

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Paadhai Trust
Project Title:	Building stake to conserve river related biodiversity using Otters as flagship species in the Cauvery river basin in Karnataka
Date of Report:	
Report Author and Contact Information	Mr. Nisarg Prakash

CEPF Region: Western Ghats (Mysore-Nilgiri Corridor)

CEPF Strategic Directions 1 - Enable action by diverse communities and partnerships to ensure conservation of key biodiversity areas and enhance connectivity in the corridors.

Grant Amount: \$ 18,496.27

Project Dates: 1st August 2013 to 31st October 2014

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

Nityata Foundation has been an active partner throughout the project. Nityata Foundation has been a constant source of support and an advisory for the project. Our efforts towards the execution have been equal and all decisions taken during the project has been in association with Nityata Foundation. Nityata Foundation has supported us with logistics and also facilitating our programs in multiple ways.

Conservation Impacts

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

(Type here how your grant matched IP 1.2 Promote partnerships to identify, evaluate, and advocate for suitable mechanisms that incorporate critical links (biological corridors) into the protected area network in the priority corridors) (Hint: (i) develop criteria and protocols for defining biological corridors, and use them to develop strategies for consolidating corridors with broad ownership of government and civil society)... same for IP 1.3...

It did not directly deal with establishing corridors or forms of protected areas but mostly deals with the acceptance of otters as top predators that invariably share space with us along rivers we use. Fishermen are less likely to retaliate and kill otters now, having been exposed to the various facets of these animals through street plays, discussions, films, etc.

Our work, in close co-operation with local fishermen and officials from the Fisheries Department focused on enhancing the awareness and tolerance of otters in a largely complex and multiple-use system like the Cauvery River.

We have worked with the forest department in our outreach program; ACF Shivanna was present during the street play.

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

<p>Functioning of VRC's</p>	<p>After careful analysis and work on the ground, establishment of VRC's was not taken up as fishermen who are major stakeholders would be neglected/left out in the entire decision making process. These fishermen belong to backward castes and will not get a chance to play an integral role in any of the decisions arrived at by the committee. Instead we tried to develop relationships with individual fishermen and build trust amongst them.</p>
<p>Popularizing Otters as a flagship species</p>	<p>We have highlighted the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Otters are an integral part of the river, 2. Otters indicate the health of the river and act as the indicator for the fish abundance in the river. <p>We have achieved this mostly through sessions with fishermen, street theatre and school awareness camps.</p> <p>We have successfully conceptualized and filmed a documentary called "Eradu Kai idare Chappale". The film was screened in 12 villages across 2 districts through which the Cauvery river flows. The film was received well by the audience, relating to the dynamite incidents and/or people dynamiting in their villages. This film can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/cBP_4WTdM_w</p> <p>We have interviewed fishermen regarding the impact of dynamiting across 13 villages to actually divert attention from otters to a severe issue.</p>
<p>Create positive influence on the people's attitude towards species conservation and to view rivers more holistically.</p>	<p>We have also collected fish catch data from mainly two sites T Narsipura and Hanusoge stretch, interacting closely with 20 fishermen (Refer Appendix 2)</p> <p>The fishermen have stereotyped otters as being problematic to their livelihood. The same belief is passed on to their children as well. We have tackled this issue with school programs in numerous villages.</p> <p>Street theatre was a very effective tool in creating some tolerance towards the otters through well-crafted information embedded in quick witted humor.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have worked with the fisheries department and campaigned against dynamite fishing in the areas of T Narsipura taluk.

<p>Bringing together various stakeholders to monitor river biodiversity, fish catch and illegal activities like dynamite fishing and sand mining.)...</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. We have been successful in helping the police apprehend a dynamite fisherman in one of the villages. 3. Filmed a documentary “ Eradu Kai idare Chappale” capturing the emotions of the people maimed by dynamite fishing. This film has been screened at 12 different locations. We plan to make this movie available in the public domain (Refer Appendix 1 – Campaign against dynamite fishing for details)
---	--

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: NIL

Species Conserved: NIL

Corridors Created: NIL

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

Successes:

