

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: NACRES Foundation

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): NBSAP Implementation Program – International Conventions and Local Communities

Implementation Partners for this Project:

Biodiversity conservation NGO "Synapse", Svaneti, Georgia (CEPF Corridor # 2)

Regional Association "Zekari", Racha, Georgia (CEPF Corridor # 2)

Centre for Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Caucasus -"Sane", Khevsureti, Georgia (CEPF Corridor # 2)

NGO "Flora and Fauna", Adjara, Georgia (CEPF Corridor # 4)

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): 1 September, 2006 – 31 December, 2008

Date of Report (month/year): February, 2009

II. OPENING REMARKS

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

Over the past years the realization grew across NACRES and perhaps other centrally based NGOs that it is high time to act and help local NGO sectors in the regions of Georgia so that they become powerful instruments for nature conservation on the ground. We believe that local NGOs have an important role in ensuring that their areas develop in full compliance with sustainability principles. At present however local NGOs, especially those working in the field of conservation are few or nonexistent in many regions of Georgia. Non-existent or weak biodiversity related NGO sector in the regions severely undermines on-the-ground implementation of international treaties and relevant national policies (in particular species and habitats' conservation measures). NGO sector's low capacity to perform a go-between role and to work as a public awareness promoter permits the gap between the local governments and the communities to increase.

This project aimed to encourage on-the-ground biodiversity conservation in the Georgian sections of the Caucasus target conservation corridors 2 and 4 as identified by CEPF, respectively Greater Caucasus: Svaneti, Racha and Khevsureti, and West Lesser Caucasus: Adjara. This overall goal was envisaged to be achieved through strengthening local NGO/CBO sector and its involvement in participatory planning and implementation of measures (1) for improving/building mechanisms for species and habitats conservation activities on the ground as defined by key international conventions and corresponding national policies, and (2) for the mitigation and monitoring of development projects in selected corridors. In addition, the project delivered awareness raising activities for local communities as well as measures to inform the general public in the capital and nationwide on pressing biodiversity issues.

As one of the first steps of the project, we prepared *Regional Biodiversity Strategy* that was used throughout the course of the project implementation as a guidance. This document included the results of the assessments of NGO capacities and local people's attitudes toward biodiversity that were conducted by the project team in the the Georgian sections of Priority Corridors 2 and 4, namely in Svaneti, Racha, Khevsureti, Adjara. While assessing NGO capacity we looked at the institutional as well as individual capacities of the existing conservation-related NGOs in the target areas to identify their current and most pressing needs. Prevailing attitudes toward biodiversity were assessed in each of the project target regions, most common forms of human influences on biodiversity were revealed, and priority conservation themes were identified. The assessment of local people's attitudes toward biodiversity was based on Participatory Rapid

Appraisal (PRA) techniques consisting of group interviews and community meetings. Emphases were put on the root causes of each problem and the possible solutions. It turned out that the majority of the problems were common throughout the project target regions. They included illegal logging, land erosion, increased risk of landslides, insufficient number of protected areas, increased poaching, decline of fish stocks (both in the rivers and in the sea for Adjara). However many specific problems were also noted: dramatic drop of the tur (*Capra cylindricornis*) population in Khevsureti, decline of brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) numbers, decline of tur (*Capra caucasica*) and chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) numbers in Svaneti, severe problems with arsenic-containing waste in Racha and Svaneti regions.

Based on the findings of the above assessments we were able to utilize more targeted, site-specific and NGO-specific approaches throughout the project implementation.

III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

Project Purpose: *To develop an effective network of local biodiversity conservation NGO/CBOs for ensuring long-term biodiversity conservation and monitoring within the Georgian sections of Priority Corridors 2 and 4 (Svaneti, Racha, Khevsureti, Adjara), while raising awareness of local communities, stakeholders and general public on the pressing biodiversity issues.*

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<p><i>Purpose-level: An effective network of local biodiversity conservation NGO/CBOs developed, ensuring long-term biodiversity conservation and monitoring within the Georgian sections of Priority Corridors 2 and 4 (Svaneti, Racha, Khevsureti, Adjara), while raising awareness of local communities, stakeholders and general public on the pressing biodiversity issues.</i></p>	
<p><i>1. Capacity of 12 Non-Governmental/Community Based Organizations (NGO/CBOs) within the priority corridors 2 and 4 (Svaneti, Khevsureti, Racha and Adjara) built in the first year of the project implementation</i></p>	<p>It was the project’s approach that maximum effectiveness in respect of local NGO/CBO capacity development could only be achieved by meeting the individual needs of those NGOs and CBOs. Because such an approach is skill- and resource-intensive, we had proposed to build the capacity of a small number of local NGO/CBOs by providing them with appropriate technical as well as financial support so that subsequently they could in turn provide support services and facilities to other environmental organizations locally. We called the selected NGOs project’s Local Support Groups or LSGs and there would be one LSG in each of the 4 target regions. In order to support this approach two types of local grants were envisaged to be awarded by the project: (1) LSG Grants that involved the distribution of 4 relatively large direct grants each LSG receiving one grant to build their capacities, develop local policies and then provide capacity building and activity support to other local NGOs and CBOs and (2) the distribution of 8 smaller grants for local less developed environmental NGOs and CBOs for projects addressing most critical biodiversity issues, demonstrating law enforcement examples and incorporating a public awareness and participation component. In order to select LSGs and also gather other important fresh information NACRES had conducted preliminary feasibility studies in the target corridors prior to the project. These studies had revealed that the overall level of biodiversity NGOs’ organizational development was very poor and there were very few biodiversity conservation NGOs that had already implemented at least one relevant project on the ground. Having some conservation-related experience had been the main criterion for choosing potential local partners (Local Support Group- LSG) for the project. Consequently, local NGO “Synapse” was chosen in Svaneti, Regional Association “Zekari” in Racha, and Centre for Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Caucasus – “Sane” in Khevsureti. Since there was a wider choice in Adjara, we selected an Adjara LSG only after the project began and we could conduct a more detailed assessment. In the beginning of the project NACRES representatives visited Adjara Autonomous Republic in order to select a partner NGO i.e. Local Support Group (LSG) there. In order to ensure maximum publicity and transparency an announcement was published in a local newspaper as well as on NACRES web-site and it was also circulated through Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN). As a result, two environmental organizations expressed interest. Both were good organizations but one of them had other important commitments and we eventually chose NGO "Flora and Fauna" to be our project partner (LSG) in Adjara. Despite that it was a young organization its members had participated in numerous environmental projects.</p> <p>As a subsequent step we assessed the capacities of each of the LSGs against six elements outlined in NACRES Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool. The capacity of each NGO was measured in respect of (i) Governance (ii) Management practices (iii) Human resources (iv) Financial resources (v) External relations (vi) Current programs and activities. A detailed NGO Capacity Assessment report was eventually prepared with identified strengths and weaknesses of each of the partner organization.</p>

