

# CEPF Mediterranean Basin Hotspot Mid-term Assessment National Meeting Report

<b>Organization:</b>	Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe Country Office for Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Country:</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	February 18 <sup>th</sup> 2015 (Mostar) Bosnia and Herzegovina

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe Country Office for Bosnia and Herzegovina (on behalf of CEPF) was a host of a National meeting of CEPF grantees for the Mid-term Assessment.

## **Objectives**

The main objectives of National Meeting were to:

- Give the platform for CEPF grantees to assess the CEPF investment within their country and discuss challenges and the future of CEPF investment on a national scale.
- Allow the opportunity for the exchange of experience and networking between national organizations.
- Produce a national report summarizing the discussions and decisions taken collectively which will feed into the overall Mid-Term Assessment for CEPF's investment in the Mediterranean Hotspot

## **MEETING MINUTES - SESSION BY SESSION**

### **Session 2 – Opening**

Ms. Lejla Šuman opened the event by welcoming the participants and giving a brief overview of the Agenda, meeting objectives and expected outcomes. She was followed by Ms. Zineta Mujaković, who gave a few words on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism, followed by a brief introduction of all the participants that were part of the National Mid-term Assessment Meeting.

### **Session 3 – Challenges grantees have in implementing their projects**

Ms. Lejla Šuman presented and gave an overview of session. The presentation was followed by a role playing activity, where the participants were divided into two groups to analyze their problems they have had to-date in implementing their projects.

#### ***i) Summary of discussion:***

Participants discussed problems and challenges they have in implementing their projects. The outcome for each group was the following:

##### **Group one:**

- Lack of coordination between donor agencies leads to duplication of funding of the same activities (overlapping in activities)

- Lack of coordination between CSOs dealing with nature and environmental protection
- Lack of financial sources causes unsustainability of project results
- Poor public awareness regarding the nature protection causes lack of their participation in certain project activities
- poor public awareness
- State constitution of BiH causes problems on selecting appropriate stakeholders
- CSOs face to be recognized by citizens as a factor of change and positive influence in the country

Group two:

- Indifference of different levels of government in BiH for nature and environment protection
- Lack of capacities and expertise in relevant institutions causes lack of their interest to participate in project activities
- Lack of financial sources for operational and project activities
- Lack of capacities in CSOs to prepare quality projects
- Lack of CSO capacities for the dialogue with the government and to impact decision making
- On-the-ground issues (inaccessible terrain causes problems during the research on the field)
- Limited access to information
- Limited NGO involvement in policy development
- Lack of strategic documents and relevant laws (in sector of nature and environment protection - lack of documentation of key areas for biodiversity and weak enforcement

***ii) Conclusion of discussion:***

Following the results of discussion participants decided that **3 top challenges** they face are:

1. Lack of available financial sources needed for operational work and project activities
2. CSOs recognize that many of them have limited technical and organizational capacity. Weak capacity was identified in fundraising, governance, technical areas of development, leadership and management.
3. Lack of coordination (networking) between donor agencies as well as all key stakeholders (government, institutions, CSOs)

**Suggestions for how CEPF can help**

After the problems/challenges are identified participants proposed suggestions on how can CEPF help in order to improve existing situation:

1. CEPF should use its reputation to encourage the effective implementation of projects in the field (concretely: coordinate activities with World Bank in order to avoid overlapping in activities)
2. CEPF could provide financial support for continuation on project activities (from previous projects) in order to secure sustainability of project results.
3. CEPF could create program and provide financial support for Project focused on strengthening CSOs capacities in the field of Nature and Environment protection in order to strengthen their capacities for the dialogue with the government; to raise

Civil society's motivation to engage in decision-making to sensitize authorities for inclusion of civil society in decision-making processes.

