

CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF GONDAR

FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT



2016/17



CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	University of Gondar, Climate Change Research Center
Project Title:	Increasing the conservation status of a highly vulnerable key biodiversity area through developing new management plan in Wadela, Ethiopia
Date of Report:	April 20, 2017
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CEPF Region: Eastern Afromontane, Ethiopia

Strategic Direction: *the strategic direction in which this project aimed to address was “strategic direction 2 and investment priority 2.1”
i.e “Improve the protection and management of the KBA network throughout the hotspot” = strategic direction 2*

and

“Increase the protection status (via creation of protected areas) and develop management plans for terrestrial priority KBAs” = investment priority 2.1

Grant Amount: \$20,000

Project Dates: 1 March 2016 – 31st April 2017

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

No.	Partners	Level of involvement	Roles
1.	University of Gondar	High	Facilitation of field transport, photocopies, prints, file cabinets, work and financial supervisions
2.	Sirinka Agriculture Research Center	Medium	Facilitating field visit sites, exchange of information, teamwork meetings
3.	Woldiya University	Medium	Mentoring Ecologists during herb ecology studies
4.	Wadela district Administration office	High	Facilitating meeting hall, Mobilizing farmers to participate in dialogues, trainings, and management plan development
5.	Wadela district Agriculture	High	Mobilizing kebele DA staffs to assess areas covered with this important herb
6.	North Wollo Zone Natural Resource Management office	High	Guiding farmers and other crews on board who shared best experience of biodiversity conservation

Conservation Impacts

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

As it has been known CEPF is enhancing and contributing efforts to address the immediate threats to long-term conservation in the hotspot by using an integrated approach to pursue conservation and sustainable development goals, and by providing funds to mainstream of biodiversity conservation into government plans and policies and private sector initiatives. We carried out our project on Wadela key biodiversity area which is a home to a single site and endemic *Lagarosiphon steudneri* plant species. This plant species has been red listed by IUCN as highly vulnerable species which makes Wadela district one of the hotspot corridors of Ethiopia.

The project has created several opportunities for capacity building and training to local villagers, rangeland owners, and key stakeholders from universities, research institutes and government officials about biodiversity conservation needs. The trainings were on the environmental and ecosystem role of *Lagarosiphon steudneri* plant species, by stressing the fact that this plant species is the most vulnerable and endangered herb on Wadela KBAs and the need to protect its habitat in order to conserve it.

Perhaps the two most vital outcome of this project are development of conservation management plan and stakeholder networking agreement which will potentially increase the stake to conserve this plant species ahead. This project is the Ice breaker and the first investment of CEPF which allows the scientific community and local stakeholders to look forward on conservation issues of this single site endemic herb.

This project under CEPF fund directly contributed to Eastern Afromontane's Ecosystem Profile by providing valuable information which helps us to understand how to increase the conservation status of the key biodiversity with a critical analysis of the socioeconomic and institutional context, threats to biodiversity, climate change and other challenges, and through the development of conservation management plan which was actually the main goal of this project. This project also assessed the major impacts being posed on the habitat and possible conservation measures to be taken on this KBA's.

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

With this project intervention, four strategic objectives were outlined. The first one was focusing on raising local community's awareness about the value of "*Lagarosiphon steudneri*" plant species increasing collaboration and coordination. The second one was focusing on raising stakeholders' awareness about the value of "*Lagarosiphon steudneri*" plant species. The third one was on strengthening and mainstreaming local community's traditional ways of biodiversity conservation techniques into the management plan. The final objective was developing conservation management plan and establishing and strengthening stakeholder networking agreement to share information on key research projects'.

Result Obtained: - The greatest impact of our project was putting this highly vulnerable and endangered single site endemic plant species in the forefront of the conservation agenda in the corridor. In this KBA, universities, research institutes, government departments, and local villagers are fully aware of the challenges of this plant species, they are aware of the ecosystem role of this plant species as indicators of the ecosystem stability, as a natural water filters, as part of nutrient cycle, and as a medicine and fodder to horses. Most importantly, everyone in and around the corridor are aware of the risk of losing this unique and single site endemic herb. We developed conservation management plan with the tools needed to conserve the species and its habitat as immediate outcome of this project work.

