

CEPF Celebrates Its 2,000th Grantee: NatureUganda

- By CEPF (originally posted on cepf.net website)



Oil prospects in Uganda's Murchison Falls National Park are branded by species, including rii, the word for giraffe in the Luo language; © Megan Seman

In August 2015, [NatureUganda](#) became the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund's (CEPF's) **2,000th grantee** when the organization received a one-year, \$10,000 grant to guide biodiversity conservation in the oil and gas exploration and production areas of Uganda's Albertine Graben, an area of high biodiversity with 14 important bird and biodiversity areas (IBAs), 10 protected areas and three Ramsar sites.

Oil and gas exploration in the Albertine Graben began in 1998, before CEPF even existed. Today, the impacts – habitat fragmentation, ground water contamination, pollution and more – still affect the local people and biodiversity. With support from CEPF through its investment in the Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot, **NatureUganda is working to help ensure the sustainable management of oil and gas development** in the country.

According to NatureUganda, "Ninety percent of Uganda's gross domestic product is derived from natural resources (tourism, forestry, fisheries), making biodiversity a priority economic development resource." The country's national development plan identifies tourism, agriculture and minerals/oil and gas development as the top three priority sectors, but the expansion of oil and gas development has the potential to lead to increased poaching and decreased tourism potential.



Through the CEPF project, NatureUganda will:

Collate biodiversity data for Murchison Falls National Park that will guide the development of oil and gas activities;

1. Monitor impacts of oil and gas activities by piloting existing environmental monitoring plan developed by Uganda National Environment Management Authority;
2. Disseminate lessons learned to the Civil Society Coalition on Oil and Gas and Uganda Poverty and Conservation Learning Group.

“This grant captures what CEPF is all about,” said Dan Rothberg, grant director for CEPF. “We are investing in a small organization with a targeted activity – providing information to the Government of Uganda, the private sector and civil society – to enable the country to meet its economic development imperatives while not undercutting the resource base on which it survives.”

Question: Can you describe the project CEPF is helping to support?

Opige: The Albertine Graben Region where oil and gas has been discovered in Uganda is also a key biodiversity area (KBA). With funding from CEPF, NatureUganda has the opportunity to guide proper implementation using the existing environment monitoring plan. The **primary goal is to demonstrate the use of biodiversity protocol within a multi-stakeholder (private sector, government and civil society) arrangement** to provide data that guides oil and gas activities in a manner that is favorable to biodiversity.

Question: What excites you most about the project?

Opige: The project is strengthening the positioning of NatureUganda to engage government and private sector (oil and gas companies) for the benefit of business and conservation. It is a **unique opportunity to demonstrate that when well guided, development and conservation can be sustainable.**

Question: What challenges are you facing?

Opige: The best way for this project to deliver is to ensure that the stakeholders here, including the government and private oil companies, are on the same pace in implementing the protocol. So far, there has been a challenge in harmonizing time and scheduling of priorities.

Question: How will the project benefit biodiversity?

Opige: The data obtained through the agreed monitoring protocol will be used to guide the activities during infrastructure development and production. The biodiversity sensitive areas will be highlighted and avoided as much as possible.

Question: Will the project benefit people?

Opige: The project focuses on Murchison Falls National Park, and there is an expectation that the tourism sector, which is growing steadily, should not be affected by oil and gas development, leading to a benefit for people.



Members of the NatureUganda biodiversity team during seismic biodiversity sensitivity mapping; © NatureUganda

Question: Do you see signs of hope in the region?

Opige: Yes, during the oil and gas exploration and seismic surveys, NatureUganda was part of the biodiversity team guiding on the sensitive areas and the recommendations we provided were implemented.

Question: Why is it important for people outside the Eastern Afromontane hotspot to care about this work?

Opige: The Albertine Graben is an ecosystem which is interconnected: It is a national park, a Ramsar site and a KBA with international recognition of importance to the global community.

Previously published on the BirdLife International website on 2 December 2015
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Question: What is the significance of CEPF's support for your organization?

Opige: CEPF's support is **strengthening our position as a nongovernmental organization that can help influence the decisions and actions of both the government and private sector.**

Question: How is CEPF different from other donors?

Opige: CEPF gives NGOs an opportunity to develop capacity in a focus area, and CEPF's review of grantee applications ensures that the approved project has a clear focus and deliverables.

[Nature Uganda](#) is the BirdLife Partner in Uganda.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. More information on CEPF can be found at www.cepf.net.

BirdLife International, together with the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) and the [Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society \(BirdLife in Ethiopia\)](#) form the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot (2012-2017). The investment will support civil society in applying innovative approaches to conservation in under-capacitated and underfunded protected areas, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) and priority corridors in the region.