

CSOs capacity needs assessment in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Project Summary	
Project Title	Non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) capacity needs assessment in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.
CEPF Region	Eastern Afromontane Hotspot
Project Location	Eleven Key Biodiversity Areas in Democratic Republic of Congo: Forest west of Lake Edward, Ijldwi Island (Lake Kivu), Iranagi forest, Itombwe Mountains, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Lendu Plateau, Luama-Katanga – Mount Kabobo, Marungu Highlands, Mount Hoyo Reserve, Rutshuru, Virunga National Park. The project will focus on CSOs based in and near Bukavu, Goma and Uvira towns.
Project Duration	March 2013 –July 2015
Strategic Direction from the CEPF Ecosystem Profile	3. Initiate and support sustainable financing and related actions for the conservation of priority Key Biodiversity Areas and corridors.
Investment priority	3.4. Support the institutional development of civil society organizations in Eritrea, South Sudan, Yemen and Democratic Republic of Congo and their role in the conservation of KBAs in respective countries.
Funding Amount	US\$ 5,563
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Background

Since its creation in 2000, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) has become a global leader in enabling civil society organisations (CSOs) to participate in and benefit from the conservation of key biodiversity areas in the world. The Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of these biodiversity hotspots that CEPF has identified and secured funding to protect them through increased capacity and participation of local CSOs. According to Plumptre et al. (2003), the Eastern RDC which is part of the Albertine Rift is one of the most biologically diverse regions in Africa. It comprises over half of the Africa's bird species, 40% of mammals and 20% of Africa's amphibians and plants. The area is also very unique in many other ways. In some areas of the Albertine Rift, the human population density exceeds 1000 people/km². The most challenging issue in this area is the repetitive occurrences of civil unrests for over the past 20 years of civil wars. This insecurity has exacerbated the level of wildlife trade. The region also experiences natural calamities such as continuous earthquakes and volcanic activities, etc.

In order to build the capacity of local CSOs, CEPF does first of all assess the capacity needs of the CSOs on the ground, hence the objective of this consultancy work.

Brief background about Eastern DR Congo

The DRC is located in central sub-saharan Africa. The country is surrounded by (clockwise from the southwest) Angola, South Atlantic Ocean, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Zambia. DRC is the second largest country in Africa covering an area of 2,345,408km² and has a population of over 77 million (2014 estimate).

Ecologically and geologically, the Eastern DRC is known as the Albertine Rift and covers most of the South and North Kivu provinces. This part of the country is both mountainous but also presents tectonic rifts and great lakes originating from its active volcanic activities. This ecosystem is shared by DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and the tip of Zambia. The Albertine Rift is a biodiversity hotspot, home to the rare mountain gorilla and l'hoest's and hamlyn's monkeys, and many other endemic species of butterflies, birds, reptiles, insects, fish, plants, etc.

Unfortunately, civil wars and insecurity have been raging the Eastern DR Congo for over 2 decades now, making the situation in the area one of the most complex crises for anyone to grasp. However, there have been efforts to put an end to this crisis including the deployment of the UN peacekeeping forces, negotiations between government and rebels, peace treaties, etc. Strengthening civil society groups at the local level has also been a focus in order to improve rural development and health care, promote peace building and wildlife conservation.

The aim of this consultancy?

It is well known that the Eastern DRC is a very important biodiversity hotspots not only because of its biodiversity richness but also increasing threats to biodiversity mostly due to lack of capacity, lack of funding, lack of security etc. The consultancy aimed at determining the capacity and needs of the civil society organizations (CSOs) operating in and near the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo's KBAs. The capacity and training needs of these CSOs was assessed using the CEPF tracking tool that allows to respectively evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in administrative, personnel, project and financial management skills, fundraising, accountability, result delivery etc. Crucial capacity development areas were identified and 9 selected CSOs in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo participated in a training workshop that introduced them to project design, management and fundraising skills.

