

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

NEWSLETTER

February 2025

A message from the RIT Leader

As we step into the fourth year of the CEPF investment phase for 2022–2027, I am thrilled to share some exciting news updates and inspiring stories of achievement from our grantees and their efforts to make a tangible impact on the ground.

In August 2024, we concluded another round of call for proposals, which resulted in 58 applications for small grants and 81 for large grants. The Regional Implementation Team (RIT) has reviewed the proposals and is pleased to share that 27 applications for large grants and nine for small grants have been shortlisted.

Since the beginning of this investment phase, we have launched four calls for large grants (over USD 50,000) and five for small grants (under USD 50,000), mobilising USD 15.8 million in funding for biodiversity and community resilience projects across the hotspot.



Discover the projects supported by CEPF across Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands by exploring our interactive map.



Newsletter Highlights

A message from the RIT Leader

News from the RIT

Grantee stories

Fundraising & training opportunities

CEPF investment RIT MADIO
until January 2025

Contact Details
Regional Implementation Team



Madagascar
www.saf-fjkm.org



Comoros
www.id-onq.org



Mauritius
www.forena.mu



Seychelles
www.seyccat.org



International
www.iucn.nl

An important milestone in 2025 will be our Midterm Assessment (MTA). Scheduled for May 6 to 9 in Madagascar, the MTA is a unique opportunity for the RIT and all CEPF grantees from the current funding cycle to learn, share, and reflect on our collective aspirations and achievements.

A cornerstone of our mission remains ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) as a response to the growing challenges of climate change. We are proud to see grantees applying innovative approaches to empower civil society and strengthen the resilience of ecosystems and communities alike.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership, and I hope you find this newsletter both informative and inspiring. Together, we can continue to drive meaningful change in 2025 and beyond.

Best regards,

Monique Randriatsivery,
RIT Leader for the Madagascar and
the Indian Ocean Islands
Biodiversity Hotspot
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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.



Livingstone's Fruit Bat © O. Langrand



Signing Ceremony © Anna-Louisa Dogley, Sey CCAT

NEWS FROM THE RIT

Seychellois Civil Society Organizations Awarded Small Grants from CEPF

CEPF has awarded three local civil society organisations in Seychelles with small grants of approximately \$50,000 each. The grantees, namely Plant Conservation Action (PCA), Island Conservation Society (ICS) and Citizens Engagement Platform (CEPS), signed their grant agreements on December 10 in a short ceremony. The ceremony was organised by SeyCCAT and took place at its headquarters.

The three projects target different aspects of ecosystem-based adaptation efforts. PCA's project aims to enhance the survival prospects of native and endemic plants in the Morne Seychellois National Park, a key biodiversity area (KBA) found on the main island, Mahe. PCA will mobilise local communities for this restoration project and will follow up with an evaluation of the impact on the ecosystem after restoration efforts. CEPS will be building the capacities of local CSOs in implementing ecosystem-based adaptation projects. The focus will be placed on strengthening organisational capacities, especially in strategic planning and resource mobilisation. Finally, ICS will be strengthening Aride Island's ecosystem through the reintroduction of 150 Aldabra Giant Tortoises. The translocation of the tortoises hopes to rehabilitate the island's endemic and native species, hence building its resilience against climate change.



Type of chameleon living in Anja Park
© SAF FJKM

Exchange Visit in Anja Community Reserve

Located near Ambalavao Tsienimparihy, Anja Community Reserve is an example of successful community-based management that blends biodiversity conservation with sustainable development. Since 1999, the local community association (VOI) has managed the park, which spans 34 hectares and is home to a diverse array of wildlife, including the iconic ring-tailed lemur (*Maki catta*), alongside a variety of plant species. The community actively participates in the park's management through well-structured organisations and funding derived from tourism. Initiatives such as reforestation, fire prevention, and education further bolster these efforts.

From December 16 to 19, exchange visits were organised for CEPF grant beneficiaries. Two representatives from each participating association or NGO, including TAMIA, TAFOMIHAAVO, Ny Tanintsika, MATEZA, PARTAGE, MIAINTSOROKA, and MAMPITA, attended the event. The exchanges highlighted several positive outcomes: an enhanced understanding of community management mechanisms, strengthened skills in ecotourism and conservation, and the sharing of best practices. Participants also gained practical tools to optimize natural resource management, boost community engagement, and create sustainable economic benefits. These results reaffirm Anja Park as an inspiring model of local governance.

Masterclass for Small Grants Applicants

In order for the RIT to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations in project writing, project management, gender mainstreaming and safeguard policies, a series of masterclasses were held for the project technical and financial staff of the organizations from Madagascar and the Comoros, that were shortlisted following the call for proposals.

On December 12 theoretical and practical sessions were organised for four Malagasy CSOs. For the Comoros, the theoretical and practical workshops have been organised on December 17, 18, 19 and 20 with the participation of seven CSOs.

