

Civil Society capacity needs assessment in South Sudan and Eritrea

Final report by Tharcisse Ukizintambara (Consultant)
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Project Summary	
Project Title	Non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) capacity needs assessment in South Sudan and Eritrea.
CEPF Region	Eastern Afromontane Hotspot
Project Location	Two South Sudanese Key Biodiversity Areas (Imatong Massifs and Kidepo plains) and nine Eritrean KBAs (Arboroba Escarpment, Asmara Escarpment, Central Plateau-Keren, Ghinda, Mareb Escarpment, Semenawi Bahri, Senafe, Southern Plateau: Furrus & Yob Wildlife Reserve)
Project Duration	December 2013 – February 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 and Yemen, and their role in the conservation of KBAs in their respective countries.
Funding Amount	US\$ 10,437
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Summary

CEPF aims at building the capacity of Non-Government /Civil Society Organisations (NGOs/CSOs) in biodiversity conservation. In this report, I will use throughout the abbreviation CSO (s) to represent both NGOs and CSOs. To determine which CSOs and in which specialised areas they need support in order to improve their performance and skills, it is important to conduct a capacity need assessment. The process through which the East Afromontane Hotspot project identified KBAs is, but at a smaller scale, the same way CEPF intended to prioritise areas in which CSOs must be trained in to accomplish their mission of conserving identified KBAs and the corridors linking them. The identification of lacking skills is a participatory exercise through which each selected CSO has a say on what must be done to improve their capacity and when.

Due to limited resources, a tracking tool/questionnaire was sent to identify CSOs and responses were analysed to determine areas in which CSOs must receive training support from CEPF. Eritrea and South Sudan are the focal countries in this report. Both countries are relatively young in the sense that they gained their independence 22 years and 4 years ago for Eritrea and South Sudan respectively. Similarly, most CSOs are in general also young, weak and sometimes non-existent. For a country such as Eritrea, where freedom of association is limited and where CSOs are government led, it was suggested that CEPF consider working directly with government institutions/organisations such as the unions of women, workers and students and help develop their capacity in areas proposed by the government in their last national capacity needs assessment report (NCA, 2007) if applicable. In South Sudan, over 7 CSOs were assessed and a capacity development plan was proposed to empower CSOs in (a) conservation project design and management, (b) human resource development, (c) sustainability strategy, (d) monitoring and evaluation and (e) networking and communication strategy. Some of these gaps were also identified during the ecosystem profile development including: insufficient staff to perform the tasks, insufficient experience and skills (in GIS, administration and accounting for example), inadequate funding, lack of transparency, insufficient oversight of the board in countries subjected to civil strife, and lack of sustainable measures. The profile also identified that the civil society in South Sudan was at the very low level of development on all criteria.

This report presents the background and summarises steps taken by Dr. Tharcisse Ukizintambara, Environmental Consultant, in identifying, assessing the training needs and establishing a network between national and international CSOs operating in and around key biodiversity areas (KBAs) of South Sudan and Eritrea. In Eritrea, I reviewed the National capacity need assessment and recommended where CEPF can intervene if appropriate.

In South Sudan, this project was conducted in collaboration with the Wetlands International (WI), an international NGO that subsequently organised a successful training workshop in four out of above five proposed capacity development areas and WI continue to support the already trained CSOs mainly in proposal writing and fundraising skills.

Background

What is an NGO/CSO?

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is an institution created usually by individuals. NGO does not belong to the government and that is not involved in activities for profit. NGOs are created by individuals. They get their funding mainly from membership, governments, foundations, businesses, or private persons or just run their business on volunteership basis. NGOs are difficult to define, and the term 'NGO' is rarely used consistently. According to Wikipedia, there are many different classifications depending on the type of activities the NGO performs. These activities might include human rights, environment, or development work at local, regional, national or international levels.

