

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

NEWSLETTER

April 2025

Bimbini Mangrove, Comoros © CAP

A message from the RIT Leader

In the ever-evolving field of nature conservation, collaboration and inclusion are essential for lasting impact. CEPF values knowledge exchange between grantees, recognising that shared experiences, challenges, and successes can lead to stronger, more innovative approaches. Whether through exchange visits, joint activities, or informal peer learning, these moments of connection help build a vibrant, supportive conservation community.

This newsletter highlights inspiring examples of how CEPF grantees are working together—and making space for women and young people to take the lead. From youth-led reforestation efforts to community-based governance models, these stories show how inclusive conservation can achieve tangible, lasting results.

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“As we look ahead to the
midterm assessment we
celebrate the power of
working together.”

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CEPF investment RIT MADIO
until March 2025

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These exchanges are not only valuable, they are central to CEPF's approach. As we look ahead to the midterm assessment in Antananarivo from 6–9 May 2025, we celebrate the power of working together – across cultures, disciplines, and generations—to protect the unique biodiversity of the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot.

Best regards,

Monique Randriatsivory,

RIT Leader for the Madagascar and
the Indian Ocean Islands

Biodiversity Hotspot

(monique.randriatsivory@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.



Field visit VOI Ankarinoro © SAF/FJKM

NEWS FROM THE RIT

Inclusive Agro-Ecological Practices for Gender and Youth : Webinar Recording

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time and it has a severe impact on agricultural productivity. Youth and women are hit extra hard. On February 20, 2025, experts from IUCN NL and SDG Partnership Facility (SDGP) partners from Chad and Niger shared their insights on inclusive agro-ecological practices as a climate change adaptation mechanism. A keynote presentation addressed key concepts of gender and youth inclusion and their relevance in project implementation.

This webinar is part of the SDG Partnership Facility (SDGP) knowledge exchange series, organised by IUCN NL, reNature, and VU Amsterdam, on behalf of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO).

- **Watch the full webinar here: [Webinar: Inclusive agro-ecological practices for women and youth](#)**

Project visits Comoros

From February 14 to March 8, 2025, ID-ONG conducted site visits and meetings with future grantees who had responded to the August 2024 Small Grant call for projects. The aim of these meetings was to ascertain their management capabilities, their access to the necessary resources (technical and material) and to assess the project's consistency with local conditions.



Pink Pigeon, Mauritius © O. Langrand



Project visit Comoros GIDD Chindini Beach © GIDD



Discover the projects supported by CEPF across Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands by exploring our [interactive map](#).

GRANTEE STORIES

Empowering Young Leaders to Protect Madagascar's Biodiversity

Between July 2023 and December 2024, Money for Madagascar delivered an ambitious and impactful project aimed at strengthening both community livelihoods and biodiversity conservation in Madagascar. Funded by CEPF, the initiative focused on building local capacity to manage natural resources across three key biodiversity areas: Amoron'i Onilahy, Lake Ihotry-Mangoky Delta Complex, and Tsinjoarivo.

At the heart of the project was a commitment to local empowerment. Seventy-five young people, 59% of them young women, were trained to become development agents within their own communities. These youth, drawn from remote areas with limited access to further education, gained the skills to provide guidance on agroecological farming practices and climate resilience. Their work reached more than 2,500 farmers, contributing to both improved livelihoods and stronger environmental stewardship.



MfM Group photo GEC Mahalomba Maroamalona © Henintsoa

All future small grant project leaders were met during this period: Association d'Intervention pour le Développement et l'Environnement (AIDE), Assistance aux Initiatives Innovantes pour la Protection de l'Environnement aux Comores (AIPEC), Association les Amis de Nyoubadjou-Djoumoichongo (ANYD), Collaboration-Action-Pérennisation (CAP), Groupe d'Intervention pour le Développement pour Durable (GIDD), Initiative Pour une Alternative Citoyenne (IPAC), Ulanga Mayesha Mayendreleyo (UMAMA) and Wandzani Wazi Mbwedza (WWM).

