A SUSTAINABLE PLANNING TOOL

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- **Proactive planning & decision-making process:** identify, predict, assess and mitigate environmental, social and other relevant effects of proposed developments prior to major decision makings and commitments.
- **Addresses:**
  - negative & positive impacts of development on the environment
  - impacts of the environment on development e.g. flooding, climate change, coastal erosion.



# EIA IS A TOOL THAT IS APPLIED...

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- before major decisions are taken and when all alternatives are still open;
- to inform all stages of decision making, including final approval and the establishment of conditions for project implementation;
- with public participation and consultation; and
- to integrate environmental considerations and safeguards into all phases of project design, construction and operation



## EIA PURPOSE: 4Ps

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**Promote** environmentally sound and sustainable development through the identification of appropriate mitigation measures.



**Protect** the quality and productivity of the natural environment.



**Predict** and avoid, minimize or offset the adverse significant environmental, social and other relevant effects of development proposals.



**Provide** data and information for decision-making on the environmental consequences of any proposed developments

# EIA PURPOSE

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- **The immediate (short term) aim** of EIA is to inform the process of decision-making by identifying the potentially significant environmental effects and risks of development proposals.
- **The ultimate (long term) aim** of EIA is to promote sustainable development by ensuring that development proposals do not undermine critical resource and ecological functions or the well being, lifestyle and livelihood of the communities and peoples who depend on them.



# Global Origin and Evolution of EIA



## 1960s

The USA first introduced EIA through its National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) 1969

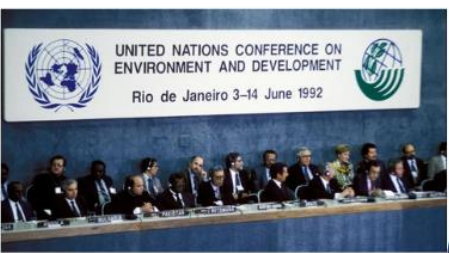


## 1970s

- UN Stockholm Declaration outlines 29 principles on the environment and development.
- Developed and some developing Nations began introducing and legislating EIA (Canada, Australia, Germany, France, Brazil, Phillipines etc.).

## 1980s

- World Bank begins to promote EIA in its policies.
- EU implements EIA directive.
- UNEP implements rules to introduce and promote EIA.
- EIA in the Pacific began with the deployment of donor funded projects



## 1990s

- Rio Declaration (1992) declares EIA as a "national instrument" (principle 17)
- SPREP established (1993)
- Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) entered into force (1997).
- PICs began introducing environmental legislations with EIA provisions (Solomon Island Environment Act 1998)



## 2000s

- UNEP Environmental Plan Highlights the need for EIA
- Most Pacific Islands establish environmental legislations with provisions for EIA.
- Solomon Islands develops EIA Regulations (2008)

