

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: World Wide Fund For Nature Caucasus Programme Office

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): Regional Council for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Resource Use in the Caucasus

Implementation Partners for this Project: WWF Armenia Branch, WWF Azerbaijan Branch, WWF Turkey and WWF Russia

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): 1 January, 2005 – 30 June, 2009

Date of Report (month/year): 15 September 2009

II. OPENING REMARKS

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

In 1999-2000, during the preparation of the first Conservation Strategy for the Caucasus Ecoregion, the stakeholders agreed on the urgent need to establish a coordination body to improve cooperation in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Caucasus. They thus requested WWF to coordinate the establishment of a coordination body, named as the “*Regional Council for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use in the Caucasus*”, in close partnership with the stakeholders from the region.

In 2004, through the financial support of the MacArthur Foundation and in close cooperation with other stakeholders, WWF Caucasus Programme Office established an independent regional body - “*Regional Council for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use in the Caucasus*” which was later re-named as the Caucasus Biodiversity Council (CBC) according to a decision of 5th meeting of the Council, 13-15 November, Trabzon, Turkey.

The Caucasus Biodiversity Council is a regional body, consisting of officially nominated governmental representatives and NGO delegates from all countries of the Hotspot. The Council also invites academics/scientists to participate in its meetings, which are organized twice a year. The key intention of the Council is to improve regional and transboundary coordination in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Caucasus.

The first meeting of the Caucasus Biodiversity Council was convened on 26 May, 2004, in Tbilisi, Georgia through the support of MacArthur Foundation, where the main organizational issues related to functioning of the Council were discussed and agreed. This first meeting, also, discussed commencement of the CEPF Investment in the Region.

The Caucasus Biodiversity Council has its Terms of Reference which clearly defines its major duties and responsibilities in the Region and also, endorses the Council’s logo¹. The Council is chaired by a person

¹ At the 5th meeting of the Council, 13-15 November, Trabzon, Turkey, members of the Council agreed that the CBC logo is a black & white and mountains depicts symbolizing countries of the Ecoregion, with full name of the Council and the abbreviation CBC.

from outside the region (External Moderator). The Chair is assisted by an Executive Secretary, who is not a member of Council.

III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

Project Purpose: *Regional Council for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use in the Caucasus effectively guided implementation of conservation activities in the region to ensure conservation targets are met by 2009 under CEPF and ECP.*

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<p>Purpose-level: <i>Regional Council for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use in the Caucasus effectively guided implementation of conservation activities in the region to ensure conservation targets are met by 2009 under CEPF and ECP.</i></p>	<p>The Caucasus Biodiversity Council (CBC) is becoming stronger in the Hotspot having responsibility to promote, facilitate, strengthen and monitor regional and transboundary cooperation in the field of biodiversity conservation. The CBC proved itself indispensable for conservation in the region, not only by promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Ecoregion Conservation Plan (ECP)² and CEPF Investment, but also by facilitating and guiding other regional initiatives, projects and programmes in the Caucasus.</p>
<p><i>1. Technical supports are provided by the Regional Council to help meet priorities of CEPF Ecosystem Profile and ECP targets by 2009</i></p>	<p>During the recent five years of 2004-2009, the CBC promoted effective coordination among CEPF funded conservation projects, programmes and initiatives and significantly contributed to the implementation of the CEPF priorities and ECP targets through their technical support and recommendations.</p>
<p><i>2. CEPF conservation outcomes outlined in the Ecosystem Profile as well as WWF's ECP medium term targets are met by 2009</i></p>	<p>Through the support of the Council, CEPF conservation outcomes are met and also, the most of ECP medium-term targets are achieved though the CEPF Investment in the Caucasus. Following recent evaluation of the ECP implementation status, around 71% of the medium-term targets are addressed and met.</p>

² Ecoregional Conservation Plan (ECP) is a comprehensive strategy for actions to conserve and restore the Caucasus biodiversity over the span of several decades.

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

The Caucasus Biodiversity Council promoted effective coordination among CEPF funded conservation projects and interactions and continues coordination among other regional programmes and initiatives. Also, the Council contributes to building regional level partnerships among different groups of stakeholders to be as much as possible effective in regional level conservation efforts and in achieving ECP conservation targets.

