

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

NEWSLETTER

October 2024

Madagascar © Jonathan Irish 2023

A message from the RIT Leader

As we enter the third year of the CEPF investment phase for 2022-2027, I am excited to share some important updates. In August 2024, we launched another call for proposals, which again met with great enthusiasm: 46 applications for small grants and 73 for large grants. The Regional Implementation Team (RIT) is currently thoroughly reviewing these applications, and the results of this pre-selection will be shared by November 2024.

To date, we have launched four calls for large grants (over USD 50,000) and four for small grants (under USD 50,000), totaling over USD 9 million. Although this is an important milestone, our work continues as the review of nine large and three small grants is still underway, as well as the analysis of the 119 proposals received.

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



Newsletter Highlights

A message from the RIT Leader

News from the RIT

Grantee stories

Fundraising & training opportunities

CEPF investment RIT MADIO
until September 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

CEPF's mission for the hotspot is to empower civil society to improve the resilience of ecosystems and humans to climate change is at the heart of these grants. A key pillar of this mission is ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), a strategy highlighted by CEPF's executive director, Olivier Langrand, in his recent interview with Mauritian Business Magazine. You can access the full interview via [this link](#).

In this edition of our newsletter, we again share some of the remarkable achievements of our project leaders. Their dedication and innovation inspire us, and we are pleased to be able to share some of their stories. I'm also delighted to introduce a new member of our RIT, Rindra Ratsimiseta (Rindra.Ratsimiseta@iucn.nl), who joins us as assistant team leader, based in Madagascar. We are confident that her expertise will be a tremendous asset to the team.

Thank you for your continued support, and 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 CEPF's investment in the hotspot. Not yet on our newsletter mailing list yourself? Please register by sending an email to cepfproposals@iucn.nl.

NEWS FROM THE RIT

Workshop for civil society organisations in the Seychelles

On August 28, SeyCCAT organised a workshop to inform members of civil society organisations about the CEPF funding in the Seychelles and to encourage them to make use of it. The workshop provided an opportunity to share information about the funding and gather input from various organisations and experts to better identify the necessary support. The workshop was attended by representatives from seven organisations.

Regional director of the French Development Agency (AFD) visits CEPF-supported projects in Seychelles

In August, Ms. Laetitia Habchi, the AFD director for Mauritius and Seychelles, conducted a familiarisation mission to Seychelles, where she held a courtesy meeting with SeyCCAT. Ms. Habchi was eager to learn about ongoing initiatives funded by CEPF, of which AFD is a global donor, but also a regional one as the accredited entity for the Green Climate Fund and the fiduciary agent for the European Union (EU). Ms. Habchi was able to meet and discuss with grant recipients, including the Island Biodiversity and Conservation Centre (IBC) and the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), who presented their projects, highlighting the impact of the work being carried out in the region.



Did you know that CEPF has awarded over US\$300 million in grants to civil society organisations in the world's biodiversity hotspots? Learn more in this [video on the 2023 CEPF Impact Report Highlights](#).



Information sessions to explore the intersection between ecosystem-based adaptation and gender

On April 25 and July 18, two information sessions were led by Celine Desbrosses (CEPF) and Monique Fleuria Randriatsivery (RIT) to explore how to effectively integrate a gender perspective into EbA projects.

Discussions and practical case studies from Conservation International Madagascar, the Aspinall Foundation, and Ny Tanintsika showed how these organisations ensure marginalised groups, particularly women, play a meaningful role in decision-making and participation in their programmes.

The first session, attended by 47 participants, presented a comprehensive planning and implementation model developed by GIZ and IISD. The second session, with 29 attendees, continued the exchange by deepening the understanding of gender-sensitive approaches in EbA projects.

Recordings of both sessions can be found via the following links:

- [Recording session 1](#)
- [Recording session 2](#)

Supervision Mission

As part of its regular six-month review process, CEPF conducted a supervision mission to Comoros from October 3 to October 14. The mission included meetings with the RIT, small and large grant recipients, and key partners, such as the National Parks Agency, the National Designated Authority, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) focal point (who also serves as the Director of Environment and Forests), the Regional Director of Environment from Anjouan, as well as regional representatives from AFD and the EU.

