

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: Africa Environmental News Service (AENS)

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): AENS: Phase 2 Market Research Exercise

Implementation Partners for This Project:

AENS Lead Development Team: Giles Davies, Aidan Hartley, Jonathan Clayton.

Brief Biographies included as APPENDIX 1 to this report.

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): January 1, 2003- March 30, 2004

Date of Report (month/year): April 15, 2005

II. OPENING REMARKS

Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.

1. Due to the complex nature of the Phase 2 market research exercise - *nearly 300 people representing nearly 200 organizations in 22 different countries participated in the interactive elements* - the exercise itself took longer than was originally expected. It was completed in Q4 of 2004.
2. It is important to be aware that this remains a project in progress. The Market Research Exercise which was supported by CEPF funding was the Phase 2 of the development of the AENS concept, Phase 1 having been the development, initial research and articulation of the concept itself.
3. The implementation team has now produced a Pathfinder Prospectus which will be used throughout the remainder of 2005 to solicit initial funding to launch the service itself.

III. NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. **What was the initial objective of this project?**

AENS OBJECTIVE & PURPOSE

The overall objective of the proposed AENS service is:

To develop a world-class, independent information and news service providing original, comprehensive, accurate and timely coverage across the full spectrum of environmental issues in Africa.

The underlying purpose of this objective is:

To leverage emerging information technologies, to widen perceptions of and stimulate engagement in, the status and significance of Africa's natural environmental resources - so as to actively promote and facilitate sustainable development.

The initial and current objective of the Phase 2 Market Research Exercise funded by this grant was to execute a market research program specifically designed to test the viability of the proposed service.

The context for the development of the proposed AENS service is as follows:

THE STATUS OF AFRICA'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The following set of significant dynamics characterizes the current status of the African environment and provides the key to the AENS opportunity and its focus on the continent.

- **Scale of Undamaged Natural En vironments**

Africa is a vast continent. Many parts of it are still relatively inaccessible and hence undeveloped. Despite increasing threats, successful traditional livelihoods and livelihood systems still feature strongly. Consequently, it contains some of the largest and richest unspoilt natural ecosystems and related natural resource pools left on the planet.

- **Low Trans-Continental Environmental Impact**

One of the key issues facing environmentalists today is the international nature of environmental issues. Deforestation in one country can have a dramatic impact on weather systems in another; a land or sea based industrial chemical disaster in one continent can create a widespread health hazard for human and wildlife populations many thousands of miles away.

In this respect, by dint of its relatively low levels of industrialization and land use transformation, Africa remains not only one of the least damaged but also the least globally damaging continents on earth.

- **Fragility & Magnitude of Potential Environmental Threat**

Despite the above, national and international social, economic and political trends underline the fragility of a status quo that is under considerable threat. Moreover development in Africa is taking place within a modern day technological framework that is combined with inadequate compensating institutional and regulatory strictures and often in the context of significant demographic growth, widespread human conflict and very poor standards of public governance. Furthermore, poorly defined property rights and increasingly high local level opportunity costs mean there is no incentive structure in place to foster environmental protection.

This threat and the consequent environmental damage have the capacity to manifest itself with unprecedented scale and speed. Ultimately, the consequences will be felt just as much by the global community as by Africa and Africans.

- **The Linkage between Environmental Health, Sustainable Development & Poverty Alleviation**

The process of development in Africa and the ability of this process to alleviate poverty, perhaps more so than in any other continent, is and will continue to be directly dependant on the health of its environmental resources. Failure to manage this process in a sustainable manner will create a downward spiral of regression that will ultimately lead to environmental degradation, development distortions and incremental levels of poverty.

- **Scale & Efficiency of Opportunity**

While the African continent therefore faces a range of imminent environmental trauma that are inextricably linked to its capacity to develop efficiently, productively and sustainably, the scale of natural environmental value still in place, combined with relatively lower rates of industrial, agricultural or other institutionalized environmentally damaging practices or policies means that it is still ripe for a policy of prevention rather than cure. This has major positive implications with respect to its potential for high environmental, developmental and poverty impacting returns on effort and investment.