## 2010s

- Environmental and Social risk management mainstreamed in donor policies

## 2020s

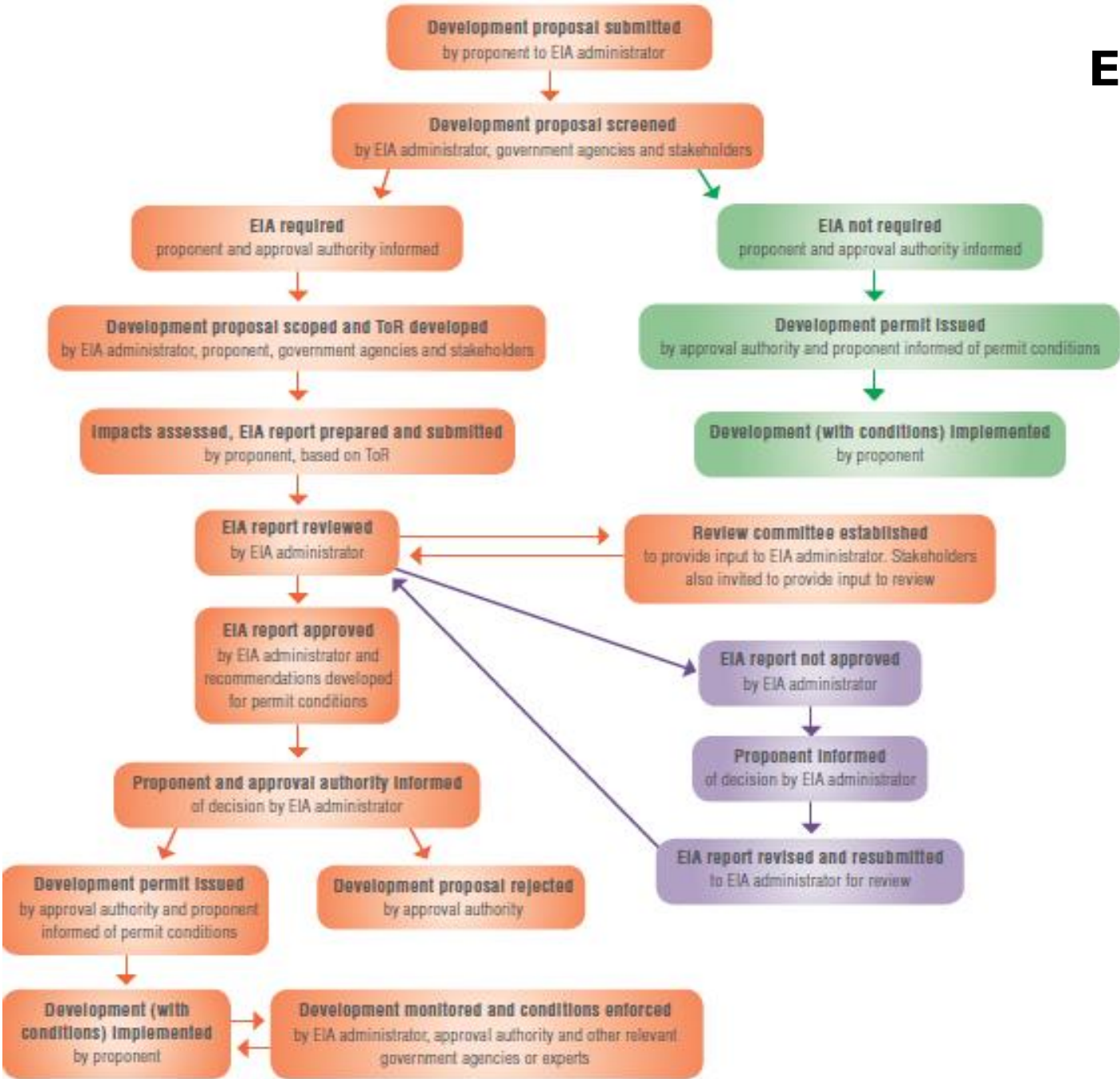
- All PICs have Environmental legislations with provisions for EIA.
- Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) establishes framework for EIA in the High Seas (2023)



# Specific reference to EIA in MEAs

- **The OECD “Declaration on Environmental Policy” (1974)** was the first international document to incorporate EIA. This declaration was the follow up activities after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972) and it set the trend for environmental policy in OECD member countries.
- **Noumea Convention (1986), Article 16: Environmental Impact Assessment I.** The Parties agree to develop and maintain, with the assistance of competent global, regional and subregional organisations as requested, technical guidelines and legislation giving adequate emphasis to environmental and social factors to facilitate balanced development of their natural resources and planning of their major projects which might affect the marine environment in such a way as to prevent or minimise harmful impacts on the Convention Area.
- **Rio Declaration (1992), Principle 17:** Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority.
- **CBD (1992), Article 14:** Each Contracting Party, as far as possible and as appropriate, shall: (a) Introduce appropriate procedures requiring environmental impact assessment of its proposed projects that are likely to have significant adverse effects on biological diversity with a view to avoiding or minimizing such effects and, where appropriate, allow for public participation in such procedures.
- **UNFCCC (1992), Article 4:** All Parties, taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and their specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances, shall: (f) Take climate change considerations into account, to the extent feasible, in their relevant social, economic and environmental policies and actions, and employ appropriate methods, for example impact assessments, formulated and determined nationally, with a view to minimising adverse effects on the economy, on public health and on the quality of the environment, of projects or measures undertaken by them to mitigate or adapt to climate change.
- **Rio+20, The Future We Want (2012), 168:** We also commit to enhance actions to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from significant adverse impacts, including through the effective use of impact assessments.
- **BBNJ (2023): Part IV -** The BBNJ Agreement sets a high standard for environmental impact assessments (EIAs), which may affect EIAs for seabed mining.