This project also leave a lasting but important legacy by creating joint collaboration among two universities and one research institute (University of Gondar, Woldiya University and Sirinka agricultural research center) to closely work on the conservation of the herb together with government departments of the corridor.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: N/A

Species Conserved: N/A

Corridors Created: N/A

Although it has been stated in the first LOI of the project to maintain the 273,000 ha of the habitat through the adoption and implementation of conservation management plan, much effort is needed to make it practical. But the Conservation management plan is handed over to the district Environmental protection and land administration office to endorse it on the regional house of people's representative meeting. It will be monitored by the stakeholders that have already been established for further cooperation in research, project and development works over the KBAs.

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

Planned Short-term Impacts (List each short term objectives/impacts as stated in the proposal)

1. Raise community's awareness on the importance of the KBA in Wadela
2. Raise Local stakeholders' awareness about the value of *Lagarosiphon steudneri* species
3. Strengthen local community's traditional ways of protecting the site

Success of the project interims of short term objectives/impacts:

The project was successful in delivering short term impacts and objectives. The project was able to:

1. To raise community's awareness on the ecosystem role of the key biodiversity, various activities had been implemented as per of the proposal. a) Inception meeting with fifty head of households drawn from the five kebele administration of the hotspot was

conducted. The inception meeting was aimed at introducing the project purposes and asking local villagers about their willingness to work and cooperate with us. 10 representative head of households were taken from *Bete-Yohannes*, *Kurkur Solela*, *Betehor*, *Yewetet* and *Dorera* kebele administrations each. From these kebeles fifty head of households, 22 of them were female representatives. We intentionally invited female representatives because biodiversity conservation issue is gender sensitive. We were able to provoke collaborations and dialogue among the local villagers. During this event, progress was made towards achieving a better understanding of the local villagers the need to protect the biodiversity. b) Capacity building trainings for one hundred households on the socio-economic and ecosystem values of *Lagarosiphon steudneri* plant species, management and conservation techniques of this plant species and on optimal utilization of this biodiversity resource without jeopardizing its regenerative capacity were given. The trainings were given into two sessions. The first session was given to sixty household trainees and during the second training session, forty households were taking part. Elders, religious leaders, youths, farming households, and females had taken the training. From these trainees, 34 of them were females. This training program enabled the project to address its objectives by letting the local villagers to better understand the ecosystem role of this single site endemic plant species. List of Standardized questions were dispatched to the trainees to evaluate their level of understanding about the species and its ecosystem role after the training had been completed. Accordingly, 97% of them had never realized its ecological role before the training. Only 3% of the participants know its medicinal value and they typically called the herb in Amharic as “*Ye Bahir Libse*” and some others call it as “*Wuha-amchi*” to mean water pumper. c) To increase local villagers’ and other stakeholders’ knowledge about the ecology and conservation needs of this key biodiversity, leaflets on the socio-economic, and ecosystem values of conserving threatened biodiversity to the farming community, students, development agents (kebele agricultural extension workers), Woreda and regional environmental offices, and to NGOs directly involved in biodiversity conservation activities were distributed. Above 350 leaflets were distributed. In addition, 100 T-shirts were distributed to the training participants and Biodiversity and environmental conservation club members of Junior and High School students with key messages on it and thereby signaling alerts to the rest of the community to conserve and manage the threatened biodiversity of the district.

2. **To raise other stakeholders’ awareness** on the ecosystem role of the key biodiversity, a range of actions had been implemented.

Conduct training workshop for stakeholders from Development agents of the district, Wadela Woreda Environmental and natural resource management experts, Wadela Woreda administrators, Woldiya University, University of Gondar, and Sirinka Agricultural Research Center. The training areas were:

- ✓ Introducing the ecology of *Lagarosiphon Steudneri* plant species to the trainees, because every participant except the development agents had never known the herb before this project intervention.
- ✓ Socio-economic and ecosystem values of the species

- ✓ Why we need to conserve the single site, endemic but highly endangered key biodiversity of Wadela district?

We carried out the training workshop to 15 experts from different sectors and disciplines. The trainees were mainly from government representatives, researchers, landowners, and representatives of local users of natural resources.

But before the training, we had conducted one time consultative meeting with representative stakeholders from Wadela Woreda Environmental protection office, Woldiya University, University of Gondar and Sirinka Agricultural Research Center. The aim of the inception meeting was to introduce the purpose of the project for better clarification and common understanding.