	<p>Based on the above mentioned capacity assessments, tailored work plans (assistance and training plans) were elaborated for each of the Local Support Groups (LSG) in the four regions: Svaneti, Khevsureti, Racha and Adjara and specific and targeted training was then provided to each of the LSG's.</p> <p>Responding to their individual needs NACRES Technical Assistance Team (TAT) delivered trainings at which the following topics were covered: for the Adjara LSG, grant application writing, organizational structure and organizational development, project management, strategic planning; for the Svaneti LSG, organizational development and governance, grant application writing, project evaluation and self-evaluation, environmental advocacy, for the Racha LSG, grant application writing, project management, project evaluation and self-evaluation, developing project success indicators, for the Khevsureti LSG, organizational structure and governance, strategic planning, grant application writing, project cycle management, development project success indicators. In addition LSG's were regularly provided with any additional advise they needed in the course of proposal development for the project's LSG grant cycle. These included topics such as developing project goals and objectives, and formulation of effective performance indicators, elaboration of suitable methodology and overall improvement of their grant applications. Within LSG Grants and in partnership with NACRES and local communities, each LSG had to develop a local policy document (LPD) describing priorities for species and other biodiversity conservation for their respective region, act as local biodiversity clearinghouses for the local public and other NGOs, and in addition provide intermediary services to another 8 primary-level NGO/CBOs wishing to engage in biodiversity conservation activities through subsequent local grants programs (Environmental Protection Organization - EPO Grants).</p> <p>Parallel to the above, NACRES team conducted preliminary meetings with local Environmental Protection Organization (EPOs) primarily to better plan future capacity building trainings and also to present upcoming grants competition for local environmental NGOs and CBOs. These meetings were very useful as they enabled us to obtain firsthand information on the current status of local NGO sector. Later the project team prepared a special capacity building training kit and relevant presentations for local environmental NGOs and CBOs that were used in subsequent trainings. LSGs were further consulted on biodiversity conservation issues and on their role in EPO capacity building training.</p> <p>Capacity building trainings for EPOs were conducted in Batumi (for Adjara EPOs) in January and March 2008 and in the town of Ambrolauri (for Racha and Svaneti EPOs) in April 2008. In total, more than 20 local organizations participated in the sessions. The trainings were dedicated to the following topics: designing grant applications, project management, strategic planning. Additional sessions were organized on biodiversity conservation issues. A special emphasis was placed on CEPF priority species and on LPDs developed by the project for Adjara, Svaneti and Racha.</p>
<p><i>2. 4 development projects in each of the 4 corridors identified and their monitoring conducted at the end of the first year and within the second year of the project implementation</i></p>	<p>It was one of the main tasks of the local support groups (LSG) to identify development projects and conduct their monitoring. First, LSGs gathered information about on-going business activities in their target regions. As a result lists of on-going development projects was composed for three target regions: Adjara, Racha and Svaneti. Most important business activities were later chosen to be subsequently monitored by the LSGs.</p> <p>As part of the preparatory phase the project also organized a special workshop with LSG's to discuss challenges of monitoring local business activities. As an invited speaker, Ms. N. Gujaraidze (from Association Green Alternative, one of the leading Georgian NGOs with extensive experience of monitoring business activities and development projects) had a presentation on methodological aspects and approaches. She also presented case studies and shared the experience and lessons learnt by her organization. Each of the LSG</p>

