

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: Red Panda Network-Nepal

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): *Local Stewardship for the Conservation of Red panda in Eastern Nepal*

Implementation Partners for this Project:

1. Community Forest User Groups (Ilam and Panchthar District)
2. Shree High Altitude Herbal Production and Conservation Institute (Ilam)
3. Shree Deep Jyoti Youth Club (Panchthar)

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): 1 October 2008- 31 December 2010

Date of Report (month/year): 28 February 2011

II. OPENING REMARKS

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

Nearly, 60% of the potential red panda habitat remains outside the protected area system of Nepal where red panda are facing survival threats due anthropogenic factors. To safeguard this unattended potential red panda areas, Red Panda Network – Nepal (RPN) initiated a long term red panda monitoring and awareness raising programs in the community managed areas of Kangchenjunga-Singhalila Complex (Upper Mai Valley area), eastern Nepal since 2006. This two year intervention in eastern Nepal aimed at enhancing red panda and its habitat conservation through increased stewardship of the local people along with livelihood improvement. This project is an extension of the best practices and lesson learned from the pilot program.

This project addressed CEPF's Strategic Direction 1 for the Eastern Himalayas by facilitating the development of stewardship and ownership in the local communities that support and promote the conservation of the complex's globally important red panda population. Through community-based monitoring, priority corridors, or "hotspots" for red panda were identified and local forest user groups were catalyzed to initiate low cost, sustainable monitoring of red panda habitat.

This program aimed at building local capacity to monitor the red panda and mitigate threats. These outcomes included the development of monitoring protocol, which enables the approaches to be replicated more widely in the Eastern Himalayan Region. The community managed red panda ecotourism concept piloted in the project area increased the participation and stewardship of local people and hence generated love and appreciation for red panda.

This project report summarizes the activities undertaken by Red Panda Network - Nepal and also focuses on the output level impacts.

III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT IMPACTS

Project Impacts:

Long Term: *Conservation of red panda and its habitat quality (contiguity) in the Kangchenjunga-Singhalila Complex (KSC) through the stewardship of local communities.*

Short Term: *Key threats affecting the survival of red panda in the project area reduced through increased stewardship by community forest user.*

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

- One of the most notable performance indicators has been a stronger community participation in red panda conservation activities.
- Community commitment demonstrated in monitoring exercises. Newly formulated or amended operational plan of all the community forests of the project areas incorporated red panda monitoring as one of their regular program. 12 community forests are regularly involved in the monitoring activities.
- The capacity of the community forests has also been improved due to technical and financial support provided by this project in terms of better office management and forest management. Wildlife monitoring training to the local people “Forest Guardian” enhanced their capacity to undertake the transect monitoring more systematically and technically.
- Organizational development and book keeping training increased the organizational capacity of the community forests and red panda tourism management group.
- Restocking of indigenous plant species in the connectivity areas (that acts as the linkage between two identified red panda hotspots) is taking place by the local initiatives.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

- Income generated from red panda based tourism activities have been directed to habitat management and community development activities such as zoning the specific red panda habitat, restoration of wetlands, public awareness for conservation and building and maintaining the trekking routes.
- Additional livelihood opportunities and diversification of income generating activities from various conservation efforts. Examples: Home-stay, red panda tracker, Nature Guide
- Enhanced capacity of the community members to run tourism activities and also networking with various conservation donors and potential partners/collaborators.

IV. PROJECT COMPONENTS

Project Components:

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
Output 1: Identification of red panda hotspots through community consultations as well as scientific monitoring to conserve and restore key red panda habitat	
<i>Indicator 1.1: An understanding of baseline information on the distribution, relative abundance and conservation status of red panda in the project area by year 1 and a technical paper produced by 2 year</i>	To access the basic understanding of the red panda distribution, its relative abundance and conservation status, 82 line transects were laid that totals the length 129.54km in 12 community forests of Eastern Nepal. Transects ranges from 500m to 3100m in length. In the project area, red panda were found distributed within the altitudinal range of 2200-3400m and average sign encounter rate was found to be 1.76/km. Habitat fragmentation, overgrazing, Human-wildlife conflict and developmental activities are threatening the survival of red panda in the project area. A manuscript incorporating these findings is in the review process.
<i>Indicator 1.2: A GIS based red panda hotspots map for the project area prepared by the end of year 1</i>	A GIS based red panda hotspot map for the project area is prepared. In the project area, 6 core red panda activity areas (hotspots) were

