

CEPF Final Project Completion Report

Instructions to grantees: please complete all fields, and respond to all questions, below.

Organization Legal Name	<i>Wildlife Information Liaison Development Society</i>
Project Title	Roots of a Green Economy: Enhancing biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods in the Anamalai Corridor
CEPF GEM No.	62911
Date of Report	16-03-2016
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CEPF Region: Western Ghats & Sri Lanka Hotspot

Strategic Direction: Strategic Direction 1

Grant Amount: US\$ 50000.00

Project Dates: 2013/6/1 to 2015/12/31

1. Implementation Partners for this Project (*list each partner and explain how they were involved in the project*)

- a. Keystone Foundation supported the NTFP initiative of the project in the initial stages especially in designing the surveys for understanding the status of NTFP collection
- b. Palni Hills Conservation Council, supported the project by providing expertise regarding native tree saplings for a small tender project by a local community individual to restore the native vegetation in the Kottagudi Valley
- c. Kestrel Adventures is a private tourism organization based in Munnar which operated in the Kottagudi valley. They supported in the implementation and participated in the ecotourism activities of the project

Conservation Impacts

2. Describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile

The project was successful in leveraging financial support through the Forest Department that would sustain the ecotourism component. This would merge into support for protected area management, once the Conservation Reserve is established. The value chain for ecotourism was improved upon at Theni and was more successful than the NTFP initiative.

3. Summarize the overall results/impact of your project

The project was successful in promoting local stewardship at the proposed Theni Conservation Reserve that integrated biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods. It was successful in identifying a permanent source of funding for ecotourism at the proposed reserve site that would support the protected area management on establishment. The project helped build the capacity of local communities in responsible ecotourism, community leadership and resource management; improved waste disposal at the proposed reserve site, outreach and promotional

material was designed and printed while proposals were submitted to the Theni Forest Divisions, which were successful and are being implemented by the Forest Department.

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

List each long-term impact from Grant Writer proposal

- 1. Foundation for a forest-based green economy established in Theni and Kodaikanal Forest Division.*
- 2. Improved management of biodiversity-rich areas through multi-stakeholder collaboration and co-operation*
- 3. Livelihood sustenance of local communities through forest-based resources*
- 4. Permanent funding source for protected area management*
- 5. Non-invasive tourism and improved waste-management within biodiversity-rich area*

4. Actual progress toward long-term impacts at completion

- 1. Foundation for a forest-based green economy established in Theni Forest Division.*
- 2. Improved management of biodiversity-rich areas through multi-stakeholder collaboration and co-operation*
- 3. Permanent funding source for protected area management*
- 4. Non-invasive tourism and improved waste-management within biodiversity-rich area*

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

List each short-term impact from Grant Writer proposal

- 1. Designation of Theni Conservation Reserve (22,000 ha) by the Tamil Nadu State Government*
- 2. Improved capacity and awareness of local communities in forest-based livelihoods*
- 3. Improved outreach initiatives at proposed Theni Conservation Reserve*
- 4. At least one forest-based livelihood option tested and demonstrated to be viable*
- 5. Collaborative management model of the Conservation Reserve disseminated among conservationists in government and civil society*

6. Actual progress toward short-term impacts at completion

- 1. Improved capacity and awareness of local communities in forest-based livelihoods*
- 2. Improved outreach initiatives at proposed Theni Conservation Reserve*
- 3. At least one forest-based livelihood option tested*

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

We were able to improve the foundation for forest-based economy in terms of ecotourism at Theni. The non-timber forest produce (NTFP) initiative was largely unsuccessful in the region since communities either stopped collection due to restrictions from the declaration of the Kodaikanal Wildlife Sanctuary, reduced interest in NTFP collection and reduced demand for these products from the markets. Moreover, our initiative towards value addition of honey was successful during the first year. However, in the second year, the indigenous collectors doubled the rates of the produce due which the market community was not further interested. The ecotourism initiative was more successful and helped create livelihood opportunities for the local communities involved. Improved management of biodiversity-rich areas through multi-stakeholder collaboration and co-operation was achieved on a smaller scale since the Theni

