

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: Voluntary Health Association of Sikkim

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement):

Building Capacity of Civil Society for the Conservation of Biodiversity with Special Focus on Livelihood, Sanitation, and Health Development in Kanchanjunga-Singalila Areas of Sikkim State.

Implementation Partners for this Project:

Nagbelli Conservation Association (NCA), Ribdi;
Eco-Development Committee (EDC) of Okhrey-Ribdi;
Community Health and Environment Conservation Society (CHECS), Sombarey;
Hamro Pariwar Lungchuk (HPL);
Nizor Tshokpa SHG Ribdi;
Namo Budha Farmers Club.

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): January 1, 2008 - June 30, 2010

Date of Report (month/year): 15.09.2010.

II. OPENING REMARKS

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

The project had laid some objectives and outputs, and by and large most of these were achieved. Even though, due to the unique design of project and its integrated/holistic base, some of the objectives and output (s) may not be visible and for that matter can't be measured tangibly at this stage.

The host of difficulties encountered and solved during the project implementation phase is also the solid foundation of this project initiative. The difficulties included communication problem, transport and connectivity, interferences from some quarters, short-gain & large expectation, repeated change in project staff/workers and so on. However, the objective of the project was never let diluted, and through middle path and consistent efforts, the bundle of difficulties were tackled, and eventually a few threats/challenges were exploited to opportunities which proved to be strength for securing the slated objectives.

III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

Project Purpose: Increase in participation of civil society groups and communities in the conservation and sustainable management of locally important medicinal plants species of threatened and rare status in Varsay KBA of Kanchenjunga landscape in Sikkim.

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
Purpose-level:	
<p><i>1. 06 Grassroot civil society organizations engaged in ex situ & in situ conservation of 10 important local medicinal plant resources within two and half years in and around Varsay KBA in western Sikkim along Singalila-Kanchanjunga complex</i></p>	<p>06 Grass-root civil society organizations (viz, NCA; CHECS; HPL, Nizor Tshokpa SHG; Namo Buddha Farmers Club; Ribdi EDC) engaged for conservation of 10 important local medicinal resources; besides above civil society organizations, many community organizations and entities such as a host of EDCs, SHGs, FCs, school network from the fringe areas also engaged for the objective of project in and around Barsey KBA along Singalila-Kanchenjunga complex</p>
<p><i>2. Government policies/management regimes support civil society groups in conservation of threatened and rare medicinal plant species.</i></p>	<p>Government authorities/ management regimes support CSOs for the conservation of threatened and rare medicinal plant species. The formation of state level Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary Conservation Committee (BRSCS) comprising of government/management officials, Barsey sanctuary functionaries, NGOs, community organizations, EDCs is the main source and link for the support from government/management regime.</p>

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

The project was a success in terms of achieving its intended impact objective and performance indicators. Moreover, some of its impacts are not directly measurable at this stage as the project intervention approach was integrated and holistic one which require due course to get the measurable and tangible result. Thus, project still requires support and strengthening to the given inputs. However, many spin off impacts have also been achieved that will go a long way in conservation endeavor which hitherto were not anticipated.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Yes. Negative impacts due to interference from some quarter caused initially which was tactfully handled & the affairs were brought to the track.

IV. PROJECT OUTPUTS

Project Outputs:

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<p>Output 1: 06 civil society organizations strengthened & capacitated for biodiversity conservation at Varsay KBA</p>	<p>06 Civil society organizations strengthened & capacitated for biodiversity conservation (viz, Nagbelli Conservation Association of Ribdi; Community Health and Environment Conservation Society of Sombarey; Hamrow Pariwar Lungchuk o Lungchok; Nizor Tshokpa Women SHG of Ribdi; Namo Budha Farmers' Club of Ribdi, Eco Development Committee of Okhrey-Ribdi).</p> <p>Besides these, other 06 civil society entities, many local bodies and organizations from the periphery of Barsey KBA such as various EDCs, SHGs, Farmers' Clubs, schools, CBOs also strengthened & capacitated in terms of conservation issues & purpose.</p> <p>Apart from conservation issues, these civil society bodies were also strengthened and capacitated in terms of their organizational capacity building/development issues too.</p> <p>Strengthening and capacitating measures for Civil Societies Organizations involved conduction of various training/orientation on the core issues of conservation and their organizational development; their involvement in conservation planning and implementation, extending the technical guidance and funding support, exposure programme, networking and advocacy, education-communication & training materials, linkage building with line agencies and stakeholders alike at different level.</p> <p>Different trainings programmes covering various aspects of organizational capacity development conducted for civil society organizations using manual (viz Training Manual on capacity-building & local conservation needs for the Civil Society Organizations working at the fringe areas of Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary) based on the local capacity building & conservation needs of the civil society organizations working at the fringe areas of Barsey Sanctuary in western</p>