FORENA Certifies Eleven Women in Nursery Management

On December 20, Fondation Ressources et Nature (FORENA) awarded certificates in Nursery Management and Propagation of Mangroves and Useful Plants to eleven women from the South-East region of Mauritius. In addition, thanks to a collaboration with Nature Technics, a CEPF beneficiary, they have been trained in composting. The inhabitants of this region, many of whom live from fishing, had suffered from a serious oil spill caused by the sinking of the MV Wakashio in 2020.

Manoj Vaghjee, Chairperson of FORENA, commented, "The women who have received the training are autonomous and have a choice. They can either sell plants to FORENA, work with local companies, or join other nurseries." Oudesh Bapoo, founder of CEPF grantee Nature Technics Ltd, highlighted their contributions, saying, "Participants helped establish Mauritius's first organic jackfruit orchard and developed composting materials, crucial for the Aerated Static Pile Composting system."

The ceremony took place at La Vallée de Ferney's Agri-Hub in the presence of Nandita Ramdewar, CEO of the State Insurance Company of Mauritius (SICOM), Arnaud Berthelot, Managing Director of La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust, and other distinguished guests.



Certification eleven women © Forena



Masterclass for Small Grants Applicants © Tahirisoa



Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher
© O. Langrand

In addition to promoting agroecological farming, the project focuses on strengthening the governance of community organisations. Through capacity-building activities, MfM supports these groups in managing natural resources more effectively, fostering transparency, and enhancing their ability to act as stewards of their local ecosystems.

Since the start of the programme, 70 Young Leaders (Tanora Mpitarika - TM) are now fully operational and benefit from the support of the 5 Focal Points, who are also TMs, all aged between 19 and 30, with an average education level equivalent to the third year. 70% of these young people have never received training and have rarely left their locality.

The 19 supported VOIs (community organisations) also have a capacity-building plan, and 3,866 people have been trained in financial education, 1,276 in agro-ecological practices including organic fertilisation and soil management and restoration, and 977 in vegetable cultivation.

GRANTEE STORIES

Empowering communities in their role as natural resource managers

In July 2023, Money for Madagascar (MfM) launched a project to strengthen the role of grassroots organisations in managing Madagascar's natural resources. Supported by the CEPF, this initiative focuses on the organisational development of 19 community-based organisations and local land managers. Its goal: to foster resilient livelihoods while ensuring the sustainable governance of three Key Biodiversity Areas: Amoron'i Onilahy, Complexe Lac Ihotry, and Tsinjoarivo.

This initiative integrates community development with environmental conservation, addressing the urgent need for local solutions to challenges such as deforestation, habitat destruction, and biodiversity loss. At its core is a commitment to equipping communities with the skills and knowledge necessary to take charge of their future.

Building capacity and fostering leadership

A key component of the project is the training of young men and women from local communities to serve as advisers on agroecological farming practices. These trainees provide guidance on sustainable agriculture, helping their communities adopt practices that enhance food security while preserving the environment. By combining ecological stewardship with livelihood development, the project ensures that communities are better prepared to adapt to changing environmental and economic conditions.

The story of Esamberaiso

The impact of MfM's approach can already be seen in stories such as that of Esamberaiso, a resident of Ranomay in the Tongobory Commune. After receiving training in April 2024 on community savings groups (Groupes d'Épargne Communautaire, or GECs), Esamberaiso established two GECs in his village, each with 30 members. This structured, transparent approach to savings has been widely adopted, replacing less formal systems.

Esamberaiso also shared his knowledge of vegetable farming with group members, enabling them to cultivate their own plots. These farms not only improve food security but also provide income to sustain their GEC contributions.



Livingstone's Fruit Bat, Anjouan © O. Langrand

Advancing Conservation in the Hapemba Forest Zone

As a grantee of CEPF, Initiative Pour une Alternative Citoyenne (IPAC) from the Comoros is leading impactful conservation and sustainable development efforts in the Hapemba forest zone, located within Mount Ntringui National Park. This park, situated on the island of Anjouan in the Comoros, is an important biodiversity hotspot.

Recently IPAC collaborated with the Bureau d'Étude Environnemental (BEE) to conduct an ecological study in the Hapemba forest zone.

The study had two primary objectives:

1. To deepen understanding of the intervention zone to optimize the impact of reforestation.
2. To establish a participatory methodology for monitoring and evaluating conservation activities.

The study focused on mapping and delineating the forest area, identifying degraded areas, and locating potential habitats for the Livingstone's Bat and the Anjouan Scops Owl (Petit Duc d'Anjouan).

The results of the study include a detailed description of forest areas, their surface areas, levels of degradation and the species to be prioritized for conservation in these areas. The hydrology of the region, the specific richness of endemic forest trees, and potential habitats for the petit duc d'Anjouan and Livingstone's fruit bat. IPAC is also implementing a participatory method for monitoring and conservation activities:

Local farmers were actively involved in drawing up data sheets and mapping reforestation areas in Hapemba, Boini, Dziani, and Hamgara, all of which have prepared them for reforestation efforts for the 2024-2025 campaign. IPAC staff have also been trained in the use of ecological monitoring tools to ensure technical self-sufficiency, enabling them to assist farmers in monitoring tree growth and effectively managing, processing, and analyzing data using Power BI.