Capacity needs assessment for Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

We realised that there are so many CSOs operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in and around the 11 identified KBAs, namely: Forest west of Lake Edwards, Idjwi Islands in Lake, Iranagi forest, Itombwe Mountains, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Lendu Plateau, Luama-Katanga – Mount Kabobo, Marungu Highlands, Mount Hoyo Reserve, Rutshuru and Virunga National Park. Some of these CSOs have already secured funds from CEPF to implement conservation and development activities in the area. During the CEPF call for proposals, over 100 CSOs applied for CEPF small grants from but only one local CSO "Horizon Nature" working in and around the KBA of Kahuzi-Biega National Park was successful. This shows that the fundraising skills and capacity of the personnel of CSOs in Eastern DRC is not sufficient. Therefore, there was an obvious need to tackle such weakness. Based on how CSOs were ranked during the small grant application, RIT and the consultant decided to assess the capacity of the top 20 CSOs and train at least 10 CSOs in identified capacity development areas in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Consultancy results

Sixteen CSOs have submitted the assessment forms. These CSOs are: Actions de développement pour la protection de l'environnement et la promotion des droits humains (ADEPDH), Association for Social Development and Safeguard of Environment (ADSSE), Dynamique pour la protection de l'environnement (DPE), Fondation Nature et Humanité (FNH), Jeunes Méthodistes Libre pour le Développement (JMLD),

Lutte nationale contre la pauvreté (LUNACOP), Environment civil society network (SOCEARUCO), Cadre de Concentration Communautaire du Parc National de kahuzi-Biega (CACOPKAB), Solidarite des femmes pour le développement integral (SOFEDI), Solidarite pour la promotion rurale (SOPR), Protection de l'environnement et du développement integer (PEDI), Recherche e actions pour le développement (RADD), Programme Integre pour le development du pauple pygme (PIDP), The Pole Pole Foundation (POPOF), Association des agriculteurs sans frontieres (AASF), Alternatives, ménages,nature et marches (AMEN).

The experiences and capacity between these CSOs vary tremendously. According to the assessment, there is a correlation between the longevity and the experience of CSOs. The youngest of them (DPE) has only been in operation for about 2 years and its score also lags at the bottom of the scale while the oldest (PIDP) has over 24 years of experiences and is among the top on the list in capacity scores (Fig. 1).