	<p>representatives also had presentations on their activities and current and projected development projects in their regions that were likely to have an impact on local species and habitats. Discussions and brainstorming were held to identify target ventures for monitoring activities in each region. Overall approaches and methods of monitoring were also discussed and agreed on by the participants. In addition to this workshop, LSGs were subsequently provided with more specific advice both on the ground and at NACRES office in Tbilisi.</p> <p>In Adjara, Association <i>Flora and Fauna</i> (project LSG in Adjara Autonomous Republic) began to monitor <i>Georgian Association of Fishing License Holders</i>. They monitored the companies that were holding a 10-year license to fish in the Georgian Black Sea waters. The monitoring involved gathering information on license holding companies and on the terms and conditions that applied to the licenses. Seven firms were identified to hold valid commercial fishing licenses as of July 1, 2008. Using independent and alternative sources of information the association also collected information on activities and practices some of those firms were using (e.g. information on catch discharge points). Additional information was also obtained from other sources including local fish processing factories, the Black Sea Protection Inspection, Coast Guard Service of the Georgian Border Police, and from the Customs. Based on obtained information the Association then conducted an assessment of fishing activities – the actual fish harvest was assessed and the sustainability of the quotas for the next years were evaluated; current levels of excess harvest was also estimated.</p> <p>In Svaneti, association <i>Synapse</i> (project LSG in Svaneti) conducted the monitoring of timber processing firms that operated in that region. In total 15 license-holding timber processing mini-factories were identified in Lentekhi district alone (one of the districts in the Svaneti Region), out of which only 7 were found to be operational. Local people were found to be the main suppliers of timber to those timber processing mini factories. Overall, the situation was assessed as satisfactory apparently due to the recent general improvement in forest management and activation of the Environmental Inspection in the region. Nevertheless, some major violations of environmental regulations were also noted. For example, most of the mini-factories were situated by river banks (mostly the river Tskhenis-Tskali). Because they did not have proper facilities for sawdust and other waste collection and storage most of the waste they produced ended up into the river and obviously caused serious contamination. In addition use of red list species such as <i>Buxus</i> and Chestnut trees were noted. Both of these species are protected by law. Special recommendations were prepared for improving the situation including prevention of river contamination with sawdust and other timber waste, and their use as fuel instead, also on the protection of rare tree species, and overall reduction of illegal timber extraction. These recommendations were presented to the local authorities, the local unit of the Environmental Inspection, to the local timber processing companies as well as to the local communities. There were some positive signs too in respect of cooperation with the timber processing companies. Some of the companies actually expressed interest in the possibilities of secondary processing of sawdust and its use. Association <i>Synapse</i> even achieved preliminary agreement with some of the local firms to engage in a joint project on the reuse of sawdust.</p> <p>In Racha, association <i>Zekari</i> (the project LSG in Racha) chose and monitored the newly built asphalt producing facility at village Khidashlebi. They reviewed the terms and conditions of the environmental permit issued to this company (asphalt production is a <i>Category 1</i> activity according to national legislation and therefore requires an environmental permit to operate). The Racha LSG found that the factory was polluting the environment and this was associated with certain technological faults. These findings were reported to the local authorities as well as to the company itself. In addition, local communities were informed to encourage their mobilization so that they could keep an eye on the factory's activities in the future too. Eventually recommendations for the future</p>
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	<p>prevention of environmental pollution were developed jointly with the ISG and the company itself.</p> <p>No major development projects were noted in Khevsureti region. Relatively small scale tourism-oriented projects were mainly focused on cultural and historical sites and were found to have little interference with natural habitats or wildlife. Therefore no development projects were monitored in Khevsureti.</p>
<p>3. <i>Biodiversity clearinghouse mechanisms established by Local Support Groups (LSGs) in each of the selected corridors, within the last year of the project duration</i></p>	<p>Clearinghouses were set up in 3 target regions: Racha, Svaneti and Adjara. The LSGs became fully operational as local clearinghouse mechanisms and continued to play an important role in the implementation of the environmental protection organization (EPO) grants program. The purpose of these clearinghouses was to provide necessary support to local (less developed) environmental NGOs, to collect and store environmental information for the district, and to monitor the environmental situation on the ground. They continued to provide day- to-day support as well as consultations and technical assistance as needed to local NGOs.</p> <p>Currently all the LSGs enjoy better access to and have networks with NGOs in other parts of the country. Hence they are fully involved in information exchange and experience sharing between the different regions of the country. They have also become more actively involved in events and developments taking place in the capital in the field of nature conservation. For example, they all participated in workshops that took place in Tbilisi during December 10-12, 2008 that were organized under the GEF/UNDP project <i>Assessment of Capacity Building Needs for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use, Participation in Clearing House Mechanism and Preparation of a Second and Third National Reports to CBD</i>. These workshops were dedicated to aspects of fauna and flora species conservation in Georgia, biodiversity monitoring and to further improvement of the nature conservation legislation. The LSGs also attended the national conference entitled <i>Biodiversity in Georgia: Current Status, National Capacity and Future Outlook</i> that was held in Tbilisi on December 19, 2008. At that conference the LSGs had the opportunity to listen, meet and get latest information from almost all major stakeholders currently active in the field of nature conservation in Georgia including central government agencies (Ministry for the Environment, Agency of Protected Areas), international players that are based in Georgia (such as UNDP, WB), international conservation organizations based in Tbilisi e.g. WWF and IUCN, as well as large on-going initiatives. The LSGs had the opportunity to initiate discussions about the problems and challenges they are faced with in their respective regions and also grab up-to-date information about national priorities and funding opportunities. Having become involved in such activities they are able to better facilitate information exchange between centrally based institutions and the local communities in their respective regions.</p>

Describe the success of the project in terms of achieving its intended impact objective and performance indicators.

