

Regional Implementation Team of the Madagascar
and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot



NEWSLETTER

July 2024

Blue-legged Mantella (*Mantella expectata*) @Fotografia di P. Andreone

A message from the RIT Leader

The CEPF programme in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot will soon be entering its third year of implementation. So far, we have launched five calls for proposals, which have resulted in 40 active grants to date and 18 grants that are about to start their projects.

Over the past two months, we, as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT), and CEPF have had the pleasure of reading some inspiring large grant proposals. These proposals focused on integrating ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) into political and economic decision-making processes, and on applied research that improves understanding of specific ecosystems and tests the effectiveness of promising EbA techniques. Of the 49 proposals received, the RIT and CEPF selected eleven that have been presented to the CEPF Advisory Committee.

In June, CEPF and the RIT held their third supervision mission, this time to Mauritius. Coordinated by FORENA, the main objectives of the mission were to:

- Visit the ongoing projects in Mauritius.
- Meet with selected organisations in Mauritius and Rodrigues whose grant contracts are in the process of being finalised.
- Meet potential grantees in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

It was also an opportunity for the team to exchange views with other donors and the local authorities, but above all to take stock of the portfolio in order to ensure effective implementation of CEPF's investment strategy throughout the hotspot.

Newsletter Highlights

A message from the RIT Leader

News from the RIT

Grantee stories

Fundraising & training opportunities

CEPF investment RIT MADIO
until June 2024

Contact Details Regional Implementation Team



Madagascar
www.saf-fjkm.org



Comoros
www.id-ong.org



Mauritius
www.forena.mu



Seychelles
www.seyccat.org



International
www.iucn.nl

One of the visited projects was Vallée de Ferney. They made a great video about their project.



In this newsletter we will be highlighting the work of four other CEPF grantees: Initiative Pour une Alternative Citoyenne (IPAC) from the Comoros, the Seychelles Islands Foundation from the Seychelles, Ebony Forest Ltd from Maurice, and TAFO MIHAAVO from Madagascar.

our next call for large and small grants is scheduled to launch early August. Please keep an eye on our communications channels for updates.

For an overview of the projects that received a CEPF grant so far, please have a look at the [interactive map](#).



I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

Best regards,



Monique Randriatsivery,

RIT Leader for the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot (monique.randriatsivery@iucn.nl)



Please share this newsletter with others that might be interested in the CEPF programme in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot.

Not yet on our newsletter mailing list yourself? Please register by sending an email to cepfproposals@iucn.nl.

NEWS FROM THE RIT

Additional contribution from the European Union to strengthen the resilience of island populations

CEPF has received EUR 9,433,962 of additional funding from the European Union (EU) via l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) acting as the fiduciary agent. The contribution is part of the Africa, Caribbean, Pacific Small Island Developing States (ACP-SIDS) programme, to reduce the vulnerability of island populations by securing the critical ecosystem services they need to be resilient to climate change.

The EU Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius, H.E. Mr Oskar Benedikt, stressed that: "The EU is pleased to join CEPF's work in the biodiversity hotspot of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean islands. The conservation of healthy ecosystems is a key asset for adaptation to climate change, which is an urgent challenge in this region. The answers lie in the hands not only of public authorities, but also of the many local initiatives we support through CEPF. The financial support we provide to CEPF, via the AFD, reflects our commitment to working with our partners to protect biodiversity in the region."

The new funds will run until June 2028. They expand on the current US\$38 million, 10-year investment funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) through AFD as the GCF accredited entity, to support civil society organisations to promote ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change in Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles.

CEPF has already allocated part of these funds to seven projects (six large grants and one small grant) contributing to forest and watershed restoration in Madagascar and Mauritius, and to invasive alien species eradication in Mauritius and the Seychelles.





Signing ceremony @SeyCCAT

Three new grant agreements signed in the Seychelles

In March 2024, a ceremonial signing took place with three new CEPF grantees at the SeyCCAT headquarters. The organisations receiving the grants are:

- Blue Economy Research Institute (BERI) of the University of Seychelles, with a small grant to enhance capacity to promote marine monitoring and ecosystem management in three Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).
- Indian Ocean Tortoise Alliance (IOTA) with a large grant to eradicate black rats from Curieuse Island.
- Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) with a large grant to undertake a feasibility study to eradicate rats and cats on Aldabra Atoll.

