

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Equitable Tourism Options (EQUATIONS)
Project Title:	Community Based Partnerships for Impact Assessment and Regulation of Tourism in Western Ghats
Date of Report:	30.08.2013
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CEPF Region: Western Ghats, India, Asia-Pacific

Strategic Direction: Direction 1. Enable action by diverse communities and partnerships to ensure conservation of key biodiversity area and enhance connectivity in the corridors.

Grant Amount: US \$ 50,000.00

Project Dates: 1st January 2010 to 30th June 2013

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

There were a few local CSO's and environmental groups who we had planned to involve in creating appropriate frameworks and tools to undertake both the rapid and the comprehensive tourism impact assessment. In the project, we however were not able to get to the stage of developing the appropriate frameworks and the comprehensive tourism impact assessment.

During the initial phase of conducting the Rapid Impact Assessment (RIA) study, based on discussions with the local community and the tourism industry we understood that the past engagements and experiences with some of the CSOs and environmental groups had created antagonistic feelings, leading to a non-acceptance of them in the region. Strategically therefore, we decided to conduct the study on our own as we were seen as an organisation that did not have direct stake in the outcome. The groups identified were however met and discussions on tourism issues held as a part of the RIA study.

As a part of the workshops facilitated by CEPF, we had the opportunity to engage with Keystone Foundation on 3-4 occasions on the issue of tourism in the Western Ghats.

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.

Threat that unregulated tourism development has caused in the Nilgiris Protected Areas; Bokkapuram Reserved Forest, Masinagudi, Sigur Reserve Forest, Kalhatti Slopes and Naduvattam Reserved Forest is assessed.

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

- Address the threats that unregulated tourism development has caused in the Nilgiris Protected Areas; Bokkapuram Reserved Forest, Masinagudi, Sigur Reserved Forest, Kalhatti Slopes and Naduvattam Reserved Forest

- Shift in tourism stakeholders, the bottom-up approach by establishing Tourism Impact Assessment cells; to shift the focus to local and community initiatives for sustainable tourism development and conservation in the project area. Build in local communities the capacity to assess tourism impacts and help them to influence proper regulatory and management practices

- Engage policy makers and industry players in efforts towards sustainable tourism

Actual Progress Toward Long-term Impacts at Completion:

Threats of unregulated tourism development have been assessed by way of the RIA study, though we have not been able to move to the next step of setting up of tourism monitoring cells that would have addressed the threats and build in local communities the capacity to assess tourism impacts so as to influence proper regulatory and management practices.

Efforts were made through the study to engage with panchayats, tourism industry, local communities and the state tourism and forest departments. As we were not able to move to the next step, the engagements could not be deepened so as to engage in efforts towards sustainable tourism.

Planned Short-term Impacts – 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal):

1. Assess the threats that unregulated tourism development has caused/is likely to cause in the Nilgiris Protected Areas; Bokkapuram Reserved Forest, Masinagudi, Sigur Reserved Forest, Kalhatti Slopes and Naduvattam Reserved Forest.

2. Establishment of community based Tourism Impact Assessment cells at the pilot sites to monitor and inform other stakeholders on the nature of tourism impacts, influencing tourism policy making and regulation and influencing governments on regulation, planning and management measures.

3. Capacity Building of community based institutions.

4. Development of management measures to feed into policy and management decisions towards conservation.

5. Empowering local people and communities to carry out sustainable tourism activities to generate income, for themselves and the community.

Actual Progress Toward Short-term Impacts at Completion:

A rapid assessment of tourism impacts in the region was completed which assessed the threats of unregulated tourism. Stated short-term impacts 2 to 5 could not be achieved.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: NA

Species Conserved: NA

Corridors Created: NA

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

Success

We have been able to keep our engagement with our partners from the region on the issue of tourism through the field visits, community consultations and workshops. Even though the project has moved much slower than anticipated we do plan to take this to the next level and feel positive about our collaborations with people from the region.

Challenges

The challenges have been both external and internal while working on implementing this project.