The Council has a central role in:

- ⇒ Strengthening coordination of conservation actions among partner countries, by developing and agreement on joint strategies.
- ⇒ Building consensus between stakeholders on implementing regional strategies and projects.
- ⇒ Providing credibility of the conservation movement in the region to donor agencies by coordinating and representing views and positions of Governments, NGOs, and the Scientific Community.
- ⇒ Promoting conservation programmes according to policies and standards required by donor agencies, based on CBC objectives and targets.
- ⇒ Monitoring implementation of ECP.
- ⇒ Coordinating and contributing to the implementation of urgent activities for fulfillment of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Programme of Work on Protected Areas (CBD PoWPA).

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

N/A

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: Cooperation among countries of the Caucasus Ecoregion is strengthened to ensure smooth and effective strategic implementation of biodiversity conservation activities in the Ecoregion</p>	<p>Caucasus Biodiversity Council promoted effective coordination among CEPF funded conservation projects and interactions and continues coordination among other regional programmes and initiatives. Also, the Council contributes to building regional level partnerships among different groups of stakeholders.</p>
<p><i>Indicator 1.1: At least eight meetings of the Regional Council organized, to coordinate conservation projects and shared lessons learned by June 2009</i></p>	<p>Through the CEPF financial support the following eight meetings of the Council were convened: ⇒ The first meeting: 30 March 2005, Tbilisi, Georgia: The meeting was attended by 16 participants. During this meeting, the Regional Council elected the Chairman of the Council - Dr. Hartmut Jungius - an Independent Expert from Switzerland. The Regional Council discussed and approved the ToR of the Chairman and the ToR for the Council.</p>

Apart from the above mentioned, the Regional Council considered the ECP developed for the Caucasus Ecoregion through coordination of the WWF Caucasus PO.

While the first meeting, the Council was thoroughly provided with detailed information on the CEPF Investment in the Caucasus Hotspot: current status and implementation plans.

⇒ **The second meeting: 5-7 October 2005, Hopa-Trabzon, Turkey:** All members of the Regional Council participated in the meeting and besides, local Governor of Hopa, representatives of CEPF, WWF-Caucasus Programme Office and WWF-Turkey attended this event. The following main items were discussed during this meeting: (i) Ongoing and planned large-scale nature conservation projects in the Caucasus; (ii) A strategy for using the CBD process for delivering on the ECP; (iii) Current implementation status of the ECP; (iv) Implementation of the CEPF Regional Programme in the Caucasus; (v) Perspectives of establishing the Caucasus Biodiversity Monitoring Network; (vi) Creation of Protected Areas database for the Caucasus; (vii) Leopard Conservation in the Caucasus: current status and perspectives.

⇒ **The third meeting: 29 May-2 June 2006, Georgia:** It should be highlighted that in addition to governmental and non-governmental representatives already nominated in the Regional Council, the third person representing scientific institutions was invited from each country to participate in the meeting. This was the first effort to enhance countries' representation in the Regional Council which itself reinforced transboundary cooperation in the Caucasus. The following main items were discussed during this meeting: (i) Basic principles of transboundary cooperation; (ii) Project - "Halting the extinction of the threatened Tugai forest in the transboundary area of the Iori River in Caucasus" financed by the Norwegian government / WWF; (iii) Planned project on creation first transboundary protected Areas between Armenia and Georgia to be financed by KfW; (iv) Perspectives for development of transboundary cooperation in South Colchis; (v) Perspectives for

development of transboundary cooperation in the Eastern Greater Caucasus; (vi) Implementation of the CEPF Regional Programme with focus on regional and transboundary projects; (vii) CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA).