Conservation Reserve was not declared during the project period. This was the most challenging to do so since during the project period the DFO of Theni Forest Division had changed over three times and each of them had a different interest towards the project. Due to this the proposal was very slowly processed at the Tamil Nadu Forest Department and multiple similar discussions needed to be undertaken to introduce the different DFOs to the project idea. There was improved management of the forest areas in the Kottagudi Hills at Theni due to the ecotourism initiative in the region. The waste management in the proposed Conservation Reserve was improved and the mechanism for non-invasive tourism was initiated and will be undertaken and managed by the Forest Department and local communities. A permanent source of funding for the protected area management is available through the ecotourism revenues. This will be generated by the new infrastructure and initiatives of the Forest Department that was initiated from proposals and reports provided to them by us through CEPF financial support. The capacity of local communities was improved in undertaking responsible ecotourism including waste management and understanding the local biodiversity. However this was not possible towards NTFP since the collection had reduced to negligible quantities. The surveys being undertaken with indigenous communities and at the respective markets was very time consuming and took much more effort to analyze than we had expected. This was also since we had identified many more settlements in the region than had been estimated.

The outreach initiatives at proposed Theni Conservation Reserve were very successful. We were able to build and support interest in restoring native forests and grasslands through the tenders among local communities. Through the tenders we also have an interpretation centre for tourists at the proposed reserve site and art installations at the most popular trek path in the reserve which further expand the outreach initiatives at the region. Furthermore, the brochure and social networking sites further improved the outreach initiative

8. Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

The positive support towards the ecotourism initiative from the Forest Department was unexpected and a large part of its success is due to their support and participation. We also never expected that the rates of the NTFP that we had chosen to value add would be doubled or tripled during the next season, due to which the initiative had to be discontinued.

Project Components and Products/Deliverables

Component 1 (as stated in the approved proposal): *Promotion of Theni Conservation Reserve establishment and as a model for collaborative conservation in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu*

1.1. Report on perceptions and discussions regarding the Theni Conservation Reserve Proposal among the Tamil Nadu Forest Department

1.2. Activity reports and logbooks of the conservation reserve management committees, detailing formulation of site-appropriate management plans and its implementation

1.3. List of project proposals received from the invited stakeholders, reports from successful individuals detailing the undertaking of their proposed project and the main project team's assessment of projects' success with regard to the overall objective of improving grass-root level conservation

1.4. Report of a feasibility study on sustainable funding mechanisms for conservation reserve management

9. Describe the results from Component 1 and each product/deliverable

The Theni Conservation Reserve was not declared during the project period. Therefore product/deliverable 1.2 was not possible. Though 1.1 was achieved, the end result of reserve declaration was not achieved. 1.3 was the most successful product/deliverable of this component and all 6 tenders were carried out successfully of which three projects: setting up information boards at Top Station, art installations featuring local biodiversity on the Top Station – Kurangini trek path and the interpretation centre at Kottagudi were the most significant. Deliverable 1.4 was also completed and we were successful in attaining a sustainable funding mechanism for ecotourism in the region that would soon support the management of the reserve forest for now and the conservation reserve once declared.

Component 2 (as stated in the approved proposal): *Enhancing the capacity of indigenous NTFP collectors and their market chain of sustainably collected produce in Theni and Kodaikanal Forest Division of Tamil Nadu*

- 2.1.** Report summarizing the meetings with the indigenous communities, list of individuals with respect to produce collected, seasonal variation of supply and prices including that of transportation charges and other incidentals incurred by the collectors
- 2.2.** A workshop report including the workshop material, list of individuals in the collectors network and discussions regarding the collection protocols and their practicality
- 2.3.** A report of market surveys detailing the prices, their distribution and stability of NTFP produce
- 2.4.** A report on the value addition initiatives undertaken in order to improve the returns from NTFP produce and its success
- 2.5.** A report on the development of the market chain through the supply of value-added produce by the collectors network to identified markets

10. Describe the results from Component 2 and each product/deliverable

Deliverable 2.1 has been completed and the report is also being prepared for submission as a research article to a scientific journal. Deliverable 2.2 was not undertaken since the indigenous communities had all of a sudden reduced collection to a negligible extent due to pressure from the Forest Department and lack of market demand. Deliverable 2.3 had been completed and has been detailed in the additional report provided. The value addition initiative was very successful during the first season but due to doubling of rates by indigenous collectors during the second season, it crashed during the second year. Though deliverable 2.4 and 2.5 have been completed, it has not led to success.