Internally, we have had problems keeping together a stable team to work on the project which led to a gap in the planned work schedule. This coupled with the changes in the external environment have resulted in a delay in completion of the programme components.

Externally people on the ground especially the government officials and the tourism industry to a certain extent have been hesitant to speak & engage on the issue of tourism since the Elephant corridor judgment that was passed in April 2012 by the Madras High Court. As the verdict was in favour of the corridor, the respondents have now moved the Supreme Court, resulting in continuing uncertainties.

The region in the following months was faced with newer developments.

In May 2012, the report of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) was made public, and comments invited. While tourism unfortunately did not figure very prominently in the report, the WGEEP has recommended that the entire Western Ghats be considered as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA), and that three levels of Ecological Sensitivity be assigned to different regions of it. The WGEEP has recommended strict regulation of all developmental activities in the Western Ghats, and a moratorium on environmental clearances in some of the most sensitive zones. The Sigur Plateau falls within ESA. The MoEF received a wide set of comments from several groups / organisations and networks from across the country. MoEF then constituted another committee – the Kasturirangan Committee – to take a holistic look into the recommendations and suggestions of the WGEEP, and to come up with new recommendations. The Kasturirangan Committee Report was made public in April 2013.

In June 2012, UNESCO accorded World Heritage Status to 39 sites in the Western Ghats – 20 in Kerala, 10 in Karnataka, 5 in Tamil Nadu and 4 in Maharashtra. It is not clear to us if the Sigur plateau region will fall under this. Currently this tag is being contested in political circles.

Another development was an interim order that has been passed in the Supreme Court on 24th July 2012 in the Ajay Dubey vs. NTCA & Others case, which has disallowed tourism in the core areas of tiger reserves till the final directions are issued by the court on the matter. The Guidelines for Ecotourism in and around Tiger reserves were notified by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in October 2012.

In addition, in December 2012, the MoEF had sent out letters to the Chief Secretaries of all the states asking them to submit their proposals of declaration of Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs), around Wild Life Sanctuaries and National Parks, latest by the 15th February 2013. The MoEF had further warned, that if the states fail to send in their proposals, a blanket notification of 10 kms around the Protected Area will come into effect. Since some of the villages are within 10 kms of the Mudhumalai Tiger Reserve, there is a possibility that they may fall under proposed ESAs.

It was unprecedented to have so many macro level interventions in the region. It has taken us time to understand and assess the implications and ramifications of each of them and in combination.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Nothing to report.

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:

Gaps in information on the impacts of tourism bridged through networking and research

1. Developed one spatial map and one database of tourism establishments in the project region.
2. Recruitment of local Field Researcher
3. Preliminary Draft TIA reports (2) and documentation from the RIA of tourism impacts and conservation efforts.
4. Site specific report of selection of appropriate methods and tools for the intensive assessments that follow (one draft training manual for capacity building and training workshops to follow)

Component 1 Actual at Completion:

1. Using GIS various maps were created. These included representing tourism related as well as general GIS data. Tourism related included accommodation units, tourist attractions & tourist services. General data included public services, transport, garbage sites, water sources, religious places, open spaces, utilities and governmental offices.
2. One field researcher was recruited for a brief duration of the project
3. RIA report completed. Apart from the RIA report, two other pieces of research that were conducted looking at the current developments were an analysis of the elephant corridor case that is currently in the Supreme Court of India and a study on the economic multiplier effects of tourism in Masinagudi. These along with the maps have been interwoven within the RIA report.
4. The TIA manual (in English) has been completed.

Component 2 Planned:

Strategic partnerships or links established with civil society groups, local government, government departments and the tourism industry and creating a space for dialogue for evaluating tourism impacts and promoting sustainable tourism

1. Database of contact list of strategic partners and stakeholders

2. Two local/ site level stakeholder consultation workshops. Documentation of outcomes from workshops

3. Publish One Final Rapid TIA reports and One Final training manual for capacity building workshops. Translation of documentation

4. One Wider level stakeholder consultation (1st wide level) to take forward community, stakeholder action based on tourism impact assessments and research. Outcomes from the consultation will be documented. assessments that follow (one draft training manual for capacity building and training workshops to follow)

Component 2 Actual at Completion:

1. A contact list of strategic partners and stakeholders was done.

3. TIA manual in English is completed. The manual has three broad sections 1. General base line, 2. Tourism Service Providers and 3. Tourism Impacts.

