

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Centar za krš i speleologiju (Center for Karst and Speleology)
Project Title:	Protection of underground biodiversity in the Neretva River catchment area – Identifying and raising the awareness of conservation hotspots.
Date of Report:	29 June 2014
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CEPF Region: Mediterranean biodiversity hotspot

Strategic Direction: 3. Improve the conservation and protection status of 44 priority key biodiversity areas

Grant Amount: 15300 US\$

Project Dates: 01/05/2013 – 30/04/2014

Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):

“Hrvatsko biospeleološko društvo” (Croatian Biospeleological Society) from Zagreb: provided key experts for the training of volunteers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and lecturers during the two workshops. Experts from the above mentioned society were also available for consultation during the whole project duration and actively participate during few field investigations.

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.

The project successfully raised awareness and promoted the importance of conservation and management of underground biodiversity in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (located within the Eastern Adriatic corridor and specifically to the Neretva river catchment region). In addition, it encouraged the training, link and networking of local conservationists with neighbour countries and wider. This project provided the necessary know-how not just directly on conservation issues but indirectly providing capacity building on managing of similar grants and therefore setting the ground for future projects and improving local capacity for fund leverage.

Field activity covered almost 20 caves with at least 40 different species detected (although majority still need detailed determination). By starting an inventory of underground species and treats in the region, this project tackle an important knowledge gap in this region. The results will enable in the future to establish target actions for the protection of underground biodiversity in the region leaving a long lasting heritage. The database with collected data may be integrated in the short term with other relevant wider projects such as Biospeleologica Dinarica (<http://www.biospeologica-dinarica.org>) and provide additional useful information for the ongoing Dinaric Arc Initiative.

Therefore, the project addressed at least two of the investment priorities within the strategic direction 3 (Improve the conservation and protection status of 44 priority key biodiversity areas):

3.1. Establish new protected areas and promote improved management of existing protected areas by developing and implementing sustainable management plans

3.3. Raise awareness of the importance of priority key biodiversity areas, including those that have irreplaceable plant and marine biodiversity

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.

The project officially started with the organization of the first workshop in Čitluk on 28 June 2013 in concomitant with the other CEPF financed project on protection of bat population. The first part of the workshop was the occasion to present all CEPF financed and potential projects in the region to relevant stakeholders while the second part was more specific to the underground biodiversity.

Volunteers from CKS, other NGOs and university students were educated by expert from Croatia and our NGO was equipped with necessary instrument to perform researches (microscope). Field activities, sometimes in collaboration with other projects or with the participation of experts from Croatia, investigated 20 caves in the region (in addition to these other potential sites were also visited but no caves were found). Collecting general description, conditions and sample for further determination. More than 60 observed specimen. Few species could be easily identified many other required expertise not available in Bosnia and Herzegovina and wider region and therefore need to be send abroad. It is highly probable that few of them will results in new endemic species. Available results were included in a database and summarized in a preliminary report that was discussed during the second workshop in Blagaj on 26th April 2014. Other more detailed results will be available in the next period and will provide the base for a final version of the project report. A brochure promoting underground biodiversity was designed printed and distributed.

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

The project successfully brought attention to this thematic and therefore provided a short term results in the correct development of the region. However, there is still much to do ahead. Thanks to this project a team of interested people is now present in B&H, received basic training and equipment and linked with international experts. This is the first and maybe more important step toward long terms objective to have conservation of underground biodiversity properly valorised, considered in decision making and protected by legislation.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

None

Project Components

Project Components: *Please report on results by project component. Reporting should reference specific products/deliverables from the approved project design and other relevant information.*

Component 1 Planned: Raise awareness

- A brochure will be prepared including information on caves and underground biodiversity, threats and protection needs. 250 copies will be printed and distributed to main stakeholders, schools and during public events.
- Project web pages will be created.

Component 1 Actual at Completion: Completed. Brochure has been created and distributed. Brochure can be downloaded from http://www.centarzakrs.ba/biodiversity/images/PDFovi/Brochura_biodiverzitet.pdf. Project web site is available at <http://www.centarzakrs.ba/biodiversity/>.

Component 2 Planned: Training and networking

- There is urgently need to improve local know-how to provide sounds solutions for a sustainable development of the key biodiversity region. Currently, there is not an adequate number of underground biodiversity experts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are planning to organize a training (3 days including field work in the target area with international experts as lecturers). This will also be a tool to fostering collaboration between local and international experts.

Component 2 Actual at Completion: Completed. The training has been successfully organized in Blagaj on 25-27 October 2013. More information available at: <http://www.centarzakrs.ba/biodiversity/aktuelnosti/30-trening-u-okviru-projekta-protection-of-the-underground-biodivesity-in-the-neretva-river-catchment-area-25-27-10-2013-u-blagaju.html>.

Component 3 Planned: Underground biodiversity database

- Majority of knowledge of underground biodiversity in the target region is based on research and publication of the first half of XX century. This data are sparse and not easy available. First activity will be to gather literature data from scientists in other countries, archiving and digitalizing old papers and summarize present baseline knowledge to make it easy available to further researches and studies.
- Most of caves recorded in literature do not have adequate documentation, the exact position is unknown and data on present conservation status absent. We therefore foreseen a field survey of each identified cave. Output of field activities will be a summary report including at least a preliminary biological inventory, speleological surveys, photo documentation and threat level. These records will form the inception of a database that our society will further develop after the conclusion of this project.