# EIA process in the Pacific



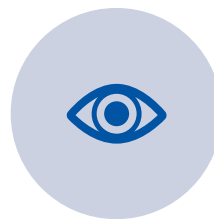


# EIA GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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**PARTICIPATION:**  
APPROPRIATE AND  
TIMELY ACCESS BY ALL  
INTERESTED PARTIES



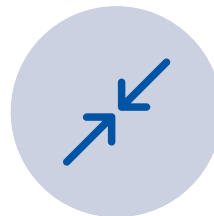
**TRANSPARENCY:** ALL  
DECISIONS SHOULD BE  
OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE



**CERTAINTY:** PROCESS  
AND TIMING AGREED IN  
ADVANCE AND  
FOLLOWED BY ALL



**ACCOUNTABILITY:**  
DECISION MAKERS AND  
PROJECT PROPONENTS  
ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR  
THEIR ACTIONS EIA  
PROCEDURES AND  
DECISION MAKING



**FLEXIBILITY:** ABILITY  
TO ADAPT TO  
CHANGING  
CIRCUMSTANCES, NEW  
INFORMATION OR  
UNFORESEEN IMPACTS

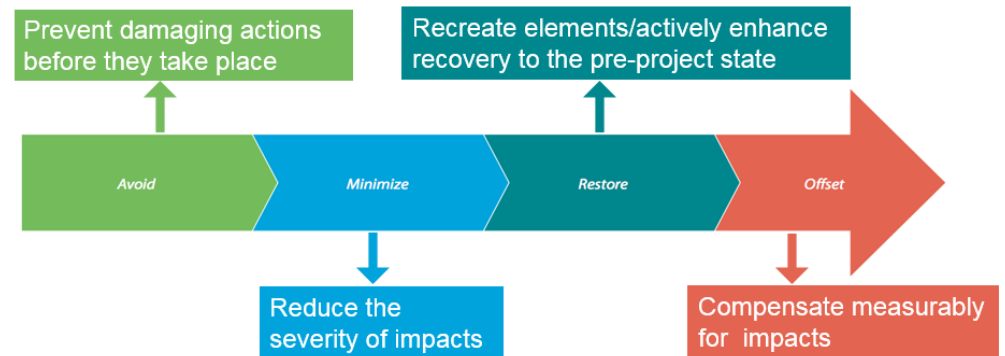


**PRACTICALITY:**  
REQUIREMENTS  
REASONABLE, COST-  
EFFECTIVE AND  
IMPLEMENTABLE.

# IMPORTANT OUTCOMES OF THE EIA PROCESS

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- By using the principles of the mitigation hierarchy
- Selection of an optimal development site & design
- Preparation & implementation of an environmental management & monitoring plan (EMMP)
- Reduced vulnerability to environmental hazards & environmental change



# BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF EIA

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## Benefits

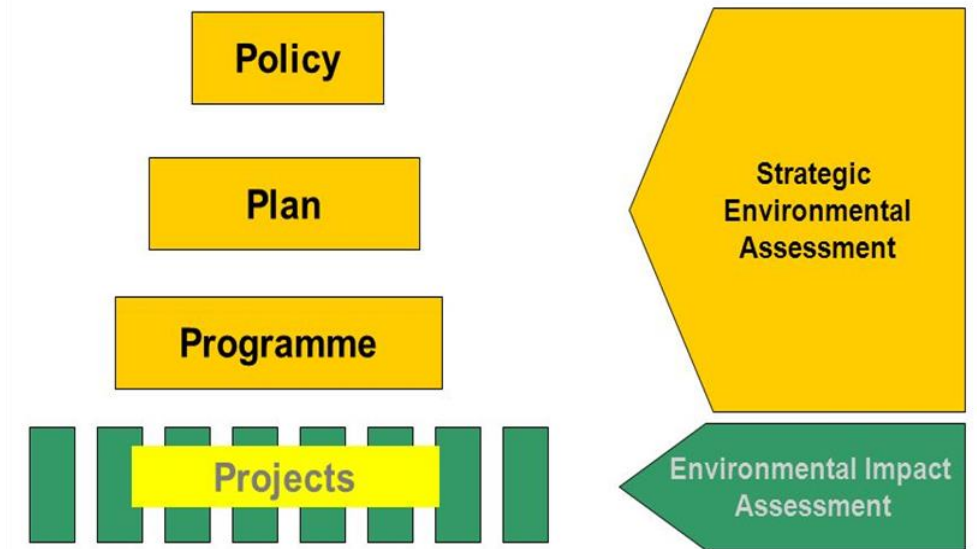
- Helps **identify potential issues early**, avoiding costly mistakes and delays during project execution.
- **Facilitates early engagement** with stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, and regulators, fostering transparency and building support.
- Allows for the **consideration of alternative designs or approaches** that may be more sustainable and environmentally friendly.
- **-Promotes sustainable development** by ensuring that development projects are undertaken in a sustainable manner