	<p>Sikkim.</p> <p>The 08 focused training programmes conducted on capacity building of NGOs covered two grey areas that required intervention/attention. The two areas included the crucial themes of organization strengthening/organization development & biodiversity conservation. The former dealt with issues of NGO governance, institutional growth, leadership, project planning & implementation, record-keeping, process of registration for legal incorporation, sustainability, account-keeping & financial management. The biodiversity conservation issues covered in the training programme included the lucid definition of biodiversity, about threatened & rare species, various threats factors to the biodiversity prevailing in the fringe area of Barsey KBA along Kanchenjunga-Singalila landscape, threats mitigation measures that NGOs/civil society could initiate, roles & responsibilities of civil societies in biodiversity conservation.</p>
<p><i>1.1. One Training manual (500 numbers) on capacity building for civil society organizations in place by the middle of year 02</i></p>	<p>One training manual designed and developed (500 nos.) on the basis of the local needs for conservation and organizational capacity development for civil society organizations with expert input from external consultant. The manual has main two components: one exclusively for conservation capacity development issue, and the other on organizational capacity development.</p>
<p><i>1.2. 08 different trainings programmes on crucial themes of organization development for building capacity of civil societies imparted by the middle of year 03</i></p>	<p>Different trainings programmes spread over 08 different parts on crucial themes of organization development for building capacity of civil societies imparted with the in-house expertise and external consultants & resource persons. This included the governance issues in civil society organizations/NGOs, mission and vision of Organizations, record and account keeping, documentation and the capacity development for biodiversity issues and conservation aspects and the roles and responsibilities of civil society.</p>
<p><i>1.3. 06 functional civil society organizations in place in fringe villages of Barsey sanctuary by the middle of year 03</i></p>	<p>Dormant civil society organizations functionalized through their reactivation/revitalization by way of sensitization, consistent training, guidance and</p>

	<p>support measures, and in place of the fringe areas of Barsey sanctuary. These CSOs are mainly NCA of Ribdi; CHECS of Sombarey; Hamro Pariwar Lungchuk of Lungchok; Nizor Tshokpa Women SHG of Ribdi; Namo Budha Farmers Ribdi, EDC of Okhrey-Ribdi. As a momentum of this initiative, a new Environmental Organization called Community Health and Environment Conservation Society (CHECS) comprising of young educated youth mass also formed at Sombarey.</p>
<p>Output 2: Grassroot actions to mitigate key threats to biodiversity implemented at proposed KBA</p>	
<p><i>2.1. Key threats to biodiversity from within & around Barsey KBA identified by the end of year 01 and Information-education and communication (IEC) materials (2000 numbers) in the form of brochures, pamphlets developed and disseminated to the communities and stakeholders, by the middle of year 02</i></p>	<p>Main key threats to biodiversity from within and around Barsey KBA identified through field study, workshop with key stakeholders and focused group discussions with general people and key stakeholders far and wide the areas of Barsey sanctuary.</p> <p>Based on these key threat issues, IEC materials (2000 numbers) drafted, designed with relevant visuals and issues, expert opinion incorporated after through review by expert, formatted in brochure form/folders & developed/printed in <i>lingua franca</i> for the reach and understanding of common people & grassroot stakeholders; these were then circulated among key players of conservation in and around Barsey sanctuary areas including government agencies workers/bodies, & also distributed to the local people in the said villages during their conservation awareness and education programmes.</p>
<p><i>2.2. At least 06 civil society organizations supported financially and technically to mitigate identified threats through grassroot actions including biodiversity conservation awareness programmes in the 08 fringe villages and 06 schools in the area by the middle of year 03</i></p>	<p>06 civil society organizations (CSOs) & 13 schools of the peripheral areas surrounding Barsey sanctuary extended technical and financial support towards biodiversity conservation threat mitigation measures in 08 fringe villages and the 13 schools locations/premises, as follows.</p> <p>08 fringe villages included Ribdi, Lower Bhareng, Okhrey, Tikpur, Lungchok, Rumbuk, Moonew, Sapreynagi.</p> <p>13 schools included Ribdi secondary school, Tikpur secondary school, Okhrey secondary school, Bhareng primary school, Anden primary school, Rumbuk junior secondary</p>