1. We have been successful in raising the profile of the smooth-coated otter in specific locations along the river where it is found.
2. We have isolated the top three threats to the otter, from a possible basket of threats that we were confronted with at the beginning of the project. These threats to the future of the otter in the Cauvery River are:
 - a. The unchecked mining of sand, which was not initially perceived to be a threat
 - b. Dynamite fishing and the intensive use of gill nets by fishermen
 - c. Conflict with fishermen
3. Prominent denning sites identified: As a result of an extensive raft-based survey done along the length of the river in Karnataka, we have identified a number of denning sites. This has helped evolve a protection strategy and to focus on the priority areas
4. We have been able to work on two key threats – dynamite fishing and conflict with fishermen – with some anecdotal success
5. We have built a modest network of contacts with Fisheries officers on the field and have got them to recognize their role in otter conservation and to appreciate the co-existence of fish and otters.

Challenges:

1. We have worked towards monitoring fish catch by fishermen and also diversity of fish in the river. We wanted to understand the impact of invasive carnivorous fish in the river on the native species of the river.

The data we collected suggests that the African Catfish which are known to feed on other fish are present in limited numbers. But this cannot be concrete evidence for the population of the Cat Fish in the river, as fishermen still claim the presence of these fish in large numbers. It is difficult to assess the situation based on only this survey. A more detailed study and action plan to regulate the African Cat fish maybe required.

2. A significant challenge we face is to build credibility with selected temples along the river. They have the ability to act as a moral authority with fishermen and to create informal fish sanctuaries that would protect otters as well. We are enlisting the help of a volunteer, Mr. Hanumanth, who lives in Mysore and is closely associated with two temples along the river, to help us initiate a dialogue in this direction.
3. The main concern raised by the public is always that there is no strict enforcement against illegal activities like dynamite fishing and in some places sand mining. The long term conservation solution – assuming that enforcement will continue to be lax – is to build local stakeholder engagement in the protection of their own resources.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

1. In the course of the project we were able to educate the State fisheries department about Otters and also the importance of their presence in the river.
2. We hired a local fisherman Shivanna to work with us. This was a fisherman who like everyone else complained about otters. Over the course of the project he has learned the importance of otters and has worked towards protection of the species and monitoring them.

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.

Our important learning has been that when working with communities it is essential to have a local resource work with the team. In our case we found a fisher Shivanna, initially who shared the same views of others that otters are problematic to fishermen. We were able to convince him that otters have an important role in the biodiversity. He gained interest in the project and has been a constant source of support on the field, strengthening our ties with the locals.

Dividing the project into smaller experiments made it effective to pursue our objective. We had segmented our approach into multiple experiments such as monitoring fish catch, village committees, outreach activities, exploring other fishing techniques etc. Each of these experiments have been a learning for us. Some experiments like the street play awareness, documentary on dynamiting has exceeded our expectations while others like drift netting technique did not deliver results as expected.

Another important learning we had is that for implementation and enforcement of laws, a good rapport is necessary with the government agencies. We would require government agencies to support us with effective monitoring or strict enforcement of the available laws. In our case it is a challenge for us to get police department or fisheries department to monitor the river to curb dynamiting or apprehend some regular offenders.

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

We designed the project as a series of experiments, on the valid assumption that some would fail while others might work; this is precisely what happened.

For instance, our experiment on tracking fish catch for possible presence of exotic carnivorous fish turned out differently from expectation – there were few such fish in the river.

We tried introducing a fishing technique called Drift netting in K R Nagar district. Drift netting entirely depends on the water current to pull the net forward in the river. This is an instant method of fishing where the fishing net is not left overnight, hence reducing the probability of damage by otters. This attempt was not successful here because the water current was not strong enough to pull the net along its flow. And this technique requires deeper pools which is available only in a stretch before the check dam. It was an experiment we wished to be employed in these regions but the fisher folk thought it was too much work compared to their regular method of fishing.

Our outreach and awareness activities were split into Street play, school camps and the documentary film screenings. All these activities were well planned based on our objectives. The street play was well crafted by a theatre group from Mysore understanding the dynamics of villages synced with appropriate folk songs summing up to a very effective performance in every village. Street play was performed in 10 villages with an overall audience of 700 people.

School camps aimed at education the younger individuals about their river and the animals dependent on the river. Raising the profile of otters as the apex predators of the river and how their presence indicates the health of the river,

Our documentary film aimed at discouraging local people from dynamite fishing and to provide an insight into the life of people maimed by dynamite explosions. More details on the awareness activities handled by us can be found in detail in Appendix 1 – section on Outreach and Awareness.

