

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Applied Environmental Research Foundation(AERF)
Project Title:	Critical Links- Forging Partnership with civil society and communities for enhancing connectivity in the Sahyadri-Konkan Corridor
Date of Report:	07-09- 2013
Report Author and Contact Information	Mr. Jayant Sarnaik, Applied Environmental Research Foundation(AERF), C-10, Natya Chitra Co-op Hsg Society, Paud Road, Bhusari colony, Pune-411029

CEPF Region: Western Ghats

Strategic Direction: Strategic Direction 1 and Investment Priorities 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3

Grant Amount: \$ 155510.00

Project Dates: 01/11/2009 to 30/06/2013

Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):

- a) **Shramik Sahayog- a voluntary organization based in Chiplun, Distric-Ratnagiri, Maharashtra and AERF's CSO partner in this project. Shramik Sahayog was mainly responsible for implementation of community based activities for conservation in Chiplun. Their work involved conducting feasibility for selection of five villages for intervention, organizing community meetings, collection of seeds from the forests, raising nursery of plants , plantation and implementation of conservation agreement approach at CEPF priority site (Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary)**

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.

Over the period of 3 and half years, the project has achieved following key results

- a) ***Identified and organized a group of CSOs and individuals for collaborative work for conservation in the SKC.***
- b) ***Built capacity of selected organizations and community groups in SKC in formation and achievement of realistic conservation goals.***
- c) ***Leveraged strengths and skills of CSO partners and/or community groups for effective resolution of specific conservation issues at local level in SKC.***
- d) ***Pilot tested conservation agreement model with significant success at all the three CEPF investment priority sites in SKC (Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandoli National Park and Amboli Reserve Forest)***

- e) *Created a precedence for effective use of biodiversity as legal tool for avoiding mining and thus for saving biodiversity rich 438 hectares of core mining area in the Amboli wildlife corridor in SKC*
- f) *Built capacity of local communities in 22 villages in Sindhudurg district in the adjoining landscape of Amboli reserve forest in formulation of environmentally benign development models as alternative to mining project and got those approved through local governing bodies(Panchayat Raj Institutions)*

Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal):

To develop and promote an innovative participatory model whereby a network of civil society organizations partner with local communities to achieve a common goal of enhancing the ecological connectivity and reduce fragmentation in the Sahyadri-Konkan corridor and other landscapes in the Western Ghats

Actual Progress toward Long-term Impacts at Completion:

AERF made substantial progress in development and promotion of participatory platform through formation of North Western Ghats Conservation Network (NWC) which did and would help civil society organizations, naturalists, activists, conservationists, research groups and lawyers working in the Sahyadri-Konkan Corridor of North Western Ghats to address local issues impacting conservation. AERF organized 10 meetings for the CSOs and individuals to discuss the major challenges in conservation in the SKC in an effort to bring consensus and establish clarity about the practically feasible long term conservation goals. On the other hand, AERF team members also attended 5 meetings organized by the network members.

The formation of network evolved over a period of 1 and half years and majority of the organizations who attended the meetings organized by AERF expressed need for such a platform. One of the important outcomes of this exercise is that AERF now has database of organizations and individuals working for conservation with their own understanding and capacity in the North Western Ghats. Moreover, it is our experience that this database of contacts has been very useful for Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel to engage CSOs and individuals in a broader policy dialogue organize regional meetings and receive feedback on important conservation issues of the Western Ghats. Moreover, through the extensive interactions with the CSO members and individuals, we could get hang of their perspective of conservation, challenges they have chosen to work on and their capacity in mobilizing people, resources and finally influencing policy. It also helped us in identifying potential partners with whom we can build short term(issue specific) and long term (goal specific) partnerships. It was realized that building partnerships take time and certain amount of openness and transparency is necessary for sustainability of the partnership. AERF could form short term partnerships with about 10 organizations and long term partnerships with 2 organizations. It must be highlighted that quite a few network members are ready to work for a specific issue voluntarily and that is one of the key strengths of this network.

