CEPF Final Project Completion Report

Instructions to grantees: please complete all fields, and respond to all questions, below.

Organization Legal Name	Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment		
Project Title	Empowering Local Communities and CSOs in the		
Project fille	Western Ghats to Use EIA as a Conservation Tool.		
CEPF GEM No.	62891		
Date of Report	21.01.2016		
Report Author	Ritwick Dutta		
Author Contact Information	ritwickdutta@gmail.com		

CEPF Region: Western Ghats

Strategic Direction: Investment Priority No 1.2 (iii) promote partnership that demonstrates effective responses to the impacts of liner infrastructure and other development projects on ecological connectivity.

Grant Amount: USD 75,000

Project Dates: 2013/7/1 to 2015/6/30

1. Implementation Partners for this Project *(list each partner and explain how they were involved in the project)*

The Keystone Foundation, Tamil Nadu: Keystone Foundation housed the Niligiris unit of ERC. It will provided all the necessary infrastructure for carrying out the activities of ERC.

Conservation Impacts

2. Describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile

There are hardly any new developmental projects impacting environment, forest and wildlife are being proposed in the region. ESZs of Western Ghats region are being notified.

3. Summarize the overall results/impact of your project

ERC's regular representations/memos to the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) have resulted in better availability of documents related to projects appearing for environmental and forest clearances. In the long run this would result in

greater transparency in decision making. Furthermore, ERC activities in the region have led to greater vigilance and focus on environmental and forest clearance related issues.

People on their own keep track of new projects, try to get hold of related documents e.g. EIA reports etc, and participate in Environmental Public Hearings in hundreds, while previously public hearings used to be mere formality and eyewash.

More and more people are making representations or sending memos to authorities against projects with potential to cause damage to forest and environment. Likewise, more and more people are approached legal system for environmental justice.

Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal) List each long-term impact from Grant Writer proposal

Significant policy changes as well as effective implementation of environmental laws in the western ghats.

Incorporation of strategic impact assessment and cumulative impact assessment as mandatory requirements under the environmental governance framework.

Effective regulations aimed at reducing the impact due to linear projects as well as other devlopment projects on wildlife corridors etc.

progress towards declaration of significant portions of the western Ghats as ecologically sensitive

Significant reduction in threats to the Western Ghats Ecosystem due to the impacts of development projects (such as, mining, industrial, hydro-electric dams, etc.) that have been approved based on faulty and improper Environment Impact Assessment, reports and processes.

Enhanced legal protection to key biodiversity and critical linkages within the Western Ghats

Improved environmental appraisal and clearance processes at the national level, through generation of precedent and documentation of case studies within the Western Ghats. Improved access to the specialized justice forums like the National Green Tribunal by imparting specific trainings.

4. Actual progress toward long-term impacts at completion

- Better availability of documents related to projects appearing for environmental and forest clearances in public domain e.g. MoEF&CC website. In the long run this would result in greater transparency in decision making.
- Greater vigilance and focus on environmental and forest clearance related issues in the region.
- ESZs of Western Ghats are being notified

Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal) List each short-term impact from Grant Writer proposal

Greater civil society vigilance and scrutiny over new projects including linear projects and reduction of the ecological footprint

Tracking forest diversion in the region and taking effective steps to reduce the loss and avoid the same in ecologically critical landscape.

Effective citizen driven enforcement of environmental laws and regulations in the region Greater public access to data on forest loss as well as proposed diversion which will facilitate public action with respect to the same.

Greater awareness about the Environment Impact Assessment & Forest approval process among local communities and Civil Society Organizations to enable effective participation in environmental decision making for specific cases where biodiversity values and ecosystem services are compromised by proposed development projects.

Increased capacity and confidence among local and grassroots Civil Society Organizations, to monitor the issues of non-compliance, raise critical questions, obtain information under the Right to Information Act, and critique environmental clearance & forest approval clearance processes and Environment Impact Assessment reports.

Establishment of a new channel of communication between affected communities and the Government, in the form of a 'Western Ghats Environment Impact

Assessment Cell', which will ensure that the issues related to Environment Impact Assessments and concerns of the local communities are communicated to the relevant agencies (e.g. the Expert Advisory Committee and Forest Advisory Committees of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, and the National Green Tribunal).

Strengthened networks among local communities and Civil Society Organizations working to safeguard critical biodiversity against incompatible development projects.

