

## FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

### I. BASIC DATA

**Organization Name:** Conservation International

**Project Title:** Facilitating the Transition from Conservation Planning to Action:  
Establishing SKEP Sub-regional Coordination Nodes

**Project Dates:** April 2003 – September 2003

**Date of Report:** July 30, 2004

### II. OPENING REMARKS

With the support of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), CI's Southern African Hotspots Program (SAHP) facilitated a highly participatory and scientifically rigorous process that led to a 20-year plan for conservation and sustainable development of the Succulent Karoo Hotspot. In the Ecosystem Profile, CEPF has identified a specific investment niche "to catalyze key activities in under-funded geographic priority areas using innovative mechanisms to achieve biodiversity conservation by involving specific land-users such as agriculture, mining and communal authorities."

To assist CEPF realize this objective, this project established a decentralized Coordination Unit in five regional nodes to champion the geographic priorities and facilitate project development linked to the vision and priorities of the SKEP Action Plan. These nodes address a dual function of furthering collaboration and partnerships and increasing awareness of both CEPF and SKEP. Each of these nodes has Steering Committee with representation from the major land-use sectors in the region (i.e. agriculture (communal and private), mining, tourism, local government, education and law enforcement), and a Coordination team (a coordinator and an assistant) who are responsible for catalyzing strategic projects, supporting potential project implementers with application process, facilitating a local review of project applications, and ultimately contributes to the realization of the SKEP strategy.

### III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

**Project Purpose:** A SKEP Coordination Unit exists and is effectively building awareness, facilitating communication between enabling agencies and implementers, and catalyzing action in CEPF priority corridors as part of the development of a long-term SKEP Programme for Conservation and Sustainable Development of the SKH.

## Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<b>Purpose-level:</b>	
1.1. Appropriate staff, contracts, policies and procedures for the CI SAHP and SKEP Sub-regional Coordination Nodes are in place.	All staff have been secured under approved, local South African contracts. A South African operations manual has been drawn up by the Operations Manager and has been approved by DC legal department. All staff have been given training and a copy of the policies and procedures.
1.2. Local stakeholders are taking an active role in contributing to the design of five-year strategies at Fine-scale Action Planning workshops in April and May 2003.	All sub regions have completed the fine scale action planning workshops and the results have been compiled into sub regional strategy reports and forwarded to CEPF.
1.3. Local stakeholders develop partnerships and submit CEPF project proposals that reflect the priorities identified in the Ecosystem Profile strategies.	Local stakeholders have received training and hands on assistance in developing project proposals, using the guidelines as set up by SKEP and CEPF. Project proposals have been submitted to CEPF

***Describe the success of the project in terms of achieving its intended impact objective and performance indicators.***

The project has been hugely successful and the establishment of the nodes maintained the momentum of the SKEP Planning Phase. The hiring and training of local individuals for the SKEP nodes enabled a rapid acceptance by the people living in the region of the SKEP Strategy and the integration of the Coordinators into important meetings for influencing conservation and sustainable land use programmes. The establishment of local Steering Committees from non-traditional conservation sectors has expanded the understanding and linkages between initiatives resulting in biodiversity concerns being integrated into the dialogue. As a result, some agriculture, mining, and tourism initiatives have shifted focus to address biodiversity issues, achieving a much greater impact than intended. Additionally, these local networks provide regular information on potential threats to biodiversity (e.g. local conversion of natural veld to fields, new planned irrigation or expansion of ostrich farming into sensitive areas, the de-proclamation of a local authority reserve all occurred during the time of this project) to the Cape Town based Coordinator who was able to raise these issues to relevant authorities and stakeholders at the provincial and national levels.

***Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?***

As described above, there were numerous positive impacts of the establishment of local nodes. The only negative impact was that the rapid growth of administrative activities for the CI office outstripped our capacity and our lack of financial and operational systems led to a great deal of frustration for the newly hired staff and CI-DC during this

transitional period. Lesson learned...ensure you have the administrative capacity in place before taking on such an ambitious task of opening 5 new offices at once.