An obvious improvement of the local NGO sectors within the Georgian sections of Priority Corridors 2 and 4: Svaneti, Racha, Khevsureti and Adjara is a major success of this project. The capacities of selected 4 NGOs have been significantly increased through technical support and trainings as well as direct financial support. These NGOs are now also helping others and serve as a major instrument for the exchange of information at two levels: (1) between the centrally based agencies (government agencies, larger national and international conservation NGOs, large-scale projects, etc) and local NGO sector, and (2) between each other i.e. between the different regions of the priority corridors. In addition within this project a number of smaller and very young and inexperienced NGOs and CBOs had the opportunity to attend special trainings and afterwards 7 of them could actually put their motivation and rather theoretical knowledge into practice through implementing small conservation projects. Most of these NGOs are expected to continue their activities in the field of nature conservation. Notably, the project partners (Local

support Groups -LSGs) have already been actively participating in major events and developments taking place lately in the field of biodiversity conservation both locally and nationally. During this project they were involved in monitoring of local development projects that had potential harmful effect on local biodiversity (local biodiversity in those corridors of course has global significance). For each of them this activity was a complete novelty and it appears that being monitored by local NGOs was new experience for the companies involved in those development projects too. Overall, it is important to note that at present there is at least one conservation group in each of the target regions of the of Caucasus Priority Corridors 2 and 4 that is capable of (i) implementing biodiversity projects on the ground independently or jointly with larger agencies, (ii) serving as a local clearinghouse mechanism for other local organizations and (iii) being a strong advocate of local biodiversity and also local communities in the light of on-going or future development projects that may have an adverse influence on the species and habitats on the ground.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

IV. PROJECT OUTPUTS

Project Outputs: Enter the project outputs from the Logical Framework for the project

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<p>Output 1: - Effective national network of Local Support Groups (LSGs) established.</p> <p><i>Indicator 1.1: 4 Tailored Work Plans elaborated in participatory manner for each Local Support Group (LSG) in each of the 4 regions within the first year of the project implementation.</i></p>	<p>It was the project's approach to build the capacity of a small number of local NGO/CBOs by providing them with appropriate technical as well as financial support so that they subsequently could in turn provide support services and facilities to other environmental organizations locally. In order to provide this assistance the project had to conduct the assessments of the NGOs that were in advance selected as project support groups (LSG). The assessment was conducted by looking at six main elements outlined in NACRES Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool. The capacity of each NGO was measured in respect of (i) Governance (ii) Management practices (iii) Human resources (iv) Financial resources (v) External relations (vi) Current programs and activities. A detailed NGO Capacity Assessment report was eventually prepared with identified strengths and weaknesses of each of the partner organization. Tailored work plans (assistance and training plans) were then elaborated for each of the Local Support Groups (LSG) in the four regions Svaneti, Khevsureti, Racha and Adjara and specific and targeted training was then provided to each of the LSG's.</p> <p>The work plan for the Adjara LSG was focused on the following themes: grant application writing, organizational structure and organizational development, project management, strategic planning. That of the Svaneti LSG involved organizational development and governance, grant application writing, project evaluation and self-evaluation, environmental advocacy. The plan developed for the Racha LSG included grant application writing, project management, project evaluation and self-evaluation, development project success indicators. The work plan for the Khevsureti LSG had organizational structure and governance, strategic planning, grant application writing, project cycle management, development project success indicators.</p>

<p>Output 2: Participatory local policy documents developed by Local Support Groups (LSGs) and distributed</p>	
<p><i>Indicator 2.1: 4 direct Local Support Group (LSG) grants issued within the first year of the project duration.</i></p>	<p>During January-August 2007, 4 sub-grant agreements were signed between NACRES and Local Support Groups (LSGs), namely with "Flora and Fauna" (Adjara), "Zekari" (Racha) , "Synapse" (Svaneti) and Khevsureti Natural and Cultural Heritage Center – "Sane" (Khevsureti).</p>
<p><i>Indicator 2.2: Following publications prepared and distributed by Local Support Groups (LSGs), within the second year of the project duration : Svaneti – Sites' Conservation Action Plan, Racha – Site Conservation Action Plan Khevsureti – Agreed guidelines for creation of Capra cylindricornis Managed Reserve, Adjara – Local Biodiversity Strategy with Action Plans for all 16 CEPF priority species.</i></p>	<p>Fieldwork and surveys were conducted in the target regions by respective LSGs and invited experts where needed and appropriate during July to December 2007. After all the necessary information was collected, LSGs in Adjara, Racha and Svaneti began drafting local policy documents for priority species conservation in their respective region. In parallel, the Khevsureti LSG began to prepare guidelines for the creation of a protected area in Khevsureti.</p> <p>Special efforts were made to ensure the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the process of development of local policy documents. After all the necessary background information was collected for the development of local policies, meetings were organized in each of the target regions for all relevant stakeholders. The primary aim of these meetings was to inform the local communities about the local policies and more importantly to grab local views and attitudes for their integration into the policy documents. In total, 4 stakeholder meetings organized in the target regions attracted more than 70 participants from the local governments, NGOs and CBOs. Their views and comments were taken and fully integrated in the draft policy documents which were then disseminated among all stakeholders including local authorities.</p> <p>At the meetings held in Svaneti and Racha it was suggested by some stakeholders that in addition to local policies for each region a combined policy document be also elaborated for the two regions. This suggestion was justified by the current territorial and administrative division of the country, both Racha and Lower Svaneti provinces are under the same local authorities; the two provinces have similar environmental problems and the Central Caucasus National Park currently under development is expected to encompass parts of both provinces. This suggestion was anonymously supported by the meeting participants and the two LSGs were advised to work on a combined policy document for priority species for Racha and Svaneti. The combined document for Racha and Svaneti was then prepared and distributed among all stakeholders and also submitted to the local governments in both regions, which accepted it as guidelines for their work.</p> <p>Because Adjara has a special political status (unlike the other target regions it is an autonomous republic within Georgia) Adjara Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ABSAP) was prepared and submitted to the Parliament of Adjara Autonomous Republic for approval. The Adjara LSG in addition to developing this document was actively lobbying the local government to accept it as an official policy document. At the time of writing this report the review of the document is still pending within the Adjara Parliament.</p> <p>Guidelines for East Caucasian tur managed reserve in Khevsureti were developed by the Khevsureti Local Support Group (LSG). First, baseline studies were conducted that included identification and mapping of most important sites for East Caucasian tur, description and rapid assessment of tur habitats, identification and mapping of potential tourist attractions, cultural/archeological sites. In addition, meetings were conducted with the local communities with the primary</p>