Later, we established strong stakeholder networking agreement to conserve the threatened biodiversity plant species in cooperation. This networking and partnership agreement would identify joint activities in areas of biodiversity conservation and management works. Within one month of the signing of this agreement, representatives of stakeholders together with University of Gondar started implementing the activities. The undersigned stakeholders are supposed to develop new joint intervention project proposals, where appropriate and feasible, for purposes of sustainable biodiversity management practices of this key biodiversity in Wadela district.

1. Strengthen local community's traditional ways of protecting the site
2. Increasing the conservation status through developing conservation management plan

Challenges of the project towards achieving the short-term objectives/impacts:

The first challenge which we face was the conflict that has happened between the local villagers and the local administrators in the process of selecting representative training participants. The responsibility of selecting training participants was given to local administrators and Development Agents. Because, it was not possible to give training to all local villagers since resource was limited. The other challenge was people had a strong cultural and spiritual value to the water coming from the center of the habitat. Women had never access to fetch the holy water inside the habitat. As a result, they never get a chance to know the herb. This cultural barrier limits women's participation into the conservation work. In addition, people initially misunderstood why the project is there even though briefings have been given several times. They thought we are there seeking some medical outputs from the endangered herb, probably for Cancer and HIV/AIDS.

It was also very difficult to agree on community representatives, development practitioners and researchers and project team meeting date. When some of the participants agree on proposed day other participants were not agree. After several attempt and time taking process, it was possible to conduct the meeting in University of Gondar.

The Major challenge however was the outbreak of Ethiopia's wave of protests in 2016. As known our project area is located in areas where there were strong protests by those who say they have been marginalized by the government. For many times there was a form of strike by the people _ workers staying at home, drivers and taxi services stopped working. The security was tight and mobility to the project site was scary, particularly for three months (July to

September 2016). Several project works were pended and later on we compromise through active engagement and frequent visits.

The financial settlement periods were also delayed due to over burdens of financial officers in administering several mega projects.

Planned Long-term Impacts (List each long term objectives/impacts as stated in the proposal)

The long term objective of the project was to protect and sustain the vulnerable single site and endemic plant species (i.e. Lagarosiphon steudneri) through developing and implementing biodiversity conservation management plan.

Success of the project interims of short term objectives/impacts:

- 1) Conservation management plan is developed. Even though it is difficult to see the long term impact with one year project life time, we completed the development of conservation management plan. In this plan, we informed decision makers and practitioners to take actions to guarantee the survival of Lagarosiphon steudneri plant species. After the adoption of the management plan, the local development units will synergize conservation actions into their intervention measures.
- 2) Community Conservation Groups, Biodiversity and Environmental Management clubs are established; Stakeholders Networking and Partnership agreement had been signed. These efforts will have great impact on the long term conservation of Lagarosiphon steudneri plant species. Team projects are being developed to assure this endemic plant species is intact.
- 3) Big awareness creation campaign had been undertaken to the general public through Amhara Regional State's mass media (i.e. Amhara Television Program). The information was given regarding the endemic Lagarosiphon steudneri plant specie's ecological function and how conservation need becomes vital in Wadela district.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Sirinka Agricultural Research Institute and Universities were happy by the network which has already been signed for partnership; because it has created a great research opportunities to propose and implement research ideas both for postgraduate and undergraduate students, as well as, for all possible researchers in country and abroad.

Lessons Learned

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.

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

During the project design and planning phase, it was able to discuss and consult with local villagers to understand their interest to cooperate the project implementation. It has been known that participative management of Key Biodiversity Area is essential for improved conservation of critical ecosystem. Accordingly, the project was designed to be participatory and transparent. We established one community conservation groups in each kebele to ensure participation of local community in decision making on KBA management and conservation. This allowed the project to be successful in its endeavor. The national coordinator office of CEPF in Ethiopia (i.e. EWNHS) was also the key for the success of this project by supervising and evaluating the project's outcome regularly. The coordinator office was ensuring whether activities had been carried out as per of the project schedule with regular e-mails, phone calls and progress reports. In the project design, delay of the project activities due to unforeseen circumstances, (e.g. internal instability), was entertained via compromising the timeline.

