

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	The Vanuatu Environmental Science Society Committee Inc. (VESS)
Project Title:	Supporting the Vanuatu Environment Science Society in its first year of operation including a project to develop dugong and seagrass educational materials.
Date of Report:	04/04/16
Report Author and Contact Information	Dr. Christina Shaw seashawconservation@gmail.com +678 5510026

Background Information

CEPF Region: East Melanesian Islands

Strategic Direction:

Strategic Direction 4. Increase local, national and regional capacity to conserve biodiversity through catalyzing civil society partnerships

4.1 Strengthen the capacity of local and national civil society organizations in financial management, project management and organizational governance.

4.2 Provide core support for the development of civil society organizations into national and regional conservation leaders

Grant Amount: US \$20,000

Project Dates: 01/03/2015 to 29/02/2016

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

VESS was the implementing partner for this project.

Support in the form of technical advice was given by the following project supporting partners:

1. The Vanuatu Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation (DEPC)
2. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
3. Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Dugong MOU Secretariat
4. Seagrass Watch

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of CEPF's Ecosystem Profile for the East Melanesian Islands. For example, you may refer to the Strategic Directions that your project has contributed to.

The CEPF grant was the catalyst to establish VESS, as it offered core funding for local organizations. The grant was used to support the activities of VESS in its first year and put in place policies and procedures, including in financial management, to ensure good governance into the future.

The grant was also used to hold public lectures and a stakeholder meeting, which increased the awareness of the existence of VESS within Vanuatu and the region. It has enabled VESS to form relationships with government departments and other NGOs here in Vanuatu as well as international and regional organizations. This has enabled VESS to successfully procure other funding for other projects. VESS has established a volunteer group made up of university students and others and these young people are now actively involved in our projects. VESS has also established a Facebook page and a website to enable dissemination of information on the environment on Vanuatu to the general public.

The grant has therefore fulfilled the CEPF strategic direction 4, which aims to increase the capacity of local organizations to conserve biodiversity within the East Melanesian Islands Hotspot.

The grant was also used to develop and print educational materials for dugong and seagrass conservation. Dugongs are one of the species listed as a priority for conservation within the CEPF ecosystem profile. These materials will be disseminated during the GEF-funded Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project which is being implemented by VESS.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project against the expected results detailed in the approved proposal.

- Accounting system for VESS has been set up.
- A Procedures and Policy Manual for VESS has been written.
- The website www.vanuatuconservation.org has been set up.
- The VESS Facebook page has been set up and has 310 likes.
<https://www.facebook.com/vanuatuconservation/>
- A Mail Chimp newsletter database for sending out newsletters or other information has been established. It has 119 subscribers.
- Five public lectures for increasing knowledge of Vanuatu's natural fauna and flora were held. The topics were: Endangered species, the IUCN Red list and the CEPF (13 people attended); Fisheries management (12 people attended); Dugongs (45 people attended); Environmental change (27 people attended); and Bees in Vanuatu (47 people attended).
- A Stakeholder workshop was held which introduced VESS to government departments, other NGOs and the public in general. (27 people were in attendance)
- A group of VESS student volunteers was established. 43 students have signed up to receive email notifications. This group of student took part in the development of the educational materials.
- One booklet and 3 posters were designed, written and printed in both English and Bislama.
- CMS, SPREP, Seagrass watch and DEPC and the Vanuatu Department of Fisheries were consulted to ensure the information in the educational materials was correct and have approved the materials.

In addition to these activities specified in the grant approval, VESS has organized several other activities and events during the 12 months in which the organization was supported by this grant:

- VESS partnered with DEPC or organize events for National Environment Week, including a litter survey, film, night, lecture, and a no-plastic-for-a-day-challenge.
- VESS was asked to assist with a project by Nabanga Pikinini to produce games for pre-school and primary school children involving threatened species. VESS supplied information about the six chosen threatened species to accompany the games. The student conservation club, which VESS formed, was involved with this project.
- VESS was asked by SPREP and Ocean Conservancy to host an International Coastal Clean-up Day and an event was held in Vanuatu for the first time.
- VESS was invited to participate in the "Nguna-Pele ADB-CTI Training of trainers on Climate Change Adaptation and Natural Resource Management" and facilitated a session during the workshop.

- VESS organised two field trips for school groups (Malapoa College and Port Vila International School) with the student conservation club to seagrass beds to increase awareness of seagrasses and the ecosystem services they provide.

Overall the CEPF grant has allowed VESS to increase the capacity within the organisation to enable VESS to organise events, manage projects and disseminate information pertinent to the environment and conservation of biodiversity within Vanuatu.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: n/a

Species Conserved: Dugongs: The educational materials produced will increase awareness of dugongs and their seagrass habitats, the threats they face and measures to assist their conservation.

Corridors Created: n/a

If you provided information here, please also complete Annex 1, Performance Tracking Report Addendum at the end of this document to provide details.

Please describe the success and/or challenges of the project towards achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.

