

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

Organization:	The United Society for Developing Water Resources and Environment (USDWE)
Country:	Jordan
Date of meeting:	Feb 5, 2015

Objectives

The National Meeting will:

- i) 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.
- ii) Allow the opportunity for the exchange of experience and networking between national organizations.
- iii) 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:

1) Challenges grantees have in implementing their projects

i) Summary of discussion:

The following grantees attended the meeting:

1. Bab Al-Salam
2. The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN)
3. The United Society for Developing Water Resources and Environment (USDWE)
4. Sweima cooperative Society

Representatives from each grantee were given the chance to introduce themselves, and talk briefly about their society. Moreover, they were given the chance to clarify and discuss the progress of CEPF funded projects and the challenges that faced them starting by applying for the announced proposal and ending by closing out the project.

The grantees agreed that there are number of advantages for CEPF support such as CEPF fund support some topics that other donors doesn't like researches and plans. Although the grantees clarified a list of challenges that exceeded the requested three challenges, but the grantees in general agreed on the same challenges and spoke the same language. The Challenges are as follow:

1. In case of large grants, the 24 months duration is not sufficient for proper implementation especially if the implementation of the project activities is depending on preparation for studies, land use plans and other relevant researches.

2. Additional time is needed to communicate with surrounding communities, relevant stakeholders and decision makers to understand their needs and involve them in the project activities.
3. The On-line Reporting system is restrictive as it depends on achieved milestones and doesn't give a space for describing the completed activities which will lead at the end to achieving the milestones. As the payments are connected to achieving the milestones, this usually leads to delaying approving the payment and delaying completing the activities needed to achieve the milestones.
4. Payments take long time to be released which forces the grantee to depend on his own financial resources until he receives the payment in his bank account. Moreover, the budget in general is restricted and doesn't give much space for re-allocation from one budget line to another.
5. Some of the societies couldn't reimburse the expenses that they paid from their own resources because of lack of knowledge of the financial procedures of CEPF. Such local societies couldn't handle such financial loss.
6. Number of requested documentations is too much compared to the grant size and compared to other donors especially in case of supporting documents for financial expenditures. Local societies can hardly understand and secure needed documentation.
7. Sometimes, the requested information can't be obtained accurately such as number of hectares saved as direct impact for completing project's activities.
8. The language is a big challenge especially in case of small NGOs like Sweima and Bab Al-Salam Societies. These Societies are located in small villages and consist of local simple people.
9. Moreover, although local societies are well aware of their problems, but they lack to specialized resources to prepare and apply a competitive proposal, conduct researches and feasibility studies needed before and during the implementation of the project, and handle needed evaluation reports. Accordingly, they had to hire consultants or seek professional help. The size of small grant is hardly enough for activities on ground, and there isn't enough allocation for such consultation fees. Maybe there is a need to change target groups of CEPF in the area.
10. Accordingly, there is a need to conduct programs to build capacities of local societies as part of CEPF programs in the area.
11. CEPF Priorities and objectives in the area are restricted which forced local NGOs to tailor their issues and proposals to suite these objectives regardless of the core problem of the local society that need to be addressed. This is one of the main reasons for lack of sustainability for project's results.

ii) Conclusion of discussion: The final output will be a collective decision of the whole group of the 3 top challenges they face.

- The English Language is a barrier for most of the local societies which are located in small villages and consist of local simple people
- Payments take long time to be released which forces the grantee to depend on their own financial resources until receiving the payment.
- Number of requested documentation starting by applying the proposal and ending by closing out the project is big and needs a lot of time and efforts. This includes the documentation requested for financial payments which make the financial procedures challenging and delay the due payments.

2) Exercise on the national position to CEPF long-term goals

The Grid supplied by CEPF will be completed and added as Annex 2.

Attached are the Grids completed by each Grantee.