The term "non-governmental organization" was first coined in 1945, when the United Nations (UN) was created and according to the UN, any kind of private organization that is independent from government control can be called an "NGO", provided it is not-for-profit, non-criminal and not an opposition political party. NGOs are able to devote themselves to cross-cutting issues such as climate change, malaria prevention or a global ban on wildlife trade. Public surveys reveal that NGOs often enjoy a high degree of public trust, which can make them useful players in the trepidations of the society and stakeholders as a whole. NGOs can play key roles in charitable, service, participatory and empowering activities for members of the society. Apart from "NGO", there are many alternative or overlapping terms in use, such as third sector, non-profit, voluntary, civil society, grassroots, social movement ...organisations. The civil society organisations (CSOs) being aggregations of NGOs and institutions that are independent from the government and that advocate for the interests and the will of citizens and for the freedom of speech and public participation in voluntary associations where individuals and groups can challenge boundaries of permissible government predetermined behaviours such as speaking out against the regime or demanding a government response to social needs or advocating for the protection of an important ecosystem.

Project geographical coverage

Eritrea

The State of Eritrea is bordered by Red Sea coastline in the north-eastern and eastern parts of the country, Sudan in the west, Ethiopia in the south and Djibouti in the southeast. Eritrea has a high life expectancy (>60 years) for a population of over 6 million on an area of approximately 117,600 km² (World bank 2013). The name Eritrea comes from the ancient Greek for Red Sea (Erythra Thalassa, based on the adjective *έρυθρός erythros* meaning red). Eritrea is a unique country not only in terms of biodiversity, but also for its prehistoric and

geologic characteristics and for its strategic location in the centre of the Great Rift Valley along the coast of the Red Sea. Eritrea has been identified as the cradle of human kind due to the discovery of a hominid fossil of over 1 million years old that has contributed greatly to the understanding of human evolution and migration. The name Eritrea was formally adopted for the first time in 1890 with the formation of Italian Eritrea which became the Eritrea Governorate in 1936 which was later annexed by Ethiopia in 1953. Eritrea gained independence after fighting for it for over 30 years with Ethiopia and following the April 1993 Referendum. The State of Eritrea derives from the 1997 constitution that defined this relatively new African country.

Eritrea is blessed with a unique biodiversity and ecosystem of a country that is mostly arid and recovering from a long struggle for independence. During the Eritrea-Ethiopian war the conservation of the environment was left behind. Critical montane ecosystems were used as hiding places by local people who exploited wildlife as source of subsistence and survival. As a new country, the policy of Asmara (the capital city) government has been to improve the conservation of its fragile land and marine ecosystems. To achieve this goal, in 2006, Eritrea put the entire Red Sea coastal line and the majority of its islands into a protected zone. This zone harbours dolphins, dugongs, whale sharks, turtles, swordfish and manta ray. The rest of the country ranging from sea level to Mount Emba Soira (3,018m a.s.l.) is also very important and home to the northern population of African Elephants, lions, leopards, wild cats, jackals, genets, foxes, gazelles, warthog, olive baboons, and several species of snakes.

To protect sustainably these unique taxa and ecosystems, the government is expected to allow the creation and empowerment of CSOs in the country with the support of international community. Although the government discourages foreign dependence, it will welcome the initiative of the CEPF project of working with local CSOs through assessing and building their capacity to respond to the government appeal to curb poverty through mitigating climate change and unsustainable use of natural resources. CEPF is mostly interested in promoting the conservation of Key Biodiversity Areas in the country via the identification of which CSOs operate in and around these KBAs, assessing their current capacity and establishing a strategic plan to effectively conserve Eritrean biodiversity hotspots. In Eritrea, these KBAs include Arboroba Escarpment, Asmara Escarpment, Central Plateau-Keren, Ghinda, Mareb Escarpment, Semenawi Bahri, Senafe, Southern Plateau: Furrus & Yob Wildlife Reserve. All these nice KBAs are listed as areas of high priority for biological conservation but unfortunately only Yob Wildlife Reserve is the only protected area among the nine Eritrean KBAs.

South Sudan

The Republic of South Sudan (ROSS) is a landlocked country in north-eastern Africa bordered by Sudan in the north, Ethiopia in the east, Kenya in southeast, Uganda in the south and Democratic Republic of Congo in southwest and Central Africa Republic in the west. South Sudan covers about 619,745 km² and is inhabited by over 8 million people (2008 census). The region where South Sudan is located has been negatively affected by civil wars and as a result, infrastructure development, conservation and human rights and settlement have been neglected. South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan in July 2011. Its current capital is Juba, is the largest city in the country. There is a plan to move the capital to Ramciel, a more centralised location in the Lake province. Despite being a very new country (four years old), South Sudanese government has had significant success in building its own capacity by developing integrated system for planning and budget preparation. The government has therefore been able to better manage the financial aspects of its functions and projects and increased in staff expertise in crucial skills such as IT.