	<p>aim to introduce the idea of protected areas and to gain local support. The final report with all supporting documents including maps were submitted to NACRES as well as to relevant stakeholders.</p>
<p>Output 3: - Capacity of Environmental Protection Organizations (EPOs) built and Local Support Groups (LSGs) are providing ongoing support to EPOs</p>	
<p><i>Indicator 3.1: Necessary trainings provided to Environmental Protection Organizations (EPOs) by Local Support Groups (LSGs) within the second year of the project implementation.</i></p>	<p>Both Local Support Groups (LSGs) and project Technical Assistance Team (TAT) provided capacity building trainings to Environmental Protection Organizations (EPOs) throughout the second year of the project. Capacity building trainings for local EPOs were conducted in Batumi (for Adjara EPOs) in January and March 2008 and in the town of Ambrolauri (for Racha and Svaneti EPOs) in April 2008. The trainings were dedicated to the following topics: preparation of grant applications, project management, strategic planning. Additional sessions were organized on biodiversity conservation issues. An emphasis was placed on CEPF priority species and on LPDs developed by the project for Adjara, Svaneti and Racha.</p>
<p><i>Indicator 3.2: 8 Environmental Protection Organization (EPO) grants awarded on the competitive basis within the second year of the project implementation.</i></p>	<p>Prior to the announcement of the EPO grants program, preparatory work was conducted involving community meetings in the target regions to better inform the local NGO community about the environmental issues and priorities in their district and about the funding opportunities under the upcoming EPO grants program.</p> <p>Request for Proposals (RFP) was announced in May 2008 for Adjara, Svaneti and Racha regions. For maximum publicity an announcement was sent out through the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN) and LSGs made special efforts locally to reach each of the potentially interested NGOs and CBOs. The LSGs were fully involved in the RFP process and assisted participating local EPOs with application procedures and other aspects. As part of RFP, NACRES team developed detailed guidelines for potential applicants that were based upon the priorities outlined in respective local policy documents prepared earlier by the project and on CEPF Caucasus Program priorities. In total, 11 applications were received out of which 7 were considered to be in line with the published guidelines of the grant competition. However almost all of them needed further improvement. Additional site visits were conducted to the target regions by the project Technical Assistance Team (TAT) to provide further consultations to local applicants and jointly with LSGs help them better formulate their applications. Final applications were then resubmitted to TAT for final consideration. Shortly after that all 7 applicant were awarded grants to implement their small projects that we called Micro Pilot Projects (MMP).</p> <p>Despite intensive 2-phase training sessions and consultations as well as active publicity work by the Racha LSG, unfortunately only 1 application was found to be relevant to the requirements of the grants competition. The Technical Assistance Team raised this issue with the project Steering Committee suggesting that the remaining (not awarded) funds be allocated to the best ongoing micro-projects. The Steering Committee approved this idea and after consultations with the Steering Committee members and the evaluation of the ongoing micro-projects, Association "Mta-Bari" was chosen to qualify for additional funds. The association was then requested to prepare a request for the extension to the existing project <i>Ex-situ conservation of endangered species of the south Colcheti at the Batumi Botanic Gardens</i> with additional specific activities. The Technical Assistance Team (TAT) worked closely with the NGO and Batumi Botanic</p>