GRANTEE STORIES

Strengthening farmers' capacity near the Mont Ntringui National Park (Comoros)

In June 2023, Initiative Pour une Alternative Citoyenne (IPAC) received CEPF funding for a project that aims to make farmers more resilient to the effects of climate change. The project focuses on strengthening farmers' capacity to multiply seeds for food crops and market garden produce, as well as seedlings for endemic forest and fruit trees in agroforestry that are resistant to climatic variations. This initiative also endeavors to create a value chain and preserve the habitats of endangered endemic species, notably the Livingstone's fruit bat and Anjouan scops owl from the Hapimba forest zone of Mont Ntringui National Park.

The initial results of the project are promising. Through collaboration with the Village Co-Management Committee (COCOVI), nurseries have successfully cultivated 515 seedlings within just six months, surpassing the original target of 400 seedlings. This achievement underscores the effectiveness of the training provided to 30 farmers in agro-ecological practices, such as compost and organic fertilizer production, as well as forest tree propagation in the nurseries.



Mont Ntringui National Park Anjouan Comoros @IPAC

Restoring ebony forest, a degraded indigenous forest (Mauritius)

Ebony Forest Ltd was recently awarded a large grant by CEPF for the restoration of forest in the watersheds of the Chamarel ebony forest (Chamarel - Le Morne Key Biodiversity Area) and the Vallée de l'Est (Bambou Chain Key Biodiversity Area). The project's main components are:

- Restoration of a total of 21 hectares of degraded forest in the Chamarel ebony forest and the Vallée de l'Est.
- Implementation of a 26-hectare predator control grid to reduce the impact of invasive alien species in the Vallée de l'Est.
- Improving ecosystem resilience by releasing the echo parakeet into the Bambou Mountains in collaboration with the National Parks and Conservation Services, and introducing Aldabra giant tortoises as ecological replacements for the dispersal of endemic plant seeds.
- Raising awareness about the importance of ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change.

In June, team members of CEPF and the RIT visited Ebony Forest. Peggy Poncelet, Grant Director for the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot, said: "The field visit allowed us to see the impact of Ebony Forest Ltd's restoration activities, including the almost complete absence, on these sites, of invasive species, such as the traveller palm (*Ravenala madagascariensis*), the good regeneration of the restored plots and the observation of certain bird species such as pink pigeon (*Nesoenas mayeri*) and Mauritius black bulbul (*Hypsipetes olivaceus*) in the forest and the release site. It's great to see the snowball effect that a few actions targeting ecosystems can have on other species, including humans."



Ebony forest, Mauritius @Ebony Forest Ltd



Rattus ©Rich Baxter, courtesy of SIF

Eradicating invasive species on Aldabra Atoll: A key strategy for climate change adaptation (Seychelles)

The Aldabra Atoll in the Seychelles is one of the largest atolls globally. Its geographical isolation, rough terrain and scarcity of fresh water have deterred large human populations from settling. As a result, Aldabra remains remarkably undisturbed compared to other atolls worldwide. Designated a UNESCO Marine World Heritage Site in 1982, Aldabra is home to many native and threatened species, including the world's largest giant tortoise population and the largest coral reef systems, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests in the Seychelles archipelago, all of which play a major role in blue carbon storage.

However, invasive alien species, such as rats and cats, have significant negative impacts on island ecosystems, reducing their ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change. In response, the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), with support from CEPF, has embarked on an in-depth, site-specific monitoring project to inform the eradication strategy and methods. The results will enable the planning of the second largest eradication of rats on a tropical island and the fourth largest eradication of cats. The subsequent eradication will have an immediate positive impact on these ecosystems and species, and will be the single most important conservation action to support the island's adaptation to climate change.

Alongside eradication feasibility work, a number of research and monitoring programmes are being developed and implemented to fill gaps in knowledge on certain species groups and to further the understanding of the impacts of rats and cats on the atoll.

Strengthening sustainable forest governance in the Ambositra-Vondrozo corridor through conservation efforts (Madagascar)

TAF0 MIHAAVO is an association of grassroots community organisations in Madagascar committed to improve their governance as well as the livelihoods of community members while safeguarding Madagascar's unique biodiversity.