4. CEPF could create program and provide financial support for Project focused on Strengthening CSO capacities for explicate topic area (eg. nature protection or biodiversity or water management). Program could be based to strengthen CSO capacities to improve the rule of law, fight corruption and reduce the environmental pollution in the above topics.
5. CEPF could provide financial support to establish "Regional Nature Protection Network" in order to improve coordination between countries, donor agencies, CSOs and governmental and public dealing with nature and environmental protection.
6. CEPF could provide financial support for development of Strategic documents (e.g. Nature Protection/Local Biodiversity Protection Planes and Studies)

## Session 4 – Exercise – National position to CEPF long-term goals

Ms. Lejla Šuman presented and gave an overview of session. She presented table of targets about Civil Society capacity and Conservation Planning Strategies. Participants discussed each of the targets and **general conclusion is that Goals/Targets have been met partially** since there are a lot of problems which needs to be solved and there is a real need to continue with activities in the region.

**Human resources** - Individually certain number of CSOs possess technical competencies but collectively no. Improvement and further strengthening of CSOs capacities is needed.

**Management systems and strategic planning** – Only big CSOs possess sufficient institutional and operational capacity and structures to raise funds for conservation. Collectively NO - Improvement and further strengthening of CSOs capacities is needed.

**Partnerships** - Effective mechanisms exist for conservation-focused civil society groups to work in partnership with one another, and through networks with local communities, governments, the private sector, donors, and other important stakeholders, in pursuit of common objectives. CEPF is one of mechanisms and CEPF helped to establish good partnership between all above stakeholders within projects implemented. Improvement is still needed.

**Financial resources.** Local civil society organizations have access to long-term funding sources but the problem is lack of capacities in CSOs to prepare high quality projects. Improvement is still needed.

**Transboundary cooperation.** In multi-country hotspots, mechanisms exist for collaboration. There were several projects implemented via CEPF grants but improvement is still needed

*The Grid supplied by CEPF is completed and added as Annex 2.*

## Session 5 – Co-funding

Ms. Lejla Šuman presented and gave an overview of session. The presentation was followed by a role playing activity, where the participants were divided into two groups to analyze different funding sources available and challenges and obstacles to fundraising.

### ***i) Summary of discussion:***

Participants discussed different funding sources available and challenges and obstacles to fundraising. The outcome for each group was the following:

#### Group one:

- There are different financial sources available (International agencies: SIDA, TIKa, EU Commission, CEPF, WORLD BANK, etc and domestic ones (Environmental Protection Funds, Ministry Funds, Private companies and Banks, Development Agencies).
- Lack of financial capacities is one of the biggest problem CSOs are facing. Most of CSOs in BiH has an annual turnover of app 50.000 EUR or less. CSOs are faced with problem when donor agency requires much greater amount of annual turnover and organization are automatically excluded from the application process.
- There is no unified mechanism for allocation of national public funds to CSOs – current mechanisms depend on the level of authority and the institution allocating funds.

#### Group two:

- Nonexistence of “coordination body/mechanism” responsible for representation of CSOs interests (CSOs dealing with nature and environment protection) to donor agencies
- Lack of financial sources for co-financing at local level
- Lack of capacities in CSOs to prepare quality projects (including the budget)
- Allocation of funds are not based on the assessment of needs in different areas and sectors
- There is favorable and preferential treatment of certain groups (especially in case of national funding level)

#### ***ii) Conclusion of discussion:***

General conclusions are:

- CSOs do not have equal treatment neither among themselves, nor with public institutions while receiving support
- The application forms for proposals are sometimes too complex to fill out
- In the majority of cases, allocation of financial support on national level is based on personal connections and acquaintances.
- It is considered that a large number of decisions related to public calls are not based on transparent and fair treatment, but rather on personal relations and acquaintances

#### **Suggestions for how CEPF can help**

Following the results of discussion participants decided that **3 ideas** of how CEPF can help grantees in the future with co-funding are:

- CEPF could provide support to establish “*Coordination Secretariat*” which will serve as “*Clearing House*” responsible for representing the interest of CSOs (dealing with nature and environment protection) in donor community and which will be responsible for allocation and monitoring of funds collected/received from different international donor agencies and state authorities/institutions. Besides that the role of “*Coordination Secretariat*” would be communicate with international donor agencies and to actively participate in development and implementation of their Granting Programs (programs needs to be based on CSOs needs in different areas and sectors).