RESULTANT AENS DRIVERS

This context can be distilled into a set of simple yet critical drivers that underpin the AENS concept:

- Africa's economic well-being and development potential are inseparable from its environmental health.
- Africa's scale, combined with the fact that the potential still exists for a policy of prevention rather than cure, significantly enhances the potential comparative efficiency and leverage of environmental effort targeted within and upon it.
- The internal and external opportunity cost of failing to respond to the environmental threat faced by Africa will be immense - both within and outside the continent.
- It is clear that information can play a critical role in tackling this momentous challenge.
- No service of the kind being proposed by AENS exists today.

THE CORE CATALYST

The specific catalyst for this service to launch now is the explosive spread of new technologies across Africa, particularly in the field of communications.

The use of the Internet, e-mail and mobile telephony in Africa has grown rapidly, particularly in urban areas, and the combined impact of these technologies cannot be overstated – it has quite simply revolutionized communications on the continent. In particular, by leapfrogging decrepit terrestrial systems it has brought even some of the most remote areas on the planet today within range – and at a fraction of the cost of only a decade ago. Though still no where near as developed as in any other area of the world, it is growing fast as both costs are reduced and reach expanded.

A decade ago, a journalist visiting countries such as, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, or Sudan, would first have to obtain a visa – no easy task in itself. To leave the capital, a second travel permit would be required. A Ministry of Information “official” would join him or her if it was granted. Naturally, sources of information tended to be official – governments, diplomats, aid workers – except for the ubiquitous taxi driver. As a result coverage was easily influenced and very capital-city-focused. Consequently, it was potentially misleading – as difficult as trying to take the pulse of America or Britain by spending a few days in Washington DC or London.

Now, thanks to e-mail it is possible to talk to ordinary members of the public – school teachers, pupils, businessmen, community leaders – from even the most remote districts directly and without even passing through the capital and even more importantly perhaps, without the information having to be officially ‘synthesized’.

As a result of the arrival of this new technology, censorship in Africa, as in the rest of the world, is a thing of the past. Unlike in the rest of the world, no independent reporting institution has yet taken advantage of this fact. AENS intends to fill that gap.

Indeed, AENS will place great emphasis on starting and remaining at the cutting edge of future developments in this exciting and dynamic field. This will enable it to source, package and distribute original news and information as it breaks direct to and from the most remote parts of the African front-line on a world-wide, real-time basis. In so doing it will be the first environmental information and news service anywhere in the world to do this.

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.

No

3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?

Yes

4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.

None of significance within the implementation team itself.

The project did necessitate the development and deployment of an interactive pilot website for which a local internet specialist was used in Nairobi, Kenya. Significant difficulties were experienced with this operation which frustrated initial progress. The matter was resolved essentially by spending more time, and to a certain extent funds, with this operation resolving the problems that they caused.

5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.

The logistical challenge behind securing detailed information from nearly 300 people representing nearly 200 organizations in 22 different countries from a remote operating base in Kenya with poor communications infrastructure would have been insuperable without the very methodical, process driven work plan that was developed as part of Phase 1. In short, meticulous planning was essential to the success of this project as well as the aggressive leveraging of the deep contact network of the project implementers.

6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.

As mentioned above, a Pathfinder Prospectus has now been produced which will be used throughout the remainder of 2005 to solicit initial funding to launch the service itself.

7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.

The Pathfinder Prospectus will be made available to the CEPF as an addendum to this report.

VII. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Kellogg Foundation	A	US\$ 28,500.00	
Staples Trust	A	US\$ 10,085.00	

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

- A** *Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)*
- B** *Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF project)*
- C** *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)*
- D** *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

None at this stage.

VIII. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF aims to increase sharing of experiences, lessons learned and results among our grant recipients and the wider conservation and donor communities. One way we do this is by making the text of final project completion reports available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these reports in our newsletter and other communications. Please indicate whether you would agree to publicly sharing your final project report with others in this way.

