

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: The Mountain Institute

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): *Promoting Coordinated Community-Based Landscape Conservation in the Trans-Boundary Region of the Kanchenjunga-Singalila Complex*

Implementation Partners for this Project: Shree High Altitude Herbal Production and Conservation Institution and Shree Deep Jyoti Youth Club

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): October 1, 2008 - September 30, 2010

Date of Report (month/year): Nov 2010

II. OPENING REMARKS

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

III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

Project Purpose: *Strengthened cooperation between communities and district level government across the trans-boundary areas of KSC to address threats to key habitats (broad leaf evergreen forests and alpine meadows).*

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
Purpose-level:	

<p><i>1. 15 transboundary Village Development Committees of Nepal and 3 watershed areas of Sikkim and West Bengal share information on conservation issues by the end of the project</i></p>	<p>After community consultations with community-level stakeholders to identify key trans-boundary issues including poaching and the conservation of flora and fauna, TMI staff conducted meetings with the communities of the trans-boundary area to present transect-based data collection techniques and train community participants on the necessary equipment (GPS, compass, etc) so that they could begin data collection on MAPs and vegetation coverage of pasturelands. With the formation of the KSTBCWG, the WG began coordinating efforts among VDC-VDC, district -district and country to country levels among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.</p>
<p><i>2. Management regimes support conservation of key habitats in 3 sites 1 year after the project completion</i></p>	<p>First, TMI identified 14 potential sites for conservation. Then, community groups, including youth clubs, CFUGS, MAPs groups, women groups, teachers participated in consultations where mapping techniques, presentations and discussion methods were used to identify critical habitats for conservation. The pilot site of Meghma, Jogmai VDC, Ilam was selected because of its critical condition. Subsequently, Pahademeghu, Phalaincha VDC of Panchthar, and Surum-Khim VDC of Taplejung district were also selected. Members of KSBCTWG supervise the sites and made rules and regulations to reduce the impacts of overgrazing and over- harvesting of endangered flora in those 3 permanent monitoring sites. Monitoring was conducted by the groups at all 3 sites in 2010, and reported to the KSTBCWG and to the district level transboundary conservation advisory (transboundary government officials' coalition). KSTBCWG uses a belted transect method to collect data on wild flora and fauna.</p>

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

The project has successfully mobilized the population in the area, united stakeholders from both sides of the border and at every level (local, district, regional) around a common goal, and established a sustainable management regime. There were some difficulties in objective achievement, described in sections below (lessons learned), but none of these proved insurmountable.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

The strength of support from local communities surprised even program implementers, up to and including the commitment of community funds to create a financial mechanism (the trust fund) that will ensure sustainability of working group activities.

One attempt to provide continuity around the frequently shifting landscape of government officials was to network with the Speaker of the House, Mr. Subas Chandra Nembang. As a national legislator native to the area, he is an influential local figure, in or out of office. TMI has had several meetings with him, and he expressed his enthusiasm for the project, as well as a commitment to help establish additional community-based conservation area, and promote legislation that provides a legal atmosphere conducive to conservation.

IV. PROJECT OUTPUTS

Project Outputs:

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
Output 1: A mechanism for communication and coordination between the relevant district level government officers established and functional.	
<i>1.1. At least two district level meetings held to address transboundary issues (grazing, illegal MAPs trading and wildlife poaching and trade) by year 2 of the project.</i>	The program began with an 2 inception workshops to introduce the project and site selection. A total of 62 people from different NGO/GOs and CBOs participated. Three informal meetings with district stakeholders, such as DFOs, were held Jun 2 -3, 2009 and Jun 18 in Ilam and in Panchthar Jun 16. Forty-five participants from DFOs, CDOs, Civil society and trans-boundary communities participating in a trans-boundary cross-site field visit from July 2-5, 2010. Finally, Two district level workshops were held with a total of 44 participants from governement, civil society, political parties, and local communities (including members of the KCTBWG). Transboundary conservation issues were discussed including new information on the Taplejung area, including information about MAP overharvesting by pilgrims, overharvesting of Juniper by herders, and poaching in the transboundary Timpupokhari wetland area. Participants were selected for a regional-level transboundary workshop.
<i>1.2. A document on transboundary collaboration for future actions and followup by year 2 of the project</i>	The documentation of action plans are in process and will be completed by the end of November, and will be address the trans-boundary threats and issues and the suggested recommendations based on consultations and meetings conducted during the program.
<i>1.3. transboundary coordination committee comprising of relevant Nepali government official and civil society members formed by year 2 so that communication and follow up actions are continued in perpetuity.</i>	<p>The formation of the coordination committee has been in progress since 2009, including a Feb 2009 meeting was held with Indian stakeholders working in the conservation sector namely, (TMI) India, Federation of Society for Environmental Protection (FOSEF), Singalila National Park (SNP), Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary(BRS), Ashoka Trust for Research in Environment and Ecology(ATREE) and Saint Alphonsus Social Agricultural Centre (SASAC) to discuss how to coordinate programming effectively.</p> <p>The trans-boundary co-ordination committee officially formed after the two district level workshops and the regional meeting was completed (28-29 Sept 2010 at Ilam) with 77 participants from all three districts, including senior government officials, political party members, civil society, NGO partners, and community members from Nepal, and NGO</p>

