

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization's Legal Name: Mindanao Environment Forum

Project Title : Building Civil Society's Capacity for Conserving Eastern Mindanao's Priority Sites

Implementation Partners for This Project:

**IMPEDE
Kasilak
Kalumonan
MAVIASI
Pagsandug
P'yagobongan**

Project Dates (as amended from original term): February 1, 2005 – December 30, 2005

Date of Report (month/year): February 20, 2006

II. OPENING REMARKS

The opening of a window for the participation of small NGOs and POs was welcomed by stakeholders in the Eastern Mindanao corridor who had looked forward to participating in the realization of the EM vision. However, when the Board of Trustees of the network met, they decided that since a bigger project was being implemented in the northern part of the corridor and since the grant fund was small, it would be more productive to release grants not to organizations from the entire corridor but from the southern portion only.

This grant was seen as an initial foray into the task of assisting small organizations in terms of obtaining funds. Thus, the experience was valuable in terms of setting up a system for information dissemination, calling for grants, appraisal of proposals and monitoring of implementation.

Criteria for the release of funds included the relevance of the project to the over-all vision crafted in 2002; the endorsement of the community, the LGU or a known non-government organization and the lack of access of the organization to other funds. The recipients also had to be based in the community, not just implementing a program.

The small grants that were released are therefore in support of activities or projects in the South Diwata Range. Specifically, the micro-grant areas within this range were Maragusan, and New Bataan which are part of Tagub-Kampalili and San Isidro which where Tumadgo Peak is located. Both Tagub-Kampalili and Tumadgo are identified Philippine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Eastern Mindanao

III. NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What was the initial objective of this project?

The initial objective of this project was to establish a micro-grant fund to support small NGOs and Peoples' Organizations in the Eastern Mindanao corridor. This fund would provide assistance for on-the-ground efforts of groups that do not have access to large funding facilities. The project was meant to reach out to small organizations that had come into contact with Mindanao Environment Forum and its members in the course of their biodiversity conservation work in the corridor. These small organizations would be those that were area-based with minimal funding support.

A secondary or enabling objective of the project was the development of a system for seeking partners, evaluating proposals and monitoring activities and setting up simple financial reporting systems that would be appropriate for small groups in remote areas. The \$20,000.00 grant therefore was to be used as a learning arena so that the network could operate in this area of work with the best results.

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.

The objectives of the project remained the same. However, as we began project implementation, there were changes in the following aspects of the project.

Range: Initially, the project was expected to distribute funds to NGOs and POs in the priority sites within the corridor. However, the network members and its Board of Trustees saw that this would spread resources too thinly. Because of this, I was decided that funds would be concentrated on the southern portion of the corridor so that smaller groups here could participate in some critical actions that were taking place. An additional factor for choosing the southern portion as the site for micro-grants was the fact that in the northern portion, a consortium of NGOs was the recipient of a grant for CEPF so that there was some assurance that biodiversity conservation would be supported.

Amount of the micro-grants: Initially, the implementers anticipated providing support for eight to ten POs or NGOs. However, as the requests for support came in, it became obvious that for substantial work to get done, the grants had to be somewhat bigger than originally estimated. Thus, only five groups were given funding. The grant amounts were as follows:

PARTNER	SITE	AMOUNT OF GRANT (in pesos)
IMPEDE	Mt. Hamiguitan and Pujada Bay	128,500.00
Kalumonan	Mt. Hamiguitan (Davao Oriental)	105,000.00
Kasilak	MARagusan (Mt. Tagub-Kampalili Protected Landscape) (Compostela Valley)	105,000.00
MAVIASI	MARagusan (Mt. Tagub-Kampalili Protected Landscape) (Compostela Valley)	60,000.00
Pagsandug	New Bataan) (Compostela Valley)	149,750.00

P'yagobongan	Maragusan) (Compostela Valley)	60,000.00
Total grants in pesos		608,250.00

3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?

The project was successful in the sense that the partners who were assisted were able to achieve even more than they had set out to do. They were able to conduct more activities than expected; these activities involved more people than originally planned; the grants covered a larger area than initially estimated and an output of one of the partners has been a concrete policy paper which will provide basis for the governance of a forest area in New Bataan, Compostela Valley.