Component 3 (as stated in the approved proposal): *Enhancing stakeholder capacity in eco-tourism and its promotion to enhance the livelihoods of local communities in Theni and Kodaikanal Forest Division of Tamil Nadu*

- 3.1.** Report detailing the orientation and training workshops for guides and list of local guides and home-stays run by the local community
- 3.2.** A report of discussions with the Forest Department on eco-tourism including the certification of local guides and local community-run home stays.
- 3.3.** Outreach materials regarding the site information promoting biodiversity-friendly action/behavior on trek routes and local outreach centers.
- 3.4.** Report on the discussions with the forest department and panchayats regarding waste management and procurement and setup of bins

3.5. Promotional material for the conservation-friendly tourism and a report on the success of this tourism

11. Describe the results from Component 3 and each product/deliverable

This was the most successful component of the project. Two detailed workshops were undertaken towards building the capacity of local guides in ecotourism. Five detailed meetings were held with the local guides of Kottagudi valley towards forming a legally-registered group for improved accountability and undertaking community-managed ecotourism. This account of deliverable 3.1 has been detailed in the additional report. Towards deliverable 3.2, numerous meetings were engaged with the Forest Department and other agencies of the State government for certifying the local guides and homestays. Though the certification process is not yet complete, it is underway and being undertaken by the Forest Department with support of the information provided by us. We also submitted two proposals during this project period (further supported by the reports generated during the last CEPF supported project in the same study area) that was successful in the Theni Forest Department receiving a grant of Rs. 98,00,000/- from the State Government. We then formulated the ecotourism microplan for the Kottagudi valley focusing on Top Station in consultation with multiple stakeholders. Towards deliverable 3.3, outreach material was prepared for physically handing out to tour operators, local guides and tourists as well as towards garnering interest on social networking sites through a detailed facebook page (www.facebook.com/kottagudiecotour). The three tenders that are highlighted above in Component 1 as most successful also furthered the outreach initiative. In relation to deliverable 3.4, dustbins were setup at Top Station and Kottagudi, large bags were provided to local communities in the valley to stock plastic and signage requesting for responsible disposal of garbage was setup. Numerous discussions and meetings were held with local stakeholders towards improving the waste management in the Kottagudi valley. Towards deliverable 3.5, promotional materials were designed at no additional costs.

Component 4 (as stated in the approved proposal): *Monitoring compliance with CEPF Social Safeguard Policies*

4.1. Minutes of regular meetings with scheduled tribes and other local communities, to facilitate input into conservation reserve management regimes, air and resolve grievances, and identify persons (if any) adversely affected by project activities

4.2. Semi-annual reports on compliance with safeguard policies submitted to CEPF

12. Describe the results from Component 4 and each product/deliverable

This has been detailed in the separate document attached towards monitoring the compliance with CEPF Social Safeguard Policies. No individual was adversely affected by the project.

13. If you did not complete any component or deliverable, how did this affect the overall impact of the project?

There were some deliverables under the components that we were not able to undertake due to issues that have been detailed under each Component above. This has been discussed in greater detail in the additional report.

14. Please describe and submit any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results

Outreach material (A3 brochure, cover and display photos for Facebook page) were created towards the ecotourism element of the project. This has been submitted in the additional report. A scientific article is being prepared for submission to a journal regarding the status of NTFP collection by indigenous communities in Theni and Kodaikanal. Once published, we will share this research paper.

CEPF Global Monitoring Data

Respond to the questions and complete the tables below. If a question is not relevant to your project, please make an entry of 0 (zero) or n/a (not applicable).