Identification and experience sharing on the existing / proposed non-compatible projects like Tourism, Transportation and man made activities in wildlife corridors to bring them into the ambit of comprehensive assessments and implications (to demystify the need for such projects against environmental damages in consultation with stakeholders)

5. Actual progress toward short-term impacts at completion

- The civil society groups, NGOs and other concerned groups have been oriented on the provisions of the EIA, environmental and forest clearance laws.
- The fact that communities are aware that destructive activities could be legally challenged provides environmental security on the one hand and increased public participation on the other in enforcement of environmental laws.
- The documentation on brick kilns, waste dumping, banana cultivation on forest land has led to these issues being highlighted at the local level. These have also led to action for regulation of these activities.
- People on their own keep track of new projects, try to get hold of related documents. More and more people are making representations or sending memos

to authorities against projects with potential to cause damage to forest and environment.

• More and more local groups are approaching the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and legal systems for environmental justice.

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

Success : Very few projects are appearing for public hearing and those which are appearing have more comments from affected communities.

Challenge : Make common man appreciate the ESZs of the whole Western Ghats and make them understand that it would not undermine their normal activities. ERC has been part of campaign of the Save Western Ghats.

7. Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Positive : Very few new projects are appearing in the Western Ghats.

Project Components and Products/Deliverables

Component 1 (as stated in the approved proposal)

List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer

Component 1.

Capacity built among at least 10 local and grassroots Civil Society Organizations in the Western ghats on the following topics:

- 1. The EIA Process and Forest Clearances process
- 2. Non-Compliance, Ecological Damages and Claims for Compensation
- 3. Approaching the National Green Tribunal

1.1. At least 6 field-level capacity building trainings organized involving key stakeholders with participation of about 15-20 people per training. The training will concentrate not only on community members but also training those who could be future trainers.

1.2. At least 2 local Civil Society Organizations that receive training for trainers go on to organize trainings for others

8. Describe the results from Component 1 and each product/deliverable

Orientations /Trainings

Focused training programme was conducted on 28 June 2014 on Environmental and Forest Clearance processes and National Green Tribunal Act at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. There were 25 participants including lawyers, NGOs, law students and others interested in environmental issues.

LIFE/ERC strategy has been to conduct trainings in collaboration with local CSOs /NGOs. There was no specific demand for focussed EIA training from the region, since earlier several focussed trainings had been organised, so the strategy of training was changed.

Several environment and forest related meetings where being organised in the region. LIFE/ERC was invited to attend several of these meetings.

ERC coordinator in particular and ERC team in general have been actively involved in participation as resource persons and knowledge partner in several meetings in the Western Ghats with partial relevance to EIA processes. We used these opportunities, because of the felt need, to make focussed presentation on EC processes, particularly on Public Hearing process. Some examples are :

Conservation of Sahyadri- Konkan Corridor at Amboli, Maharashtra on 18.07.2014-

<u>World Indigenous day Celebration</u> on 8th and 9th, August, 2014 by Keystone Foundation at Kotagiri. ERC actively collaborated in the programme.

<u>HLC meets twice at Bengaluru- Karnataka on 26th and 27th September and at Mangalore-Karnataka on 28.09.2014:</u> The three meetings were for public consultations on the amendments to be proposed for Forest and Environmental regulations. ERC made a representation on the Forest Conservation Rules.

Western Ghats meeting on 28-29 October 2014 at Chorla Ghat, Goa: The meeting was to discuss the present status of issues in the Western Ghats and the implementation of the HLWG Report. We made an oral presentation on a group discussion -Beyond the Mining Ban (Goa).

Interstate Save Western Ghats meeting at Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Karnataka on 19-20 January 2015; local level meets of Save Western Ghats on 21st January 2015 at Hanur Kollegal, Karnataka; and Karnataka State levels meet of Save Western Ghats on 22 January 2015 at Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Karnataka ERC Coordinator participated in and made presentations at all these meetings largely highlighting ERC activities and environmental processes. His presentation on Public Hearings and related issues at these three meetings were to enable better understanding of the people's role in environmental decision making.

<u>'Conference on Forest and Environmental Laws' at Sirsi, Karnataka on 28.03.2015</u> - ERC coordinator attended the meeting. The meeting was an effort to initiate public discussion on the Western Ghats reports and the dilution of environmental laws. ERC coordinator made a presentation of the recent developments. LIFE's Critique of the HLC report was shared with the organisers.

Trainings by Trained

CSOs trained in orientations organised by LIFE/ERC are training local groups/people

- Thanal (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala)
- One Earth One Life (Ernakulum, Kerala)
- OSAI, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Component 2 (as stated in the approved proposal) List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer

Component 2.