- CEPF could increase financial support for capacity building programs for CSOs (support for CSOs through training sessions, instructions, study trips, especially drafting of project proposals and applications to European Commission programs)
- CEPF could provide support to establish “CSOs Incubator” The “Incubator” is a concept borrowed from successful business practices, designed to accelerate the successful development of CSOs. The application of this concept will allow civil society access to a variety of support resources and could be a hub for civil society activity by providing civil society organizations (CSOs) a central location to connect with one another and to develop their own capacity. The “Incubator” also could collect funds from profitable private and state companies and other donor agencies and in later stage create grant programs available for all CSOs “Incubator” members in order to provide them financial support for implementation of their project and activities.

## Session 6 – Communications

Ms. Lejla Šuman presented and gave an overview of session. The presentation was followed by a role playing activity, where the participants were divided into two groups to discuss how grantees are communicating conservation activities in KBAs to the wider audience, what is working, what tools are being used and how CEPF can help.

### ***i) Summary of discussion:***

Participants discussed main communication channels and activities. The outcome for each group was the following:

#### Group one:

- Most of organizations are using printed promotional materials to communicate with public (brochures, leaflets, magazines, etc)
- There is lack of education among media reporters on nature and environment protection issues
- Lack of media interest (media owners and editors do not take an interest in environment stories). In rare cases where environmental stories are given space either in the electronic or print media, these stories are either politically inclined and often lack in-depth articulation of critical issues at hand.

#### Group two:

- Web pages and social networks are main tools for communication (provides opportunity to communicate with a large number of people, boosting donations, sharing knowledge, alerting people, recruiting volunteers)
- CSOs do not promote their activities beyond their local area of activity
- Organization of different events (round tables, workshops, meetings) providing space for direct communication with citizens
- Lack of CSOs capacities (assets, funds, staff with promotional skills) for communicating with main target groups

### **General conclusions are:**

- Many organizations do great work but sell themselves short when it comes to getting their message across public
- CSOs do not have developed Communication strategy (and do not have capacities to develop it)

- Lack of media interest and lack of journalists ethic is a regional problem
- Poor communication between CSOs (nationally or regionally – CSOs are not exchanging information between themselves)
- Poor media development and interest in the area of nature and environment protection

### **Suggestions for how CEPF can help**

Following the results of discussion participants decided that **3 ideas** of how CEPF can help grantees in the future with *communications* are:

- CEPF could provide support to establish “*Coordination Secretariat*” which will be responsible to represent the interest of CSOs in communication with government and donor community.
- CEPF could create program for strengthening media capacities in the area of nature and environment protection (organization of capacity building trainings, study visits in one of EU countries and media competition awards). Program also could involve Universities because environmental journalists should receive specialized education to prepare them for careers in writing about the nature and environment protection.
- CEPF could create program for strengthening CSOs capacities for public relations in order to enable them to develop Communication Strategy. Implementation of Strategy will enable them to communicate key messages to public on better way and to share information with other CSOs (nationally or regionally).

## **Session 7 – Opening the afternoon session**

Ms. Lejla Šuman opened the afternoon session by welcoming the second group of participants and giving a brief overview of the meeting objectives and expected outcomes. She was followed by a brief introduction of all the participants arrived on afternoon session.

## **Session 8 – Achievements of national CEPF grantees**

In this session each grantee had opportunity to present their project (main activities implemented and results achieved).

*All presentations are attached to this report.*

## **Session 9 –Networking and collaboration**

Ms. Lejla Šuman presented and gave an overview of session. The presentation was followed by a role playing activity, where the participants were divided into two groups to identify networking and collaboration opportunities between CEPF grantees, other organizations, initiatives, governments and private sector within or outside the country.

### ***i) Summary of discussion:***

Participants discussed main opportunities networking and collaboration. The outcome for each group was the following:

#### Group one:

- Most CSOs think of networking as attending "events" (such as, conferences, professional association meetings) and making "elevator pitches" and exchanging business cards. But that's just one way to network.

