CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	South African National Biodiversity Institute
Project Title:	Optimizing the conservation and social return on investment by Natural Resource Management Programs of the Department of Environmental Affairs, through improved planning and prioritization
Date of Report:	27 May 2014
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CEPF Region: Maputo-Pondo-Albany Hotspot

Strategic Direction: 3. Maintain and restore ecosystem function and integrity in the highlands grasslands and Pondoland Corridors

Grant Amount: $39,910

Project Dates: 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014

Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner): The Natural Resource Management (NRM) Programmes Chief Directorate of the Department of Environmental Affairs was integrally involved in the design and implementation of this project. A range of staff, including the Chief Director: NRM; Director and Deputy Director: Operational Support and Planning and one Regional Programme Leader participated in various meetings and workshops to construct a framework for planning that incorporated best available data on ecological infrastructure and biodiversity assets. Subsequent to testing and refinement, involving NRM staff, this framework was adopted and applied by NRM in evaluating submissions received in response to its call for proposals under its Land User Incentive scheme. One of the major outcomes of the CEPF-funded intervention was thus the use by NRM of a product of the project to influence the allocation of ZAR197 million (~USD19 million) to projects around the country, including the Maputo-Pondo-Albany Hotspot.

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.
Through optimizing the substantial investments of NRM, the project aimed to contribute to restoring ecosystem function in key corridors and KBAs. With an annual investment of ZAR1,8 billion (~USD174 million), NRM is by far the largest funder of conservation-related activities in the country and on the continent. This was achieved by elevating and expanding biodiversity priority (e.g. KBA and protected areas) and ecosystem services (especially water production, erosion and invasive plant control) in the criteria used for selecting projects for investment.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.

Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal):
NRM investments in ecological restoration are more closely targeted to areas of high biodiversity and/or delivering greater ecosystem services, and are more aligned with sustainable funding sources. The chances of restoration success will be improved through better planning and commitment to specific areas.

Actual Progress Toward Long-term Impacts at Completion:

At the request of the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), SANBI developed a set of spatial criteria for use by NRM in evaluating proposals submitted under the Land User Incentive scheme. These criteria consist of spatial layers that utilise SANBI data to rank proposed project areas contained in Land User Incentive submissions according to their importance for biodiversity and sustainable provision of ecosystem services. This is the first time that such explicit criteria relating to biodiversity and ecosystem services have been used by NRM in the selection of proposals for activities such as invasive alien plant control, wetland rehabilitation and wildfire management.

The Chief Director: NRM has indicated on numerous occasions that the project outcomes have influenced both their thinking and selection of projects for investment. While the frameworks developed through this project have to date only been explicitly applied to the Land User Incentive (which accounts for approximately 11% of annual NRM spend), NRM treated this as a pilot for ultimately applying the framework to its entire annual investment in ecosystem rehabilitation and natural resource management.

It is still too early to quantify whether the gains made to date will definitely result in enhanced restoration success. By focusing on strategic water service yielding activities in catchments with clear beneficiaries who are likely to augment the NRM investment, we believe that the outcomes have provided a sound base for alignment with sustainable funding sources. By proposing an alternative approach (focusing on rehabilitation of key ecological infrastructure – as opposed to a silo approach to alien clearing, wetland rehabilitation, and fire management) it appears that the scene is set for improved choice of rehabilitation methodology in the right target catchments.

Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal):

A revised methodology for prioritising investments in ecological restoration should be completed and adopted, resulting in improved ecosystem service outcomes, and greater effectiveness of investments.

Actual Progress Toward Short-term Impacts at Completion:

A revised methodology has been completed, tested and applied to the Land User Incentive component of NRM. The thinking behind this methodology has been endorsed by the NRM planners and senior management, as well as by the Director-General and other top managers at a strategic session on 6 May 2014, when this approach was presented. Whether this has translated to adoption at a regional and sub-catchment level is unclear as yet. The process begun through the project will be sustained over a three year period from April 2014 to March 2017, through the conclusion of an agreement between DEA and SANBI for the provision of ongoing planning support to NRM.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: Not relevant – although the NRM programs operate on over 20 000ha in the target corridors
Species Conserved: not relevant
Corridors Created: not relevant

Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.
Successes are covered in the sections above.