Yes

If yes, please also complete the following:

For more information about this project, please contact:

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APPENDIX 1

LEAD IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

The lead team behind the implementation of the AENS service concept combines significant experience in African environmental issues and related enterprise development together with many years of field-based reporting and news management.

Jonathan Clayton (49)

Jonathan Clayton is the Africa correspondent of the London Times newspaper, based in Johannesburg. This position follows a long career in journalism, much of it based in Africa working for Reuters and the United Nations.

Among the stories he covered for Reuters were the US intervention in Somalia and the 1994 Rwandan genocide, two of the most important events in the continent's post-independence history. He also covered the civil wars in Ethiopia, Sudan and Congo and the end of apartheid in South Africa. In addition to reporting from the field, as Bureau Chief for Africa he coordinated Reuters' award-winning text, photographic and video coverage of those and other events.

Jonathan's responsibilities with the United Nations, which he joined in 1997, included developing and expanding a humanitarian news and information service focused on crisis areas to include all of sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. While with the UN, he also launched the award-winning IRIN web site that grew from 20,000 monthly page views to over one million in just five months.

More recently, he has advised Agence France Presse on the creation of a North African and Middle East economic and financial news service; he has acted as media and public relations advisor to a leading Swiss conflict prevention organization, the War-Torn Societies Project in Geneva; and has served as regional spokesman for the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR.

Jonathan has an extensive network of contacts at senior government level in both the developed and developing world. His experience and knowledge straddles the disparate but increasingly interlocking areas of politics, aid, and development.

Jonathan is married with two children and divides his time between bases in Paris and Johannesburg.

Aidan Hartley (39)

Aidan Hartley is a Kenya-born author and journalist. His bestselling book *The Zanzibar Chest* (2003) was nominated for the prestigious Samuel Johnson BBC 4 Non-Fiction Prize and the Duff Cooper Prize for history. His writing has received extensive coverage internationally on TV, radio and in print and he regularly speaks publicly on Africa. He is one of the Africa correspondents for *The Spectator* magazine and writes frequently for magazines and newspapers in the USA and Britain. He is currently presenting and reporting 'Plain Tales of the Commonwealth', a BBC Radio 4 series.

He holds two Masters Degrees in English Language and Literature from Balliol College, Oxford and in African Politics and International Relations from the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London University.

Starting in 1988, he worked for various newspapers and then Reuters covering the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa, Eastern Africa, the Balkans and Middle East. In the late 1990s he was partner in a London-based television production company. He was a consultant for the IRIN OCHA division of the United Nations reporting on humanitarian and political developments and

also served as Senior Analyst and Communications Manager for the International Crisis Group providing analytical reporting and advocacy on Central Africa in Sudan. He has been active in several charitable enterprises over the years.

Aidan is married with two children and divides his time between bases in London and the Laikipia district of Kenya.

Giles Davies (36)

Giles Davies currently works for Conservation Capital, an organization he co-founded in 2004 which specializes in the development and management of mechanisms that generate strategically targeted finance for biodiversity conservation.

Having obtained a first class degree in History from Kings College London, Giles qualified as a chartered accountant with Price Waterhouse and then went on to gain five years international management consulting experience with the same firm based out of New York and London. During that time he worked on assignments in 18 different countries across Asia, Europe, Australasia and North America. He is a member of both the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and the Institute of Management Consultants.

In 1997 he returned to Kenya, the country of his birth to develop his interest in private sector based conservation development. Since then he has lead financing initiatives that have generated in excess of US\$ 35 million of conservation funding and launched new private sector driven conservation projects that cover in excess of half a million acres of critical habitat and employ nearly 1,000 people.

In addition to these entrepreneurial based developments he now also advises some of the world's leading international conservation organizations. In 2005 he was appointed Director of Enterprise for the US based African Wildlife Foundation. In this capacity he is now responsible for conservation enterprise initiatives in 11 countries across eastern, central and southern Africa.

Giles is married with one child and divides his time between bases in Paris and the Laikipia district of Kenya.