The short-term goal of this project was to increase the capacity of VESS so the organization would be in a position to apply for funding and implement conservation projects within Vanuatu. We believe we have achieved this goal and the fact that VESS has secured another project is testament to that. We believe that VESS is now in a position to fulfill the long-term impact of becoming a leader in conservation in Vanuatu by being well-established with robust financial and project management policies and procedures in place.

The educational materials produced for dugong and seagrass conservation will be great assets for the Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project during the awareness activities performed over the next 2 years of that project.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

As such a young organization, VESS was not expecting to be invited to host or participate in events or become an implementing partner on behalf of the Vanuatu Government on the global Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project. The fact that VESS has achieved this demonstrates that the efforts to create a transparent and well-managed organization have come to fruition. It may also reflect that there was a void of conservation organizations in Vanuatu, particularly with a science basis, to address the conservation issues within the country and that the creation of VESS has gone some way to fill that void.

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

Writing of the policies and Procedures Manual was a good exercise for a young organization such as VESS.

Attached:

VESS Policies and Procedures Manual,

Booklet “Dugongs and their seagrass habitats”

Posters: Dugongs in Vanuatu; Seagrass facts; Some of Vanuatu’s threatened species.

Lessons Learned

Please 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.

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

The project design included putting in place robust procedures, in particular financial management procedures, from the very beginning of this new organization. This helped VESS to be seen as a suitable organization through which other projects could be implemented. The project design included consultation with regional and international organizations with experts in seagrass and dugong conservation, as well as consultation with government departments. This ensured that VESS could be confident the information contained in the educational materials was accurate, up-to date and in line with Vanuatu Government policies.

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

Using the Civil Society Tracking Tool provided by CEPF for use in the project was a very useful tool and assisted VESS to ensure the procedures necessary for a successful organization were included in the writing of the VESS Policy and Procedures manual. The time taken for all of the feedback from the project technical supporters was longer than anticipated. The lesson learned is that this process should have been started earlier in the project time frame to ensure completion at the planned time.

The website design was delayed due to the under performance of the web-developer originally assigned the task of building the VESS website. VESS obtained quotes from several locally based web designers. One was awarded the job but when he did not perform the task he was replaced. Other locally based developers were significantly more expensive and therefore quotes were obtained from overseas. The lesson learnt from this is that although preferable, it is not always possible to use local consultants and to produce acceptable results whilst keeping within budget.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

Vanuatu has three official languages. Although Bislama is the most commonly spoken language in Vanuatu, when it comes to written material, when people are given the choice of which language they would prefer their copy in, they will sometimes choose English over Bislama as they are more used to seeing this and were schooled in written English. Therefore it is important that the materials are available in both languages (or all three if possible) to ensure the messages are conveyed in the easiest way for people to understand and take in. The lesson learnt is that spoken communications and written communications can require different languages and that the assumption that people would prefer written materials in Bislama, as it is the most common spoken language, was not necessarily true.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Please provide:

- 1) Details of any additional donors who supported this project***
- 2) Details of any further funding secured for this project or for your organization as a result of CEPF's investment in this project.***

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	B	US \$165,870	VESS is the implementing partner for Vanuatu's projects within the GEF-funded global Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project on behalf of and in partnership with the Government of Vanuatu.

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) / Ocean Conservancy (OC)	B	US \$1000	VESS was contacted by SPREP and ask to host an event for the International Coastal Clean up day in conjunction with the Ocean Conservancy.

****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

Please summarize the success or challenges in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of the project activities and results.

Now that VESS is a viable organization and has already achieved some degree of success, we envisage that VESS is in a position to take on new projects and seek funds for other conservation activities and continue to inform the public on conservation issues. With the base created with the assistance of the CEPF grant, VESS is expected to grow further and promote the use of sound science in decision-making around the issues of resource management and conservation of biodiversity.

The educational materials, which have been produced for dugong and seagrass conservation, will be used during the up-coming awareness activities of the Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project.

Please summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability that has been achieved.

VESS was pleasantly surprised in the interest in and turnout for our lectures, stakeholder meetings and events and the number of people who have signed up for the newsletter. We have therefore created a larger database of people interested in conservation than expected. We will be able to use this database in the future to inform people about our projects and encourage them to participate in events.

VESS's involvement in the Nabanga Pikinini games project has helped produce a resource for teachers which will assist in the teaching of biodiversity and natural resources to young school children in Vanuatu.

Safeguard Policy Assessment

Please provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project. This may be attached in the form of an updated Social Safeguards document.

The Project did not trigger any environmental or social safeguard policies and therefore no mitigation measures were required.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

Please note any additional comments or recommendations arising from the 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:

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ANNEX 1: Performance Tracking Report Addendum

CEPF Global Targets

(March 1st 2016 – February 29th 2016)

Provide a numerical amount and brief description of the results achieved by your grant.
Please respond to only those questions that are relevant to your project.

Project Results	Is this question relevant?	If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.	Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.	Describe the principal results achieved (attach annexes if necessary)
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate the number of hectares improved.	No			Please also include name of the protected area(s). If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?	No			Please also include name of the protected area. If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No			Please also include name of the KBA(s)
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No			Please include the names of protected areas
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.	No			

If you answered yes to question 5, please complete the following table.