Challenges were encountered in soliciting interest from some of the NRM Regional Programme Leaders in the provinces that fall within the Maputo-Pondo-Albany Hotspot. This reinforced the perceptions expressed by some programme staff and external observers that there can sometimes be something of a disconnect between national planning and prioritization efforts and the areas where the work is actually implemented through the regional offices. A challenge going forward will thus be to better understand these apparent discontinuities and work with NRM to put in place measures to address them. Part of the agreement between DEA and SANBI for the next three years includes deliverables relating to the establishment of communities of practice within the NRM sector, such as convening a regular forum between planners, researchers and managers in NRM.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?
The primary unexpected impact (positive) was the recognition of SANBI as a useful source of detailed biodiversity and ecosystem service information, and innovative approaches to the challenging task of prioritizing investments. Moreover, the CEPF resources provided the capacity to develop the linkages to potential long-term sustainable funding mechanisms for key ecological rehabilitation in priority areas.

The project also provided the opportunity for SANBI able to grow the capacity within its Biodiversity Planning unit, which is having beneficial effects for the ability of SANBI to support other planning processes, such as the Strategic Environmental Assessments being undertaken for Strategic Integrated Projects under the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission.

Project Components

Project Components*: Please report on results by project component. Reporting should reference specific products/deliverables from the approved project design and other relevant information.*

Component 1 Planned: Build an understanding of NRM investment and prioritization strategies and constraints through desktop research and interviews

Component 1 Actual at Completion: A sound working understanding of the NRM investment and prioritisation processes has been built in SANBI (and transferred to some implementing agencies), and is informing the programme of work of the Director: Ecological Infrastructure, and the Deputy Director: Land Use Policy and Advice in SANBI. It also helped shape the work to be done by SANBI in 2014/15 through the agreement with DEA for NRM support. This understanding has been codified in the project inception report (deliverable 1.1).

As reported previously, the original intention to use the project as a springboard to create a full-time post within SANBI could not be realized within the project's lifespan. The desired formal agreement with DEA for long-term support to NRM, which would have enabled the creation of such a post, was only approved in May 2014 by DEA. As a result, work has not been done on drafting a job description (deliverable 1.2), since the exact nature of the work to be done by SANBI for NRM is still under discussion.

Component 2 Planned: Propose new approaches for incorporating biodiversity and ecosystem services into NRM planning and prioritization and interrogate them with different actors

Component 2 Actual at Completion: Two SANBI planners have effectively helped to develop a new approach to investment targeting in NRM. This has been workshopped with NRM senior management and planning staff, and the approach was used in the 2014 disbursement process for the Land User Incentive investments. The framework methodology (deliverable 2.1) has been captured in a technical report that provides the necessary transparency and replicability for

anyone wanting to know more about the approach developed by SANBI for NRM. Notes from the various meetings held as part of this process have also been recorded as part of deliverable 2.2.

Component 3 Planned: Test the framework methodology using a few pilot catchments/basins of different scales (priorities for water supply, biodiversity, ecological connectivity) or in different situations

Component 3 Actual at Completion: The framework approach was tested at a national level and in two basins housing CEPF priorities. However, the testing with regional staff will only be possible after the CEPF project is completed. SANBI has received follow-up funds from NRM to pursue this with (and provide other planning assistance to) the NRM regions, through the three year agreement being finalised with DEA. The approach followed in applying the framework to the test catchments, together with the results, comparative analysis and further discussion, is summarized in the final project report. This report thus covers all the work contemplated under deliverable 3.1

Component 4 Planned: New approaches to planning and prioritization are formalized and embedded within NRM programs

Component 4 Actual at Completion: Indications are that the approach developed through this project has been adopted and will be further refined by NRM, with ongoing support from SANBI. The revised prioritization methodology (deliverable 4.1) is contained in the report discussed under component 3. The approach has clearly been adopted by NRM, as evidenced by its application in the selection process for grants through the Land User Incentive scheme. The approach has been presented to NRM senior management on several occasions, with positive results. The most recent opportunity allowed SANBI to present the approach to the Director-General and five Deputy Directors-General of DEA, at a strategic session for the Environmental Programmes Branch (within which NRM is housed).