The operating methods of each structure were assessed, the capacities of the project management team were evaluated, work plans and budgets were reworked, implementation zones were validated and a baseline of sites with details of implementation locations was established.

These visits were organized for most grantees in 2 stages: a meeting with the project leaders in their office, and a visit to the site chosen for the implementation of the projects. This enabled ID to assess the organizational and technical reinforcement needs of the structures, the feasibility of the project with regard to the conditions on the ground and to issue, where appropriate, recommendations and points of attention concerning the implementation of the project.

When the projects were close (geographically and in terms of activities), a joint meeting was organized, serving as a first exchange visit between the organizations. This was the case for AIPEC and ANYD; AIDE and GIDD; and UMAMA and CAP. The organizations were thus able to discuss their respective projects, identify points of convergence and, in some cases, identical activities, reflect on the pooling of means and sharing of resources, and identify possible synergies during the implementation phase.



MfM Group photo GEC Maroamalona © Henintsoa

During supervision missions in Mauritius from June 2 to 13, 2024 and the Comoros from October 5 to 13, 2024, exchange visits were organised to facilitate peer learning. Monique Randriatsivry, RIT Leader for the MADIO Biodiversity Hotspot, reflected on the significance of these visits:

“By facilitating hands-on learning and capacity building, these exchanges equip conservationists with innovative ideas and best practices that can be adapted to their local contexts. They also foster strong networks, ensuring that conservation efforts are not isolated but part of a larger, interconnected movement. Through these visits, professionals can avoid repeating past mistakes, enhance adaptive management strategies, and stay motivated by witnessing positive conservation impacts elsewhere.”

From December 16 to 19, 2024, an exchange visit was organised at the Anjà Community Reserve for CEPF grant beneficiaries who actively collaborate with community organisations in their projects. Representatives from various associations and NGOs, including Tahosoa Alandriake Mitambatse Ianantsona Andatabo (TAMIA), Tambazotran'ny Fokonolona Mitantana Harena Voajanahary eto Madagasikara (TAFOMIHAAYO), Ny Tanintsika, Malagasy teknisiana mivondrona ho Aro sy TEzan'iZahamena ary ny Ala Atsinanana (MATEZA), Association PARTICipation A la Gestion de l'Environnement (PARTAGE), MIAINTSOROKA, and MAMPITA participated in the event.

The exchange led to several positive outcomes, including an improved understanding of community-based 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.



Variety of orchids in the caves © SAF FJKM

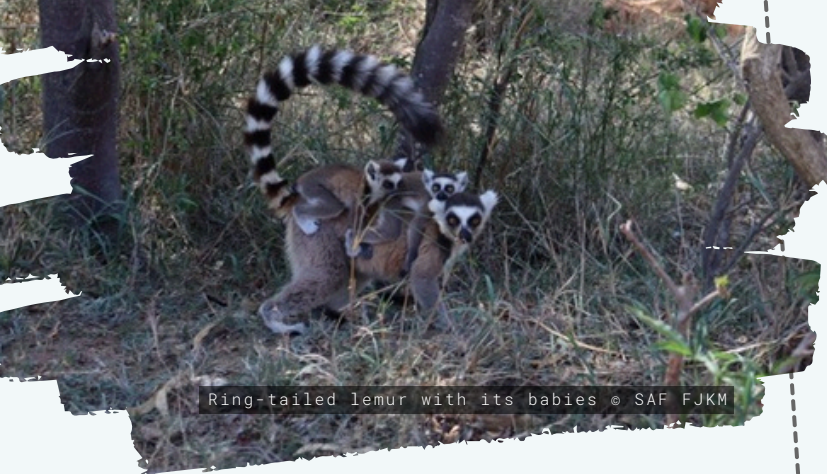
The project also focused on organisational development within 19 community-based organisations (VOIs). Each VOI was restructured into smaller, participatory units – known as village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) – which improved internal governance, encouraged member engagement, and ensured transparent financial management. The result was a 40% increase in VOI revenue, enabling activities such as regular forest patrols and reforestation efforts that had previously been sporadic or impossible.