15. List any vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species conserved due to your project

n/a

Hectares Under Improved Management

Project Results	Hectares*	Comments
16. Did your project strengthen the management of an existing protected area?	0	-
17. Did your project create a new protected area or expand an existing protected area?	0	-
18. Did your project strengthen the management of a key biodiversity area named in the CEPF Ecosystem Profile (hectares may be the same as questions above)	3788.44 ha	<i>Theni Forest Division</i>
19. Did your project improve the management of a production landscape for biodiversity conservation	0	-

* Include total hectares from project inception to completion

20. In relation to the two questions above on protected areas, did your project complete a Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), or facilitate the completion of a METT by protected area authorities? If so, complete the table below. (Note that there will often be more than one METT for an individual protected area.)

Protected area	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

21. List the name of any corridor (named in the Ecosystem Profile) in which you worked and how you contributed to its improved management, if applicable.

The project area occurs in the Anamalai Corridor as per the Ecosystem Profile. This project has led to improved management in the Theni Forest Division especially the Kottagudi Hills. The local guides backed by the Forest Department now have a transparent flow of tourists across a valley in comparison to the un-regulated flow of tourism previously. This has led to improved waste management and increase in funds to support the employment of management staff in the region.

Direct Beneficiaries: Training and Education

<i>Did your project provide training or education for . . .</i>	Male	Female	Total	Brief Description
22. Adults for community leadership or resource management positions	41	4	45	Discussions were ensued with local guides of Kottagudi Panchayat to form a legally registered group towards self-regulation and managing the ecotourism resources responsibly.
23. Adults for livelihoods or increased income	28	1	29	Workshops were conducted with local guides in the Kottagudi Panchyat towards building capacity in ecologically responsible tourism.
24. School-aged children	0	0	0	-
25. Other	0	0	0	-

26. List the name and approximate population size of any “community” that benefited from the project.

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| <i>Community name, surrounding district, surrounding province, country</i> | <i>Population size</i> |
| a. Paliyar, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India: | ≈50 individuals |
| b. Paliyar, Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu, India: | ≈200 individuals |
| c. Local community at Kottagudi, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India: | ≈ 40 individuals |

27. Socioeconomic Benefits to Target Communities

Based on the list of communities above, write the name of the communities in the left column below. In the subsequent columns under Community Characteristics and Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit, place an X in all relevant boxes.

Community Name	Community Characteristics							Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit														
	Small landowners	Subsistence economy	Indigenous/ ethnic peoples	Pastoralists / nomadic peoples	Recent migrants	Urban communities	Communities falling below the poverty line	Other	Increased income due to:				Increased food security due to the adoption of sustainable fishing, hunting, or agricultural practices	More secure access to water resources	Improved tenure in land or other natural resource due to titling, reduction of colonization, etc.	Reduced risk of natural disasters (fires, landslides, flooding, etc)	More secure sources of energy	Increased access to public services, such as education, health, or credit	Improved use of traditional knowledge for environmental management	More participatory decision-making due to strengthened civil society and governance	Other	
									Adoption of sustainable natural resources management practices	Ecotourism revenues	Park management activities	Payment for environmental services										
Paliyar (Kodaikanal)		X	X				X															X
Paliyar (Kottagudi)		X	X				X			X												
Local community at Kottagudi	X									X												

If you marked "Other", please provide detail on the nature of the Community Characteristic and Socioeconomic Benefit:

Paliyar (Kodaikanal): They had an increased income due to the sale of non-timber forest products to a niche market that paid more for organic, forest sourced produce by indigenous communities

Lessons Learned

28. 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

- a. The time taken for initiatives with Government-based Departments cannot be predicted and according to our experience with this project takes a much longer time than expected. This is especially even after repeated re-visits and was caused due to the transfer of head personnel. This time factor needs to be factored appropriately and we found that it would help approaching multiple agencies at the same time.
- b. A realistic understanding of community-based issues like NTFP use by indigenous communities takes a long time and it would have been better if we had factored in more time towards this. Continuous meetings need to be undertaken with the stakeholders like the Forest Departments for proposals and initiatives to reach a functional stage
- c. From time to time it would be necessary to find out if the stakeholders are still interested and what their specific interests are. We thought so since we found the interests of stakeholders to vary with time. Somehow a project should allow for adjusting the project plan accordingly.
- d. We also found that improved economy quickly motivated individuals but also realized that most individuals were not ready to pursue it consistently or lost interest if it did not happen rapidly. Setting realistic goals was found to be useful towards this.