Mauritius' Echo Parakeet: Conservation Efforts in Ebony Forest

Funded by CEPF, Ebony Forest is working to restore 21 hectares of degraded watershed forest in the Ebony Forest Chamarel (Chamarel - Le Morne Key Biodiversity Area) and Vallée de l'Est (Bambou Range Key Biodiversity Area) in Mauritius. The project focuses on controlling invasive alien plants and animals, aiming to improve ecosystem resilience to climate change by reinstating missing ecological interactions, such as seed dispersal and grazing.


A key focus of the Ebony Forest conservation team since 2019 has been the Echo Parakeet (*Alexandrinus eques*), the last surviving endemic parrot of Mauritius. In the early 1990s, the species was on the brink of extinction, with only 20-25 individuals left in the wild. Intensive conservation efforts, including nest rescues, captive breeding, hand-rearing, and releases, were critical to the species' recovery.

Thirty years later, the Echo Parakeet now faces different challenges. A growing population with limited space and poor natural dispersal behaviour has led to competition for breeding sites and food resources. There is also an increased risk of disease transmission, such as the Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD), along with concerns about reduced genetic diversity and the unknown effects of climate change.

The recognized way forward for the Echo Parakeet at the national level is to establish new subpopulations in suitable habitats. This strategy aims to increase the species' distribution, allowing the population to grow at lower density and with reduced pressure from competition and disease. In December 2024, in collaboration with the National Parks and Conservation Service and the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, Ebony Forest translocated 20 Echo Parakeet chicks from Black River Gorges National Park to Vallée de l'Est. This site, managed by Ebony Forest, is being restored, and predators are controlled, providing a good location to establish a new subpopulation in the eastern part of the island, and to create resilient, climate-adapted forests.



Inspecting a chick before translocation
© Ebony Forest, Image by Olivier Joel Bruneau



One of the older fledglings learning to eat fruits
© Ebony Forest

Prior to the translocations, a release aviary was built on site. The chicks are currently being hand-reared until they fledge, wean, and become independent. The juveniles will be released after a period of acclimation to increase the chances of successfully settling in the area and thus contribute to the dispersal of seeds of endemic species.

Building Climate Resilience in the Nyon River Watershed

Ferney Conservation Trust, in collaboration with Ferney Ltd, has launched an ambitious three-year project to restore the Nyon River watershed in Mauritius, backed by a USD 284,022.73 grant from CEPF.

The Nyon River watershed, a vital ecological and hydrological system, is under severe threat from habitat degradation, invasive alien species, and unsustainable land use. These pressures have diminished biodiversity, reduced water quality, and weakened the ecosystem's ability to withstand climate change impacts such as droughts and floods. Without urgent restoration, the watershed's capacity to support downstream ecosystems and communities will continue to decline.

The Ferney initiative employs an integrated, ecosystem-based approach to address these challenges and facilitate the natural regeneration of watershed forests and riparian areas in the Nyon River watershed. Activities include removing invasive alien plants, planting native pioneer and post-pioneer species, and creating fenced-off areas to protect the ecosystem. Additionally, sustainable practices like climate-smart agriculture and agroforestry will enhance land management and improve livelihoods, particularly for local women farmers.

The project, initiated in August 2023, has made significant progress. To date, 2,300 saplings have been planted, primarily *Harungana madagascariensis*, *Leea guineensis*, *Dodonaea viscosa*, and *Calophyllum tacamahaca*, across 11 sections of pastureland, covering a total of 4.2 hectares. Additionally, equipment for electric fencing was purchased to protect the plantations from damage caused by deer and wild pigs.

Further up the valley, efforts to control populations of Invasive Alien Plants have resulted in a notable reduction of species such as *Cinnamomum verum*, *Psidium cattleianum*, *Ligustrum robustum*, and *Clidemia hirta*. This intervention spanned three different forest gradients, covering an area of 7 hectares. In one of the cleared sections, 320 saplings have been planted, despite the area being accessible to deer and feral pigs.

In the Model Farm segment of the project, ten women are cultivating crops and trees over 0.45 hectares within the Ferney AgriHub. The initial five participants have completed 49 hours of training provided by the Le Vélo Vert association and Forma'Terra, a training institution from Reunion Island.



Want to learn more?

Watch the video to see how Ferney is working towards a resilient Nyon River watershed.

FUNDRAISING & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- The self-paced online 'Women Leadership in Climate Action' e-course, developed by UNITAR and C40 aims to inspire women and girls, strengthen their leadership skills, and help them deliver the just climate initiatives needed to tackle the climate crisis. [Enroll here](#).
- 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/>

CEPF investment in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot until January 2025



**9,712,283 USD
granted so far**



**48 grants awarded
(23 SG and 25 LG)**



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

Projects by CEPF pillar



Biodiversity
32 projects



Civil Society
10 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.