“When youth are empowered, they become powerful allies for conservation”

This involvement of younger generations is crucial in achieving long-term conservation goals. Other CEPF grantees have also shown the power of youth engagement. In 2024, the Madagascar Flora and Fauna Group organised a football tournament where teams were conditioned to planting trees to participate – resulting in 11,553 trees planted by 277 young people. Similarly, The Aspinall Foundation created a football team for marginalised young men, who later led a reforestation initiative after feeling more valued and included. These creative, community-based approaches show that when youth are empowered, they become powerful allies for conservation.

The Power of Knowledge Exchange in Conservation

During CEPF's current investment phase in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands (MADIO) Biodiversity Hotspot, multiple exchange visits between grantees have taken place, providing valuable opportunities to learn from one another and share challenges, successes, and lessons learned.



Ring-tailed lemur with its babies © SAF FJKM

In late February, 2025, Maholy Ravaloharimanitra, country director of CEPF grantee The Aspinall Foundation, attended a workshop hosted by another CEPF grantee, Association Vahatra. Ravaloharimanitra shared:

“What made this trip particularly valuable for me was the opportunity to see firsthand the remaining patch of highland forest while learning about the restoration efforts being carried out. I gained insights into how they manage and coordinate the production of seedlings, ensuring that collected species are representative of those present in the forest and available throughout the year.”

Additionally, I learned how they prepare the field in time for transplantation. I sincerely thank Association Vahatra for this opportunity—it was far more enriching to witness the work in action rather than simply learning about it through a presentation.”

Beyond practical skills, exchange visits play a crucial role in shaping better policies, engaging communities, and strengthening partnerships. They foster cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, making conservation efforts more inclusive and effective.

Recognising the importance of knowledge exchange, CEPF will take advantage of the mid-term assessment in May 2025 in Antananarivo, Madagascar to invite representatives from all CEPF-funded projects, further reinforcing the commitment to shared learning and collective progress in conservation.

CEPF grantees in Ferney region join forces

The Ferney region is located in the South-East region of Mauritius, in the immediate periphery of the Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) MUS 02 - Bambous Mountain Range. Ferney Ltd is a CEPF Large Grant beneficiary promoting a ridge to reef approach on its lands. Two Small Grant beneficiaries, namely Nature Technics and Pat's Nature Farm develop activities in and around Ferney's Agri-Hub.

The projects of the three CEPF grantees are as follows:

- Ferney Ltd - “Building Climate Resilience in the Nyon River Watershed, Ferney, Mauritius”
- Nature Technics Ltd - “Promoting Resilient Agroforestry and Developing Nature-based Solutions for Climate-smart Agriculture”
- Pat's Nature Farm - “Development of Model Agroforestry Plots at Chazal, Chamouny and O'Connor, Camp Caval, Curepipe”

In the wake of the Supervision Mission held in Mauritius, since the 12th of June 2024, the three grantees active in the Ferney region met together to find collaboration synergies. They elaborated a first diagram which identifies potential pathways.