- Collaboration involves a number of activities and it is absolutely needed in each stage of the project (conceptualization, proposal preparation and submission, management, implementation, etc.).
- Different institutions and stakeholders need to be connected in order to implement project successfully.
- Lack of coordination and networking between CSOs (nationally and regionally) is a problem
- Many CSOs see networking as important for their policy engagement, especially with similar actors with whom 'bonding' networks have proven useful for information sharing and learning. But they work together all too rarely – caused in part by a perception of competition for funding and influence.

#### Group two:

- The driving force for collaboration is motivation. In order for a collaboration to succeed, everyone involved needs to feel that they gain something from the collaboration or feel that they are doing a meaningful thing and working towards a valuable end result.
- In order to find the right people to collaborate with, the project needs to be communicated clearly. Giving information about the project and its goals helps people decide whether to participate or not.
- Online networking is one of the ways to expand network.
- Lack of capacities and expertise in relevant institutions causes lack of their interest to participate in project activities

#### **General conclusions are:**

- Poor Networking was identified as a major challenge. It is the cause of duplication of efforts, conflicting strategies at community level, a lack of learning from experience.
- Negative competition for financial resources also undermines the reputation of the sector and the effectiveness of CSO activities at community level.
- Networks are a powerful mechanism for : sharing information and knowledge, promoting communication, acting as effective catalysts for building up relationships and commitment among the public, private and civil stakeholders, etc and needs to be used in project implementation as much as possible
- When more organizations are spreading the collective message, the message reaches a wider audience, increased awareness and may in turn stimulate more support for the issue.

#### **Suggestions for how CEPF can help**

Following the results of discussion participants decided that **3 ideas** of how CEPF can encourage and facilitate collaboration are:

- CEPF could provide support to establish “*Coordination Secretariat/CSO resource Center*” which will be responsible to network; share experiences (Mediterranean Countries - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia) and development frameworks for effective collaboration and donor coordination.
- CEPF could make (extra) funding available to Mediterranean Countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia) and to create, finance and implement thematic program for networking and advocacy.

- CEPF could continue to finance CSOs projects (national and regional) with required networking component (e.g. at least two CSOs in partnership could apply on CfP)

## Session 10 – National Conservation Priorities

Ms. Lejla Šuman presented and gave an overview of session. Participants discussed main National Conservation Priorities. The outcome was the following:

### 10a) National Conservation Priorities

#### ***i) Are these still relevant nationally?***

**Yes, CEPF national conservation priorities are more than relevant nationally.**

The territory of protected areas in BiH is relatively small, and the percentage share as compared to the total BiH territory is very low and significantly below the European average. In 2011, the percentage of protected areas in BiH was 2%. The percentage of protected areas has increased over the past 9 years with the establishment of the National Park “Una” in 2008 and similar activities. However, that percentage is still below the level of protection envisaged in numerous strategic documents.

Existing protected areas are not implementing fully: system of protection, monitoring and sustainable use. The reasons are different: insufficient care of the competent institutions through insufficient budget allocations, inadequate structure of employees, lack of management plans, Manager/management of protected areas are not appointed, etc.

#### ***ii) Are there any new factors to consider?***

Bosnia and Herzegovina is developed new National Biodiversity Strategy and Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

#### ***iii) What is the biggest challenge?***

- Due to fragmented BiH structure the challenge is how coordinate activities between all key stakeholder institutions
- Different Country priorities (BiH – Non EU Country) and (Croatia and Slovenia – EU Countries)
- How to make people more interested of the importance of priority key biodiversity areas (low level of public awareness)

#### ***iv) What should be prioritised?***

- Activities focused on promotion of ecotourism needs to be continued (with active involvement of local communities)
- Field research needs to be continued
- Activities focused on strengthening capacities of CSOs needs to be continued
- Activities focused of strengthening capacities (management improvement) of Protected areas needs to continued (development of Management Planes, technical support, etc)
- Activities focused on strengthening public awareness needs to be continued

#### **Please outline any other points raised:**

BiH is faced with a lot of problems in biodiversity sector and any financial support is more that welcome in order to improve existing situation:

- Data on the majority of identified indicators for monitoring the biological diversity state are not available in BiH.
- Systematic collection and analysis of biological diversity data are almost non-existent.