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

Our decision to work with local fishermen in executing the project contributed to the success that we have achieved in some areas in controlling dynamite fishing. Choosing to focus on dynamite fishing as a common ground for activism has also helped us build a relationship of trust and mutual interests with the regular fishermen.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

An important lesson we have learnt is that there is little credible information or work on river wildlife (fish, otters, crustaceans) and that a comprehensive, integrated approach to studying river species, combined with a practical conservation plan is of the essence. Implementation of laws and vigilance by government agencies is the need of the hour.

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
<i>Nityata Foundation</i>	B	Rs 1,00,000	Provided field vehicles - a four wheeler and a two wheeler for the entire duration of the project.
<i>Nityata Foundation</i>	B	Rs 7,000	One camera for field use for the entire duration of the project

****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

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

We have filmed a documentary along the Cauvery river. For the documentary we have interviewed fishermen who have lost their limbs to dynamite fishing. Our idea was to capture the trauma of the individual when he was maimed and how his family has suffered this ordeal, capture the emotions and show it to the target audience. We want the film to inculcate a sense of fear towards dynamite fishing and its implications on their family.

The fisheries department is interested in making copies of the film to be distributed all over Karnataka.

This documentary will be freely shared between government organizations and other organizations working along the river. We further wish to screen it along other rivers in Karnataka. The Nityata Foundation has a medium term strategy of selecting critical habitat zones and engaging local volunteers to build opposition to dynamite fishing. As an immediate measure, Nityata has chosen the river stretch by Hemmige village and has employed a fisherman to campaign against dynamite fishing, report it to the Fisheries Department and to monitor otter population in the area.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

(None.)

Safeguard Policy Assessment

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

Not applicable

Performance Tracking Report Addendum

CEPF Global Targets				
(Enter Grant Term)				
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 from 1st August 2013 to 31st October 2014 (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.	No			
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	Yes	300 hectares	300 hectare	We have been instrumental in reducing the practice of dynamite fishing in a stretch of river near Talacad. Around this region we have campaigned intensively against the ill effects of dynamite fishing to the biodiversity and the implications of such an illegal activity
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.

Table 1. Socioeconomic Benefits to Target Communities

Please complete this table if your project provided concrete socioeconomic benefits to local communities. List the name of each community in column one. In the subsequent columns under Community Characteristics and Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit, place an X in all relevant boxes. In the bottom row, provide the totals of the Xs for each column.

Name of Community	Community Characteristics							Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit													
	Small landowners	Subsistence economy	Indigenous/ethnic peoples	Pastoralists/nomadic peoples	Recent migrants	Urban communities	Communities falling below the poverty rate	Other	Increased Income due to:				Increased food security due to the adoption of sustainable fishing, hunting, or agricultural practices	More secure access to water resources	Improved tenure in land or other natural resource due to titling, reduction of colonization, etc.	Reduced risk of natural disasters (fires, landslides, flooding, etc)	More secure sources of energy	Increased access to public services, such as education, health, or credit	Improved use of traditional knowledge for environmental management	More participatory decision-making due to strengthened civil society and governance.	Other
									Adoption of sustainable natural resources management practices	Ecotourism revenues	Park management activities	Payment for environmental services									
Total																					

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

Additional Comments/Recommendations

Recommendations

During the course of the project we have seen very few fish sanctuaries along the river. These fish sanctuaries

- a. act as a reserve and a safe breeding haven for all the fish in the river
- b. help replenish the fish numbers in the river
- c. preclude fishing in the sanctuary area and also protect the sanctuary from other external pressures like sand mining or dynamite fishing.

We recommend that CEPF-ATREE take up the case to set up more fish sanctuaries in partnership with government agencies and religious institutions that have establishments along the river. Religious institutes have a powerful presence around their establishments and people conform to the rules laid down by these institutions.

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:

Name: Nisarg Prakash

Organization name: Nityata Foundation

Mailing address: Reach for the Sky, 184, 9th cross, Indiranagar I Stage, Bengaluru - 560038

Tel:080 42042842

Fax:

E-mail: nisargprakash@gmail.com

List of appendices:

- 1) Appendix 1. Detailed Technical Report
- 2) Appendix 2. Report on Fish catch recording in Cauvery