#### IV. PROJECT OUTPUTS

**Project Outputs:** Enter the project outputs from the Logical Framework for the project

#### Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
Output 1: A network of sub-regional SKEP Coordination Units is formally established and funding is secured for a two-year pilot structure for facilitating the coordinated implementation of the SKEP.	
1.1. Existing SKEP Coordination staff secure for full 2-year period.	All staff are secured
1.2. Funding for a full-two year pilot coordination project secured.	Funding secured
1.3. Appropriate administrative and financial management strategies and supporting hardware and vehicle-use procedures are in place.	Financial management guidelines have been drawn up in the operations manual and staff are being trained and monitored on new procedures. New banking system is being set up however there is a slight delay in getting legal documentation signed off and this will be complete in due course.
1.4. SKEP Sub-regional offices are open and operations are standardized though flexible to accommodate local situations.	Sub regions have all secured offices and operations manual dictates policies to staff.
1.5. SKEP Sub-regional Nodes are effectively linked as a network through management by the Field Coordinator	A field Coordinator has been secured for management of the project and is working with nodes to standardize communications and set up systems to ensure regular meetings and support is provided to continue momentum of the project
1.6 SKEP Coordinators have developed and are working towards a set of achievable outcomes for the annual period of 1 July 2003-1 July 2004 by 15 June 2003.	SKEP coordinators are working according to complete workplans and deliverables and will be evaluated annually in July month.
Output 2: The SKEP Coordination teams have been trained in workshop facilitation, the CEPF application procedure, and logframe training as part of developing	

their skills for acting as key liaisons within a long-term SKEP programme management strategy.	
2.1. SKEP Coordinators participate in Participlan Workshop Facilitation Training course by 5 April; CEPF application and logframe training by 10 June 2003.	All SKEP coordinators have received facilitation training and are registered Participlan facilitators. All coordinators and assistants have received comprehensive training on CEPF application procedures and logframe development
2.2. Individual feedback sessions for each coordinator will be provided on workshop facilitation by Field Coordinator and overall process coordination by SAHP Director.	All SKEP coordinators participated in implementing the Priority region action planning workshops as facilitators where individual feedback was given on their ability to facilitate community based meetings. These sessions were facilitated with lessons learnt from each intervention.
2.3. SKEP coordinators understand and are able to articulate and demonstrate the CEPF application procedure and logframe.	SKEP coordinators are working according to CEPF application procedure guidelines and are advising sub regional proponents on the process and assisting proponents on logframe training and development.
Output 3: SKEP Coordinators and the THK Sub-regional Advisory Committee have an increased understanding of the ecological environment of the Sutherland region of the Succulent Karoo as part of their training in awareness of biodiversity priorities within the SKH.	
3.1. BotSoc Training session is contracted, developed and offered to SKEP Coordination Teams and the THK Sub-regional Advisory Committee during the first week of June 2003.	BOTSOC have developed and provided the SKEP coordination teams with training on the ecology of the THK priority region and on SKEP conservation targets as well as the ecological environment of the Succulent Karoo.
3.2. SKEP Coordinators are utilizing this information and sharing it with other stakeholders in their own sub-regions.	SKEP Coordinators and field coordinators are utilizing the information and have also provided the same training to stakeholders and advisory committees in field based training days.
Output 4: A rapid and efficient review process by local experts for CEPF proposals exists and CEPF is being supported in their decision-making for large and small grants in the SKH.	
4.1. Criteria and guidelines for evaluating proposals developed and agreed upon by	Criteria and guidelines developed agreed upon and disseminated to CEPF,

CEPF and SKEP by 1 July 2003.	Stakeholders, and Advisory Structures. Workshop held with Nina Marshall at the SKEP quarterly training session to decide on appropriate review process.
4.2. Database of potential reviewers for projects developed by 1 July 2003.	All sub regions have an approved sectoral database of reviewers for projects as well as an advisory structure that assists in identifying new reviewers according to the specific skills required to review a certain proposal. More reviewers are being added as specific skills sets are needed.
4.3. Proposals to CEPF evaluated according to agreed upon criteria and recommendations to CEPF for investment submitted by sub-regional Coordinators within 2 weeks of receiving an LOI.	Investment guidelines were not ready for this to happen immediately however the sub regions were working on refining these strategies before they went to CEPF. Two-week periods are a bit over ambitious, but this is what the teams ultimately aim for. Teams are working to streamline this process as quickly as possible.
4.4. Short and long-term options for the review and administration of a CEPF Small Grants Fund(s) for the SK are identified.	Legal consultant was met with and advice given on the different legal mechanisms for an independent SKEP co-ordination unit. It was agreed that this activity should be taken up in the next proposal for the SKEP coordination unit.
Output 5: SKEP 20 year strategy documents, and the quarterly SKEP newsletter are consolidated and made available in Afrikaans as a priority activity for ensuring that the public of the SKH is informed of the importance of the SKH and are engaged in the SKEP Programme as implementation partners.	
5.1. Consultant contracted to edit, consolidate, and translate SKEP documentation by 15 May 2003.	SKEP document translated, edited, summarized and reprinted and disseminated
Output 6: Civil society stakeholders and partners have been assisted to prepare a suite of project proposals addressing the top priorities within the CEPF Ecosystem Profile.	
6.1. Coordinate, facilitate and report back on workshops in each of the CEPF Priority regions by 1 June 2003.	Workshop reports for each sub-region submitted and disseminated to stakeholders.