	identified based on community consultation fed by technical survey. These hotspots area are connected by average habitat in-between.
Output 2: A Forest Guardian or community-based red panda monitoring manual prepared, information collection and sharing mechanism developed and implemented to monitor trend in red panda population and occurrence	
<i>Indicator 2.1: A community based red panda monitoring manual /protocol developed by the end of year 1.</i>	A Community based red panda monitoring manual/protocol developed and available for community use.
<i>Indicator 2.2: At least 5 community forest user groups will start using the monitoring manual/protocol and practice monitoring, information collection and sharing on the red panda by year 2.</i>	12 community forest user groups initiated the red panda monitoring in their respective forests. Two local people" Forest Guardian" from each community forest regularly monitor transects established in their respective forests. The information collected by Forest guardians is compiled by CFUGs and finally by RPN Nepal to draw some inference and disseminate. Red panda monitoring is also incorporated in the operational plan of the community forests of project area as a regular program to be implemented.
Output 3: A Community Conservation Vision developed for the red panda in KSC so that red panda conservation initiatives continue beyond the life of the project	
<i>Indicator 3.1: A community based red panda conservation vision document prepared by year 2.</i>	With the series of consultation and discussion with representatives of 17 community forests of project area, a community based red panda conservation vision document was prepared. The salient features of the document are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continuation of community based red panda monitoring program as their regular programs as guided by the community forest operational plan ➤ Conservation of identified red panda hotspots ➤ Habitat linkage between red panda hotspots ➤ Delineation and management of red panda zones in community forests ➤ Promotion and expansion of community managed red panda tourism initiated by this project
<i>Indicator 3.2: Red Panda Network Nepal leverage additional funding for the sustainability of conservation initiatives in KSC by year 2</i>	Red Panda Network-Nepal already secured some funds (about \$ 5,000) for the sustainability of conservation initiatives in KSC and looking for additional. Similarly, community forests of the project area started to seek the funding and technical support opportunities themselves which increases the sustainability of the conservation actions beyond the project. Community forests started to manage the local funds as well such as certain percentage of the allocated budget to the village development committee for conservation works.
Output 4: Grassroots actions initiated for	

<p>conserving red panda in a community forest and the intactness of its habitat</p>	
<p><i>Indicator 4.1: At least 5 community forests supported financially and technically for grassroots actions to mitigate threats to red panda (e.g. conservation awareness raising, 'eco-friendly' land- and resource-use practices, etc.)</i></p>	<p>15 community forests financially and technically supported grassroots actions to mitigate threats to red panda. 6 of this community forest were supported financially for their organizational development such as bank account operation, basic concept on account keeping, transparency etc. With the technical and financial support, community forests conducted the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community based red panda monitoring (12 community forests) ➤ Wetland restoration (Mabutham and Choyatar Community Forests) ➤ Delineation of red panda zone within community forest (Choyatar and Chhintapu Community Forest) ➤ Plantation of indigenous and endangered plant species in the critical linkage between two red panda hotspots (Pokharidanda, Laligurans, Chhintapu, Choyatar and Jaljale Community Forests) ➤ Technical support provided for community forest operational plan preparation (Chhintapu and Laligurans Community Forests) ➤ Community managed red panda tourism (Choyatar Community Forest) ➤ Conservation awareness programs and conservation education programs (Todke Chantalung, Jarbutte Bhalupani, Makaipari Thulodundh, Pokhari Danda, Lali gurans, Chhintapu, Dhanepa Sandakpur, Kanyadevi, Ahale Narelung, Hangeham, Choyatar, Kalikhop Dadheli and Mabutham CF)
<p><i>Indicator 4.2: At least 2 small portion of the two community forests declared as red panda conservation zone within the community by the community forest user groups by year 2</i></p>	<p>2 community forests of the project area delineated a red panda zone within their community forests (120ha) for special management purpose. The delineated red panda zone is also further sub-blocked for better management of red panda habitat and tourism purpose. Human intrusion is strictly prohibited in some of the sub-blocks. It is the innovative concept of conservation and management of red panda and its habitat implemented by the local community in Nepal.</p>
<p><i>Indicator 4.3: At least 1 red panda eco-trip organized in 1 site in the project area by year 2</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Red Panda Tourism Management Group established in Choyatar Community Forest ➤ Tourism management guideline and benefit sharing mechanism prepared ➤ Exchange visit to observe community managed ecotourism programs for the community people ➤ Training on home-stay and other tourism related activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Networking and promotional workshops in district and central level to promote the red panda tourism in the project area ➤ Community livelihood opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 households involved in home-stay ➤ 2 people trained as red panda trackers ➤ 2 people trained as tourist guide <p>Revenue generated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No of visitors: 45 (24 domestic and 21 foreigners) ➤ NRs 38,500 (USD 550) generated as forest entry fee, camera fee and conservation donations ➤ NRs 42,000 (USD 600) generated through home-stay.
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Describe the success of the project in terms of delivering the intended outputs.