## Limitations

- Conducting a thorough EIA can be **time-consuming and expensive**, especially for large-scale projects.
  - **Subjectivity and bias** in impact assessment can arise from consultants' expertise, assumptions, or conflicts of interest.
  - Models and **predictions have inherent uncertainties**, and on-ground realities during project execution may differ from assessments.
  - **Scope is typically limited** to the project footprint, potentially missing broader cumulative impacts or long-term impacts, especially for areas with multiple developments.
  - Robust assessments may be rendered ineffective if there is a lack of stringent **implementation and monitoring of recommended mitigation measures** during the project's execution.
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# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** is a higher-level process that emerged in the middle to late 1980s to address the increasing complexity of environmental issues;
- Can be used in three main ways:
  1. to prepare a strategic development or resource use plan for a defined land and/or ocean area;
  2. to examine the potential environmental impacts that may arise from, or impact upon, the implementation of government policies, plans and programmes; and
  3. to assess different classes or types of development projects, to produce general environmental management policies or design guidelines for the development classes/types.



Applying Strategic Environmental Assessment: Good practice Guidance for Development Co-operation. (OECD, 2006)

# SEA in the Pacific Region

- Constantly evolving, being adapted and applied in modified ways to suit different policy and planning contexts in different parts of the world
- Several countries now have formal policies or laws in place that provide for the application of SEA.
- SEA is yet to be widely **utilized** in the Pacific, but several countries have begun inserting provisions for the use of SEA into their legislations including Tonga, FSM, and Fiji.
- Some examples include:
  1. *Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report: Neiafu Master Plan Vava'u, Kingdom of Tonga.*
  2. *A Strategic Environmental Assessment of Fiji's Tourism Development Plan.*
  3. *FSM Ridge to Reef project in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia.*

Aspect	Environmental impact Assessment	Strategic Environmental Assessment
<b>Planning Level</b>	EIA applied at the project level to identify and manage impacts.	SEA applied at the policy, planning and programme level.
<b>Spatial scale</b>	Small spatial scale focusing on the maximum extent of the project boundary impacts	SEA is undertaken at a larger spatial scale, such as sector-wide or national level.
<b>Level of detail</b>	At the small scale of EIA, sufficient detail of project design is required to enable quantification of impacts and judgement on the significance of these.	At the strategic scale, the complexity of plans mean that assessment of effects can only be articulated in general terms such as direction of travel
<b>Flexibility</b>	Limited flexibility – mitigation measures can be proposed to address negative impacts but there is limited flexibility to adapt the proposal.	Iterative and adaptive, informing changes to the plan based on assessment including review of alternative options to the plan.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Responsibility of proponent	Responsibility of planning authority

# REGIONAL EIA AND SEA RESOURCES

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- 4 Regional EIA and SEA Guidelines developed
- internationally recognized by international development partners including the World Bank, ADB and UNDP.
- Guidelines have facilitated improvements in EIA processes, its management, application, and awareness.





**PNEA**  
PACIFIC NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**LATEST DRUPAL 9 PLATFORM**

**NEW DISCUSSION FORUM**

**NEW CONTENT TYPES**

**IMPROVED SECURITY**

Read More  
PNEA Portal Upgrade Brings New Features To Assist Impact Assessment And Safeguard Practitioners In The Pacific

## Welcome to the PNEA network

The Pacific Network for Environmental Assessment (PNEA) Portal is an initiative of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to support government officials from Pacific Island countries and territories who work with environmental impact assessment (EIA), strategic environmental assessment (SEA) as well as Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS).