<p>6.2. Strategy reports from Priority Region Workshops are developed and submitted to CEPF by 15 June 2003.</p>	<p>Firs draft of strategy reports submitted. It was discovered that these were too generic and that we should consider re-writing parts with help of professional writer. These are to be taken up in the follow-up project for the SKEP coordination unit.</p>
<p>6.3. Meetings held with all identified project teams from the Priority Region workshops to assist the development of their CEPF Project Proposals</p>	<p>Several follow up meetings were held with project implementers to define their role in strategy clearer and some have even submitted their LOI's as indication of follow up.</p>
<p>6.4 Coordinators have assessed the need for Afrikaans translated materials to assist potential project applicants complete proposals.</p>	<p>This has been discussed with CEPF and they will take this up. CI-SA will assist with the co-ordination of a review of the translation and has identified and forwarded names of translators for CEPF to use.</p>
<p>6.5. One letter of enquiry submitted from each sub-region on a project that was identified as a priority within the Fine-Scale Workshops by 1 July 2003.</p>	<p>All these were exceeded as many more than one project were submitted by regions</p>
<p>Output 7: Strategic relationships are developed between SKEP, CEPF, and CI and lessons are shared with the wider CI community.</p>	
<p>7.1. SKEP Coordinator and SAHP Director and Administrative Manager attend CI Annual Planning to give a presentation to CI's global staff on SKEP and solicit input and share lessons from the SKEP Programme.</p>	<p>All attended annual planning – many contacts made and operational progress made. See trip reports.</p>

***Describe the success of the project in terms of delivering the intended outputs.***

This project was considered a great success, in particularly the use of action planning works per priority areas. It was at these workshops that stakeholders could all agree on the appropriate activities to be funded by CEPF. Stakeholders understanding and capacity was increased, by clearly understanding the CEPF funding directions and how their possible actions could relate to these. At these workshops many projects fell away for CEPF investment, as a result of stakeholders identifying other donors to approach for project investment.

***Were any outputs unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?***

All outputs were realized except that of investigating the small grants trust for Succulent Karoo. In discussions with CEPF and partners it was agreed that this is maybe premature and the SKEP institutional arrangements for the coordination unit is still too unclear.

## V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS

***Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.***

## VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT

***Describe any lessons learned during the various phases of the project. Consider lessons both for future projects, as well as for CEPF's future performance.***

There were numerous lessons learned during the implementation of this project. The first was the importance of hiring local for integrating the biodiversity message into the grassroots actors. The second was that the trade-off of this in an area where conservation capacity is limited requires substantial skills training and ongoing mentorship. To get biodiversity concerns successfully integrated into other sectors we need to take the time to learn their languages and spend time training them to learn ours and in the interim, be aware that your non-verbal communication (e.g. attitude, effort, etc.) is going to play a tremendous role in determining whether or not you are accepted.

### **Lessons gained in creating partnerships:**

Seek to understand before seeking to be understood;

Capitalize on the strengths of others and use networks to fill gaps in expertise;

Incubate and empower local talent by bringing employees of other agencies into your programme and seconding your staff to other agencies as partnerships require daily reassurance, understanding, and nurturing;

Maintain transparency and commitment on resource use;

If conservation in the SKH is a stew that is being cooked with fuel from CEPF in a pot provided by the CI-SAHP and served up ("skep" in Afrikaans means to serve/dish up) by the new SKEP Coordination Unit, then the lessons of this phase were to:

- First make sure that there are no leaks in the pot
- Invite everyone to agree on the recipe: A common understanding of what the end product is going to look like is essential for making sure people stay for dinner
- Give everyone a role: People always enjoy something they have helped to create
- Enlist the top chefs: Although everyone should provide suggestions, your recipe/conservation plan must be based on rigorous scientific analysis...more people are likely to come to and enjoy a meal designed by a top chef than by a group of stakeholders that are interested, but don't have the expertise to make a great stew;

- Involve local cooks and ensure that they are properly trained: The importance of the local base of the SKEP Coordinators was already mentioned several times;
- Concentrate on the key ingredients: When you have a complex recipe it is easy to become overwhelmed with the opportunities and try to throw everything in the pot at the same time...the key ingredients/projects need to be identified and probably need to cook a bit first;
- Add flavorings incrementally: As with above, too many little projects that lack a link to the key ingredients can spoil the stew;
- Understand that the firewood is limited! Prioritize and plan for how you will cook tomorrow night as well!!

***Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/failure)***

The establishment of the SKEP field nodes was appropriate and successful for raising awareness and getting civil society involved. However, it was not as successful at getting priority projects into the CEPF pipeline, as the Coordinators did not have the capacity or strategic understanding initially to get these projects in. The design of the project is, therefore, still being tested.

***Project Execution: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/failure)***

The hiring of a skilled trainer/facilitator was crucial to the success of this project, while the lack of administrative capacity was nearly its failure.

<b>VII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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**For more information about this project, please contact:**

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