The project in overall has been successful with most of the intended outputs being realized. Community participation, willingness and commitment to continue the conservation actions beyond the life of this project are the prominent success realized. It demonstrates the sense of community stewardship and ownership. The community based red panda monitoring guideline/protocol and red panda monitoring by community forests as their regular program guided by their community forest operational plan is another significant success in terms of delivering the intended outputs. The other significant change is the actions taken to conserve the bamboo the staple food source of red panda. The collection of bamboo shoot is strictly prohibited and is included in the operational plan of the most of the community forests and 2 community forests strictly implemented as guided by operational plan. The effect of this actions is the nearly 60% decline in bamboo shoot collection from the project area. The grass-root conservation actions taken by the local community themselves (e.g. Plantation of native species, zonation of red panda habitat, initiation of red panda based tourism, and networking with conservation donors and potential partners/collaborators) are also great intended success.

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

NA

V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS

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

NA

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.

For effective management of forest habitats close to community reach, it is a robust strategy to shift powers and management responsibilities to communities to be able to plan, implement and monitor by themselves. Community powers and authority in natural resources management increase the conservation commitment.

Support from other legal authority such as, district authorities and Forest Department improves moral of community forests to carry out their duties with confidence. Choyatar community forest was awarded as one of the most well managed forests of the district by District Forest Office, Ilam, which encouraged the community members to undertake the conservation and management actions more robustly.

Economic benefit from conservation was also a motivating factor for communities in the area. The model community used was the Choyatar Community Forest by forming an ad-hoc group named "Choyatar Red Panda Tourism Management Group" which generated income from tourists visiting the red panda site in their forest. The funds obtained were then directed towards various red panda habitat management and community development initiatives. The community has been very enthusiastic towards the red panda conservation and monitoring. This has in effect caused a ripple effect with other communities emulating them. Their success also led to more funding being received from WWF Nepal to improve and market the area with better conservation and management of red panda habitat.

Success evaluation and follow up monitoring activities requires longitudinal project intervention.

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

Working in direct partnership with community forests has ensured that the project has been implemented successfully at the grass-root level of the community organization. RPN Nepal's direct contact and experience within the project area has definitely contributed to its success. Discussion with most relevant stakeholders during the project design phase along with CEPF Nepal representatives also contributed to its success.

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

Initially, the project didn't focus on the red panda based tourism management as an important component of the project. It was taken as only the activity to ensure its feasibility. Later while working with local communities, they were found interested on these activities and showed the conservation commitment too. This community realization made us to go through the red panda tourism as the main component of the project as it also has the greater positive impact towards the livelihood the local community. This timely change in implementation led to the success of this project generating love and appreciation to red panda and its conservation commitments by the local community. This is well reflected in the investment and benefit sharing mechanism of the revenue generated through tourism.

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
ECOCLUB.com	C	€ 2,000	
Minnesota Zoo	C	US\$ 2,500	

***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 community is now well aware about the importance of red panda conservation. One of the communities has started generating income through red panda eco-tourism. It is effective and gaining popularity among other communities too. So other communities are also interested to establish eco-tourism. This has encouraged the community to regular monitor and preserve red panda.

VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Monitoring of the red panda and its habitat in the Kanchenjunga-Singhalila Complex needs to be continued beyond the project. To make this happen effectively, the local community needs further support and assistance. The communities are in initial phase of biodiversity conservation and management. The following are some recommendations based on the learning of this project:

- Continuation of community based monitoring and information sharing, technical and financial assistance to local communities
- Community-managed Red Panda Area
- Expansion and promotion of community managed red panda ecotourism
- Technical study on habitat fragmentation and its impact on red panda and other sympatric species
- Ecological and spatial predictions of red panda occurrence incorporating impact of climate change in the landscape level which helps to prioritize the conservation actions needed for red panda conservation in this landscape

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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