In terms of biodiversity, the country is covered by tropical forest, swamps and grassland. The Republic of South Sudan (ROSS) supports a large but unfortunately diminishing (due to civil wars) population of hartebeest, kob, topi, buffaloes, elephants, giraffes, lions, chimpanzees and monkeys. South Sudan split from Sudan in 2011. During the South Sudan-Sudan war, biodiversity was negatively impacted although large areas remained unexploited due to insecurity. As a new country, building the capacity of local and national CSOs and community based organisations (CBOs) is one of the major priorities for South Sudan. CEPF has initiated this project to contribute to these efforts through assessing and building the capacity of CSOs that will respond to the government appeal to curb poverty through adapting to climate change and using wisely limited natural resources. CEPF is mostly interested in promoting the conservation of Key Biodiversity Areas in the country. The aim of this project was to identify which CSOs operate in and around KBAs and assess their current capacity and establish a strategic plan to effectively conserve biodiversity hotspots in South Sudan. The two KBAs identified in South Sudan are Kidepo plains and Imatong Massifs, though Kidepo is contested to mainly belong to a much lower elevation in relation to the rest of the Afromontane hotspots. Both KBAs are characterised by high species diversity but are unfortunately unprotected.

Capacity needs assessment

Capacity needs assessment in Eritrea

Since December 2013, a desk search regarding national CSOs in Eritrean was fruitless. The search found mainly International CSOs and a few national CSOs (Appendix A). Later I learnt that many of these international CSOs have been suspended and the national CSOs were actually mainly government-led or religious organisations dealing with development and humanitarian activities. There was no sign of a conservation organisation at all.

Efforts were also made and many individuals were contacted (see list in Appendix B) to get access to data and information about CSOs in Eritrea. As the project concerns the environment, each respondent redirected me to the Ministry of Environment which is in charge of all environmental issues in the country. The Director General at the Ministry Mr. Mogos Woldeyohannes informed me that the project I was suggesting has already been implemented by his ministry in 2007 and would not recommend a replication of work. The final report of the national capacity self-assessment project was published on the GEF website (www.thegef.org/gef/eritrea-nca) (Appendix C).

According to this report, the government of the arid/semi-arid country of the Sahelian Africa, is preoccupied by ensuring food security, reduction of poverty and sustainable development for all Eritreans. In order to mitigate the effects of drought and climate change, prevent/minimize loss of biodiversity Eritrea has undertaken a National capacity needs self-assessment project.

The assessment identified the following areas in which the government needs more support to implement the Rio Conventions to which Eritrea is a signatory:

- Improving human resource capacity in project and financial management, and coordination
- Training the personnel of the department of environment in biodiversity conservation and environmental management, sustainable land use planning, regulatory policies, EIA methods, information collection, management and reporting lesson learnt
- Training staff in international agreements, effective negotiations, and networking
- Increase the capacity in monitoring and evaluation
- Promoting a strong civil society concerned with environmental issues
- Promoting gender equity and the production of gender-sensitive material

Proposed solutions for the impasse in Eritrea

For about 4 months the project in Eritrea faced with obstacles mainly related to lack of communication with potential partners and lack of cooperation from contacted government institutions. Since the government is keen in the existence of a strong civil society, it will be interested in collaborating with CEPF in this project. A high level visit from CEPF to the Ministry of Environment could motivate the government to join and participate in project and allow contacts with government institution and institution of higher learning including the University of Asmara and other colleges. Also, since the government must control the activities of the project, it must be discussed whether Eritrea can be treated differently and allow the participation of the government institutions in the project. Otherwise, the CEPF will be forced to exclude Eritrea from the project all together and this is not desirable. To avoid reaching such a decision, initiating a discuss with the government (which has been complaining for not being present during the design of the project and its inception workshops) and determine how Eritrea would like to participate and benefit from the project. It is very clear that the country needs support in capacity building and skills for the conservation of identified KBAs in the country. This could mean that another CEPF investment strategy for the targeted areas

should be reviewed in Eritrea and needed tools and skills re-discussed in order to deliver the strategic objectives following an agreed upon action plan.