	partners from Sikkim and West Bengal.
Output 2: A mechanism for communication and coordination between the community groups established and functional	
<i>2.1. A transboundary working group of key actors (local NGOs, CEPF partners, and resource users) established to advocate actions on transboundary issues by year 1 of the project.</i>	TMI conducted 5 settlement level consultations in 2008, to identify key actors for the working group. The first draft of the Terms of Reference for the trans boundary working group, comprising key actors from local NGOs, CEPF partners and resource users, was developed in 2009. At a formation workshop, 42 participants set a common agenda for the working group and selected 21 members. The working group was legally registered in the district administrative office (DAO) of Panchthar as Kanchenjunga - Singalila trans-boundary biodiversity conservation working group (KSTBCWG). The group aims to resolve the trans-boundary conservation issues by coordinating among VDC-VDC, district-district and country to country level governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. The working group began annual monitoring in partnership with community groups in the designated biodiversity permanent plots in 2009. At the time of writing, program findings have been discussed with the WG, and technology and equipment has been handed over. The official final handover of information will happen after the completion of the final documentation (and its submission to CEPF) in November.
<i>2.2. 300 participants from trans-boundary area are aware on legal provisions and policies related to natural resources of Nepal and India.</i>	In 2008, TMI provided information on Legal rules and regulations and government policies on trans-boundary issues related to forests, wildlife, NTFPs and pastures to 272 participants during 5 settlement level consultations. In 2009, 3 VDC-level trans-boundary workshops, which included 135 participants from 15 VDCs of Nepal and 6 participants from trans-border settlements of India, discussed and prioritized a solution strategy for local level trans-boundary conservation issues.
Output 3: Community capacity to monitor and manage key habitats in transboundary area strengthened	
<i>3.1. 50 participants (mainly herders, lodge owners, DoF staff, MAPs collectors and wildlife poachers) trained on monitoring tools and techniques to assess transboundary threats by year 1 of project.</i>	In 2008, TMI conducted a threat assessment in 10 VDCs of Ilam and Panchthar. The assessment was carried out with community consultations in which endangered fauna and flora including kutki (<i>Picorrhiza scrophulariiflora</i>), padamchal (<i>Rehum nobile</i>), bikhma (<i>aconitum bisma</i>), loth salla (<i>Taxus baccata</i>), Himalayan monal (<i>Safyr tragopan</i>), musk deer, bear, red panda, and snow leopard were found to be severely threatened. Poaching activity sites, including Phalut, Jamlay pokkhari, Phalekey, Chewa Bhangyang , Darjeeling, Taplejung District Via Gola, Tibet were identified In 2009, a monitoring manual was developed with a focus on transect establishment, monitoring, data collection & analyses. The flora and fauna to be monitored are placed with their photos and brief information about most of them is provided. During establishment of transects in the field, key persons

	<p>from MAPs groups, CFUGs and Herder groups were trained using these materials. TMI also conducted two units of biodiversity conservation and community based sustainable monitoring trainings in Ilam district and one in Panchthar district. A total of 54 participants were invited from herders groups, Community forest users groups (CFUGs), District forest offices, MAPs cultivation and conservation group and executive members of KSTBCWG. During the training, 4 plots, 2 for fauna (each of 1 sq.km) and 2 for MAPs (each of 1 hectare) were established as pilot monitoring sites for future community based monitoring through KSTBCWG.</p> <p>Monitoring at all three permanent sites has continued since 2009.</p>
<p>3.2. At least 3 transboundary sites initiate monitoring to assess threats by year 2 of the project.</p>	<p>First, TMI identified 14 potential sites for conservation. Then, community groups, including youth clubs, CFUGS, MAPs groups, women groups, teachers participated in consultations where mapping techniques, presentations and discussion methods were used to identify critical habitats for conservation. The pilot site of Meghma, Jogmai VDC was selected because of its critical condition. In April 2009, using 21 transects at the altitude ranging from 2500m to 4500m in Ilam, Panchthar & Taplejung districts, TMI staff, local partners and local communities collected information on the status of wild MAPs and measured vegetation coverage of pasture land. sites as mentioned below were selected as permanent monitoring sites for the future.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meghma, Jogmai VDC of Ilam district at 2940m 2. Pahademeghu, Phalaicha VDC of Panchthar district at 4500m and; 3. Yubanaghi, Kalikhola VDC of Taplejung district at altitude of 4500m <p>These sites are rich in biodiversity and are considered main habitats of endangered and extinct flora and fauna species.</p>
<p>3.3. transboundary working group monitors the sites and the trust fund that generates income from interest which is used to continue monitoring of the sites even after the project period.</p>	<p>Since 2010, Several informal meetings among CEPF grantees, working group and government stakeholders have been conducted to discuss the guidelines have been held. Trust fund preparation committee formation and draft guideline was prepared. At the time of writing, trust fund operating guideline has been developed with the consultation of the trust fund preparation coordination committee and it has been handed over to Kanchenjunga Singhalila Trans-boundary Biodiversity Conservation Working Group (KSTBCWG). The trust will raise around 50,000Nrs from the annual amount allotted to each VDC by the DDC. The fund will be administered by the working group at the regional level, and funds will go towards monitoring and advocacy activities.</p>