3) Co-funding discussion

i) Summary of discussion:

Each grantee was given the opportunity to clarify their available funding sources, challenges and the obstacles facing them and they were as follow:

1. Only large organizations such as RSCN or specialized ones like USDWE have access to different Donor Agencies due to their strong English language skills and specialized technical skills. So, they have various funding sources such as CEPF, European Union, World Bank, USAID, Jordan Government and many others.
2. On the other hand, the majority of local societies which consist of local members from the civil society have very limited access to funding sources due to the language barrier and technical skills. They mainly depend on local productive initiatives such as small farms, production kitchen and supermarkets. Their main sources of funding are Ministry of Planning, GEF program, and members' fees.
3. Local societies don't know about majority of the funding opportunities because they don't have enough skills to access their websites or subscribe to their regular announcements for new calls. Moreover, some local Societies don't have computers, internet or even required skills to operate them.
4. They mentioned that GEF Program is well known by majority of local societies because it announces its new opportunities in the newspapers in addition to their website, and they conduct orientation workshops in the governorates and invite different NGOs to attend.

ii) Conclusion of discussion: The final output will be a collective decision of the whole group of at least 3 ideas of how CEPF can help grantees in the future with co-funding

- Announce new calls for proposals in Arabic Language in the local newspapers and conduct local workshops to clarify to local NGOs the objectives of these calls and how to apply for them
- Allocate one of the annual grants to build capacities of local societies such as provide them with needed computers and train them on using them, build their managerial, technical and financial skills, and train them on fund raising skills
- Develop a regular newsletter in Arabic for available calls for proposals for different donors and distribute it through Local coordinator.

4) Communications: discussion covering 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:

When the grantees were given the opportunity to talk about their experience in communicating their activities, it was clear again the big gap between large grantees such as RSCN and small grantees such as Sweima and Bab Al-Salam.

As RSCN possess the needed technical and financial resources, it communicates its relevant activities in KBAs using different methodologies such as posting them on RSCN website, Facebook, develop brochures and flyers, and publish monthly newsletter to its (2,000) members.

On the other hand, majority of local societies don't have enough technical and financial resources to do the same. They even don't have a website or Facebook page. They usually present their activities only during General Assembly meetings. Also, they managed to develop simple flyers using their own resources and distributed within their communities only.

ii) Conclusion of discussion: The final output will be a collective decision of the whole group of at least 3 ideas of how CEPF can help grantees in the future with communications.

- Allocate one of the annual grants to build capacities of local societies such as provide them with needed computers, train them on using them.
- Design a website for each society connected to different social media, design and print educational brochures about their different activities.
- Help these societies by conducting large conferences or exhibitions that gather these societies and provide them with the opportunity to communicate, know each other, distribute their brochures and present their activities

5) Networking and collaboration

i) Summary of discussion:

Mr. Munir Al-Adgham who is representing GEF in Jordan joined the meeting in the afternoon session. USDWE has sent official invitations to several stakeholders such as European Union, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Environment, GEF, and some local NGOs but the main stakeholder who managed to attend was GEF Regional Representative; Munir Al-Adgham.

The grantees welcomed him and each grantee delivered a brief presentation about their project, objectives and achieved outputs. They also clarified their major challenges which opened the discussion with Mr. Munir about how local societies can collaborate with relevant stakeholders including different donors such as GEF. He discussed with the grantees their projects objectives and achieved outcomes, challenges they are facing and how they could overcome them.

Mr. Munir confirmed the information that grantees mentioned about GEF in the morning sessions which are: GEF announces its new opportunities in the newspapers in addition to their website using Arabic Language, and they conduct orientation workshops in the governorates and invite different NGO. Mr. Munir added that GEF asks the local societies

about their needs and try to tailor the grant to satisfy such needs. GEF has a local office in Amman and its doors are open for everybody. GEF managed over 15 years to support almost (500) projects. This helped GEF program to expand and sustain in Jordan over decades. Grantees assured that they are in continuous need to collaborate with Donors the same way GEF is doing in Jordan. GEF enabled the local societies to overcome the language and communication barriers which facilitated the collaboration process.

The grantees added that they need during the different stages of project implementation to collaborate with their local communities supported by local authorities especially the municipalities. One of the grantees clarified that they tried to convince the local community to stop littering and dumping trashes in the local eco-park and they asked the local municipality to support them, but they discovered at the end that some of the trucks that dump such pollutants are owned by the Municipality itself.

Another grantee approached Ministry of Agriculture to support them to stop one of the activities that is threatening the ecosystem balance in the relevant KBA. They simply couldn't as the Ministry should modify policies and strategies to address such an issue.

So, local grantees are in continuous need for collaboration with donors, local community and relevant authorities, but they usually can't gain such support. Large grantees such as RSCN can easily participate in national projects and conferences, but small ones can't due to the above mentioned obstacles.

ii) Conclusion of discussion: The final output will be a collective decision of the whole group of at least 3 ideas of how CEPF can help encourage and facilitate this.