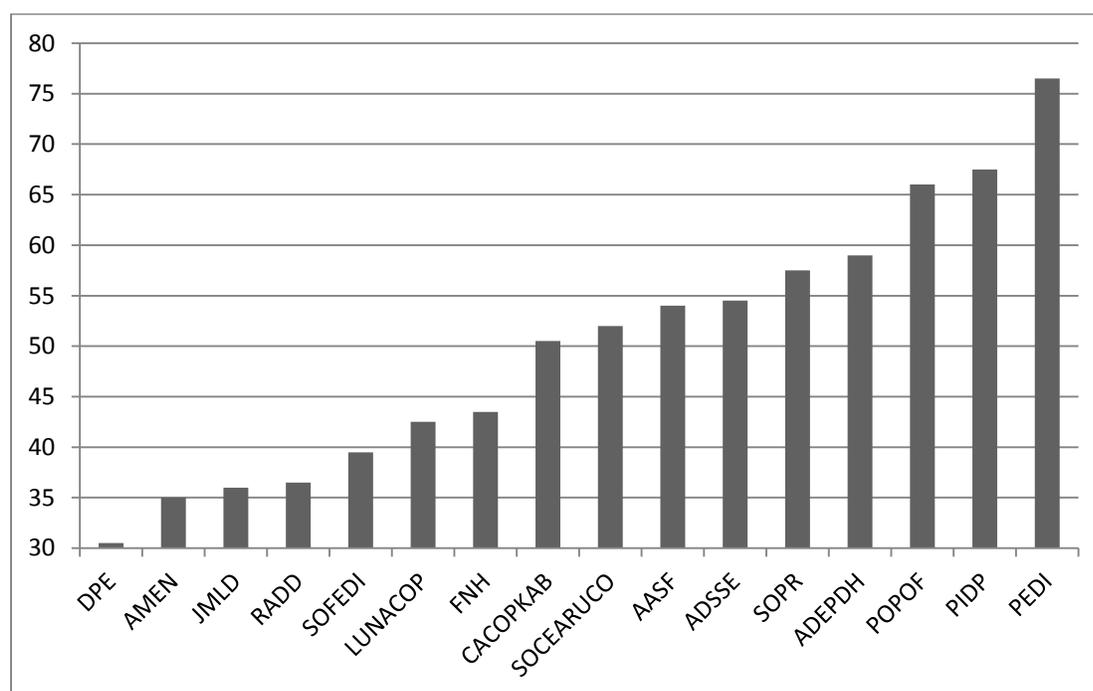


Figure 1: CSO capacity scores (%)

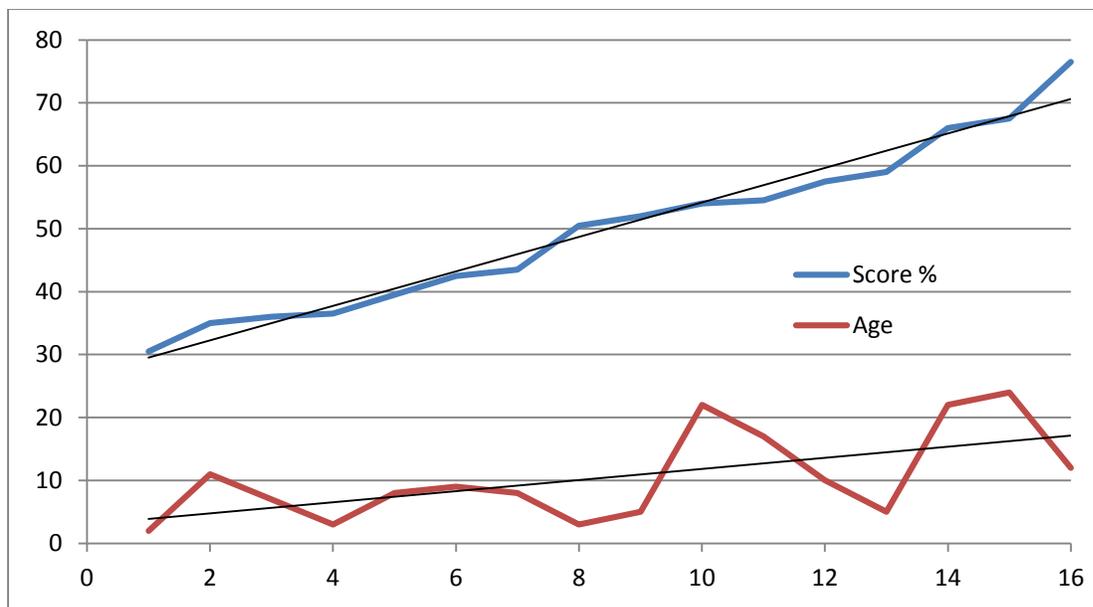


Figure 2: Correlation between experience (assessment score) and longevity (age)