⇒ **The fourth meeting: 13-15 November 2006, Trabzon, Turkey:** In addition to governmental and non-governmental members, already nominated in the Regional Council, the third scientific person was invited from each country to attend the meeting. This was the second effort to enhance countries` representation. The following main items were discussed during this meeting: (i) Council`s logo and name; (ii) Current implementation status of the ECP; (iii) Implementation status of the EPF Regional Programme in the Caucasus; (iv) Role of the Regional Council in implementation of CBD PoWPA and relevant amendments to the Council`s Terms of Reference; (v) Sustainable river basin management (Firtina River) and NGO networking in Turkish Caucasus; (vi) Kachkar Mountains Sustainable Forest Use and Conservation; (vii) Creation of a new Protected Area in Ajara Autonomous Republic; (viii) Status of transboundary proposals and next steps for developing the transboundary cooperation in the West Lesser Caucasus and other large conservation landscapes of the Caucasus; (ix) Registration of the Regional Council as a civil association in Switzerland; (x) Opportunities for creation of the separate web-site for the Regional Council Further operation of the Council

⇒ **The fifth meeting: 26-28 June 2007, Batumi, Georgia:** The fifth meeting of the Regional Council, also, was attended by invited persons / guests. CI/CEPF was represented in the meeting by Mr. Jorgen Thomson – CI/CEPF Vice-President, Mr. Christopher Holtz – CI/CEPF Grants Director and Mr. Kevin Tagami – CI/Global Conservation Fund. The following main items were discussed during the Meeting Plenary Session: (i) Current implementation status of the ECP; (ii) Implementation status of the CEPF Regional Programme in the Caucasus; (iii) New development of CEPF Programme in Russia; (iv) BMZ / KfW Programme for the Southern Caucasus; (v) Caucasus Wild Plant

Certification Centre; (vi) Development of transboundary and regional cooperation in the Caucasus; (vii) Grant scheme to assist countries in implementing CBD PoWPA. Also, a special / close session was organized only for country delegates for discussion of organizational issues such as: (i) CBC Registration; (ii) CBC Membership and (iii) Changes in CBC ToR.

⇒ **The sixth meeting: 19-20 February 2008, Tbilisi, Georgia:** All countries of the Ecoregion were completely represented to the meeting except of Russia. In addition to governmental and non-governmental members, already nominated in the Regional Council, the third scientific person was invited from each country to attend the meeting. This meeting, also, was attended by invited persons / guests: Mr. Mike Garforth, Regional Team Leader, KfW Transboundary Joint Secretariat for the Southern Caucasus and Mr. Tobias Garstecki, Programme Coordinator, IUCN Programme Office for Southern Caucasus. The following main items were discussed during this meeting: (i) First draft of ECP prioritization and necessary steps for its completion; (ii) 2012 Protected Areas Programme – Caucasus Ecoregion - project supported by MAVA Foundation; (iii) Relevance of ECP high priorities actions to CBD PoWPA; (iv) Status of South Caucasus Protected Areas Fund; (v) Regional Strategy for Leopard Conservation in the Caucasus and necessary next steps; (vi) Development of KfW South Caucasus Programme; (vii) UNEP Initiative for the Caucasus; (viii) Proposal on establishing the Regional Biodiversity Monitoring Network; (ix) Perspectives of development of FSC Forest Certification in Georgia;

⇒ **The seventh meeting: 3-4 February 2009, Batumi, Georgia:** Four countries of the Ecoregion were represented to the meeting except of Russia and Iran. The following main items were discussed during this meeting: (i) Implementation status of 2012 Caucasus Protected Areas Programme funded by MAVA Foundation; (ii) Implementation status of the CEPF Investment / Regional Programme in the Caucasus with focus on PAs; (iii) Program of Transboundary Joint Secretariat / KfW; (iv) Perspectives for transboundary and cross-