	<p>Gardens and the new request was eventually elaborated as a separate proposal but logically linked with the ongoing project. It was entitled <i>Ex-situ conservation of rare relic flora species of the humid subtropics of the south Caucasus at the Batumi Botanic Gardens</i>. This proposal was awarded. Thus 8 EPO grants were eventually awarded as originally planned.</p>
<p><i>Indicator 3.3: 8 Different species/habitats conservation Micro Pilot Projects (MPP) implemented by the Environmental Protection Organizations (EPOs) within the second year of the project implementation.</i></p>	<p>All 8 of the Micro Pilot Projects (MMP) were successfully completed and the implementing NGOs (EPO) submitted their progress and/or terminal reports accompanied with relevant materials and documentation and financial accounts.</p> <p>LSGs provided additional assistance to the awarded EPOs and the project Technical Assistance Team (TAT) monitored the implementation of the micro-projects. Site visits were conducted to Batumi (Adjara) and Ambrolauri (Racha) for this purpose.</p> <p>Thus a total of 8 micro-projects were successfully implemented:</p> <p><u>In Adjara:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Ex-situ conservation of endangered species of the south Colcheti at the Batumi Botanic Gardens</i>, Association "Mta-Bari". 2. <i>Biodiversity and the Youth</i>, Civic Society Development Association "Borjgalo" 3. <i>Action for Black Sea biodiversity preservation</i>, The Black Sea Eco-academy 4. <i>Rehabilitation of the relic Colchic forest: Conservation of endangered Quercus imeretina, Quercus hartwisiana and Pterocarya pterocarpa</i>, Society for the Protection of Nature "Chaobi". 5. <i>Ex-situ conservation of rare relic flora species of the humid subtropics of the south Caucasus at the Batumi Botanic Gardens</i>. Association "Mta-Bari". <p><u>In Racha:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. <i>Informing and Educating Local Communities about Biodiversity</i>, Association "Sadmeli". <p><u>In Svaneti:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. <i>Conservation of Tur, Capra Caucasica</i>; Association of Young Conservationists. 8. <i>Beehives to the Lashketi Community</i>, CBO "Lashketi" <p>In order to summarize the results and achievements of the micro-grant program meetings were organized in Batumi with LSGs and EPOs (grantees of the program). Technical Assistance Team (TAT) presented the overall results; awarded EPOs talked about their projects, about challenges they had to face during the project implementation and they also presented their views and plans for the future. Some time was also allocated to the discussions on current environmental and conservation issues in the target regions.</p>
<p>Output 4: Active biodiversity monitoring of local commercial ventures carried out</p>	
<p><i>Indicator 4.1: At least one venture identified by Local Support Groups (LSGs) in each of the 4 regions at the end of the first year and within the second year of the project and their monitoring reports produced.</i></p>	<p>It was one of the main tasks of the local support groups (LSG) to identify development projects and conduct their monitoring. First, LSGs gathered information about on-going business activities in their target regions. As a result lists of on-going development projects was composed for three target regions: Adjara, Racha and Svaneti. Most important business activities were later chosen to be subsequently monitored by the LSGs.</p> <p>As part of the preparatory phase the project also organized a special workshop with LSG's to discuss challenges of monitoring local business activities. As an invited speaker, Ms. N. Gujaraidze (from Association Green Alternative, one of the leading Georgian NGOs</p>

with extensive experience of monitoring business activities and development projects) had a presentation on methodological aspects and approaches. She also presented case studies and shared the experience and lessons learnt by her organization. Each of the LSG representatives also had presentations on their activities and current and projected development projects in their regions that were likely to have an impact on local species and habitats. Discussions and brainstorming were held to identify target ventures for monitoring activities in each region. Overall approaches and methods of monitoring were also discussed and agreed on by the participants. In addition to this workshop, LSGs were subsequently provided with more specific advice both on the ground and at NACRES office in Tbilisi.

In Adjara, Association *Flora and Fauna* (project LSG in Adjara Autonomous Republic) began to monitor *Georgian Association of Fishing License Holders*. They monitored the companies that were holding a 10-year license to fish in the Georgian Black Sea waters. The monitoring involved gathering information on license holding companies and on the terms and conditions that applied to the licenses. Seven firms were identified to hold valid commercial fishing licenses as of July 1, 2008. Using independent and alternative sources of information the association also collected information on activities and practices some of those firms were using (e.g. information on catch discharge points). Additional information was also obtained from other sources including local fish processing factories, the Black Sea Protection Inspection, Coast Guard Service of the Georgian Border Police, and from the Customs. Based on obtained information the Association then conducted an assessment of fishing activities – the actual fish harvest was assessed and the sustainability of the quotas for the next years were evaluated; current levels of excess harvest was also estimated.

In Svaneti, association *Synapse* (project LSG in Svaneti) conducted the monitoring of timber processing firms that operated in that region. In total 15 license-holding timber processing mini-factories were identified in Lentekhi district alone (one of the districts in the Svaneti Region), out of which only 7 were found to be operational. Local people were found to be the main suppliers of timber to those timber processing mini factories. Overall, the situation was assessed as satisfactory apparently due to the recent general improvement in forest management and activation of the Environmental Inspection in the region. Nevertheless, some major violations of environmental regulations were also noted. For example, most of the mini-factories were situated by river banks (mostly the river Tshenis-Tskali). Because they did not have proper facilities for sawdust and other waste collection and storage most of the waste they produced ended up into the river and obviously caused serious contamination. In addition use of red list species such as *Buxus* and Chestnut trees was noted. Both of these species are protected by law. Special recommendations were prepared for improving the situation including prevention of river contamination with sawdust and other timber waste, and their use as fuel instead, also on the protection of rare tree species, and overall reduction of illegal timber extraction. These recommendations were presented to the local authorities, the local unit of the Environmental Inspection, to the local timber processing companies as well as to the local communities. There were some positive signs too in respect of cooperation with the timber processing companies. Some of the companies actually expressed interest in the possibilities of secondary processing of sawdust and its use. Association *Synapse* even achieved preliminary agreement with some of the local firms to engage in a joint project on the reuse of sawdust.