	<p>school, Buriakhop senior secondary school, Dodak secondary school, Saprenagi primary school, Moonew primary school, Peureytaa primary school, Ambotey primary school and Lower Okhrey primary School.</p> <p>These activities were further strengthened by observing important event days, i.e., observation of World Environment Day on 5th June in these villages for public involvement for conservation and threat mitigation initiative, and State Green Mission drive/programme for plantation towards adding/increasing greenery on the road-side or vacant lands.</p>
<p>Output 3: Collaboration for in situ and ex situ conservation of important threatened and rare medicinal plants species between civil society organizations and local government institutions initiated at Varsay KBA</p>	<p>Collaboration for conservation initiatives of important threatened and rare medicinal plants species between CSOs and local government institutions initiated at Barsey KBA; these included the raising of community garden of important threatened & rare medicinal plants species* at Gufa Dara with the help of local government village Panchayat institution (namely, Okhrey-Ribdi Gram Panchayat Unit); involvement of civil society bodies such as EDC, NGOs of the villages, SHGs and school network of the Barsey fringe areas in ex situ conservation measure (Community garden of important threatened and rare medicinal plants) and monitoring/regulating & mitigating the threat factors & several other anthropogenic activities as a measure of conservation in situ. These were possible through mutual collaboration and coordination between various civil society organizations, Barsey Sanctuary functionaries, Forest Department and the local government institutions like Panchayats.</p> <p>*Threatened and rare important medicinal plants species grown in Community garden being <i>Panax pseudoginseng</i>, <i>Swertia chirayita</i>, <i>Taxus baccata</i>, <i>Rubia manjith</i>, <i>Heracleum nepalense</i>, <i>Tupistra nutans</i>, <i>Astilbe rivularis</i>, <i>Bergenia ciliate</i>, <i>Rhododendron arboreum</i>). One important medicinal plant entity called <i>Piper longum</i>, however, could not survive/adapt in the said garden due to its low adaptability and poor growth in higher elevated areas.</p>

<p><i>3.1. Formation of one conservation committee comprising of local government institutions and civil society organizations by middle of year 03</i></p>	<p>One conservation committee being named as Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary Biodiversity Conservation Coordination Committee (BRS:BCCC) formed at the State level comprising of field level various stakeholders including village governing bodies like Gram Panchayats, Barsey sanctuary functionaries, NGOs of the State and Forest Department authorities.</p>
<p><i>3.2. A participatory monitoring system for ex situ and in situ conservation of important threatened and rare medicinal plants species developed and implemented by the middle of year 03</i></p>	<p>This has not been achieved yet but in due process as the participatory monitoring system would be pursued by the recently formed said committee (BRSCCC) through its meeting & review discussions. <i>This is a absolutely a new and recent entity evolved as an output of CEPF project but requires further support & nurturing towards its maturity and stability. The implementing agency, VHAS, thus requires some support from CEPF for furthering it to yield the intended result.</i></p>
<p>Output 4: Local medicinal plants resources and traditional health care uses/practices documented</p>	
<p><i>4.1. Information on local medicinal plants resources and traditional health care practices gathered & compiled by the end of year 02</i></p>	<p>A substantial and precious information & relevant data regarding local medicinal plants and their use in traditional health care practices gathered through field survey, focus group discussion, workshop and demonstration, resource and photography documentation. Structured & well scripted questionnaire/observation sheets were developed, field tested and used for information gathering.</p>
<p><i>4.2. A document in the form of book (500 to 1000 numbers) containing checklist of local medicinal plants resources along with traditional health care uses/practices prevalent in the project areas prepared by the middle of 03 year</i></p>	<p>Above precious knowledge and resources have been documented/compiled with expert's review and opinion in the form of books (500 nos.) that also contains checklist of precious local medicinal plants, animal parts or products and mineral resources being used in traditional health care practices/systems.</p>
<p>Output 5: Ten (10) species of locally important threatened and rare medicinal plants species (namely, Panax pseudoginseng, Swertia chirayita, Taxus baccata, Rubia manjith, Heracleum nepalense, Tupistra nutans, Astilbe</p>	