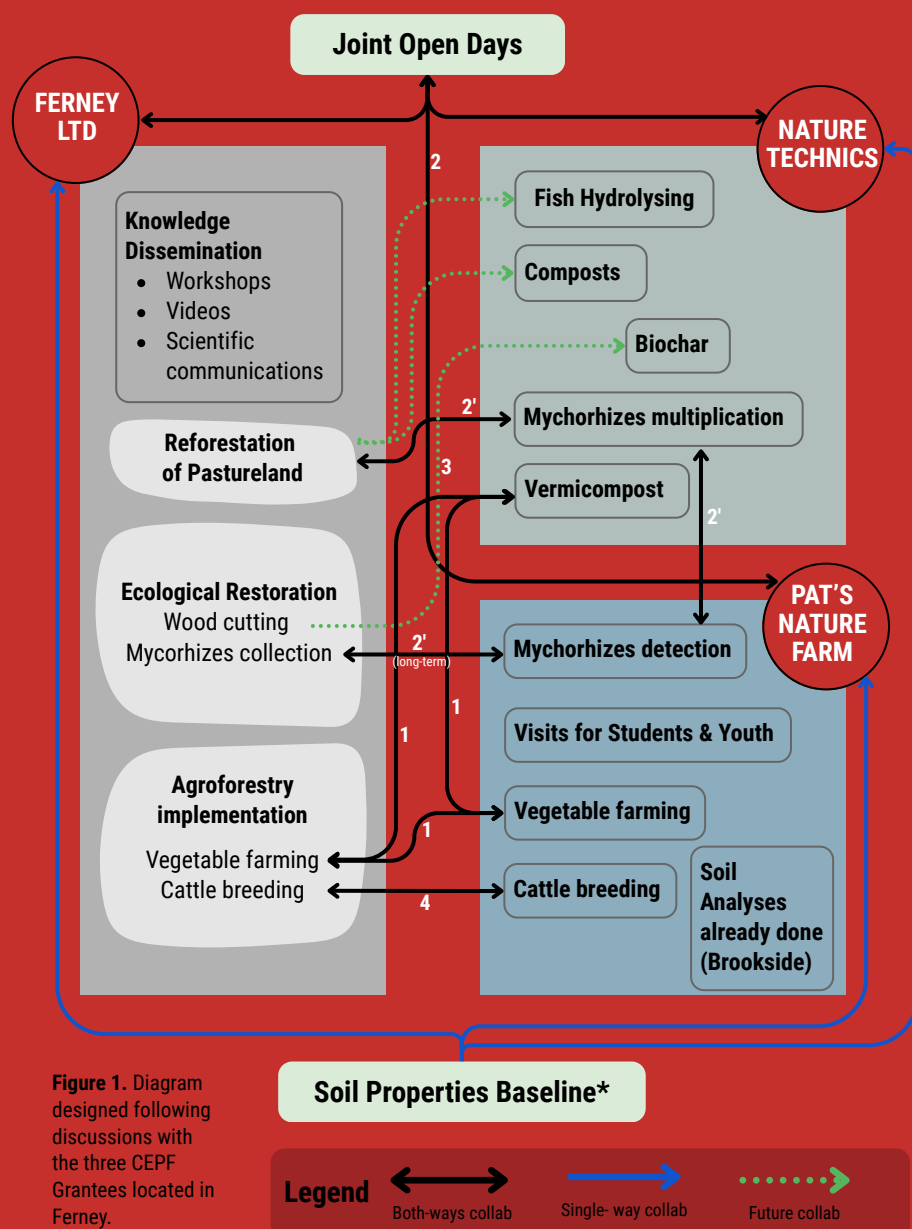


Figure 1. Diagram designed following discussions with the three CEPF Grantees located in Ferney.

Drone footage (source: Xavier Koenig, 2024) of the vermicompost trials on green beans at the Model Farm managed by the South-East Ladies (SELA) Agro-cooperative.

The trials were successfully implemented in both sites following a protocol designed by Dr Seelavarn Ganeshan of Pat's Nature Farm and Alexandre Hervé of Ferney Ltd. Each grantee followed the same data collection guidelines. At the end of the trials, a report was compiled by Alexandre Hervé and shared with the other CEPF Grantees and the RIT leader, detailing the experiment and its result on [green bean Ferrina](#).

The first path (see Fig.1) identified for concrete synergies was vermicompost trials. Two Grantees identified plots, namely Ferney Ltd's Model Farm run by South-East Ladies Agro. (SELA) cooperative and Pat's Nature Farm's site, located approximately 700m North-West of the Ferney Agri-Hub. The third grantee, Nature Technics Ltd, provided vermicompost, and in return, could showcase reports on the impacts of use of vermicompost on food crops. Logistics were then organized, and the trials started in September 2024.