Activity 2 & 4 – Could not be completed.

Component 3 Planned:

Enhanced local capacity to assess tourism impacts, and development of a draft regulatory and management measures at local level

1. Two Capacity building and training workshops for local communities to undertake intensive tourism impact assessments (TIA) in the 2 pilot sites. Documentation from the training workshops. The framework for local level management and regulation outlined

2. Inter-site field visits

3. Documentation of outcomes from field visits

Component 3 Actual at Completion:

Activity 1 to 3 could not be completed.

Component 4 Planned:

Tourism Impact Assessment Cells established at two pilot sites and able to influence decisions of local government on tourism regulation, planning and management and development of regulatory and management measures at local level

1. Documentation of progress and activities – Developed one draft (TIA) impact assessment manuals from the intensive TIA that emphasize the framework for management measures to monitor tourism impacts and for its regulation in the project area

2. Established two TIA cells within the local community that are able to monitor and inform other stakeholders on the nature of tourism impacts, to influence tourism policy making and regulation, and influence decisions of governments on regulation, planning and management

3. One Wider level stakeholder consultations (2nd wide level consultations) Sharing of the management and regulatory framework at the local level to the wider stakeholders and getting a buy-in. Their feedback is incorporated Outcomes of this consultation will be documented

4. Monitor visits to check progress of TIA cells
5. Published One final TIA manual for project area
6. Translation of Manual and Dissemination to project area for wider out reach to local communities

Component 4 Actual at Completion:

Activity 1 to 4 & 6 could not be completed.

5. TIA manual has been published in English.

Component 5 Planned:

Locally evolved management and regulatory measures disseminated among a wide range of stakeholders

1. One Wider level stakeholder consultations (3rd wide level consultation) Outcomes of this consultation will be documented and used for wider circulation and replicability.
2. Final reports

Component 5 Actual at Completion:

Activity 1 & 2 could not be completed.

Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?

Project Component 1 and to a certain extent 2 were achieved. We were unable to achieve the remaining Project Components which has impacted in us not being able to achieve the objectives of community based tourism impact assessment cells that would monitor and inform tourism planning, development and regulation as well as impacts, and influence governments on policy, regulation, planning and management measures.

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

Three deliverables as a part of the project:

- Rapid Impact Assessment Report
- Tourism Impact Assessment Manual
- Maps detailing tourism spread in the region

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)

Success

Shortcomings

Before choosing the Sigur plateau, it would have been critical to have had a much deeper understanding on the geo-political & social situation of the region as well as the complex history of the forest issues.

Secondly, we realise that we should either have chosen a place where the stakes in tourism were not high and where the idea of the monitoring cell could evolve as it does require some stability and cohesion among the community or because we choose the Sigur plateau our project design then should have been different taking into consideration the situation.

Lastly, it would have been critical to have had prior engagement with the community and groups on the ground on the issue of tourism.

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

Several changes in staff who were handling the project interspersed with developments in the external environment brought instability, with the project being implemented in spurts rather than as a continuous process. Changes on the staff front also meant additional time spent in building capacities. It was also crucial for the team working on this project to have had a deeper understanding of the geo-political context of the region and so that the politicisation of tourism which was necessary could have been brought into the spaces of engagement.

In time we also came to understand that intervening in any big way would prove to be difficult as for many people of the local community tourism was starting to be their mainstay and hence a general reluctance to "rock the boat".

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

NA

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.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes

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

A Project co-financing (Other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)

B Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project.)

C Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)

Sustainability/Replicability

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

As a part of this project we have been unable to achieve the aspect of sustainability / replicability because of reasons stated in the section of on Describing the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

Safeguard Policy Assessment

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

A poster was prepared to highlight the project objectives and activities. This was translated into Tamil and displayed at the Masinagudi Panchayat Office.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

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 Website, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

Please include your full contact details below:

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