<p>rivularis, Bergenia ciliata, Piper longum, Rhododendron arboreum) protected in community garden as ex situ conservation measure.</p>	
<p><i>5.1. 01 community garden established and piloted for ex situ conservation measures by the middle of year 03</i></p>	<p>A Community Garden of important threatened and rare medicinal plants (<i>Panax pseudoginseng, Swertia chirayita, Taxus baccata, Rubia manjith, Heracleum nepalense, Tupistra nutans, Astilbe rivularis, Bergenia ciliata, Rhododendron arboreum</i>) established and piloted for ex situ conservation initiative at Gufa Dara of Upper Ribdi bordering the village from Varsey sanctuary. The said Garden is not only serving as <i>ex situ</i> conservation measure but also for education and demonstration purpose for public and school students committed and involved in conservation programmes. The Garden is now under the care of local partners of the area such as NCA of Lower Ribdi village, Namo Budha Farmers' Club of Ribdi village, Nizor Tshokpa SHG of Ribdi, Ribdi EDC & Ribdi secondary school.</p>
<p>Output 6: Four (04) Self Help Groups promoted in the fringe villages of Varsay sanctuary & alternative livelihood support activities initiated</p>	
<p><i>6.1. 04 Self Help Groups promoted for economic development activities for livelihood support by the middle of year 03</i></p>	<p>Not just 06 Self Help Groups but also 26 farmers Clubs in diverse villages surrounding the Barsey Sanctuary have been formed and promoted for economic development activities. They have been tied up with Banking agencies like State Bank of India and National Bank Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) for their savings, credit-thrift and grant support for their livelihood support initiatives. Reputed NGOs like World Wide Fund For Nature-India (WWF-India) and Ecotourism & Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS), local government body like Gram Panchayat and field workers of the Agriculture-Horticulture Department have been linked with them for furthering and strengthening their economic development activities towards livelihood support. These agencies are according small fund support to these SHGs and Farmers Clubs for income generating programmes eventually to help them in their livelihood initiative which is will go a long way in future.</p>

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

Project was a success as this could deliver most of the intended outputs along with some important spin-off results. Success is not just in terms of achieving the intended targets but also creating enabling and conducive environments, establishing platforms for conservation advocacy, aggregating & abridging key civil society stakeholders with line agencies and the departments of the government, getting rid of many hurdles and difficulties (such as communication difficulties and interference from some angles), putting things back on track and streamlining affairs. Besides, developing capacity of local people and stakeholders for conservation issues along with their organizational development/strengthening; reviving community bodies in the far-flung and remote villages from dormancy and opportunity creation for engagement of less privileged grass-root people as project workers and development of sense of ownership for the cause of conservation responsibilities.

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

No. Almost all the outputs realized even though some of them are not tangible/measurable at this stage of project and that requires sometime to yield the result. This is also due to holistic, inclusive and integrated nature of project approach intervention.

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 initiative undertaken is a noble venture but it still requires support and guidance. In the changing scenarios of priority and actual needs of the local people in the ground, such inputs or efforts invested in such a distant and far-off places in this part of global map are always vulnerable and get diluted with time if adequate nurturing is not rendered and strengthening measures are not undertaken. The Committee formed at the State level for monitoring and coordination of biodiversity conservation in and around of Barsey Sanctuary in Kanchenjungha-Singalila complex requires further technical guidance which can play a big role in social safeguard policies. The cross border issues of biodiversity are also of major concern, and therefore, the cross border level biodiversity conservation committee so formed collectively (through Tumling Declaration) at the cross border level by the relevant stakeholders of civil societies and respective government departments need to be revived and revitalized.

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.