	<p>boundary cooperation; (v) Regional priorities for funding under 2012 Caucasus Protected Areas Programme; (vi) Status of Leopard Programme for the South Caucasus and next steps and Leopard Programme in Russian part of the Caucasus;</p> <p>⇒ The eighth meeting; 16-17 June 2009, Ankara, Turkey: All countries of the Ecoregion were represented to the meeting. The following main items were discussed during this meeting: (i) General overview of the ECP implementation and needs for revision; (ii) Developing Status of the Regional Biodiversity Monitoring Network; (iii) Implementation status of the CEPF Regional Programme / Investment and its conservation outcomes; (iv) Review priority targets for CBC investment under the 2012 Protected Areas Programme funded by MAVA Foundation; (v) Implementation Status of on-going regional projects (leopard conservation, Armenia-Georgia transboundary protected area project funded by KfW, projects funded by Norwegian Government, etc.); (vi) Discussion on climate change report and incorporation of Climate change issues into the biodiversity conservation in the Caucasus; (vii) Leopard reintroduction project in the Russian Caucasus.</p>
<p><i>Indicator 1.2: The Regional Council members are entirely familiar, with the CEPF's priorities outlined in the Ecosystem Profile for the Caucasus Hotspot and Ecoregional Conservation Plan (ECP), its targets and endorsed them by May, 2005</i></p>	<p>As mentioned above, during the meeting in March 2005, the Council was thoroughly provided with detailed information on the CEPF Investment priorities in the Caucasus. Also, during the whole implementation of the CEPF Programme, the Council was directly involved in the process: the Council was in charge of coordination, guiding and supervision of the CEPF Programme implementation. The CEPF Investment was on the Agenda of each meeting of the Council recent 5 years.</p>
<p><i>Indicator 1.3: Conservation projects in the Caucasus Hotspot are effectively monitored and overseen pertaining to the CEPF priorities and ECP targets by June, 2009</i></p>	<p>In addition to the above mentioned, the Council was and still is responsible to coordinate and monitor conservation projects and almost all of them are within CEPF and ECP priorities. Besides, the most of ECP medium-term targets are achieved though the CEPF Investment in the Caucasus. Following recent evaluation of the ECP implementation status, around 71% of the medium-term targets are addressed and met.</p>

<p>Output 2: Regional Council promoted and communicated conservation projects and results under CEPF-ECP with relevant governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations and donor communities for leveraging political support</p>	
<p><i>Indicator 2.1: All CEPF/ECP projects related to development of protected areas systems or improving management of existing protected areas officially supported by Governments; at least 5 large-scale proposals for leveraging matching funds are discussed and promoted by Regional Council members by 2009</i></p>	<p>All projects related to Protected Areas, funded either CEPF or another donor, are agreed and officially supported by the Government. More, without the strong support from the Government, it is impossible to implement the projects related to protected areas in the Caucasus. Relevant governmental representatives are involved in the implementation and they represent the leading and significant part of the process.</p> <p>Since 2005, the Council discussed and promoted the following large-scale proposals for leveraging matching funds to the CEPF Investment and all these projects are funded and being implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ ``Promotion of Transboundary Cooperation for Biodiversity Conservation in Javakheti`` including two countries of the Javakheti Corridor – Armenia and Georgia. This projects is already financed by KfW and aimed at establishing the first transboundary Protected Area between Armenia and Georgia in the Caucasus. Establishment of new protected areas in Javakheti Corridor will ensure conservation of the following CEPF priority species and their habitats: <i>Lutra lutra</i>, <i>Ovis ammon</i>, <i>Aquila heliaca</i>, <i>Falco naumanni</i>, <i>Crex crex</i> and <i>Vipera dorevskii</i>. ⇒ Project - ``Halting the extinction of the threatened tugai forest in the transboundary area of the Iori river in Caucasus`` in Iori-Mingechauri Corridor aimed at halting the extinction of the floodplain forests in the transboundary area of the Iori River of Georgia and Azerbaijan, and lay a long term plan for the restoration of the threatened floodplain habitats. This project is financed by the Norwagina Government and it will contribute to conservation of the following CEPF priority species and their habitats: <i>Lutra lutra</i>, <i>Myotis emarginatus</i>, <i>Rhinolophus ipposideros</i>, <i>Rhinolophus mehelyi</i>, <i>Anser erythropus</i>, <i>Crex crex</i>, <i>Aquila heliaca</i>, <i>Falco naumanii</i>, <i>Testudo graeca</i>. ⇒ Project - ``2012 Protected Areas Programme - Caucasus Ecoregion`` funded by MAVA