A function and updated website on EIA and Forest Clearance related issues in the region and integration with the Western Ghats Portal

2.1. Effective linkage with the Western Ghats portals for all EIA and Forest Clearance related information

2.2. Updated Google map of proposed development projects, showing location-specific information, particularly stage of project (awaiting Terms of Reference, Environment Clearance under consideration, clearance obtained, etc.), information from ground-level checks, and information provided by the project proponent.

2.3. A functional website that contains Environment Impact Assessment reports of all existing projects in the Western Ghats with the Approval conditions. This interactive Website will serve to provide advice to Civil Society Organizations and the general public on various Environment Impact Assessment related issues. The website created under this project will be linked to the Western Ghats Portal, and all data will be made available through that portal.

2.4. Weekly updates to the website on developments regarding individual projects and Environment Impact Assessment related issues of environmental

9. Describe the results from Component 2 and each product/deliverable

ERC Website - Dynamic

Website Usage Data from Google show number of hits increased from 377304 in June 2013 to 9.4 million hits in August 2015.

ERC website is dynamic with ever increasing inputs on the site. Alert on Upcoming Events and write ups on ERC Alert are posted almost every day. Scientific and legal resources as added regularly. Regular update of EIA Processes related information into ERC data base on the website is taking place. Information on monthly review of Forest Advisory Committee agenda and minutes is uploaded. Regular articles on current environmental and forest issues are written and uploaded on ERC Desk page, almost every alternative day.

We have a graphical representation of projects granted forest and environmental clearances every month on the website.

ERC Website - Public Hearing Data Base

Data of Environmental Public Hearings, which is an important part of EIA Process, is being compiled after scanning some 100 websites of State Pollution Control Boards; Project Proponents; and media. The related EIA Reports are uploaded in the data base. Public Hearing and EIA reports data base is updated every month.

We also sent out Public Hearing alerts to local groups from time to time. Sometimes information related to Public Hearing available in public domain is incomplete. ERC makes personal efforts to obtain such information by telephone, email or representation.

ERC Website - Maps

A map depicting Protected Areas of India including all the Western Ghats States, and 10 km buffer around them was created and was available for about two years on ERC Website.

Map of mini and micro hydroelectric projects in Kerala

ESZ maps of the Western Ghats comparing the areas suggested under WGEEP and HLWG reports (States - Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and Gujarat)

Mapping of Mini and Micro hydro-electic projects in Karnataka was done and uploaded on the website.

ERC website & Environmental Groups - Information Sharing

ERC prepares regular articles /updates /notes on latest developments on environment and forest, and related news, notices, events etc and share with public and interested individuals & groups. There were about 10-15 releases every month.

Maintaining communication with Western Ghats Portal

Regular communication is maintained with Western Ghats Portal and maps developed by ERC are shared with the Portal.

Component 3 (as stated in the approved proposal) *List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer*

Component 3.

Consolidation of the 'ERC Western Ghats Environment Impact Assessment Cell' as an independent action and advocacy initiative group (with Scientific and Legal Expertise)

3.1. At least 20 communities and/or civil society groups impacted by faulty Environmental Impact Assessments and approvals and/or forest approval conditions supported to respond to issues of non-compliance, damages to the environment and claims for compensation.

3.2. Informal network of experts from relevant disciplines established to provide regular advice and strategic inputs to Civil Society Organization's and Communities on scientific and legal aspects related to Environmental Impact Assessments.

3.3. At least 6 fact sheets produced following investigations conducted by the ERC Western Ghats EIA Cell in association with other concerned groups of selected development projects, covering both environmental clearance applications and post-approval compliance with environmental and forest conditions.

3.4. Public disclosure of Environment Impact Assessment reports, clearance related letters and compliance reports of at least 20 development projects in the Western Ghats, to enable a close watch to be kept on level of compliance with stipulated environmental clearance conditions.

3.5. At least 4 communication products (e.g. reports, training modules, information booklets, etc.) published and disseminated to grassroots communities and local civil society organizations.

3.6. Independent third-party record kept of at least 15 public hearings in the southern Western Ghats, to enable subsequent analysis of shortcomings with the proposes, and to contribute to a nationwide review of the public hearing process

10. Describe the results from Component 3 and each product/deliverable

Community Interactions

Networking with local communities, groups, CSOs, etc; and assist and guide them in participation in environmental decision making e.g. Participation in Public Hearings, making representations and obtaining information through RTI Act 2005 is a regular activity of ERC.