The two year workplan (deliverable 4.2) was not completed during the project lifespan, but will be done as a three year workplan through the implementing agent agreement currently being finalized between DEA and SANBI. This agreement is the culmination of a process during which SANBI put forward a list of areas in which it could support the work of NRM, namely:
1. Early detection and rapid response to invasive alien species
2. Evidence-based support for decision-making and the development of best practices
3. Support attainment of optimal outcomes for NRM field operations in relation to incentives, disincentives, directives and regulations
4. Conduct long-term monitoring and reporting on the status of species and ecosystems to assess the impact of NRM interventions
5. Develop novel funding and implementation mechanisms for NRM
6. Capacity building and training

The focus of the first year of work under this agreement (2014/15) will be on:
1. Continuing to support the further development of spatial frameworks for evaluating future investments through the Land User Incentive, including:
    a. evaluating the success of the framework developed for the current round of Land User Incentive funding;
    b. modifying and updating the framework, based on lessons learned, for future calls for proposals for Land User Incentive projects;
    c. generating spatial datasets on biodiversity, ecological infrastructure/ecosystem services that currently do not exist, but could be of value in future evaluation frameworks; and
    d. extracting good practice that could potentially be incorporated into broader planning and prioritisation procedures used by NRM.
2. Continuing to support the refinement of existing approaches to planning and spatial prioritisation used by NRM, including:

a. generating and providing additional relevant spatial datasets;
b. supporting the application of the existing planning approach at a finer scale than the current quaternary catchment scale, in order to support fine-scale prioritisation within catchments;
c. supporting the proposed conversion of Management Unit Clearing Plans (MUCPs) to Management Unit Rehabilitation Plans (MURPs) that incorporate all NRM activities taking place within a particular management unit, rather than just alien plant clearing;
d. participating in the development of pilot MURPs in strategic catchments, with a particular objective of testing the value of these tools in operationalizing water pricing mechanisms for funding the rehabilitation and maintenance of water-related ecological infrastructure.

In relation to deliverable 4.3, the approach and lessons learned were due to be shared at the KwaZulu-Natal Symposium of Contemporary Conservation Practice in November 2013, but had to be postponed when the presenter was hospitalized the day before. SANBI presented the approach and its results at the annual Biodiversity Planning Forum in May 2014, and opportunities will continue to be sought long after the project ends to share lessons with the broader community of practice.

Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?
No

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

The various deliverables described above, which include all of the tools and methodologies developed through the project, have been submitted to CEPF.

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)
Ideally, the project should have had greater input and buy-in from the target government program (NRM in this case) to better understand their operational and implementation constraints, and by this to better identify the key obstacles and requisite changes in policy and approach.
However, given the nature of (sometimes opaque) governmental processes, it is perhaps appropriate that these kinds of project remain flexible and responsive to real needs, and through this to adapt its outputs and outcomes, while remain faithful to the overarching purpose.

Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)
Ideally, it would have been preferable to appoint dedicated in-house capacity in SANBI as early as possible to drive, deliver and internalize the project outcomes. Given unforeseen funding challenges this didn't materialize. However, the flexibility of consultant driven approaches, combined with sound, open working relationships with other officials keen to understand and take over the intellectual contributions of the project, resulted in a successful outcome.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

Additional Funding

Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of the CEPF investment in this project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
SANBI	A	USD4,000	Co-funding in the form of staff time not covered in the project budget
DEA	B	USD367,900	Value of three year implementing agreement about to be signed between DEA and SANBI for continuation of the work started through this project.

*Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:

A *Project co-financing (Other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this 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 funded 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.
Project succeeded in ensuring the sustainability of work initiated through the project. Evidence is the draft agreement currently being finalized between DEA and SANBI for continuation of support to NRM over a three year period. This agreement will enable the creation of a dedicated post at professional/middle management level focusing solely on NRM.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

Safeguard Policy Assessment

Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.
No safeguards were triggered.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

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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If your grant has an end date other than JUNE 30, please complete the tables on the following pages

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 July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. (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	Not possible to quantify at this stage		
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	Yes	Not possible to quantify at this stage		
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1below.	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													
									Increased Income due to:													
	Small landowners	Subsistence economy	Indigenous/ ethnic peoples	Pastoralists/nomadic peoples	Recent migrants	Urban communities	Communities falling below the poverty rate	Other	Adoption of sustainable natural resources management practices	Ecotourism revenues	Park management activities	Payment for environmental services	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
Total																						

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