Some highlights of what the partners were able to do:

IMPEDE (128,500.00)

Assistance to this small local organization resulted in the following:

- Formation of LUWAS KINAIYAHAN¹, a community-based advocacy group to protest mining in the municipalities of San Isidro, Governor Generoso and Mati, Mt. Hamiguitan, a natural bonsai forest and a sizeable mossy forest straddle these three municipalities where there is an aggressive push for mining as a solution to the economic problems of the region. IMPEDE was able to organize 18 POs² in 18 barangays (10 in Gov. Generoso, 4 in Sanldiro and 4 in Mati).
- The coalition has held regular monthly meetings and the group has already conducted a signature campaign to oppose nickel mining in Pujada Bay and Mt. Hamiguitan, both of which are protected areas.³
- A Speakers' Pool training was conducted by the organization to prepare volunteers to speak on the Mining Law, the processes that communities are entitled to, the steps to take when there are violations of the right to consultation.
- Apart from the Speakers' Pool, from among the barangay communities, an Information Education Team was organized. Members of the team were given training on Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management.

KALUMONAN (105,000.00)

- CEPF assistance to KALUMONAN enabled the organization to mobilize women for the establishment of a nursery of indigenous species. A total of thirty households are participating in this nursery which blends very well with livelihood activities that they are undertaking through informal cooperative efforts. As preparation for nursery establishment, agro-forestry training was given to participating households.

¹ LUWAS KINAIYAHAN means "Save Nature" in the local dialect

² POs (People's Organizations which are sectoral and usually area-based. The most common POs in this area are farmers' and fisherfolk organizations)

³ Under Philippine law, mining is not allowed in protected areas and yet government is actively pushing for mining in the hope of reducing foreign debt.

KASILAK (105,000)

- The small grant received by Kasilak helped the organization strengthen livelihood alternatives for thirty families through the promotion of biodynamic farming and natural swine production. This effort was designed to showcase the possibility of increased farm incomes for families in three communities with access to the proposed Mt. Tagub-Kampalili Protected Area Landscape in Maragusan. It is hoped that the trainings received will also show the interconnectedness between serious conservation and increased farm incomes. Apart from orientation on the significance of the remaining forest in the municipality, trainings for thirty families included Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation and Technical Training on Natural Swine Production.

MAVIASI (60,000.00)

- Through the grant, MAVIASI was able to gather the leaders of the different clans of the tribe in order to discuss serious conflicts which had stood in the way of their arriving at solid decisions on resource management in Maragusan. Through the different meetings, the IPs were able to track where they were in their bid to get a title for their ancestral domain.

PAG-SANDUG (149,750)

- Of all the grants that have been awarded to communities, this grant has yielded the most qualitative change and the most concrete output. The grant helped the IP communities in the municipality of new Bataan do the following:
 - Train members of community-based working groups to use a GPS rover;
 - Arrive at a consensus at the household level of where the boundaries of their protected forest will be;
 - Articulate their community rules on forest protection using the IPRA
 - Prepare their Ancestral domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP) which incorporates biodiversity conservation and resource management
- We can say that this grant has led to the most qualitative change because before the community was able to get this support, the local government was vehemently against the idea of protected areas. The local chief executive even went so far as to declare that he would allow the cutting of trees in the forest if that was what it took to meet the economic needs of the community. However, because of the fact that the ancestral domain is covered by a title and is in fact private but communal property of the community, the law provides that the CADT holders must come up with an ADSDPP. The mayor has agreed that though he is not in favor of protected areas, he will not only honor the decision of the community, he will incorporate what the ADSDPP into the comprehensive land use plan of the entire municipality. This document will actually be the management tool for the entire area which incidentally covers approximately 50,000+ hectares of forest, some of it primary. In this case, though the format is different, the protection of the forest has been assured.

PYAG-UBONGAN (60,000)

- The Indigenous People's organization was able to conduct much needed consultation among Mansaka communities in Maragusan. These communities, owners of an Ancestral Domain which contains a significant amount of forest, have often been marginalized in the past and have been victimized by logging and mining companies through spurious land purchases. Part of their inability to participate comes from the lack of opportunities to come together and arrive at important decisions about managing their domain as a whole and disallowing mining and other destructive "investments". Because of this, in spite of the existence of affirmative legislation, Indigenous Peoples' communities are often exploited and swindled.
- The grant also provided the communities with a chance to discuss the progress of the processing of their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT). Twenty communities were reached through the grant, probably allowing the first significant opportunity for the IP communities to come together and make initial decisions on what they will consider allowable in their domains. Two of the barangays, Bahi and Langawisan are the site of a part of a primary forest.

4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.