During the visit, the CEPF and RIT delegation visited the grantees' sites on the islands of Grande Comore and Anjouan. This supervision mission provided an invaluable opportunity to engage even more closely with grantees, observe their achievements, and strengthen collaborative efforts. The organisations visited were ANYD (Association les Amis de Nyumbadjou-Djoumoichongo) and the Coelacanth National Park in Grande Comore, and IPAC (Initiative Pour une Alternative Citoyenne), BEE (Bureau d'Études Environnementales des Comores), and Dahari in Anjouan. The delegation also met with the focal point in Comoros of the Tropical Biology Association project and the Dayima team.

Interview following the grantee exchange in the Comoros

On October 9, during the CEPF supervision mission in the Comoros, an exchange was organised by ID, the RIT focal point in the country, between three Comorian grantees:

- ANYD, based on Grande Comore, focuses on preserving the Karthala Ecosystem by promoting climate-resilient agricultural and forestry practices, including capacity building in sustainable agriculture.
- IPAC, based on Anjouan, works to strengthen the capacity of farmers in the Hapemba forest region, with a focus on agroecology and reforestation.
- BEE, also based on Anjouan, conducts research on habitat health and participatory management for biodiversity protection, focusing on issues such as invasive species control and possible restoration areas.

What topics were discussed during this exchange?

Oirdi Abdourahim, Project Manager (ANYD):

"During the exchange, we discussed a range of topics, including reforestation and ecosystem restoration, agroforestry, and strategies to combat invasive species."

Dr. Amelaid Houmadi, Project Manager (BEE):

"We also addressed several challenges and brainstormed potential solutions together."



From left to right: Ibrahim Said (IPAC), Oirdi Abdourahim (ANYD), Dr. Amelaid Houmadi (BEE)



Mont Ntringui National Park Anjouan
Comoros © IPAC

What did you learn from this exchange?

Ibrahim Said, Secretary General (IPAC):

"I gained a clearer understanding of the difference between restoration and reforestation, which was new to me. The field visit broadened my perspective on our project. Now it's up to us to maintain a dynamic approach to ensure its success. The biggest challenge is identifying shared goals for a specific area and community. Achieving this could strengthen solidarity and enhance our restoration efforts. For example, the UCEA (Union des Comités de l'Eau d'Anjouan) has shown how collective efforts can manage water resources and protect the environment."

Dr. Amelaid Houmadi, Project Manager (BEE):

"This exchange gave me a better grasp of IPAC's project, and some of the issues of the ANYD project. The discussions helped me explore new ideas and consider proposed solutions. For example, I still struggle with the idea of group collaboration, like the approach used in Mauritius. In the Comoros, we tend to be more sectarian and individualistic. A potential solution could be to establish security and agroforestry management committees, which could ensure both safety and sustainable resource management."

Were there any outcomes from the exchange that you plan to implement?

Oirdi Abdourahim, Project Manager (ANYD):

"As has been said, this exchange helped clarify the distinction between restoration and reforestation for us. We're now more focused on restoring native and endemic species as part of our activities."

Dr. Amelaid Houmadi, Project Manager (BEE):

"For me, the exchange allowed me to better identify areas in need of restoration, particularly degraded forests. I also had the chance to meet other people working in biodiversity restoration, which will help expand my network of partnerships. I've already established contacts that will lead to valuable technical exchanges."

Video series: Managing Environmental and Social Risks on CEPF Grants

Many CEPF grants are implemented in environmentally sensitive areas or among vulnerable communities. CEPF has an overriding commitment to do no harm to people or the environment, so we adopted an Environmental and Social Management Framework, which sets out the process and policies for managing environmental and social risks in the context of CEPF grants.

This video is the first in an upcoming series explaining the ten CEPF safeguard policies for prospective grantees.

Translations in French will be made available soon. You can subscribe to the CEPF YouTube channel where the entire video series will be posted once it's complete:

youtube.com/@CEPFVideo

GRANTEE STORIES

Empowering farmers to restore ecosystems: A payment for ecosystem services (PES) pilot in Madagascar's Fandriana-Marolambo Corridor

Association PARTAGE (PARTicipation A la Gestion de l'Environnement) was awarded a US\$ 31,155 grant by CEPF in July 2023 to launch an innovative project that will run until June 2025. The project aims to establish a pilot site for a PES scheme, encouraging small groups of self-governing farmers to engage in restoration and environmental management efforts. This overarching goal is to restore degraded land while reducing pressure on the Fandriana-Marolambo Forest Corridor, testing this sustainable development model in the region.