- Conduct wide national conference and invite different relevant local NGOs, different donors, local authorities, community leaders and other relevant stakeholders. Provide an opportunity for donors to present their programs and funding opportunities. Facilitate the same opportunity for the relevant government departments that have programs to support local NGOs. Give the opportunity for local NGOs to communicate, know each other, market their activities, and discuss the different challenges they are facing.
- Allocate one of the annual grants to develop a website that gathers all available funding opportunities in Arabic and update it on regular basis. Grantees can access this website to know about the available funding opportunities.
- Allocate one of the annual grants to build capacities of local societies such as: provide them with needed computers, train them on using them to enable them access the developed website for proposals. Develop brochures for these societies that they can distribute during the national conferences to promote their activities.

6) National Conservation Priorities

Please summarise and state the overall opinion of meeting participants on the Investment Priorities:

i) Are these still relevant nationally?

Yes, they still relevant nationally, but there is a need to expand the geographic area of the KBAs to cover all protected areas, special conservation areas in Jordan as they include threatened habitats, and birds migration routes.

ii) Are there any new factors to consider?

Yes. There is a need to consider programs for institutional and technical strengthening of the local NGOs in the targeted KBAs to enable them better implement CEPF grants and sustain the results.

iii) What is the biggest challenge?

The biggest challenge is to tailor the local community needs to CEPF priorities in the area. There is a need to focus more on the needs of the targeted communities and their sustainable development. It's difficult to gain the advocacy of local community to protect the ecosystem if this community is poor and lack to basic life needs.

iv) What should be prioritised?

There is a need to add to the current list of priorities the following points:

1. Expand the geographic area of CEPF KBAs to include all KBAs in Jordan.
2. Develop programs to build capacities of relevant NGOs.
3. Focus of community needs and sustainable development.

Please outline any other points raised:

Keeping targeted geographic areas as they are will limit the fund and projects to few NGOs located in these KBAs over the coming years and will prevent expanding to other NGOs.

7) Changes in priority Key Biodiversity Areas

Please provide any information on the suggestions made by participants to add or remove current KBAs.

Participants agreed to keep the current KBAs and expand the geographic area of CEPF KBAs to include all KBAs in Jordan.

8) Additional points raised in the meeting

Please add any other questions raised or statements made by participants which CEPF should take into consideration.

- Most of the important points that need to be taken into consideration were raised by grantees during the first session as clarified above under "Challenges grantees have in implementing their projects".
- Additionally, separate similar meetings should be conducted for large and small grantees as they don't share some of the main challenges.
- The value of small grants (US\$20,000) is too small and is not sufficient to implement a comprehensive project with sustainable outcomes.

Meeting conclusions

General meeting conclusion

Please summarise a general meeting overview and record the general feedback from stakeholders

- The meeting in general was productive as the grantees were given a valuable opportunity to talk about the different challenges they faced during the projects implementation and their suggestions to overcome them. Moreover, this gave the opportunity for other grantees to discuss and benefit from their experience.
- Moreover, they were given the opportunity to talk about challenges they are facing in general to sustain their societies and their suggestions for CEPF to help them to overcome such challenges.
- USDWE sent invitations to several stakeholders, but the main stakeholder who managed to attend was GEF Regional Representative; Munir Al-Adgham. He discussed with the grantees their projects objectives and achieved outcomes, challenges they are facing and how they could overcome them.
- He advised the grantees to develop their objectives based on their actual needs and look for funding opportunities that satisfy these needs. The grantee should contribute to several sustainability factors to ensure sustainability of results after project completion.
- Moreover, he clarified GEF program objectives, policies and welcomed the grantees to visit him to discuss possible collaboration opportunities.
- One of the important suggestions was documenting lessons learned from each grantee and arrange field visits between relevant NGOs to communicate, collaborate and benefit from these lessons on ground

Feedback from meeting organizer

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

- In general, the selected location for the meeting was excellent. It provided the participants with the needed peace and privacy to speak freely about their concerns.
- The organizer managed to move from one session to another, but the participants needed much more time than the one hour allocated for the first session which is “Challenges grantees have in implementing their projects”.
- Each participant needed at least 25 minutes to talk in details about the challenges they faced and their suggestions to overcome them. This gave the opportunity for others to benefit from their experience.
- Large and small grantees agreed some times on the same challenges and suggestions, but large grantees in general are in a better position than the small ones.

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)

Annex 3: Photographs from the meeting