The short coming of our project design was we did not expect the unforeseen circumstances which, to some extent, delayed the activities. During project implementation phase, because of stakeholders were invited from different areas and institutions it was difficult to agree on the common agendas of conservation, capacity building and meeting dates. After several attempt and regular communications it was able to reach on common priority conservation agendas as per of the proposal's LFM.

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

During project implementation, major stakeholders appeared well organized enough to allow proper implementation of the project activities. Getting this support by stakeholders had made easy to implement the project as expected.

As a short coming, some local community members were complaining on participation during capacity building trainings. It caused a bit concern but not too critical. It was entirely a community strengthening activity executed through the use of community representatives, local government units, school biodiversity and environmental management clubs, community conservation groups, experience sharing program and intensive capacity building workshops which, without active participation of these stakeholders, would never have succeeded.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

1. From this project implementation we have learned that anybody who plans to organize wide variety of participants, it is better to give a bit relaxed and flexible time as well as to be patient as much as possible.
2. We have learned a key lesson that conservation practitioners need also to develop the knowledge and skills on how a conservation practitioner can integrate people's right and other social issues into the conservation work.
3. Specifically, conservation practitioners need to build skill and knowledge to recognize and integrate gender dimensions into biodiversity conservation projects and gender based constraints and opportunities for the implementation of gender responsive conservation strategies.
4. In addition, conservation practitioners need to know effective biodiversity related conflict management tools and approaches besides sharing good practices in biodiversity conflict management from other best model conservationists. The experience sharing program will also empower conservation practitioners through academic coursework, networking and other opportunities.
5. Assigning responsibilities to key stakeholders guarantees a more productive project works
6. Partnership among stakeholders enables to design promisable project areas to make the project sustainable and resilient.
7. Understand the needs of all project partners is the key for goal achievement

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.

There was no additional fund source except the in-kind contribution of University of Gondar

Sustainability/Replicability

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

This project has developed ultimate sense of ownership by the local community. Besides, partner stakeholders are institutionalizing and mainstreaming the project activities further and they will make it more sustainable. Establishment of Biodiversity and Environmental Management Clubs (BEMC) and Community Conservation Groups (C2G) will continue to contribute on conservation education, awareness rising campaign on threats to biodiversity to the wider community. Besides, the signatory stakeholders' on partnership networking will continue to link conservation activities of Wadela district with their institutes, other partners and funding agencies. Hence, the project activities will sustain for long time and will be replicable to other hotspot sites.

The main sustainability challenge of this project would include climate change, increasing population which might result in increased pressure on remaining habitat of the plant species. In addition, securing funds to ensure that the remaining stock of the herb stay preserved might also be a replicability challenge.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

Other herbs which have medical values but critically endangered are being collected by the club to protect and multiply them in school plots of gardens.

Safeguard Policy Assessment

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

N/A

Additional Comments/Recommendations

Some departments of the government and other conservationist NGOs are loosely working together to manage the key biodiversity area of the district. Research institutes and universities have never reached the site to make it researchable and sustainable.

The possible intervention areas as recommendations had been pointed out by the project team and other stakeholders.

There is a great possibility to achieve a better conservation outcome if:

- 1) The local government departments dealing with close thematic issues manage and conserve the vulnerable herb via synergies and capacity building trainings
- 2) Females are active in conservation project
- 3) Universities and Research institutes close to the site address the conservation challenges of this globally important but vulnerable plant species.
- 4) Potential biodiversity conservationist NGOs intervene in the area
- 5) CEPF invest large scale projects

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

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

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*****Please complete the tables on the following pages*****

Performance Tracking Report Addendum			
Project Results	Is this question relevant?	If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved for project from inception of CEPF support to date	Describe the principal results achieved during project period (Attach annexes if necessary)
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate 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.	Yes	Nearly 5 hectares are conserved	Through intensive capacity building and awareness creation campaigns, community members started to conserve the vulnerable endemic plant species.
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No		
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.



Awareness creation program in public meeting place and elementary school



Experience sharing program of Wadela district while visiting Habru and Gubalafto Woredas



Team of experts surveying the habitat and taking samples for investigation



Lagarosiphon steudneri



a) Project Team



b) (Forestry, Botanist, and Ecologist from left right)



When capacity building trainings was given for 100 households on the socio-economic and environmental values of *Lagarosiphon steudneri* plant species, management and conservation techniques of this plant species



Consultative Meetings with key stakeholders