Planned short-term Impacts -1- 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

To form and train a group of non-government organizations (NGOs) to implement and promote a community incentive programme (conservation agreements) for conservation and restoration of forests in critical locations within 2 priority sites of the Sahyadri-Konkan corridor

Actual Progress toward Short-term Impacts at Completion:

AERF was quite successful in forming a group of non-governmental organizations and also provided them platform through the North Western Ghats Conservation Network for exchange of information related to various conservation initiatives undertaken by the respective organizations and individuals. However it was rather a challenge to implement and/or promote the conservation agreement model at the 2 priority sites in the SKC through a group of NGOs. This was on two accounts a) Most of the organizations working in SKC in North Western Ghats engage themselves in activism and prefer to use legal tools for conservation b) Very few organizations have any specific geographic focus , clear conservation goals, track record of working with communities for conservation and can show evidence of their work in conservation. Thus it was decided to work with NGOs who are engaged in development work at the priority sites and train them in implementing community incentive program. Out of the two organizations approached for this purpose – a) Bhagirath Pratishthan , Kudal b) Shramik Sahayog, Chiplun, Shramik Sahayog could accommodate this approach in their on going activities and was quite successful in delivering a specific conservation outcome using the incentive approach.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: 400

Species Conserved: 31 nesting sites of Malabar pied Hornbill and 6 nesting sites of Great pied hornbill actively monitored and protected at priority sites in SKC

Corridors Created:

Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.

The project provided important opportunities to interact with diverse stakeholder groups- govt officials, CSOs, local communities with different social and economic background and policy makers. Overall it was highly enriching experience. AERF was quite successful in achieving long term as well as short term impact objectives. This was mainly due to very good response and commitment shown by the local communities with respect to uptake and implementation of the conservation agreement model in the SKC. AERF could also form a very vibrant network of CSOs and individuals active in dealing with various environmental challenges in the Western Ghats. Most challenging aspect of this project was to get a relatively new approach in conservation – conservation agreement model- implemented through a group of NGOs. Independent of capacity to address conservation issues and perspective of conservation of the respective CSO partners AERF engaged with, it was very important to know and evident that this approach can't offer a solution to all the challenges tackled by the CSOs and individuals in their respective areas and thus imposing such an approach would not be fair. In other words, it is difficult to build a consensus among diverse organizations for working on a common goal in conservation in SKC. There were and there will be conservation challenges those need diverse approaches and time available for taking action might be very short.

In such a dynamic situation, it was decided to work on multiple levels and keep the feedback loop intact with the CSOs and activists and at the same work with couple of CSOs and communities on ground for promoting the conservation agreement approach.

Lastly, AERF learned quite a few lessons while working with communities. It was realized that too much of a transparency, passion and straight forward approach can turn into a disadvantage for the NGO and besides skills in conservation, it is important to have negotiation skills and capacity to understand the importance of using diplomacy.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

No

Project Components

Project Components: *Please report on results by project component. Reporting should reference specific products/deliverables from the approved project design and other relevant information.*

Component 1 Planned: To form and train a NGO network active in the SKC

Component 1 Actual at Completion: AERF did form North Western Ghats Conservation Network (NWCN) which is active in the SKC. Three meetings were conducted where expert consultation was used as form of training group of CSOs for building their capacity in respective tools in conservation.

Component 2 Planned: Conservation & Restoration Action Plan prepared with NGO network - site assessment and selection, feasibility analysis, baseline data

Component 2 Actual at Completion: AERF in collaboration with CSO partner – Shramik Sahayog did carry out assessment of 5 sites, collected baseline data for 3 Key biodiversity areas and two private forest areas, completed feasibility analysis for two private forest areas and prepared conservation and restoration plan for two sites – private forest area in village Talsar and Sacred forest in village Nandivase

Component 3 Planned: Conservation Agreements – implementing a participatory model

Component 3 Actual at Completion: AERF could successfully pilot the conservation agreement model in collaboration with local communities in 6 villages at priority sites in SKC and in two villages in collaboration with CSO partner- Shramik Sahayog. It needs to mentioned that at the planning stage the target for protection of private forests was set at minimum 50 hectares using conservation agreement model while at the project completion, AERF could protect 400 hectares of private forests in the SKC by forging partnerships with private sector.

More importantly, conservation agreement approach was probably used for the first time to ensure long commitment of communities towards the cause of conservation and worked as a trade off for NGOs support to the local community for building evidence and capacity of local community in fighting the mining project in ecologically sensitive region in SKC.

Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project? No.

Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

A report on biodiversity assessment of Asaniye-Dabhil Landscape in the North Western Ghats was published in 2011 and it has been one of the important results of this project and contributed to a great extent in achievement of spectacular conservation outcomes in the SKC. Hard copies of this report have already been shared with CEPF.

Lessons Learned

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.

Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

Though at the time of design it looked quite simple to form a network of CSOs and devise a common conservation goal in SKC, it completely overlooked the changing dynamics of conservation in SKC and thus few changes had to be incorporated to address the emerging issues in SKC. Moreover certain conservation capacity among CSO members was also assumed.

Similarly, it was assumed that CSOs would be receptive to the idea of incentive based conservation moreover it was also assumed that conservation agreement would offer solution to most of the challenges in SKC. This did not hold true in reality.

While the title of the project suggested a partnership with communities, at component level there is no mention of that partnership. In reality, forging partnership with local communities proved to be the most successful aspect of this project.

Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

The flexibility shown by CEPF at the right time helped AERF make an important addition to the project and in the end , it led to a significant success for conservation. The case in the point is saving biodiversity rich private forest area measuring 438 hectares in Sindhudurg district from onslaught of mining. Secondly, conservation agreement model proved to be highly successful strategy for saving private forests in SKC from logging and can be also very successful approach in establishing connectivity in the SKC and for long term conservation of important habitats and corridors.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

Following lessons learned through this project could be relevant to conservation community

- a) It is necessary to have clarity about the difference between measurable conservation goal and engagement for influencing policy in an environment where evidence for enforcement of any regulation is scant.
- b) Conservation research may result into waste of time, energy and expertise in absence of a strategy and resources for implementation of research outcomes.

Additional Funding

Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of the CEPF investment in this project.

****Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:***

In kind support	In USD	Description
AERF	15,000	Through contribution of other staff members of AERF
Communities and CSO partners	10,000	Contribution through attending to meetings/making venues available/ communication etc
Subtotal	25,000	
Funding from other sources		
Vanaz Engineers	4000	Support to private forest conservation in North Western Ghats
Mr and Mrs. Phatak	500	Support to private forest conservation in North Western Ghats
Mrs. Phadke and Mrs Gore	500	Support to private forest conservation in North Western Ghats
Innoventive Industries	5000	Support to private forest conservation in North Western Ghats
LabIndia instruments Pvt.Ltd.	15000	Support to private forest conservation in North Western Ghats
Praj Industries	5000	Support to private forest conservation in North Western Ghats
Subtotal	30000	

Sustainability/Replicability

Summarize the success or challenge in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of project components or results.

AERF was successful in securing follow on grant from CEPF for scaling up the conservation agreement model and for devising innovative mechanisms for ensuring social, ecological and financial sustainability of the conservation agreement model. Similarly, AERF could succeed in getting additional support from other donors such as KNCF and DEFRA through Darwin Initiative for replicability and sustainability of the project results.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

Not applicable.

Safeguard Policy Assessment

Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.

Not applicable

Additional Comments/Recommendations

It has been great learning experience to have had the opportunity to work with global funding mechanism as that of CEPF for over 3 years. It taught us a lot about framing of conservation outcomes, approaches to conservation in unprotected landscape and most importantly reassured our belief that significant conservation outcomes can be also achieved with limited research capacity if the strategy is correct.

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

Please include your full contact details below:

Jayant Sarnaik
Deputy Director
Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF)
C-10 Natya Chitra Co-op Hsg Society, Paud Rd. Bhusari colony, Pune-411029
Maharashtra, India
Tel- 00912025286952, 65235281
Website- www.aerfindia.org
E-mail- jayantsarnaik@aerfindia.org

*****If your grant has an end date other than JUNE 30, please complete the tables on the following pages*****

Not Applicable

Performance Tracking Report Addendum

CEPF Global Targets				
(Enter Grant Term)				
Provide a numerical amount and brief description of the results achieved by your grant. Please respond to only those questions that are relevant to your project.				
Project Results	Is this question relevant?	If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.	Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.	Describe the principal results achieved from July 1, 2012 to May 30, 2013. (Attach annexes if necessary)
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate number of hectares improved.				Please also include name of the protected area(s). If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?				Please also include name of the protected area. If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many hectares.				
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.				
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.				

If you answered yes to question 5, please complete the following table