The portal complements SPREP's current capacity building program for EIA and SEA - including the recently launched Regional EIA Guidelines, the Coastal Tourism EIA guidelines, and SEA guidelines.

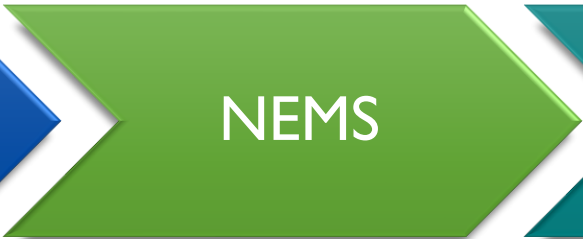
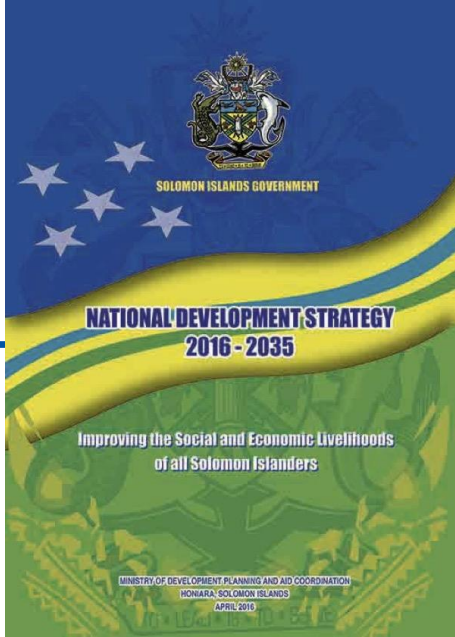
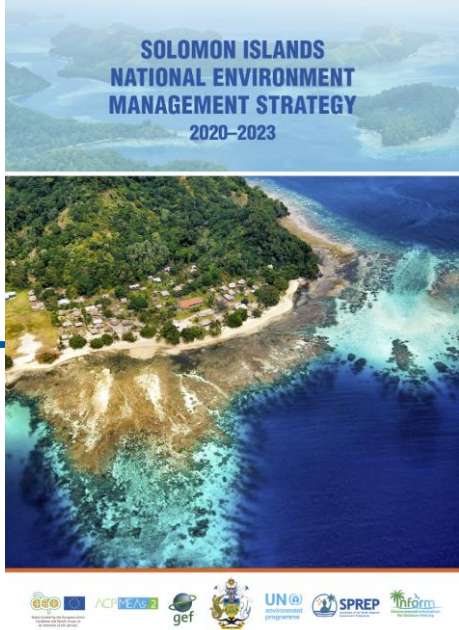
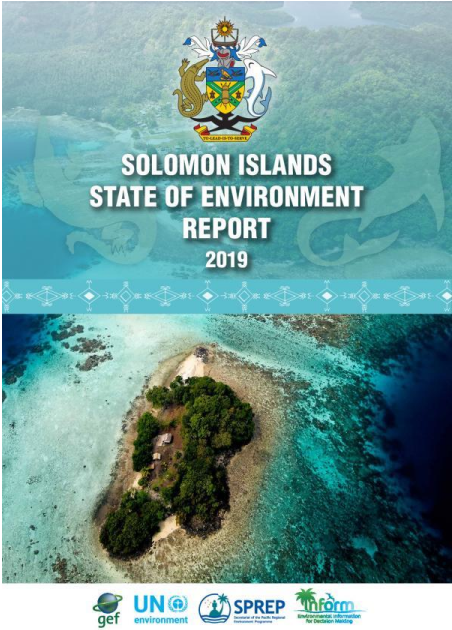
In addition to providing access to EIA and SEA reports, news, highlights, and events across the Pacific region, the

## Events

**24 Apr**  
2024  
-  
**27 Apr**  
2024

**IAIA24 Conference**  
@The Convention Centre  
Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

# MAINSTREAMING AND ALIGNMENT



**Environmental Monitoring and Planning tools (EIA, SEA, GIS etc.)**



# Do you know your Acronyms?