- Expert institutions responsible for the collection of biological diversity data do not exist at the state level or at the level of the FBiH, the RS and the BD, and neither do databases.
- Data collection and monitoring of biodiversity trends are necessary for efficient management of natural biological resources, which requires a quick and adequate response.
- Discrepancies in legislation at the cantonal and federal levels present one of the problems of nature protection on the territory of the FBiH. Regulations in some cantons are completely independent of federal regulations, which is reflected in discrepancies related to protected categories. This prevents the full implementation of the FBiH Law on Nature Protection, which is, in this case, the umbrella law.

### 10b) Changes in priority Key Biodiversity Areas

Participants discussed KBA. After discussion participants stressed the following:

- A lot of work needs to be done in current KBAs (current KBAs are still in focus)
- The real need is to expand the territory of KBA at least on Sub-Mediterranean Areas in order to allow others to be involved in process and projects (e.g. National Park "Una; Protected Area of Canton Sarajevo, etc)
- If the above is not possible than create programs based on "Ecosystem Areas". In the case of natural sites, support should be ensured for an area which reflects the special requirements for species, habitats, etc.

### Meeting conclusions

#### **Additional points raised in the meeting**

Stakeholders gave additional recommendations for CEPF (how CEPF can help to additionally CSOs):

- Organizing "Donor Conference" in order to help CSOs to secure/find funds for projects
- CEPF should programing own Funds according to "Level of Development of CSOs". Different types of programs needs to be developed for "Grassroots CSOs" and for "Professional CSOs".
- CEPF could provide a phase of follow-up funding to build on and consolidate results achieved
- CEPF could create "Donor Database" – Database of donors financing nature protection projects
- Since there is a Lack of strategic documents and Laws CEPF could conduct advocacy programmes and building the capacity of CSOs to use results of CEPF projects to influence policy

#### **General meeting conclusions**

General feedback during the discussions showed that this meeting was an important event during which CSOs discussed very important issues in their everyday work (financing issues, obstacles, challenges, opportunities, networking issues, etc).

In general, participants stressed that CEPF financial support helped CSO to achieve positive results in terms of enhanced biodiversity conservation actions, project development and management, increased networking with other CSOs and government agencies, and more engagement of local communities. CSOs stressed that CEPF financial support help them to:

- Achieve valuable results on the field (through field research and practical activities) and to put biodiversity conservation on the agenda of local governments
- Facilitated networking and building partnerships at national and regional level. “Informal CSO network” was established. Base for strong network of civil society organizations dealing with nature protection exist. This base should be used for work together in future, share concerns and act in collaborations with government, business and policy makers for long term sustainability of conservation initiatives in region
- Technical capacities of institutions dealing with nature protection were strengthened (NP “Hutovo Blato”)
- Enhanced citizens awareness
- Improved capacity of CSOs (project development, management and implementation) but still needs to be improved
- Strengthened participation of local communities in biodiversity conservation

The main conclusion of the meeting was that, although the CEPF program is in final stage (period 2012-2015) there is a real need to continue this program in future. It will allow us to manage our sites better and will secure sustainability of projects results achieved in period 2012-2015.

Also, participants agreed that events such as this meeting are very useful because it is allowed to CSOs to express their concerns, real needs and proposals for future programing.

All in all, the meeting provided a forum for fruitful discussion and sharing of experiences among CSOS and representatives from the different institutions (government, municipality, environmental protection funds).

### **Feedback from meeting organizer**

*Please add any comments to CEPF about the meeting logistics or content – suggested areas of improvement, challenges faced etc.*

No additional point raised

### **Annexes:**

Annex 1: List of Participants

Annex 2: CEPF long-term goals – Civil Society worksheet

Annex 3: Photographs from the meeting (Maximum 4 imbedded in the document)