Interactions with CSOs, NGOs, Local Communities and other interested groups have taken place all along the project implementations.

Panels of Experts

Experts are consulted for reviewing selected important proposals for environmental clearance and forest clearance & EIA Report Review.

Fact Sheets /Studies

Need of Wetlands Authority in Kerala

Kerala is well known for its wetlands. These wetlands provided livelihood to the residents in the area in the forms of agricultural produce, fish, fuel, fiber, fodder, and a host of other day-to-day necessities. They support biodiversity.

The Central Government has taken the initiative to strengthen the protection and conservation of wetlands of the country by creation of the Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules 2010. The Kerala state has not been implementing the law.

To protect wetlands in Kerala by effective management and conservation, Wetland Authority of Kerala needs to be created as a priority. Such authority /nodal agency should initiate the steps to be taken as per the Rules.

Non-forestry activity (Banana plantation) in Forest around Bhawani Sagar Dam (Tamil Nadu)

The Bhavani Sagar is located on the Bhavani River between Mettupalayam and Sathyamangalam in Erode District, Tamil Nadu. Although the dam height is 105 ft, the water level at the dam is very low due to releasing the water for agriculture purpose. Earlier, during summer, wild animals easily accessed water at Bhavani Sagar dam without any hurdles. At present, due to the banana plantation and electric fences, the wild animals are not able to access water which leads to conflict in this area.

Goa after Lifting of the Mining Ban

The mining ban in Goa was lifted after about one and a half years, in April 2014, by the Supreme Court of India. During the mining ban there was perceptible improvement in environment and people had started exploring alternative livelihood options. Now, people are finding the start of mining related activities depressing. There are protests. People are voicing concerns about the exploitative nature of mining by private entrepreneurs. People are talking of forming villagers' cooperative to take up various livelihood activities including mining.

We have carried out a study of the issue, where people are asking that mining lease should be provide to local community. A report has been prepared.

Analysis of Minutes of FAC for July-Dec 2014

The analysis of minutes of meetings during the second half of 2014 it was found that16,000 ha. (160 sq. km.) of forest land for 82 projects had been recommended for Forest Clearance by the FAC (Forest Advisory Committee). FAC did not decline any proposal. On an average about 80% of the fresh projects that came up for discussion for Forest Clearance were recommended. The other 20% were either sent back for more information or deferred.

Compliance with EC conditions for selected projects in the Western Ghats

Projects that obtain Environment Clearance as per the EIA Notifications 2006 are required to submit half-yearly compliance reports. Non-compliance of clearance conditions is the issue, as it causes damage to the environment. More than 50 RTIs were filed to State Pollution Control Boards, State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAA), of the states of Western Ghats and Regional Offices of MoEF for the study.

Publication : ERC E Journal

ERC E Journal (Vol VIII Issue 1, March 2015) was published and shared by email with people with keen interest in environmental and forest issues. The Soft copy of the Journal is available on ERC website also.

Component 4 (as stated in the approved proposal) *List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer*

Component 4.

Policy changes in the direction of effective EIA process and Forest Clearance process with respect to key biodiversity areas

4.1. Identification of key areas for reform by the Research team of ERC with respect to EIA and Forest clearance process

4.2. Publications of briefing documents and advocacy briefs to address the key issues with respect to EIA, Forest and Wildlife Clearances.

11. Describe the results from Component 4 and each product/deliverable

LIFE/ERC has been facilitating and providing expert inputs in several cases in NGT related to EIA processes. Time and again NGT has been passing orders/issuing directions for improvements EIA processes.

Component 5 (as stated in the approved proposal) *List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer*

Component 5.

Securing funding support for continuation of work of ERC

5.1. Strategic funding plan for the ERC for the period 2015-2020, based upon a review of potential funding sources inside and outside the country"

5.2. At least two proposals to sustain and consolidate the work of the ERC submitted to identified funding sources

12. Describe the results from Component 5 and each product/deliverable

LIFE/ERC has secured sufficient funding to take forward the ERC work.

13. If you did not complete any component or deliverable, how did this affect the overall impact of the project?

Not Applicable

14. Please describe and submit any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results

ERC has been making regular representation to expert committees related to environment and forest. Regular representation /memos to authorities and asking them to respond to action taken in normal course or through the Right to Information process forces them to take serious note of the issues being raised and suggestions being made and take action.

Extensive 'Media Outreach' helped in disseminating the actions and activities of ERC and share the analysis of results of submissions to authorities and decisions of NGT.

