Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Amos Yesutanbul Nkpeebo
Project Title	COMMUNITY-BASED INDEPENDENT REPORTING PROJECT: Pilot Testing a Community-Based Independent Reporting Platform with a Mobile App Link, Lake Bosomtwe, Ghana
Application ID	32041-1
Grant Amount	4800
Email Address	aynexe@gmail.com
Date of this Report	15th December 2021

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Undertake 4 Stakeholder Briefing on the Buffer Zone Policy implementation framework, local engagement in peer monitoring, forest landscape conservation planning and agroecology			✓	This objective was successfully attained
Establish inclusive and safe space online platform combining a collection of social media tools (TIMBY mobile Application, biodiversity and climate YouTube channel, community Facebook page, community twitter page).			✓	
Facilitate the training and equipping local data networks to use TIMBY mobile Application to facilitate media access to watershed degradation data and to share emerging land use, management and governance issues within the Biosphere Reserve.			✓	
Organize community-based training and installation of mobile applications to capture, develop and share climate impact- videos, biodiversity-based stories, farmer experiences and community testimonials on the implementation of the Buffer Zone Policy, biosphere conservation planning, riparian landscape restoration and agroecology			✓	
Facilitate 7 Connective Dialogues for Community			✓	

leaders to engage with Subject Matter Experts via WhatsApp group chat to identify local drivers of degradation and biodiversity loss and frame localized, culturally relevant approaches to explore and mainstream IBM into local context.				
Organize four (4) community tours and field learning visits involving 12 reporters interacting with 6 forest fringe communities, 2 CREMAs and 9 community-based monitors on deforestation and biodiversity loss data sharing and forest governance challenges.				
Organize two (2) media-briefing sessions on information access and dissemination challenges relating to deforestation and biodiversity loss involving 12 News Reporters and News Editors, 10 community representatives and Forest Services Division				
Develop a web-based interactive mapping platform with monthly updates to capture and provide information on community access to and use of ecosystem services and buffer zone conservation status at Lake Bosomtwi Biosphere Reserve				
Publication of 3 policy papers				

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Delays due to COVID-19: The project was slightly delayed in terms of activity timelines. This was due to COVID 19 restrictions. However, this did not affect the project implementation since adjustments were made in terms of restructuring the activity timelines in order to make sure that all project objectives are achieved.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

i) Resident Sustainability Team Report on Pipie Forest Destruction: On 15th March 2021, our resident sustainability team in Pipie community first reported on the destruction of forest in Pipie by a private developer. This was reported using the RST WhatsApp platform. In this story, a private developer had destroyed over 500 trees planted along the bank of the lake at Pipie despite byelaws declaring 100 m from the water as a buffer zone. In reference to this incident, the Asantehene indicated that "For the perpetrator not realizing that these trees were planted for a purpose was very worrying. Even though the Assembly and other stakeholders have resolved that he replants the trees, it should come with a caution to deter others." The strong reaction from the Asantehene to this media report is an indication of the influence that media attention could have on biodiversity conservation at Lake Bosomtwe.

ii) Introducing Geoethical Thinking in Biosphere Reserve Conservation: In the course of the stakeholder engagements, there was an interaction with other key experts from various institutions. An expert in geoethical thinking from the South-eastern Kenya University made a very unique contribution to the project in terms of exploring the value of geoethical thinking in biosphere conservation. Geoethics consists of research and reflection on the values which underpin appropriate behaviours and practices, wherever human activities interact with the Earth system. Its main issues and topics include: sustainable use of natural resources; reduction and management of natural and anthropogenic risks; management of land; pollution and its impacts on human health; global environmental changes, including the climate change; and protection of natural environments. These core elements of geoethics have intrinsic relevance to the management of LBBR given its biodiversity values. Going forward, the project team is putting together a proposal for establishing geoethical benchmarks for monitoring Highly Vulnerable Biodiversity Areas (HVBAs), with a focus on Atiwa forest in Ghana and south Nguruman in Kenya.

Lake Bosomtwe is one of the six major meteoric lakes in the world, and it is believed to be 1.3 million years old. Carefully assessing the reports and observations suggest a practical paucity of geoethical thinking in the management of LBBR and the fact that key stakeholders need to be exposed to the essence of geoethical thinking. This recommendation was therefore made to development and conservation agencies and designated authorities.

Establishing the Community-Based Independent Reporting Initiative as an inclusive and safe space online platform: The project established an inclusive and safe space online platform combining a collection of social media tools including: TIMBY mobile application, biodiversity and climate YouTube channel, community Facebook page, and community Twitter page. The project also facilitates community-based training and installation of resident sustainability teams (RSTs) to use TIMBY mobile application to facilitate media access to watershed degradation data and to share emerging land use, management and governance issues within the reserve. The monitoring and reporting process hitherto has mostly been done through WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube print media, radio discussions and traditional online media. Field reports show that in spite of all the stakeholder interventions, the Lake Bosomtwe Biosphere

Reserve is under serious threat because the landscape is still experiencing scatters of illegal mining activities.

4. What do you consider to be the most significant achievement of this work?

Fifty-seven Reports from Resident Sustainability Teams (RSTs): From the period 1st March to 30th August 2021, there were 32 reports of harmful farming activities and 16 of charcoal burning around the riparian vegetation. Both of these activities have serious negative externalities on the riparian vegetation. From these reports, it was noted that the pressure on the land has been largely the result of a combination of factors. Also, from 1st March to 30th August, the RST reported nine cases of illegal mining reports around Lake Bosomtwe with emphasis on the spread and intensity of mining activities and its implication for biodiversity conservation in the Lake Bosomtwi Biosphere Reserve. These reports were referred to local development and conservation agencies and designated authorities for follow up actions.

5. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

The project engaged 21 communities in carrying out seven connective dialogues, four stakeholder briefings and four community tours and field-learning visits involving 12 reporters interacting and community-based monitors focusing on the implementation framework of the buffer zone policy, local engagement in peer monitoring, forest landscape conservation planning and forest governance challenges. These engagements enabled community members to be able to identify local climate risks and frame localised, culturally relevant approaches to enhance climate change resilience and adaptation. These engagements also improved local awareness on climate change, biodiversity loss and integrated biodiversity management.

Improved community-media relationship: 21 communities were engaged in community-based data networks and inclusive and safe space online platforms designed to collect and share community voices. These engagements facilitated media access to watershed degradation data and emerging issues in deforestation. As a result, field observations suggest that the increased media attention on Lake Bosomtwe is increasing youth voices and community power in the management of Lake Bosomtwe Biosphere Reserve and integrated biodiversity management in general. Authorities are recognising the voices of youth in terms of the management of Lake Bosomtwe Biosphere Reserve due to increased media reporting. Across the 21 communities it has been noted that there is a broad recognition of the problem. The communities generally appreciate the enormity of the problem and are gradually mending the broken fences. Most of the communities have virtually stopped indiscriminate bush burning and illegal fishing habits.

6. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Working closely with our partners, FIDEP Foundation expects to scale up and scale out community-based independent reporting to cover Ramsar sites, critical ecosystems and watersheds and key biodiversity areas in the near future. We aim to

support the continued socio-technical development of independent reporting frameworks that support IUCN protected Area Categories V and VI to highlight both the scale and intensity of habitat degradation as well as the effect of fragmentation on key biodiversity areas.

Our plan for the future includes developing a two-way result-oriented reporting (ROR) system with resident rapid response teams. Working closely with our partners, local and international, we aim to develop a more complete system including reporting social, economic, ecological, gender risks as well as human right abuses and law enforcement, in order to create a complete platform for behavioural change across basins.

7. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

Publication: The project has already published three policy briefs making key recommendations for decision makers to take further action.

Social media handles: the project also set up biodiversity and climate YouTube channel, community Facebook page, community twitter page and a WhatsApp group to facilitate continued learning and sharing among stakeholders.

8. Timescale: Over what period was the grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The project duration was 13 months. It officially commenced in October 2020 and closed on November 30th.

9. Budget: Provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Project Monitoring and evaluation cost	410	310	-100	Decreased by 100. Monitoring was facilitated with the assistance of a resident coordinator
Undertake 6 radio awareness programmes on biodiversity loss	600	800	+200	Increased by 200 due to the need to produce awareness materials including 50 copies of project brief and 50 project branded t-shirts.

Communication cost including reimbursement of data bundle costs	420	320	-100	Decreased by 100. Reimbursement bundle costs was made based on amounts spent by RSTs per month
Carry out 21 community data tours	840	840		
Organize mass training session for 42 community members	840	840		
Organizing biodiversity dialogues in 21 local communities	840	840		
Creating and hosting the online portal	850	850		
TOTAL	**4800**	**4800**		

10. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

One of the key realisations from this project is the lack of geoethical thinking in the management of biosphere reserves. We hope to pursue this topic as further research, to assess how geoethical thinking can be applied to improve conservation values and benefits at the local level.

We also intend scale up and scale out community-based independent reporting to cover Ramsar sites, critical ecosystems and watersheds and key biodiversity areas in the near future.

11. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The project produced three publications, 50 copies of project brief and 50 project-branded t-shirts to enhance awareness creation. All these materials had the Rufford Foundation logo on them.

12. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

Amos Nkpeebo Yesutanbul: Research Director, FIDEP Foundation

Anthony Opiyo Ogutu, PhD: Full Time Lecturer, South-eastern Kenya University

Peter Ossei-Wusu: Programme Coordinator, Forest and Biodiversity, Southern Zone, FIDEP Foundation

Peter Offosu: Project Coordinator: Community—based Independent Reporting, Lake Bosomtwe Biosphere Reserve, FIDEP Foundation

13. Any other comments?

FIDEP Foundation introduced the community-based independent reporting initiative (CIRI) modelled on the CSIFM to address watershed management. Since CIRI was modelled after CSIFM, it therefore could identify and aggregate lessons from CSIFM in order to avoid any major pitfalls and build adaptations that will make the scaling out successful. However, the strong media link in CIRI has proven to be very effective in mobilising public attention on biodiversity conservation and generating public response or reaction to reported infractions/violations. It was further noticed that public response time is strongly correlated with political commitment, both at the district and community levels. This is still a major challenge for CIRI since poor political commitment has the potential to undermine the monitoring and reporting, especially of illegal activities. It was evident that political commitment is not something that simply exists or emerges accidentally, but it can be created and strengthened over time or even accelerated by integrating geoethical approaches into biodiversity conservation and management.

The 'COMMUNITY-BASED INDEPENDENT REPORTING PROJECT: Pilot Testing a Community-Based Independent Reporting Platform with a Mobile App Link, Lake Bosomtwe, Ghana' project team led by FIDEP Foundation Ghana really appreciates the funding support from Rufford Foundation grants. We also appreciate the collaboration with partners in Ghana, Kenya, Canada and the support of 21 local communities around Lake Bosomtwe in Ghana. We would like to thank resource sustainability team at Lake Bosomtwe for undertaking the interviews and providing constant updates on activities around Lake Bosomtwe.

We are especially thankful to all the local stakeholders and key opinion leaders and professionals who contributed their invaluable time local knowledge and expertise in contributing to this project.