

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

NEWSLETTER

December 2025

Mahé © O. Langrand

A message from the RIT Leader

In this edition of our newsletter, we share exciting updates from CEPF and our grantees across the Western Indian Ocean, highlighting innovative projects in ecosystem-based adaptation, such as coral reef restoration and invasive species management.

Due to the recent socio-political instability in Madagascar, the planned in-country supervision mission by CEPF and its Regional Implementation Team has been postponed. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners in the region - including C3 Madagascar, the MIHARI network, MIARAKAP and its private partner (EXA), AVT2D, Compagnie des Iles Vanille Madagascar, Régénération KORAI, and Madagasikara Voakajy - for their invaluable support in preparing the agenda and logistics for this visit.



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

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CEPF investment RIT MADIO
until September 2025

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

The current crisis in Madagascar, marked by water and electricity shortages, highlights a deep connection to ecosystem degradation, further intensified by climate change. This situation calls for a collective global response to recognize and promote the importance of ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA). It is essential that these nature-based solutions be integrated into policy and strategic frameworks to ensure a sustainable, equitable, and resilient future for generations to come. As the Malagasy proverb says, “*Ny isavorivorian-kilantoana*”, we believe better days lie ahead, and that by investing in nature, we can help make them a reality.

We hope you enjoy reading about the inspiring work being carried out by our grantees and partners, and thank you for your continued interest and support in protecting biodiversity and strengthening community resilience across the region.

Best regards,

Monique Randriatsivory,

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



A warm welcome to Brecht Verhelst

On behalf of the RIT, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Brecht Verhelst who has recently joined the CEPF team for the MADIO region. Prior to joining CEPF, Brecht spent 10 years at BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, supporting its partners to deliver ecological restoration at scale. He always had a strong connection to the Caucasus, where he founded the Batumi Raptor Count and the conservation NGO SABUKO. Brecht holds degrees in Biology, Slavic Languages and Non-profit Management. In his spare time, he enjoys birdwatching, rock climbing and riding ultra endurance mountain bike races. Originally a Dutch speaker from Belgium, Brecht also speaks English, French and Russian.

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.



Sustainable fishing in Lake Tseny led by local fishermen © Hernandez Jelot Francinel, Madagasikara Voakajy

NEWS FROM THE RIT

CEPF Safeguard Video Series

CEPF follows safeguard policies, which are guidelines that help ensure the projects we fund do not inadvertently cause negative impacts, either to the environment or to local people. We review each project, before and during implementation, to identify any potential concerns.

This video series is designed to help explain the various types of safeguard policies CEPF has and to guide grantees in identifying and managing safeguarding risks that may arise during their projects.

Translations in Spanish, French, and Portuguese are also being developed and will be available soon.



[Watch the videos](#)

Successful trainings among grantees in the MADIO region

Madagasikara Voakajy and TBA host training on EbA

A recent four-day training in Antananarivo, co-organized by Madagasikara Voakajy and the Tropical Biology Association (TBA), brought together 18 conservation professionals from Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles to explore EbA - an approach that harnesses the power of nature to help communities face climate change.



Through a mix of workshops and a field visit to the Tapia Forest in Itasy, participants gained practical insights into how well-managed ecosystems can regulate climate, prevent soil erosion, and sustain livelihoods. Supported by CEPF, this initiative highlights the vital role of collaboration in strengthening community resilience across the Western Indian Ocean.



[Read the full article here](#)

Another session as part of the TBA-led training programme was later held in the Comoros.



[Read more about the training](#)

Training on seed collection protocol and germination, as part of the *Franklinia* program

From 18 to 22 October 2025, the [Franklinia program](#) held a training session in collaboration with the Millennium Seed Bank - Kew Royal Botanic Gardens, and the Silo National des Graines Forestières (SNGF) in Antananarivo. The training brought together 15 participants from CSOs supported by CEPF from across Madagascar, building their capacity in collection protocols and seed germination. This session was requested by various grantees. Thanks to the support of the *Franklinia* program team, the training took place and will hopefully allow project leaders and grantees to achieve more successful tree and forest restoration outcomes in their projects.

GRANTEE STORIES

Korai: Regenerating Coral Reefs in Nosy Sakatia, Madagascar

In the turquoise waters off Madagascar's northwest coast, the island of Nosy Sakatia shelters some of the country's most biodiverse coral reefs. Yet these fragile ecosystems are under threat.

Rising ocean temperatures and coral bleaching, accelerated by climate change, are degrading reefs at an alarming rate. For the 1.5 million Malagasy people who depend directly on coral reefs for food and livelihoods, this loss is deeply felt. To address this, Régénération Korai, a sub-grantee of Hôtel Corail Noir (owned by Compagnie des Îles Vanille Madagascar), launched the *Korai – Regenerating the Coral Reefs of Sakatia* project in January 2025, with support from CEPF. Over 24 months, the project aims to combine science, community engagement, and sustainable tourism to revive coral ecosystems and foster long-term stewardship.

Korai's approach is built on three pillars: People, Planet, and Profit.

- **People:** The project raises awareness among local fishers, youth, and tourists, about the importance of coral conservation.
- **Planet:** Following international best practices - the "10 golden rules" of coral restoration - Korai monitors and shares data to contribute to global scientific knowledge.
- **Profit:** By integrating reef restoration into the local tourism economy, the team promotes regenerative tourism that benefits both people and nature.