	<p>In Racha, association <i>Zekari</i> (the project LSG in Racha) chose and monitored the newly built asphalt producing facility at village Khidashlebi. They reviewed the terms and conditions of the environmental permit issued to this company (asphalt production is a <i>Category 1</i> activity according to national legislation and therefore requires an environmental permit to operate). The Racha LSG found that the factory was polluting the environment and this was associated with certain technological faults. These findings were reported to the local authorities as well as to the company itself. In addition, local communities were informed to encourage their mobilization so that they could keep an eye on the factory's activities in the future too. Eventually recommendations for the future prevention of environmental pollution were developed jointly with the LSG and the company itself.</p> <p>No major development projects were noted in Khevsureti region. Relatively small scale tourism-oriented projects were mainly focused on cultural and historical sites and were found to have little interference with natural habitats or wildlife. Therefore no development projects were monitored in Khevsureti.</p>
<p><i>Indicator 4.2: Local Support Groups (LSGs) mentored by NACRES in monitoring local ventures within the second year of the project implementation.</i></p>	<p>The monitoring of local businesses whose activities implied significant influence on biodiversity continued into the second year (see details above).</p>
<p>Output 5: Citizens' knowledge, attitudes and practices toward biodiversity and, especially, key species are improved with biodiversity resource user groups adopting new, environmentally sound practices and population being permanently updated on the problems in the corridors</p>	
<p><i>Indicator 5.1: Project successes placed and updated on NACRES web-site and special Local Support Group (LSG) web-pages along with the project implementation.</i></p>	<p>Information on the project was published on the NACRES web-site. It was regularly updated throughout the course of the project implementation. Information on Local Support Groups (LSG) activities and other sub-grantees was also published (http://www.nacres.org/foundation/index.html). In addition, the project helped the Adjara LSG develop its website (http://www.florafaua.org) on which they published information on this project as well as the policy document they developed within the project (Adjara Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan).</p>
<p><i>Indicator 5.2: 20 special monthly loose leafs placed in the most readable newspaper within the whole period of the project duration.</i></p>	<p>This activity was cancelled due to dramatic price increase in the advertising business compared to 2005 when the project document was designed. All public awareness activities were then revised and agreed with the donor. One of the major components of the new public outreach plan was an anti-poaching campaign that involved less expensive but cost-effective methods.</p> <p>Following the recommendations of the Project Steering Committee NACRES team closely cooperated with CENN (another CEPF grantee NGO). NACRES participated in Media Green Café organized by CENN on February 21, 2007. Mr. Levan Butkhuzi, NACRES Chairman delivered a speech on endangered species, with a case study on Brown Bear. He also discussed problems of media and environmental NGO relations. In May 2007 NACRES joined the CENN campaign For Biodiversity Protection. NACRES team provided information to the journalist working on the series of newspaper</p>

	<p>articles on biodiversity conservation within the CENN project (Newspaper "Akhali Versia", March 28-29, 2007 (#35), March 30-April 1 2007 (#36), etc.). As part of the anti-poaching campaign an article was also published in the prominent Georgian monthly magazine (Tskheli Shokoladi, #29, July 2007).</p>
<p><i>Indicator 5.3: 7 biodiversity educational banners placed in the capital and in the regions along with the project implementation.</i></p>	<p>Due to dramatic price increase the existing budget was no longer sufficient to implement this activity as originally planned and to full extent. Therefore a revised public outreach plan was developed utilizing other options that were considered most cost-effective in the given situation such as putting up posters on Tbilisi municipal transport (buses).</p> <p>NACRES Foundation signed an agreement with TV+ Ltd. an advertising company and 5 posters were produced and placed on Tbilisi municipal transport (so-called Bogdan-type small "yellow buses") for the initial period of 3 months, September to December 2007. The concept, main message, slogan and the design of the posters were developed on the basis of priority needs that were identified by the NACRES team. The posters featured photos of 4 critically endangered species that are most effected by illegal hunting: Caucasus leopard, brown bear, red deer and tur, and an anti-poaching slogan: "Don't Shoot!". After additional negotiations with TV+ Ltd. they generously extended the duration of the campaign first for another 45 days and then for 12 months without any additional charge. So our large and rather conspicuous anti-poaching posters with photos of endangered wildlife could be see all around the city throughout 2008 too.</p>

Describe the success of the project in terms of delivering the intended outputs.

Output 1. Effective national network of Local Support Groups (LSGs) established

The network of LSGs was successfully developed through building the capacities of selected 4 NGOs by means of technical support and trainings as well as direct financial support. These NGOs are now also helping others and serve as a major instrument for the exchange of information between the centrally based agencies (government agencies, larger national and international conservation NGOs, large-scale projects, etc) and local NGO sectors, between each other i.e. between the different regions of the priority corridors. All LSGs have been participating in major events and developments taking place lately in the field of biodiversity conservation both locally and nationally.

Output 2. Participatory local policy documents developed by LSGs and distributed

Local policy documents were prepared in a highly participatory manner by the LSGs and with necessary support of the Project Technical Team and where needed invited experts. The combined local policy document for Racha and Svaneti that was prepared as part of *Output 2* was accepted by the local governments in the two regions and they expressed their wish to use them as guidelines for their work.

Adjara Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ABSAP) was prepared and submitted to the Parliament of Adjara Autonomous Republic for approval. At the time of writing this report the review of the document is still pending within the Adjara Parliament.

Guidelines for East Caucasian tur managed reserve in Khevsureti were developed by the Khevsureti Local Support Group (LSG). The document was distributed among all stakeholders. The Georgian Agency for Protected Areas has recently announced its plans to begin the process of protected area planning in Khevsureti which has been greatly facilitated or even triggered by the active promotion of this idea by the Khevsureti LSG, the project as well as by WWF Caucasus Program Office. A representative from NACRES as well as Head of the Khevsureti LSG now sit

on the governmental commission specially established by the Agency for the creation of protected areas in Khevsureti. This commission will of course extensively use the guidelines prepared by the project.

Output 3. Capacity of Environmental Protection Organizations (EPOs) built and LSGs are providing ongoing support to EPOs

A number of smaller NGOs and CBOs including very young and inexperienced ones had the opportunity to attend special trainings and then 7 of them were awarded grants to implement their own small project to gain experience and actually put their motivation and rather theoretical knowledge into practice. The LSGs provided support to local NGOs throughout the project and have taken the responsibility to continue to do so as needed afterwards too.