Meeting at PAT's Nature to prepare logistics

Small Grants: Insights from FORENA's site visits in Mauritius

As part of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands (MADIO) Biodiversity Hotspot, the Republic of Mauritius is represented by Fondation Ressources et Nature (FORENA) on the Regional Implementation Team (RIT), led by IUCN NL.

In line with its mandate, between January and April 2025, the FORENA team conducted site visits to four small grant recipients—Eco-Sud, NATIR, Nature Technics, and Pat's Nature Farm—operating in various Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) across Mauritius.

The delegation comprised the Focal Point, Technical Officer, Communication Officer, and Financial Coordinator, who jointly submitted a comprehensive site visit report to CEPF. A photography team also accompanied the visits to document activities and provide visual support for technical reporting

Emilie Wiehe, Technical Officer, stated: *"These visits allowed us to assess the progress of each project, particularly in relation to stated targets and CEPF indicators; identify any challenges encountered during implementation; and explore potential solutions. Grantees shared their approaches to monitoring progress—whether in the restoration and rehabilitation of native forests, the application of nature-based solutions, or the implementation of climate-smart agriculture. In some cases, we were able to spend additional time reviewing previous project reports and providing guidance to strengthen reporting practices. These site visits proved invaluable for building rapport between FORENA and the grantees, and for ground-truthing project achievements."*

Roshan Baguant, Focal Point (Mauritius) remarked: *"During the site visits, I was encouraged by the steady progress observed on the ground and the strong commitment of the implementing teams. Despite the need for some project adjustments along the way—often due to unforeseen challenges or evolving field realities—the dedication and adaptability of the grantees have been commendable. It is heartening to see the positive impact beginning to take shape, both for biodiversity and local engagement. These visits reaffirm the importance of adaptive management and the value of supporting locally driven conservation initiatives."*



Grantees site visit Mauritius © FORENA

Roma Brijmohun, Communication Officer, highlighted:
"The site visits are a unique occasion to interact with the grantees. For the Communication role, it is a key time to observe, listen and learn more about the projects. On the technical aspect, and especially when it comes to grassroots-level grantees, we share practical know-how about tools and software used for presentations, reporting, and social media communication. A fundamental discussion we engage in is about the mode of display of the Grievance Mechanism, given that the topographies, resources, and degree of exposure to the public vary from one site to another. Finally, there are enriching exchanges on how grantees interact with local communities and stakeholders, and how the teams approach gender, inclusivity, capacity-building, and the empowerment of women and youth."

Reena Dhanjee, Finance Coordinator, noted: *"As finance coordinator for small grantees under FORENA, my role is focused on assessing the financial management systems of grantees, ensuring compliance with CEPF guidelines on fund use, procurement, and reporting. I reviewed financial documentation, employment contracts, timesheets, and bank arrangements. Where applicable, I went through the cash flow forecasts, budget reallocations, and the adequacy of procurement procedures. My involvement extended to providing practical recommendations to strengthen financial practices. These visits provided valuable insight into the operational realities of field partners and allowed me to support alignment with CEPF requirements."*

Under the leadership of Manoj Vaghjee, Chairperson of FORENA, the team collaboratively planned the site visits and debriefed on key lessons for future visits.

Summary: CEPF Investment in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot on 31-3-2025



USD 9,974,990
granted so far



Grants awarded: 50
(23 SG and 27 LG)



Active projects in 4 countries
(Madagascar: 27, Comoros: 5,
Mauritius: 7, Seychelles: 7) Regional: 4

Active Projects by CEPF Pillar



Biodiversity
32 projects



Civil Society
11 projects



Enabling Conditions
3 projects



Human Well-being
4 projects



Mantella expectata © F. Andreone

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Conservation International, the European Union, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Canada, 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 program of support to civil society organizations to promote ecosystem-based adaptation in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot. Program activities are taking place in Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and the Seychelles. Madagascar receives additional support from Fondation Franklinia for the conservation of Madagascar's endangered trees.



CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM
PARTNERSHIP FUND



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.