

## CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

<b>Organization Legal Name:</b>	Wildlife Research and Conservation Society (WRCS)
<b>Project Title:</b>	Examining large carnivore connectivity and creating conservation networks in the Sahyadri-Konkan corridor
<b>Date of Report:</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2014
<b>Report Author and Contact Information</b>	Mr. Girish Punjabi

**CEPF Region:** Western Ghats & Sri Lanka Biodiversity Hotspot (Sahyadri-Konkan corridor)

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

**Grant Amount:** \$ 18,989.62

**Project Dates:** 1st July 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014

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

**The Nityata Foundation**, Bengaluru gave technical inputs on project activities, specifically suggestions on how to make the workshops interactive and applicable to the project's objectives.

**Malabar Nature Conservation Club** (MNCC, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Malabar-Nature-Conservation-Club-Amboli/1513734928840553>) helped organize a workshop for stakeholders in Amboli on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014, in finding accommodation, organizing food, and logistics. Some members of MNCC were actively involved in camera-trapping activities in the Amboli region.

**Raman Kulkarni**, Honorary warden of Kolhapur and owner of Pugmark Art Gallery, provided accommodation for project staff during overnight stays in Kolhapur and was part of the team that surveyed biodiversity in ecologically sensitive areas (ESA) in Sawantwadi and Dodamarg regions. This report was submitted to the Maharashtra Forest Department and shared with other stakeholders.

This project brought together individuals as a focused group such as **Varad Giri** (earlier Scientist at BNHS), **Kedar Munishwar** (Enviro-legal forum), **Terence Jorge** (eRc India (<http://www.ercindia.org/>)), **Saili Datar** (MNCC) who gave submissions in public hearings against Tillari Hydro-electric project II which could break the large carnivore corridor. **Parineeta Dandekar** (South Asia Network for Dams, Rivers, and People (<http://sandrp.in/>)) helped extensively with formulating submissions.

**Maharashtra Forest Department** (<http://www.mahaforest.nic.in/internal.php?id=23>) and current Chief Conservator of Forests Shri M. K. Rao, provided 60 camera-traps for surveys in corridor areas in five ranges of Kolhapur and Sawantwadi forest divisions.

**Mhadei Research Centre** (<http://mhadeiresearchcenter.org/>) and **Green Guards** (Kolhapur) contributed scientific data on carnivores.

## **Conservation Impacts**

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

The project contributed to CEPF Investment Priority 1.2 which aims to “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”. Through this project, we were able to systematically assess functional connectivity for large carnivores through rigorous modelling and important pinch-points. This information was shared with management agencies, such as the Maharashtra State Forest Department and National Tiger Conservation Authority for inclusion in Tiger Conservation Plans of Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. The project also built a small but focused network of local stakeholders through a workshop, which has helped in creating a group that discusses issues regarding connectivity in the corridor. This network would help enhance connectivity in the future through monitoring and actions, which include protection of important sites, identified using scientific modelling. The project has also actively involved management agencies such as the Maharashtra Forest Department in monitoring areas to prevent poaching and assess animal populations through improved techniques.

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

- 1) This project helped in a systematic assessment of large carnivore corridors and pinch-points, using large carnivore distribution data. The latter has been submitted to the Western Ghats portal ([http://thewesternghats.indiabiodiversity.org/map?layers=lyr\\_309\\_largecarnivores&title=Large Carnivore Occupancy Study in the Western Ghats](http://thewesternghats.indiabiodiversity.org/map?layers=lyr_309_largecarnivores&title=Large Carnivore Occupancy Study in the Western Ghats)).
- 2) Through this project, we brought together a small focused group of local stakeholders who are currently involved in conservation or research activities in the corridor. This focused group or ‘conservation network’ of stakeholders discusses conservation issues in the corridor region, attends public hearings, and makes submissions against large environmentally damaging projects.
- 3) This project also helped create cross-linkages between environmental watch-dogs (such as eRc India, SANDRP) with this stakeholder ‘conservation network’.
- 4) A number of popular and scientific articles about project outcomes, or records of mammals in the corridor were published in the media. More publications are expected.
- 5) The region from Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary (Maharashtra) to Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary (Goa) will likely be included in the Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve.

***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.***

For short-term objectives, such as assessing critical links in connectivity for large carnivores, earlier data on large carnivore occupancy from a CEPF-ATREE funded project to Dr. Advait Edgaonkar (<http://thewesternghats.indiabiodiversity.org/project/show/14?pos=2>) was immensely useful. This data ensured that we did not need to spend as much time collecting information on animal occupancy for this project. Instead that time was used in performing corridor modelling.

One objective involved creation of a small but focused stakeholder ‘**conservation network**’ was also successful. A stakeholder workshop through this project created a Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1456888991233570/>), where this group stays connected and discusses important conservation issues in the corridor region. The group also attends public hearings and gives submissions against large environmentally damaging projects. The larger goal is to collaborate, share skills, and help initiate conservation activities in important regions of the corridor which has been partly successful.

Another long-term objective of the project, which aimed to incorporate the importance of this biological corridor in regional policy and protected area management, is still work in progress. There have been some successes, as indicated by the initiation of camera-trapping activities by the Forest Department in important areas of the corridor outside parks, as well as likely inclusion of the corridor from Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary up to Mhadei in Goa in the Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. But, based on the ground situation, local people are opposing the inclusion of many areas in ecologically sensitive areas, as suggested in the Kasturirangan report. This makes conservation of many such areas difficult. For example, large-scale sale of land for rubber plantations in the corridor region is still on-going. Proposals to create new dams which will further severe pinch-points in the corridor are under consideration. Also, large areas of Reserved Forests are being considered to be opened up for installation of wind farms. However, given a concerted effort from this ‘conservation network’ we hope to protect some important patches in the corridor.

***Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?***

No

## 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.***

Some very valuable lessons were learned from the project design to implementation stage:

- 1) Few core objectives: At the project design stage, a number of objectives were considered to be included in the project proposal. However, advice from various sources to keep few core and focused objectives came in handy. This made the objectives more achievable in terms of the amount of time and effort we could devote to each task. This also made our successes measurable, as often ill-defined objectives make measuring success of such tasks complex.
- 2) Systematically maintaining accounts by the organization and reports for each quarter led to smooth functioning of the project till the end.

- 3) Involvement of government agencies: Involvement of the Forest Department from the beginning led to greater acceptance of the project in all areas of the corridor. Active collaboration with the Forest Department (Chief Conservator of Forests and respective DCFs) made project activities easier in the Reserved Forests. Suggestions regarding management of such areas were also positively received.
- 4) Step back when the situation is unfavourable: During some surveys in Sawantwadi-Dodamarg tehsil, there was some alienation by the villagers due to vested interests who did not want the region to be part of an ecologically sensitive area. At this time, we took a step back and avoided surveying some villages which otherwise could have led to some unwelcome situations.

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

Stakeholder workshop: We decided at the design stage, that a focused stakeholder workshop would be a great platform to bring together a small but interested group of like-minded individuals from civil society, in sharing skills, and discussing issues and opportunities for conservation in the corridor. This workshop was quite pivotal in the making a 'conservation network' by getting together a small but focused group of local stakeholders.

Involvement of Forest Department: At the project design itself, we had decided to actively work with the Forest Department to highlight certain important areas in the corridor where protection efforts may be enhanced. This gave dividends later as the Forest Department became more amenable to monitoring these areas regularly.

Articles in media: We felt that articles in the media would give a good platform for outreach activities. But, as far as possible we stay away from giving names of individuals or organizations involved in the project. This proved quite sensible, when the political situation was not in favor of conservation.

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

Assessment of connectivity: An assessment of the large carnivore corridor connectivity was conducted in the first quarter of the project, which helped us identify and focus on critical pinch-points in the corridors for the remaining period. This made our involvement with the forest department more focused. See Chapter (a) in Technical report (Appendix 1) for details on connectivity modelling and assessment.

Stakeholder workshop: This was very useful in bringing together a small but focused network of like-minded individuals from civil society, in sharing skills, and discussing issues and opportunities for conservation. See Chapter (c) Pg.25 in Technical report (Appendix 1) for detail on stakeholder workshop.

Involvement of Forest Department: Regular meetings with the forest department made the project more acceptable to them and resulted in fruitful collaboration. Conducting a camera-trapping survey jointly with the Forest Department made the findings more acceptable to them. For example, images of tigers from camera-traps set-up by the Forest Department were treated with a sense of ownership, while earlier it was uncertainty about their existence. See Chapters (b) and

(c) in Technical report (Appendix 1) for details on Ecological Surveys and stakeholder meetings, field visits and workshops.

Articles in media/ website: This gave ample coverage to project activities for awareness activities to the local public, government agencies. It was also an important component in outreach.

Facebook group: A closed facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1456888991233570/>) has been very useful in constantly updating the stakeholder network about conservation issues, actions, news articles, and publications. This is also a useful forum to discuss ideas for conservation of important regions in the corridor.

***Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:***

### 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
Maharashtra Forest Department	A	Rs. 10,00,000	Camera-traps for use in corridor

***\*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.***

One major challenge is to sustainably make the Forest Department monitor areas in the corridor region, outside of protected areas. This usually depends on the priorities of the officer in-charge, and when such an officer changes, such monitoring may come to a halt unless it is part of a working plan. If this corridor region is included in the Tiger Conservation Plan of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve, it could make regular monitoring a sustainable activity by the Maharashtra Forest Department by complementing the regular monitoring activities in the protected areas.

***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.***

We put up posters in Marathi in the corridor (Amboli, Tillari, Amba) which described the projects aims, methods, and possible outcomes. The poster also consisted of details of the organization, project in-charge, details of funding organization, contacts of CEPF grants director, ATREE project coordinator, and Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Kolhapur.

The project outcomes do not suggest or support relocation or rehabilitation of local people in any form. Inclusion of corridor region as part of the tiger conservation plan does not restrict or prevent livelihood rights of local people.

## Performance Tracking Report Addendum

<b>CEPF Global Targets</b>				
<b>(1st July 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014)</b>				
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.				
<b>Project Results</b>	<b>Is this question relevant?</b>	<b>If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.</b>	<b>Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.</b>	<b>Describe the principal results achieved from 1st July 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 (Attach annexes if necessary)</b>
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	Apprx. 50000	Apprx. 50000	Camera-traps are now regularly being used by the Forest Department in Reserved forests of four ranges outside protected areas, namely Patne, Dodamarg, Chandgad, and Ajara. This seems to have strengthened biodiversity and carnivore conservation by deterring illegal bushmeat hunting.
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		
<b>Total</b>																							

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



### **Additional Comments/Recommendations**

Technical report attached which contains project activities conducted in detail.

### **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](http://www.cepf.net), and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

#### **Please include your full contact details below:**

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Appendix 1 – Technical Report – titled “Examining large carnivore connectivity and creating conservation networks in the Sahyadri-Konkan corridor”