There were some difficulties during the implementation of the project but these did not develop into disappointments since the outputs of the project were satisfactory. One of the challenges that had to be faced was the fact that the distance of the areas plus the poor communications made it imperative that actual physical meetings be conducted. This aspect of project implementation became quite costly and labor intensive.

Another was the need for technical assistance of some partners in some aspects of project implementation. Some basic orientation had to be given on allowable expenses and documentation and reports had to be double checked.

Lastly, a major challenge to be met was the increased demand for assistance that this initial project has generated. To meet this challenge, MEF continues to look for ways to facilitate additional funds for the different communities.

5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.

On the minus side

When facilitating grants for small organizations, the demand for technical assistance is considerable. Monitoring also takes on a highly detailed nature. Communications and travel demands can also be quite demanding.

On the plus side

The most significant lesson that has been learned is that advocates and implementers of conservation efforts have to remember that there are many ways to arrive at the same results. As a concrete example, the protection of the forest found within the municipality of New Bataan is considered a major milestone in biodiversity conservation in the Eastern Mindanao corridor. The biggest solid forest in the southern portion of the corridor is found in New Bataan where the local government has clearly stated it will not participate in the efforts to make the forest a protected area. At the height of this controversy, NGOs were declared unwelcome in the area. However, persistent dialogue and the assistance given to the IPs opened a door for biodiversity conservation to still be implemented- through the ADSDPP. This implies that greater attention must be given to approaches that are not the usual option for conservation work. Moreover, it implies that the presence of CADTs be given more consideration because when and if important habitats are found within their domain (which is usually the case), their internal policies, management plans and capabilities will determine whether efforts can take root or not.

6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.

Follow-up activities related to this project can be classified into two: those on the part of MEF to continue this type of work and those on the part of the partner on the ground.

On the part of MEF, members assigned to this project continue to look for funds that can be made accessible for communities, The secretariat is also continuously passing on to the communities information on funding opportunities that can be availed of by local organizations. For example, through IMPEDE is waiting for the final decision on a \$20,000.00 grant from Panibagong Paraan which it applied for through the information shared by MEF. Forms for small grants (\$1,000 to \$2,000) from CODE-NGO have also been distributed by the secretariat to small groups in the corridor.

On the part of the implementers, activities initiated with the grant have continued. The nursery put up by Kalumonana partners is still being tended, the campaigns in Davao Oriental continue with support from individuals and the Catholic church, the IPOs in Maragusan are looking at the model for biodiversity conservation that is emerging from New Bataan, In June, Pagsandug and the local government will have a big celebration during which the IPs will formally submit their management plan, CEPF can expect an invitation to this activity.

7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.

Grants to small organizations were chosen on the following basis:

- Lack of access to mainstream facilities and large grants
- Presence in the priority site based on information on IBAs and the presence of Philippine Eagles
- Endorsement by a member, an associate or an ally of MEF (this organization would vouch for the presence of the applicant group).

IV. 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
Center for International Environmental Law	Training, technical and legal assistance	Php 300,000.00	Assistance was given to PBPF, a legal resource organization which proceeded to work with Pyagubungan for GPS training, paralegal training and legal advice on the drafting of the ADSDPP (Category B)
Upland Development Program	Barangay forest land protection program	Php 300,000	Assistance was given to PBPF, a legal resource organization which proceeded to work with Pyagubungan for GPS training, paralegal training and legal advice on the drafting of the ADSDPP (Category B)

***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.

V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The presence of Ancestral Domains must be clearly identified and IP communities must be capacitated to draft the necessary internal policies that will in effect be a form of Protected Area system.

Mining, logging and lack of information continue to plague the communities which have access to the forest. Groups and communities in this position must be assisted at the soonest possible time.

The indigenous values of IP communities are actually a positive factor for conservation.

Conservation efforts cannot succeed where conservationists ignore urgent economic needs in small local communities.

One of the biggest conservation investments in the past was the “Debt for Nature Swap”. Research should be done on whether it would be possible to have a “Business for Nature Arrangement” with First World corporations ensuring a fair and stable market for “green” products from “forest communities”. This would provide a viable alternative to forest exploitation and would ensure cooperation from local governments as well.

VI. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF aims to increase sharing of experiences, lessons learned and results among our grant recipients and the wider conservation and donor communities. One way we do this is by making the text of final project completion reports available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these reports in our newsletter and other communications. Please indicate whether you would agree to publicly sharing your final project report with others in this way.

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, please also complete the following:

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