Capacity needs assessment in South Sudan

To determine the capacity and training needs of CSOs in South Sudan this project identified all local, national and International CSOs operating in and near Kidepo and Imatong KBAs, organised a visit to Juba and used the CEPF tracking tool to respectively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses, level of development and the capacity of relevant national CSOs.

The assessment looked specifically at the background, evolution, composition and structure (membership and staffing), budgets, governance, development and conservation activities and awareness and efforts in influencing government policies, and the availability of strategic plans for progress and sustainability.

Unfortunately, a civil war broke out in South Sudan at the dawn of the project in mid-December 2013. Despite all efforts, and a long list of CSOs (see Appendix D & E) identified from the internet, there was not much success in contacting CSOs, especially these operating in Imatong and Kidepo. Most CSOs had temporarily left the area or permanently left the country. The advice from the former Minister of State (Ms. Georges Achom) was that since the country has shifted its focus, it would be reasonable to wait until the calm and peace has been reinstated to reinitiate the project.

Nevertheless, we managed to collaborate and share information with Wetlands International (WI) (Ms. Julie Mulonga), African Wildlife Foundation (Mr. James Kahurananga), Fauna and Flora International (Matt Rice), South Sudan NGO Forum (Mr. Hafeez Wani and Mr. Paul Doctor Yoramar), Wildlife Conservation Society (Mr. Michael Ropidia), Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism in Eastern Equatoria state (Mr. Georges Achom, former Minister of the State), Norwegian Church Aid (Mr. Victor Nawi), the College of Wildlife and Natural Resources of the University of Juba (Dr. Pasquale Moilinga) and the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism (Mr. Minasoma) to establish contact with individuals and CSOs that would be interested in the project.

As the peace talks and ceasefire negotiation were underway in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, there was hope that the security situation in the country will improve and that development and conservation activities would continue. During that window of time, we realised that the southern parts of the country including the Eastern and Central Equatoria States including the capital city of Juba were relatively become stable. We then organised a visit to Juba between June 3rd and 7th, 2014 to raise awareness regarding CEPF and the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot project among potential stakeholders and establish contact with identified and new CSOs. A number of CSOs were identified and/or contacted (Appendix F).

As a key output of the project, capacity development areas were identified and prioritised for assessed CSOs in South Sudan. I was able to determine from the questionnaire that CSOs in

South Sudan lacked the ability to: set conservation action, conduct biological surveys and research in conservation, communicate conservation messages, advocate for changes in public policies, conduct participatory appraisal with local stakeholders, develop GIS projects, develop standard operating manuals and mechanism to monitor logistics or procedures to deal with discipline and complaints, procurement and travel policies.

Between October 6th and 11th 2014 Wetlands International undertook a capacity training workshop as a follow up from this assessment. A network of International CSOs working in Kidepo and Imatong was also established following a joint meeting held at BirdLife Offices in Nairobi on March 9th 2015 that set up a supporting system between AWF, BirdLife International, WI and NIRAS and to avoid duplicating efforts among stakeholders and ensure the long-term conservation of the Eastern Afromontane Hotspots as a whole.

Training needs for NGOs in South Sudan

Seven CSOs filled and returned the forms and seven additional CSOs attended the training workshop organised by WI. So far, there is no single conservation organisation identified yet. Most of South Sudanese CSOs focus on development and humanitarian activities which are the main priorities for a country that has known civil wars for decades. It is obvious that South Sudanese CSOs are also relatively weak in human resource, sustainability, M&E and strategic planning.

According to the results, there is a disparity between the 7 CSOs surveyed (Figure 1).