Community members participating in the project © Partage

The PES model offers financial incentives for farmers who plant trees and adopt sustainable agricultural practices that enhance biodiversity. Community members are trained and compensated to monitor the growth of newly planted trees and ensure adherence to these practices, creating a sustainable link between environmental conservation and socio-economic development.

In one year, the project has already seen significant achievements, both in community engagement and on-the-ground activities. To date, 743 farmers - 511 men and 232 women - have joined the programme, forming 80 small groups. Together, they have planted over 11,207 trees, primarily within agroforestry systems. These trees will soon undergo an audit by the Iteraka platform, which partners with private donors to validate and fund each tree planted through the PES mechanism.

Reflecting on the progress made, project coordinator Mr. Nicolas Andriamampianina shared in a recent report: "Now seen as a precious resource, trees have become a sustainable solution for local communities after the seminar sessions organised by PARTAGE. They help restore degraded ecosystems and address local socio-economic challenges. Farmers are actively involved in designing and shaping the PES programme, which is created by them, for them."

Enhancing climate resilience in the Ambodivoasary Natural Reserve

In the heart of Madagascar, the Ambodivoasary Natural Reserve is the focus of a transformative CEPF project aimed at enhancing the climate resilience of both its ecosystems and the local communities. This initiative by the organisation Acting for Communities and Trees (ACT) seeks to empower residents through improved management of intact watershed forests, restoration of degraded forest ecosystems, and the generation of long-term income from the production of native seedlings. By developing climate-smart agriculture and agroforestry practices, the project not only addresses environmental challenges but also strengthens the livelihoods of local populations. Additionally, the promotion of community-based ecotourism aims to eventually provide sustainable funding for ongoing forest conservation activities.

A shining example of the positive impact of this approach is Mrs. Sahondranirina Olga, residing in the village of Ambodivoasary. An active member of the local FITAMA association, Olga has always been passionate about preserving the environment and improving the living conditions in her community.

Through the project's focus on restoring degraded areas of the reserve and enhancing community management, Olga and her fellow residents have benefited from sustainable initiatives that align with the project's goals. One notable achievement has been the production and sale of native seedlings, which provides a stable source of income while contributing to the restoration of the local ecosystem. "Thanks to these activities, I've been able to contribute to the production of over 5,000 native seedlings, which has enabled me to support my family financially," Olga shares proudly.

In addition to generating income through seedling production, the project has fostered the development of ecotourism in the region. By establishing eco-friendly accommodations and promoting local attractions, the community can now welcome visitors to experience the beauty of the Ambodivoasary Natural Reserve. "We finally have a way to take advantage of our natural resources while ensuring their protection," Olga explains, noting how these initiatives have significantly improved living conditions in her village.

The combined benefits of native seedling production and ecotourism will contribute to the ecological restoration of the Ambodivoasary Reserve and empowered Olga to provide better opportunities for her five children, especially in terms of education: "My children will now be able to pursue their studies further, something that was previously difficult to envision".

Building climate resilience in Northern Madagascar through mangrove restoration

A project led by Madagascar Action Development (MAD), with funding from CEPF, is helping strengthen the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems, alongside local communities in northern Madagascar. The initiative focuses on restoring mangroves, protecting endangered species, and supporting vulnerable populations impacted by climate change. Central to this effort is linking environmental conservation with local livelihoods, such as agroforestry, which protects and enriches soil, diversifies agricultural production, and establishes resilience funds offering savings loans to the community.



Young vigorous plant © RANDRIANJAKA Rado Lalaina, ACT-FITAMA Association



Mrs Olga Sahondranirina © RANDRIANJAKA Rado Lalaina, ACT-FITAMA Association

Mangroves are crucial for coastal protection, biodiversity, and supporting local fisheries. However, these ecosystems have been degraded, threatening livelihoods. This project aims to restore mangroves and promote sustainable practices to ensure long-term benefits for both the environment and communities.

A key example of this project's impact is the story of Théophile Mortgage, president of the MIRAY HINA Fishermen's Association in Ambalavola, Diégo District. A lifelong fisherman, Théophile has witnessed a decline in fishery resources due to mangrove destruction. Determined to reverse this, he founded the MIRAY HINA Association, meaning "united" or "solidarity," to restore mangroves along the Caïman River.

"I saw the destruction of the mangroves by locals, which spurred me to rally my colleagues to restore and protect them for the sake of our children and community," Théophile said.