ERC Website in the last count in August had more than 9 million hits. We make available information and resource, which at times, concerned people are not able to locate at even government's websites.

CEPF Global Monitoring Data

Respond to the questions and complete the tables below. If a question is not relevant to your project, please make an entry of 0 (zero) or n/a (not applicable).

15. List any vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species conserved due to your project

The following table is Not Applicable.

Hectares Under Improved Management

Project Results	Hectares*	Comments
16. Did your project strengthen the management of an existing protected area?		List the name of each protected area
17. Did your project create a new protected area or expand an existing protected area?		List the name of each protected area, the date of proclamation, and the type of proclamation (e.g., legal declaration, community agreement, stewardship agreement)
18. Did your project strengthen the management of a key biodiversity area named in the CEPF Ecosystem Profile (hectares may be the same as questions above)		List the name of each key biodiversity area
19. Did your project improve the management of a production landscape for biodiversity conservation		<i>List the name or describe the location of the production landscape</i>

* Include total hectares from project inception to completion

20. In relation to the two questions above on protected areas, did your project complete a Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), or facilitate the completion of a METT by protected area authorities? If so, complete the table below. (Note that there will often be more than one METT for an individual protected area.)

Not Applicable

Protected area	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score

21. List the name of any corridor (named in the Ecosystem Profile) in which you worked and how you contributed to its improved management, if applicable.

Not Applicable

Did your project provide training or education for	Male	Female	Total	Brief Description
22. Adults for community leadership or				
resource management positions				
23. Adults for livelihoods or increased				
income				
24. School-aged children				
25. Other				

26. List the name and approximate population size of any "community" that benefited from the project.

Community name, surrounding district, surrounding province, country Population size

Not Applicable

27. Socioeconomic Benefits to Target Communities

Not Applicable

Based on the list of communities above, write the name of the communities in the left column below. In the subsequent columns under Community Characteristics and Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit, place an X in all relevant boxes.

If you marked "Other", please provide detail on the nature of the Community Characteristic and Socioeconomic Benefit:

Lessons Learned

28. 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

The environmental challenges may increase or decrease with change of bureaucracy /government or policy or due to manipulations by major corporations. LIFE /ERC have been alert to such developments. The change in the Government at the Central level in mid-2014 resulted in many of the environmental legislations coming under threat. We have to therefore constantly innovate so far as our strategies are concerned since the earlier strategies may not be effective in view of the changes in the legal framework. We launched a campaign involving local and regional groups, media and broadminded policy makers to stall the dilution of laws. An advocacy document- The High Level Committee Report on Environmental Law : A Recipe for Climate Disaster and Silencing People's Voice by Ritwick Dutta, Manoj Misra, Himanshu Thakkar was published.

29. Project Design Process (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

Training design was not theoretical but involved people to bring issues to the platform, discuss solutions and take administrative, mitigation steps or judicial action.

Training people to actively take participate in public hearing and make representation created the strong drive and empowerment.

30. Project Implementation (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

Involving local and regional groups and keeping them on forefront helped a lot. We never parachuted.

31. Describe any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community

Bring out specific and pinning down details related to the issues of concern and present it forcefully to the authorities, and if required to judiciary.

Sustainability / Replication

32. Summarize the success or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated

The project results are expected to sustain since many individual and groups have been empowered in EIA processes. There is active participation in public hearings and people are approaching NGT to access environmental justice.

33. Summarize any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability

Not applicable

Safeguards

34. If not listed as a separate Project Component and described above, summarize the implementation of any required action related to social, environmental, or pest management safeguards

Not applicable

Additional Comments/Recommendations

35. Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF

CEPF support helped in creating a situation that not many new developmental projects, involving EIA processes or forest clearances are appearing in the Western Ghats.

Additional Funding

36. Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of CEPF investment

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Duleep Mathai	Grant	USD 20,000	
Nature			
Conservation Fund			
Earth Justice	Grant	USD 20,000	

LIFE/ERC has secured funding to take forward the ERC work.

* Categorize the type of funding as:

- A Project Co-Financing (other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this 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 funded project)
- *C* Regional/Portfolio Leveraging (other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project)

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.

Please include your full contact details below:

37. Name: Ritwick Dutta
38. Organization: Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment
39. Mailing address: N-71 Greater Kailash 1
40. Telephone number:01149537774

41. E-mail address: ritwickdutta@gmail.com

Ritwick Dutta

Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment N-71 LGF Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi-110048 Ph-91-11-49537774, 49536656, 9810044660

ritwickdutta@gmail.com