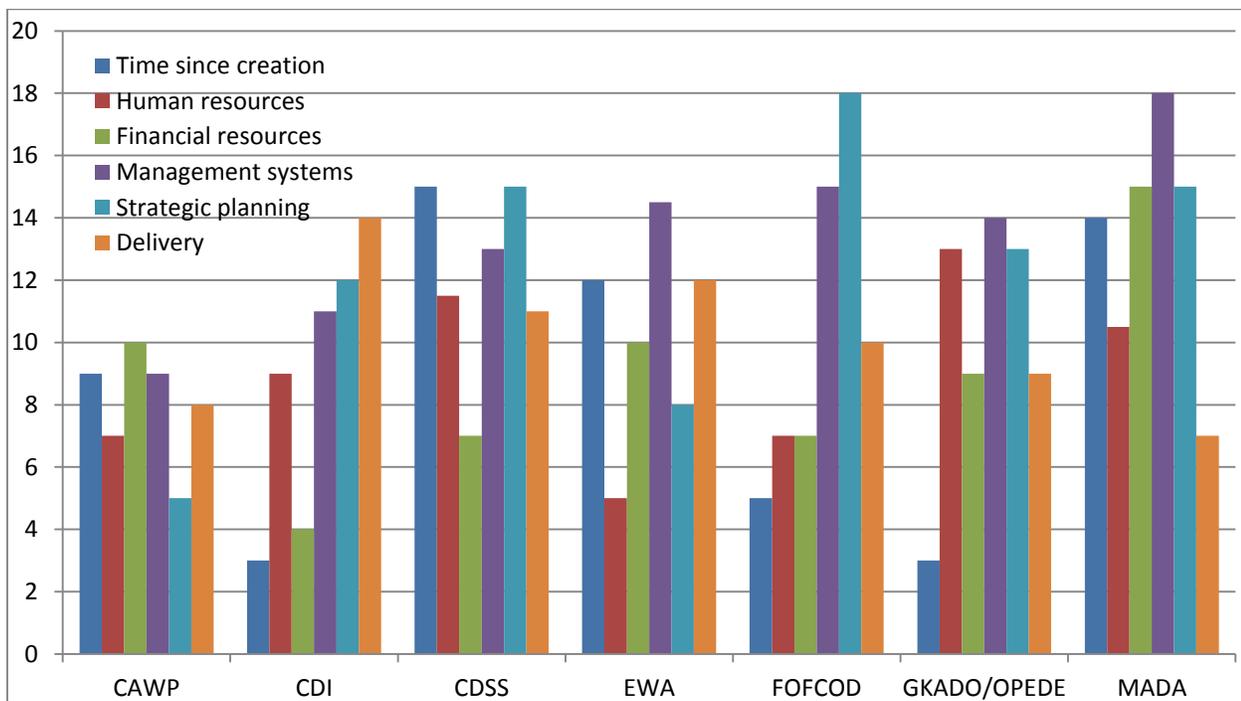


Figure 1: Results of CSOs assessment in South Sudan

Although the seven CSOs that have contributed to this survey have shown to have been in operation for between 3 and 15 years, it appeared that the oldest CSOs had at least a strong strategic plan but unfortunately most of the personnel still did not have enough experience in setting up conservation priorities, conducting biological survey, fundraising and managing financial resources and communicating conservation messages. Most CSOs are also run by a single individual and lack mentoring or training opportunities, funding resources, sustainability measures; visibility, operating manuals, management structure and tend to operate in isolation despite the presence of a large number of similar development organisations and volunteers in South Sudan.

Based on the analysis of the filled forms, CEPF should help South Sudanese CSOs undertake training in the following sectors:

- (1) Conservation project design and management
- (2) Human resource development
- (3) Sustainability strategy and diversification of financial resources
- (4) Monitoring and evaluation
- (5) Networking and communication

During the October 2014 training workshop organised by the WI, seven CSOs were trained in conservation, human resource development, and networking skills. Strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation workshop was planned to take place in February 2015 but the workshop was cancelled due to a limited number of CSOs that showed interest in the activity by making believe that they had such knowledge already. This raised the question on the efficiency of the assessment and how training workshop should be organised. Since it will not be economical to train CSO individually, CSOs should be given enough time to debate and decide together areas where they need advanced training such as in marketable or vocational training in applied GIS, Environmental Impact Assessment, Payment of Ecosystem Services and REDD +, etc.

To conclude, South Sudanese CSOs need more support, follow ups and mentoring and training trainers by more established national, regional and international CSOs and training institutions and individual experts, mainly in biodiversity conservation and resource management.

Acknowledgement

We are very grateful to NGOs in South Sudan that have promptly responded to our questionnaire and the assistance from WI, WCS, AWF, NCA, NGO Forum, FFI, NIRAS, and to the University of Juba and CDSS for inviting us in South Sudan, the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism for their interest in the project and Ms. Belinda Mwanga and Joash Omondi for the support and hospitality in Juba. Finally, we would also like to acknowledge in particular, the contribution CEPF, BirdLife International, IUCN and EWNHS towards the success of this project.

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