Although the restoration faced early setbacks, with many young mangrove saplings dying, Théophile and his team realised they needed technical expertise. Supported by MAD, the association received training in mangrove cultivation and management, significantly improving results.

"Since the training, almost all the young trees are thriving, and the ecosystem around the Caïman River is diversifying. This success has inspired others to join the conservation efforts," Théophile shared.

Théophile's story highlights how community-driven efforts, supported by technical training and external funding, can revitalise ecosystems and strengthen local resilience.

Eradicating exotic and invasive rats from Curieuse Island in the Seychelles

Curieuse Island, the fifth largest inner granitic island in Seychelles, is a biodiversity hotspot, hosting over 320 native taxa, with 87 endemic to Seychelles and some endemic only to Curieuse.

The island provides habitat for 45 IUCN Red Listed species, with five Critically Endangered and 12 Endangered, and is the only place where the iconic Coco de Mer palm (*Lodoicea maldivica*) and Aldabra Giant Tortoise (*Aldabrachelys gigantea*) coexist in the wild. Invasive Black rats (*Rattus rattus*) have had a devastating impact on the island's ecology since shortly after human colonisation, with a striking difference between islands with and without rats.

The Indian Ocean Tortoise Alliance (IOTA), in partnership with Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority (SPGA) and Terrestrial Restoration Action Society of Seychelles (TRASS), received a large grant from CEPF to carry out a whole island rat eradication, also with support from Goodnature Traps. Rats are currently being eradicated by the field team using an innovative strategy with Goodnature A24 self-resetting traps, a relatively new technology using no poison, which can continue operating for months with almost no maintenance. Equally important, this technique is more humane because the rats are killed instantly. The project is scheduled to run over two years, and includes improving biosecurity measures on the island following eradication, along with a significant public education component.

The project is well underway. Of the 325 planned rat traps, 148 still need to be deployed. Furthermore, two conservation dogs have been meticulously trained to detect rats on the island. In October, IOTA is also planning 10 trips of 15 students to engage in activities that raise awareness of the impact of invasive alien species on the island ecosystems.

Once no rats remain on the island, immediate improvements can be expected, with reduced risk of species extinction, recovery of native species populations, recolonisation by species already absent, and resumption and recovery of degraded ecosystem processes. This will not only be of ecological benefit to the island, but should stimulate further interest in rodent eradication in Seychelles, and boost the local economy through improved ecotourism opportunities.



© IOTA SEYCHELLES/RBAXTER

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)!
- The 'Capacity for Conservation' website is a free online resource that can help conservation organisations to develop themselves to be stronger, more resilient and able to deliver enduring conservation impacts. See: <https://www.capacityforconservation.org/>
- The Global Environment Facility (GEF)'s Fonseca Leadership Programme is dedicated to supporting the next generation of conservationists, especially those from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. In January 2025, the next call for nominations for the Fonseca Leadership Programme in Africa will open. Read more about the application criteria: [Fonseca Leadership Program in Africa - WCS.org](#)

- **The International Ranger Awards** officially recognise rangers and ranger teams who overcome challenges to protect wildlife each year. The 2025 International Ranger Awards will open for nominations from October 11, 2024 through February 1, 2025. Awardees must be nominated by an IUCN Member organisation, a member of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) or members of an International Ranger Awards Partner organisation. [Visit the IUCN WCPA website](#) to learn more about nominations, past winners, and supporting the Awards.
- **EBONY FOREST : 1 month training placement opportunity in Mauritius.** *Ebony Forest* (Mauritius), has received a CEPF grant under the 'Strategic Direction 3 - Strengthen the capacity of local communities and civil society at regional and local levels to enhance adaptive capacity and reduce exposure to climate change risks'. To build technical capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the region to implement activities that contribute to EbA approaches to climate change, Ebony Forest is offering the following 1 month placements for staff from CSOs of the region (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles) either interested in enhancing their skills or planning on implementing such activities:
 - Mammalian invasive species management – predator control
 - Forest restoration
 - Bird reintroductions

For more details, see the [website](#) and complete an [expression of interest form](#).

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



**USD 9,062,428
granted so far**



**44 grants awarded
(20 SG and 24 LG)**



Projects in 4 countries
(Madagascar: 24, Comores: 4,
Mauritius: 7, Seychelles 4, Regional 5)

Projects by CEPF pillar



Biodiversity
29 projects



Civil Society
9 projects



Enabling Conditions
2 projects



Human Well-being
4 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 organisations 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.