	<p>Foundation. The main goal of the project is to support Governments of the Caucasus Countries in the implementation of CBD PoWPA. This project will directly contribute to the improvement of protected areas system in the Caucasus countries.</p> <p>⇒ Developing of the Regional Biodiversity Monitoring Network – this was initially supported by CEPF and then additional financial support was received from MAVFA – Foundation and the Norwegian Government. For the time being, the Network is being completed and perfected to be operational shortly.</p> <p>⇒ Project - “Biodiversity Protection and Community Development: Implementing Ecoregional Conservation Plan Targets in South Armenia” funded by the Norwegian Government. This project is in line with- and can be considered as continuation of the completed CEPF project on “Promoting Sustainable Resource Use among Local Communities near Protected Areas in Southern Armenia”.</p>
<p><i>Indicator 2.2: Three Annual Reports on work of the Regional Council published by June, 2009</i></p>	<p>⇒ The first annual report on functioning and work of the Council was published in March 2006.</p> <p>⇒ The second annual report on functioning and work of the Council was published in June 2007.</p> <p>⇒ The third report was produced in June 2009 which covered the Council’s work in the years of 2007 and 2008.</p> <p>All these reports were communicated to all key stakeholders in the Region – governmental and non-governmental representatives, scientific institutions and donor agencies. Also, the first annual report was presented to the Ministerial Conference in Berlin, Germany, 9-11 March, 2006.</p> <p>These reports highlight progress and achievements of the Council and also, provide information on regional and transboundary projects and initiatives in the Caucasus.</p> <p>The reports are available on the web-link: www.panda.org/caucasus and accordingly, quite widely available for people concerned.</p>

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

All intended outputs were successfully achieved and detailed information is provided under the outputs section above.

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

N/A

V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS

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

N/A

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.

- ⇒ Building partnership and cooperation among such a wide range of stakeholders as the Caucasus is a huge challenge with its varied types of government and political systems, multi-ethnic issues and language diversity: all have to be addressed where possible with careful planning, diplomacy and flexibility.
- ⇒ Species and their habitats do not recognize international and political boundaries: regional and transboundary cooperation is a key to ensure biodiversity conservation.
- ⇒ Close cooperation as well as sharing knowledge and experience between scientists and other stakeholders across the Hotspot are invaluable. This is true for research, field studies, and monitoring and effective conservation activities. These provide guarantees for tangible and sustainable results at the Regional level.

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

N/A

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

During the project implementation all Ecoregional / Caucasus characters, like varied types of government and political systems, multi-ethnic issues and language diversity, were fully considered. Having in mind a wide range of stakeholders, all steps of the project implementation were carefully considered before taking forward. All CBC members were fully involved in the process concerned. Diplomacy, flexibility, professionalism and respect were key tools in having success in this challenging project.

Besides plenary meetings and discussions, members of the Council were able to visit to different projects sites, including CEPF projects / programmes sites, and see what the real implementation status is on the ground and also, exchange experiences and provide some recommendations and advices. This approach was really very effective tool for developing very close cooperation, exchange of experiences and

knowledge and generation of new regional and transboundary initiatives. The following projects sites were visited where different donors, including CEPF, invests for biodiversity conservation: (i) Camili Biosphere Reserve, Turkey, bordering area to Georgia; (ii) Altindere National Park, Turkey; (iii) Chachuna Sanctuary, Georgia; (iv) Lagodekhi Nature Reserve, Georgia; (v) Lake Uzungol Area, Turkey; (vi) Chorokhi delta, Georgia; (vii) Mtirala National Park in Adjara Autonomous Republic, Georgia; (viii) Machakhela river gorge, bordering Jamili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey, and Mtirala National Park Buffer Zone in Georgia; (ix) Bozdag Wildlife Reserve in Konya, Turkey.

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
Government of Norway	A	USD 50 000	
MAVA Foundation	A	USD 80 000	
WWF Network		USD 80 000	
Total	A	USD 210 000	

**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 Caucasus Biodiversity Council will continue its functioning and meetings and the relevant financial support is already secured from the Government of Norway and MAVA Foundation which will contribute to the CBC operation by the end of 2011.

VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CEPF significantly contributed to strengthening and effective functioning of the Council. The CBC has become an important mechanism for promoting conservation in the hotspot, and for building confidence *vis-à-vis* donor agencies and the conservation community. This role is expected to become more and more important in years to come, in view of the growing development pressures that are being felt in the hotspot.

The process of Globalization has also reached the Caucasus. This requires that nature conservation and issues of natural resource management will have to be addressed to an increasing extent on a multilateral or even regional basis. The Council is an appropriate tool to help addressing these issues and building consensus between all relevant players in this process.

Comprehensive informative packages covering all documentations of this Regional Council meetings and work, including photos, are available and can be provided upon request.

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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