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

We think that the project was well designed. We focused on a fairly wide area and were able to focus the project to a few field sites. While certain initiatives worked really well some did not at all. Certain components did not work well since the stakeholders interests changed over time due to circumstances detailed in the additional report. We think that a longer pilot period of 3-4 months would have further helped focus the project in terms of the study area and the initiatives to be carried out.

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

The project implementation was very successful due to team being inter-disciplinary and from being a good mix of local and non-local individuals. One of our team members was also very good with liaising with different stakeholder and she made a huge positive difference to the project implementation.

31. Describe any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community

None

Sustainability / Replication

32. Summarize the success or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated

The major challenge in ensuring the process will be sustained or replicated was from the constant change of the head of the Forest Department at Theni. It brought in a lot of replication especially of discussions to re-introduce the project and its objectives. However there was no other way out of this and we immediately re-approached the new head with fresh copies of all our applications. This really helped and we found the last DFO to be very dynamic and interested who was also able to initiate and

support a lot of the project initiatives. We realized how success at times was dependent on a single interested individual. The ecotourism aspect has become sustained and will continue to function and improve after the end of the CEPF project. As this improves, even the management of the forest would improve including in terms of a permanent source of funding towards it. The Conservation Reserve designation process is still a continual process which will happen even after the project ends due to the efforts of the current DFO and the project team.

33. Summarize any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability

Our continual submission of reports and proposals to the Forest Department resulted in an increased sustainability and replicability for this project. These submissions were unplanned for and served as a very useful medium of communication.

Safeguards

34. If not listed as a separate Project Component and described above, summarize the implementation of any required action related to social, environmental, or pest management safeguards

This was implemented as a separate project component and has been described in detail above.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

35. Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF

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Additional Funding

36. 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 CEPF investment

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount (INR)	Notes
HRW & EPA ^a	A	23,000	Outreach: Co-financed the setup of outreach material for improved waste management and disseminating the history and biodiversity at Top Station (Kottagudi Panchayat, Theni).
Kestrel Adventures Pvt Ltd	A	>=25,000	Native tree restoration: This tourism company financially supported the labor and transportation towards planting native tree saplings at Yellapatty (Kottagudi Panchayat, Theni). They also supported waste management initiatives at Kolukkumalai and Top Station and printing brochures for the Kottagudi Valley Ecotourism Circuit
Theni FD	A	60, 000	Education and Outreach: The Forest Department at Theni co-financed the initiative to setup natural art installations across the Kurangani – Top Station trek path to disseminate information to trekkers about the local biodiversity. The installations also served as a mile-stone that would give an indication of the extent of the trek path
The Daily Wild	A	>=40,000	The Daily Wild supported the printing of brochures for the Kottagudi Valley Ecotourism Circuit, designing outreach materials and providing contacts to designers and negotiating prices, designing the Top Station logo, printing T-shirts and magnets.
Theni FD	B	72,800	Avian research, soil and humus conditions in sholas and ecotourism microplan
Theni FD	B	12,000	Outreach Materials: The Forest Department engaged us to design entrance tickets towards trekking for Indians and foreigners in the Kottagudi valley. We also re-designed the brochure that was created was the ecotourism at Kottgudi valley so that it could be widely disseminated free of cost by the Theni Forest Divison
Theni FD received grant from Tourism. Culture and Religious Endowments Department of Tamil Nadu State Government	C	98,00,000	The Forest Department received this grant after they submitted a proposal that we formulated for them along with all our previous survey reports of the region. This helps them setup basic ecotourism infrastructure in the Kottagudi valley focusing on Top Station.

* Categorize the type of funding as:

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)*

^aHigh Range Wildlife and Environment Preservation Association, ^bForest Department/Division

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:

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