Supported by CEPF, TAF0 MIHAAVO is leading a project launched in October 2023 to update the existing management plan for the Fandriana Vondrozo forest corridor and apply the internal regulations. It concentrates on capacity-building for ten local natural resource management organisations (VOIs), revitalizing the Local Consultation Structure (Structure Locale de Concertation - SLC) at the communal level, and establishing a project committee to oversee community activities.

The project also includes income-generating activities such as rice growing, beekeeping and fish farming for around 1,800 beneficiaries. These activities not only improve livelihoods, but also promote sustainable practices.

- Scheduled to continue until March 2026, the project has already achieved some first milestones:
- Training 20 individuals from ten VOIs to implement updated management plan regulations and meet contractual obligations with the Regional Directorate of Environment and Sustainable Development (DREDD-HM).
- Strengthening the capacities of VOI structures and the TAF0 MIHAAVO association in the transferred management areas.



The story of Andriatiana Christophe, beneficiary of the TAFO MIHAAVO project

Andriatiana Christophe, a 47-year-old father residing in Sahavondronina near Ranomafana National Park, is actively involved with the local VOI and has been a staunch advocate for nature conservation for over 15 years through the 3FT association (Fikambanana Fanatsarana sy Fiarovana ny Tontolo iainana). His efforts in combating bush fires and deforestation have been instrumental.

Christophe and his colleagues have made significant strides in reforestation, with the establishment of a community nursery ensuring the production of 30,000 seedlings so far. They have also restored cleared areas and installed four hectares of firebreaks. "We're proud to contribute to the reforestation of the Haute Matsiatra region independently, using our own seedlings," Christophe remarks.

Besides protecting the protected area, these restoration efforts have notably enhanced Christophe's family's living conditions. "My income has increased considerably, enabling me to support my children's education through high school," he shares proudly.



Andriatiana Christophe @SAF/FJKM

FUNDRAISING & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- To increase knowledge on EbA, IUCN, GIZ and IISD have developed a free, self-paced online course (MOOC) for a global audience. This e-learning course, available in English and French, will equip learners with transferable and replicable skills in designing and implementing EbA initiatives by offering targeted training on key principles, risk assessments, monitoring, and governance. Read more: <https://friendsofeba.com/e-learning/>. If you pass the course, please let us know (cepfproposals@iucn.nl)!
- Join us for a workshop on Gender-Responsive Ecosystem-Based Adaptation organised by CEPF on July 18, 2pm (Madagascar time). Language: French. Learn, share, and network for a sustainable future! Register here: https://us06web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZTudeigp_zwtHdUjxuIQLodLAJHckYg101fB
- WildTeam offers online training workshops with no prerequisites to participate. The courses are run by experts and aimed at experienced conservationists, students, and career switchers:
 - Grant Writing for Wildlife Conservation: 10th July - 28th August, 2024 (4 hours of learning per week)
 - Monitoring and Evaluation for Wildlife Conservation: 20th Aug - 24th Sep, 2024 (3- 3.5 hours of learning per week)
 - Stakeholder Engagement for Wildlife Conservation: dates TBC (3.5 hours of learning per week)

More information and registration:

<https://www.wildteam.org.uk/conservation-courses>

- The Fonseca Species Conservation Fund is currently accepting proposals from young conservationists to support their efforts to conserve amphibians, freshwater fish, primates, small mammals, tortoises and freshwater turtles on the African continent and in the Indian Ocean. The application deadline is 19 July 2024. More information: <https://www.rewild.org/the-fonseca-species-conservation-fund>

CEPF investment in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot until June 2024



**USD 6.125.230
granted so far**



**Grants awarded 40
(19 SG and 21 LG)**



Projects in 4 countries
(Madagascar: 22, Comores: 4,
Mauritius: 7, Seychelles 4, Regional 3)

Projects by CEPF pillar



Biodiversity
29 projects



Civil Society
6 projects



Enabling Conditions
2 projects



Human Well-being
3 projects

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Conservation International, the European Union, the Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

With funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) through AFD as the GCF accredited entity, and from the European Union through AFD acting as the fiduciary agent, CEPF established and is managing a 10-year programme of support to civil society organizations to promote ecosystem-based adaptation in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot. Programme activities are taking place in Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and the Seychelles.



IUCN NL, SAF/FJKM (Madagascar), ID-ONG (Comoros), FORENA (Mauritius) and SeyCCAT (Seychelles), as a regional implementation team, are working with CEPF to implement a five-year conservation strategy for the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot and build local civil society capacity.