Component 3 Actual at Completion: Completed. Eight important works for the region have been digitalized. These includes work from late XIX and early XX centuries. A preliminary report on project findings has been created and distribute during the final workshop. It includes information on 20 caves in the region with at least 25 species of underground dwellers. Majority of determination are still ongoing and final results will be disseminated as soon as available.

Component 4 Planned: Project results dissemination

- Success and future sustainability of the project largely depends on its visibility and on the capacity to involve and to transfer results to final beneficiaries. A workshop/kick-off meeting will be organized at project beginning aimed to involve in the project activities since early stage potentially stakeholders. A second workshop will be organized at the end of the project in order to present achievements and discuss follow up of activities.
- Project results will be presented during third-part organized events (both popular and scientific) organized in the region.

Component 4 Actual at Completion: Completed. First workshop has been organized in Čitluk on 28 June 2013. More details at: <http://www.centarzakrs.ba/biodiversity/aktuelnosti/29-radionica-cepf-the-mediterranean-basin-biodiversity-hotspot-ongoing-and-potential-small-and-large-grants-in-bih.html>
Second workshop has been organized in Blagaj on 26 April 2014.

The project results were presented also at the following events:

- National meeting of B&H speleologists 9-11 May 2014 in Teslić:
<http://www.centarzakrs.ba/bh/aktuelnosti/146-skup-speleologa-bosne-i-hercegovine-2014.html>
- CEPF team visit. April 1st, Hutovo blato Nature Park, motel Karaotok, Čapljina.
- International Researcher Night, held on 27th September 2013 in Sarajevo:
<http://www.centarzakrs.ba/bh/aktuelnosti/101-center-for-karst-and-speleology-participate-to-the-international-researcher-night.html>

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

With regards to the expected (measurable) project outcomes foreseen in the LOI, all the targets have been accomplished and surpassed except that only 8 (against a target of 20) bibliographic references have been digitalized due to the difficulties to retrieve such old documents. The impact on the overall project was however very limited.

Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

Brochure can be downloaded from

http://www.centarzakrs.ba/biodiversity/images/PDFovi/Brochura_biodiverzitet.pdf.

Lessons Learned

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform

projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.

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

The project was designed in order to maximize the use of volunteer work and consequently to minimize the salaries/benefits budget. In a period of global economic crises, limited funding available should not put at stake nature conservancy efforts provided by small NGOs. Although we do recognize the importance of paid professionals, we believe that motivated volunteers could make the difference in protecting this planet. On the other hand, volunteer's enthusiasm may be volatile and keep them motivated and focused toward the goals of one project over a long period of time is a challenge. To cope with this we tried to mix a core of volunteer work with a project management composed by three of the most motivated members of our NGO with one of them engaged professionally part-time. Generally, this organization approach proved to be effective maintaining a minimum project activity even during period when less volunteers were available.

The same organization approach (including the same people) has been used in several other project proposal submitted in the same period. Although we are extremely happy that several funding have been approved, at the same time this has put a large workload over a small number person sometimes resulting in delay of activities (especially desk work).

The expansion of number of parallel projects and their complexity that our NGO is managing is becoming challenging and will require an evolution also in the organizational approach.

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

The project implementation was limited to one year. Although all the activities were successfully completed, most of the results of field work will be available after project completion due to the time required by international expert to examine all the collected material. This could be take into account in future projects allowing for a longer project duration.

The project positively collaborate with other affine projects in the region. Sharing information was the key to provided better results with less effort. In part due to this collaboration between projects (including also the other CEPF project managed by our NGO) that significant saving in the project budget were accomplished.

Among shortcomings we noticed a general lack of interest of large stakeholders and other large NGOs on the activities and results of our projects while collaboration with smaller stakeholders and NGOs was excellent. We feel that sometime small NGOs are facing the challenge to be heard and that this may represent the most important limiting factor in their activities and growth. One solution we may try to implement during future projects is to send official invitation (for example to workshops) through the grant donor instead of directly.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

None

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

****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) Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)*
- C) Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

Sustainability/Replicability

Summarize the success or challenge in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of project components or results.

The realized activities, since their conception at proposal stage, were designed as a pilot project. Knowing that only a relatively small part of the overall goal to investigate and protect underground biodiversity could be achieved in one year timeframe and with available funding. CKS is committed to continue field investigation and raise awareness campaign in the future. Thanks to this project, 10 volunteers/students received basic training in underground biodiversity monitoring and conservation and our NGO own the necessary equipment to perform such studies (microscope). Thanks to the reference obtained by realizing this project, with very important donors, our NGO improved its image and consequently increased the potential for further fundraising and impact in decision making and legislation drafting. We want to think that the project for the protection of underground biodiversity is just at its beginning and only the initial activities funded by CEPF are concluded.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

None

Safeguard Policy Assessment

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

None

Additional Comments/Recommendations

None

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

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