One most important lesson received from this was mobilization of key stakeholders and reaching out other targets and stakeholders at different levels in tandem sequence & planning would immensely contribute to the success of the project. Initially, the project affairs got complicated and people had a large & quick expectation for individual gains rather than collective gains from conservation inputs. This development & short-sighted individualistic perception really jeopardized the project direction in mess for sometime, and reviewing and reassessing the development helped in putting things in proper track.

Another important lesson learned was that in respect of project design & implementation, there should be a scope for situational and need-based adjustment or modification as many things and local dynamics in the ground get changed with time affecting the project plan despite the project being designed meticulously with all front-end evaluation foreseeing any eventualities. The scope of such flexibility and situational modification or adjustment would immensely contribute to the cause of the project objective (s).

In addition, a precious lesson and experience could also be earned that how the interference from influential angles could be neutralized and move ahead with business maintaining equivalence and equidistance with such forces.

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

The project endeavor was truly the integrated and holistic one, and the inclusive approach was adopted that enabled the project implementer to mobilize all sections of communities in the ground, all levels of stakeholders both from civil society and the government machineries. This holistic and inclusive approach adopted in execution of project programmes truly contributed to its success.

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

All the programmes and plans of the project were transparent and participatory, thus, it could mobilize people of all sections, gained the momentum and their support, and this consequently contributed towards enabling environment creation ultimately securing the intended outputs and objectives. Regular monitoring, review and necessary and formative follow up was the backbone of success. The initiatives such as confidence building & abridging all the key stakeholders, civil societies and government agencies alike, their inclusion and more importantly, the capacity building & monetary support to the grass-root community bodies for local level conservation actions proved to be of great strength towards the successful execution of the project endeavor.

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 USD (1=45)	Notes
Memisa-Belgium	Grant	\$15,786.53	C
Memisa, Belgium	Grant	\$ 15,454.75	C
National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD)	Grant	\$ 1733.33	C
NABARD	Grant	\$ 577.77	C

****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.)*

Note:

The above fund leveraging was possible as CEPF was supporting a unique holistic conservation programme, community health development and livelihood programme being also inclusive in the project. Memisa-Belgium supported in this endeavor for the cause of community health promotion, and the NABARD did for organizing poor farmers into Farmers Clubs and Self Help Groups for livelihood related programmes. These agencies have realized that any output of such holistic endeavor can not be measured in duration of 2 to 3 years period, and thus based on the performance and the evaluation; these agencies will render support to further and strengthen these inputs for some more time. **NABARD** is likely to contribute USD 5777.77, and **Memisa-Belgium** USD 14182 for pursuing Farmers Clubs/SHGs skill building towards livelihood, & community health issues development in the fringe areas of Barsey sanctuary, respectively.

Conservation impacts too cannot be measured tangibly in short duration in true sense apart from assessment of some visible/measurable impacts, and therefore, support of any agency for furthering and strengthening the given inputs of CEPF project in key biodiversity area of Barsey in western Sikkim is anticipated/solicited. CEPF is requested to partly support this noble and unique initiative focusing on to carry forward and further the inputs and impacts of this endeavor as this is important for its stability and many spin off effects.

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 project being holistic and inclusive, the conservation theme persists in the activities of the stakeholders in which the government department workers of Barsey sanctuary and the grass-root civil society will pull forward conservation actions in the future too but this will be holistic, not just conservation based. Conservation in itself is an interdisciplinary subject and CEPF inputs would be strengthened/enhanced by the other source of fund being leveraged which will be applied for livelihood promotion & skill building programmes, community health and sanitation promotion programmes, for which the two funding have already been mobilized, namely, Memisa (Belgium) and NABARD, Govt. of India. The project input would also get direction and application in various organizations and schools of the fringe areas of Barsey sanctuary undertaking conservation programmes at their level.

VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
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The CEPF project truly impacted the conservation fields and a pool of stakeholders/organization has been capacitated for the conservation measures. They have also been empowered by recognizing them at local level; according them capacity building training and financial support;

and connecting them with other stakeholders and agencies not just for conservation agenda but also for local issues like community health, sanitation and livelihood avenues and skill building. Some of the spin off impacts and assets, information and documents created out of this project endeavor are worth to emulate in all the upcoming course of conservation actions.

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.

Please include your full contact details below:

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