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

Project outcome delivery was often delayed, due to external, mostly local political factors. For example, at various times, national and regional strikes by the political parties, Tharuwan, Limbuwan, Kirant workers and some Madhesi groups delayed the progress of the project. At one point, progress was delayed due to political instability on both the Nepal and India sides, due to the impending approval of the new Constitution and due to continued agitation by the Free Gurkhaland Movement in India. Additionally, in Nepal several prominent GON officials were charged with corruption making them unable to concentrate on project activities, and eventually leading to their replacement with new officials. Furthermore, trans-boundary coordination itself is very challenging. However, ultimately nearly all project outcomes were realized (see below).

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

Some final documentation remains incomplete. Delays in documentation were common to the project due to streamlining and communication issues between partner organizations and field offices and the TMI office in Kathmandu (in addition to external difficulties described above). The head office has continued to reiterate the importance of timely communication with local partners and is seeking a way to incorporate these concerns into future evaluations and capacity building work. However, final reports are being completed we do not believe this has or will adversely affect the impacts of the project.

V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS

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

No safeguard policies were required of TMI by CEPF at the inception of the project.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT

Describe any lessons learned during the various phases of the project. Consider lessons both for future projects, as well as for CEPF's future performance.

As in all rural development projects, a certain flexibility is required of program implementers. However, working in areas of political stability, particularly across the border of two politically volatile areas, requires additional flexibility in planning, delays built into timelines, and robust communication mechanisms in place at the inception of program implementation.

Another important communication of mitigating external difficulties is an inclusive approach. In this case, it was vital to include all political parties, as well as ethnic activist groups, to avoid the appearance of bias, which would have caused major obstructions to successful program implementation. However, problems still arose from activities of ethnic movement groups who were outside of program areas, but whose activities controlled access to sites. In the futures, plans should be made to include these groups in some way.

Inclusion of these groups, as well as all other relevant stakeholders, including members of the police force and government officials, community forest groups, local heads, teachers, youth groups, women groups, herders, ex poachers and medicinal plant collectors brings out diverse perspectives, ensures a sense of ownership, and enhances and empowers networks and coalitions at every level.

Co-ordination among the INGO's and NGO's in conservation of KSC is necessary to stop the duplication of the programs. In the absence of the co-ordination, the program duplication might hamper the organizational credibility of NGOs and INGOs working in the area.

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

As described, inclusive program design with an emphasis on local, community ownership is essential. For instance, physical identification of conservation sites at a higher altitude with transects as our main tool would have been almost impossible without the collaborative participation, support and guidance of our community members including local herders, CFUGs, and medicinal plant harvesters. This has further affirmed our stand that conservation efforts are successful only if they are community driven and sustainable only when communities take a central role the implementation of activities.

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

During this period TMI has learned that working in a trans-boundary region provides unique opportunities but also unique challenges. For example coordinating with two national governments has an unforeseen difficulty that we will adjust to in future work. Furthermore, the constrained two-year project cycle limits the potential sustainability of the community monitoring. One attempt to provide continuity around the frequently shifting landscape of government officials was to network with the Speaker of the House, Mr. Subas Chandra Nembang. As a national legislator native to the area, he is an influential local figure, in or out of office. TMI has had several meetings with him, and he expressed his enthusiasm for the project, as well as a commitment to help establish additional community-based conservation area, and promote legislation that provides a legal atmosphere conducive to conservation.

Although NGOs and government officials have an enthusiasm for the ideas of trans-boundary conservation, they are less willing to support long-term programming (like capacity building) materially. Communities are more engaged by the practicalities of trans-boundary conservation and monitoring activities. Thus it was important, in the creation of the trust fund guidelines, and will continue to be important, as the trust fund develops, to make sure that communities maintain access to and influence in the use of the fund.

In an effort to facilitate communication and be inclusive of all participants, three, rather than one, district-level conservation advisory committees were formed. These committees are comprised of government officials, NGO partners, political parties, and other civil society actors (such as journalists). These district-level committees will coordinate among each other and with officials in West Bengal and Sikkim, India. Given the communication issues arising from lack of infrastructure among districts, it is hoped that this will increased the investment of these actors in the long-term programming in their respective districts, and that it will make coordination among districts easier.

VII. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Ford Foundation	Matching	\$ 300,00	Continues through April 2011
Individual Donor	Preparation of and documentation	\$ 3000	One time support

	of trust fund		
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***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.

- Community members strongly support through trans-boundary working group and have mobilized funds from VDC sources to support activities in the future
- Many NGO/INGOs work in the trans-boundary area. TMI has initiated discussions with several INGO, to continue programs utilizing their funding, including WWF Nepal under the SHL program.

VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

VIII. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. One way we do this is by making programmatic project documents available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these in our newsletter and other communications.

These documents are accessed frequently by other CEPF grantees, potential partners, and the wider conservation community.

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