Output 4. Active biodiversity monitoring of local commercial ventures carried out

LSGs were involved in monitoring of local development projects that had potential impact on local biodiversity. Their findings were communicated to the public and relevant authorities as well as to the companies involved. Where needed and appropriate LSGs also developed relevant recommendations for those companies to improve their practices.

Output 5. Citizens' knowledge, attitudes and practices toward biodiversity and, especially, key species are improved with Biodiversity resource user groups adopting new, environmentally sound practices and population being permanently updated on problems in the corridors

Due to dramatic price increase the available budget was no longer sufficient to implement this activity as originally planned and to full extent. Therefore a revised public outreach plan was developed utilizing other less expensive but cost-effective options in the given situation including "mobile advertising banners" that is posters placed on Tbilisi municipal transport (buses), establishing cooperation with the journalist working on the series of newspaper articles on biodiversity conservation within another CEPF supported project and with other local press. The posters that were put up on the city buses in Tbilisi featured an anti-poaching slogan and photos of 4 critically endangered species that are most effected by illegal hunting. With additional negotiations with the advertising company the initial 3 month contract was extended twice and our conspicuous anti-poaching posters with photos of endangered wildlife could be seen all around the city in fall 2007 and throughout 2008. It is very difficult to measure the exact effect of this measure, but it is obvious that many members of the public have since expressed their approval describing those posters as timely and powerful. It was for the first time that wildlife conservation themes appeared on the buses, a space that had been normally used for commercial purposes.

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

Due to dramatic price increase the available budget for Outcome 5 was no longer sufficient to implement the activities as originally planned and to full extent. Therefore we had to modify the public outreach plan so that it utilized less costly and at the same time cost-effective options in the given situation. By putting up large and conspicuous anti-poaching posters on the city buses in Tbilisi we were still able to reach the wider public at a relatively low cost because the advertising company agreed to extend the initial 3 month contract twice and our anti-poaching posters remained on the buses not only during fall 2007 but throughout 2008 too.

V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS

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

The project has had no adverse impacts.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT

Describe any lessons learned during the various phases of the project. Consider lessons both for future projects, as well as for CEPF's future performance.

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

Project Execution: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/failure)

As one of the first activities the project conducted extensive assessments of the local NGO sectors and of attitudes toward biodiversity in the the Georgian sections of Priority Corridors 2 and 4, namely in Svaneti, Racha, Khevsureti, Adjara. The assessment of attitudes toward biodiversity relied on Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) techniques. The results of these assessments were compiled in Regional Biodiversity Strategy that was used throughout the course of the project implementation as a guidance. This approach was apparently a very important aspect that ensured maximum effectiveness of all other measures implemented within the project and also maximum transparency and stakeholder involvement throughout the course of the project.

It was the project's approach that maximum effectiveness in respect of local NGO/CBO capacity development could only be achieved by meeting the individual needs of those NGOs and CBOs. Because such an approach is skill- and resource-intensive, we had proposed to build the capacity of a small number of local NGO/CBOs by providing them with appropriate technical as well as financial support so that they could subsequently in turn provide support services and facilities to other environmental organizations locally. (We called local partners Local Support Groups or LSG). In order to support this approach two types of local grants were delivered: (1) LSG Grants that involved the distribution of 4 relatively large direct grants each of the LSGs receiving one grant in each of the target regions to enable the awarded NGOs to build their capacities, develop local policies and then provide capacity building and activity support to other local NGOs and CBOs and (2) the distribution of 8 smaller grants for local less developed environmental NGOs and CBOs for projects addressing local issues, demonstrating law enforcement examples and incorporating a public awareness and participation component. We believe the above approach has been very effective and at present there is at least one conservation group in each of the target regions of the of Caucasus Priority Corridors 2 and 4 that are capable of (i) implementing biodiversity projects on the ground independently or jointly with larger agencies, (ii) serving as a local clearinghouse mechanisms for other local organizations and (iii) being a strong advocate of local biodiversity and also local communities in the light of on-going or future development projects that may have an adverse influence on the species and habitats on the ground.

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 in USD	Notes

****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.)*

Provide details of whether this project will continue in the future and if so, how any additional funding already secured or fundraising plans will help ensure its sustainability.

The long-term impact of this project is expected to be sustained by the main achievement that is strengthened local NGO communities in all 4 target regions. The strongest emphasis is of course on the LSGs (project support groups), the NGOs whose services ensure the continued support to other less developed or young smaller NGOs and CBOs on the ground . LSGs also have plans to further expand their work including toward wider public outreach activities. NACRES on the other hand continues to mentor the LSGs as they deliver intermediary services to other NGOs and where needed to provide them with information and advice on various aspects of NGO development and activity including fundraising. NACRES works both ways, informing the NGOs about donors and funding opportunities and also promoting these NGOs i.e. informing the donors and large-scale projects about these NGOs. Not all the smaller NGOs that were supported by the project through the local NGO award program (EPO grants program) should be expected to grow into successful organizations, nor would they necessarily continue their activity solely in the field of nature conservation. (in rural areas small NGOs have to diversify their scope to achieve some sustainability). But the sheer fact of having a number of NGOs with conservation experience is already a good background to build on future development. As for LSGs, they are already actively involved in a wide range of activities both at the local and national level.

VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
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VIII. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. One way we do this is by making programmatic project documents available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these in our newsletter and other communications.

These documents are accessed frequently by other CEPF grantees, potential partners, and the wider conservation community.

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