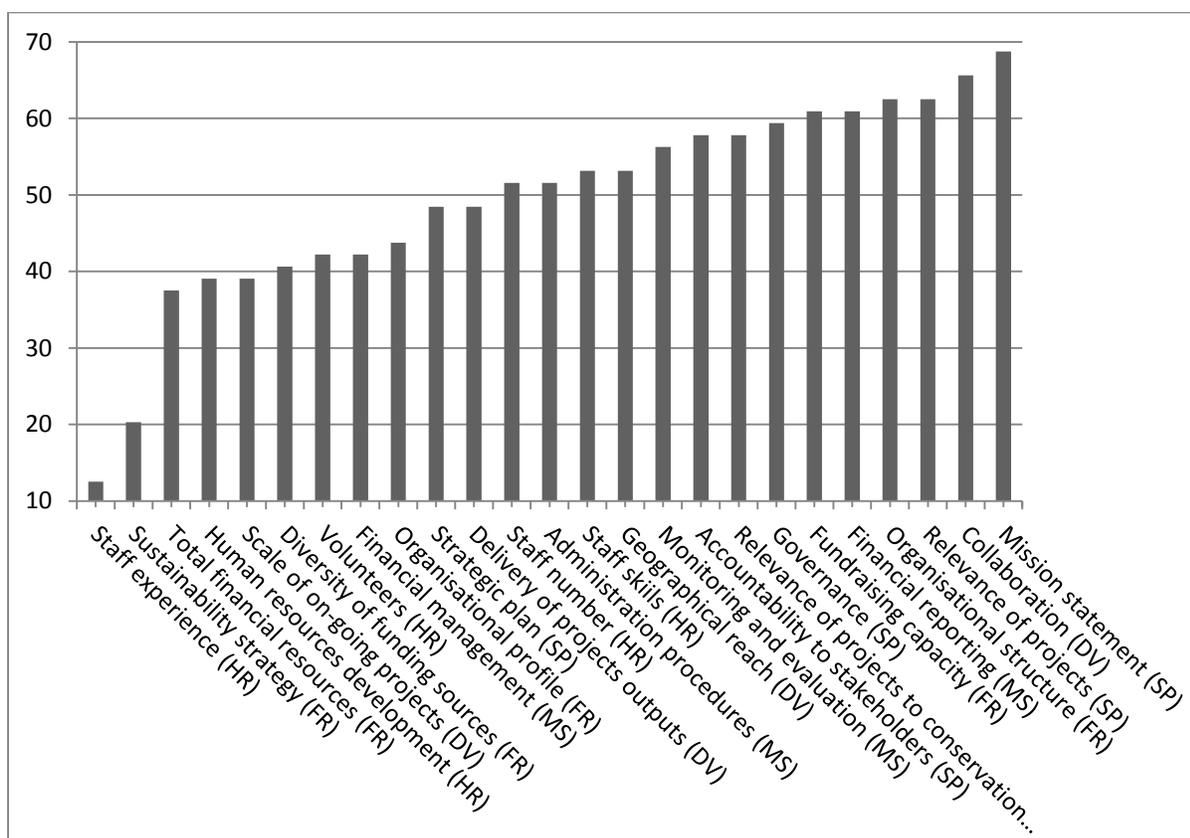


Figure 3: Capacity category and score (%)

The CSOs showed a poor score in Human and financial resources and a higher score in management and strategic planning. The CSOs seem to have a good mission statement and entertain good collaboration and networks but lack staff experiences, sustainability, total and diversification of funding resources and human resource development.

A SWOT analysis (see attached responses from 11 CSOs) demonstrated that CSOs in Eastern DRC would like to be trained mainly in (1) Programme and project design and management, and monitoring and evaluation; (2) Establishment and management of protected areas; (3) Fundraising and sustainability; (4) Training in GIS; (5); Training in climate change projects; (6) Environmental communication and (7) Setting up business and strategic plans.

Among these 16 CSOs assessed, 10 were selected to attend the training workshop in Bukavu between 22 and 23 June 2015. The CSO of Itombwe "Jeunes Methodistes Libre pour le Developpement" (JMLD) could not be reached during the preparation and therefore was not represented at the workshop. The 9 participating CSOs appreciated the efforts of CEPF and BirdLife International in reaching out and empowering local CSOs.

In conclusion, CEPF should follow up and respond to the suggestions of participating CSOs which include more collaboration and more training be organised in Eastern DR Congo. CSOs also wishes that BirdLife could select a partner in DR Congo and that exchange of expertise be encouraged between CSOs in the Albertine Rift Valley. In the long-term, the CSOs' engagement is that they pledged to submit more project proposals to CEPF in the up coming calls for proposals. CSOs will also submit proposal to request funds from other agencies and will remain active in the conservation of their natural heritage in Eastern DR Congo in collaboration with local authorities and local communities.

References

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