Since its launch, progress has been steady. In September 2025, a coral restoration strategy for Sakatia was finalized, which describes the ambition to restore more than 1,200 square meters of coral reef by the end of 2026. To date, 53.8 square meters of reef habitat have been restored through the installation of 30 coral structures, and 90 local children and various communities have taken part in awareness raising activities. As part of the Nosy Be Océan Collective, Hôtel Corail Noir and Korai are also helping align local tourism operators with biodiversity conservation.



An overview of all priority sites for the CEPF investment can be found in the [Ecosystem Profile](#).



Video: Protecting Ferney's Natural Heritage, Mauritius

Ferney is home to a rich diversity of natural habitats - from the forest of Bambou Mountain to the coastal vegetation of Vieux Grand Port. These ecosystems once hosted hundreds of plant and animal species, some of which are now threatened with extinction caused by the introduction of invasive alien species such as strawberry guava, cinnamon, and liane cerf.

Covering nearly 500 hectares, Ferney's native forest provides vital ecosystem services, including clean water and flood control to its surrounding communities. However, these ecosystems continue to face pressure from human activities and invasive alien species, underscoring the urgent need for effective management to ensure their long-term survival.

This is why stakeholders are working together to foster sustainable change across the Ferney valley. Three biodiversity-focused organizations - PAT's Nature Farm, Nature Technics, and Ferney Ltd - have received support from CEPF to implement projects in agroecology, biowaste use to improve soil quality, and climate resilience within the local watershed.

In this video, the three organizations were interviewed by Ciel Properties to share their impactful actions on EbA within one of Mauritius' Key Biodiversity Areas.



[Watch the video](#)



Paper: 'Small Step in Tech Needed to Upscale Tropical Island Eradications'

The Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) is testing a simple but promising technique to remove invasive rodents from mangrove forests, one of the toughest environments for island restoration. Under a project funded by CEPF, SIF's team on the Aldabra Atoll is experimenting with bait "bolas" - pellets connected by string that hang in mangrove canopies.

This approach keeps the bait dry and accessible to rodents while preventing loss to tidal waters, something ground baiting can't achieve. The method has already shown success in small-scale trials, offering hope for broader application across tropical islands where invasive rodents devastate native flora and fauna.

The SIF team recently published a paper about this innovative technique called '[Small step in tech needed to upscale tropical island eradications](#)' in the journal *Biological Invasions*. The study estimates that developing technology for mass production and aerial distribution of bait bolas, costing around US\$850,000, could enable rodent eradication across two million hectares of tropical habitat, including over 66,000 hectares of mangroves on at least 42 islands.



Mauritian bulbul (*Hypsipetes olivaceus*) at the restoration site © ERA

ERA: Mauritius Landowners Unite to Advance Ecosystem-Based Adaptation, Mauritius

On September 22, Ecosystem Restoration Alliance Indian Ocean (ERA) launched its Sustainable Mauritius Partnership Initiative (SMPI) project. The inaugural meeting brought together 10 landowners to advance discussions on EbA in Mauritius. The gathering was held in an open and collaborative atmosphere, with a strong emphasis on building bridges between conservation science and practical land management.

The session began with an overview of ERA's objectives under SMPI, highlighting the ridge-to-reef approach that links upland forests, rivers, wetlands, mangroves, and coral reefs into one resilient system. Participants were introduced to case studies showing how EbA can strengthen climate resilience while providing tangible benefits to communities and businesses. Examples included integrating native trees into agricultural lands, restoring mangroves to buffer against coastal erosion, and improving riverbank vegetation to protect freshwater systems.

Discussions were interactive, with landowners sharing their thoughts about applying EbA on their properties. Practical tools, technical support, and long-term collaboration were identified as essential for success. Importantly, the meeting helped clarify the role of the private sector in financing and maintaining restoration, while NGOs emphasized the need for inclusive participation, particularly from youth and marginalized groups.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to continue developing partnerships, pilot ridge to reef projects, and a legal framework that will embed EbA into long-term land management strategies.

TRAINING & FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES

- The Rufford Foundation funds nature conservation projects in emerging or developing economy countries by conservationists in the early stages of their career. [Apply here](#).
- COGICO MOOC: an online course on the Conservation and Management of Islands, Coasts and Oceans has reopened. Developed by the Conservatoire du littoral and for anyone involved in the management or preservation of coastal or island natural areas, this free training helps you tackle real-world challenges - from invasive species to data collection and stakeholder engagement - and equips you with the tools to implement sustainable, effective site management. Register at www.cogico.fr
- 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 organizations to develop themselves to be stronger, more resilient and able to deliver enduring conservation impacts. See: <https://www.capacityforconservation.org/>
- A free online course on local fundraising, tailored specifically for civil society organizations working on nature conservation, is now [available](#).

CEPF investment RIT MADIO until Sept 2025



**USD 13,976,801
granted so far**



**Grants awarded: 88
(43 SG and 45 LG)**



**Active projects in 4 countries
(Madagascar: 52, Comoros: 13,
Mauritius: 10, Seychelles: 9) Regional: 4**

Active Projects by CEPF Pillar



**Biodiversity
61 projects**



**Civil Society
14 projects**



**Enabling Conditions
6 projects**



**Human Well-being
7 projects**



Souimanga Sunbird © O. Langrand

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

Thanks to funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) through AFD as an accredited entity for the GCF, and from the EU through AFD as a fiduciary agent, CEPF has established and manages a 10-year program of US\$50 million to support civil society organizations in promoting ecosystem-based adaptation in Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot.

Under the auspices of the Ministries of Environment in the Comoros, Environment and Sustainable Development in Madagascar, Finance, Economic Planning and Development in Mauritius, and Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment in the Seychelles, the program's activities are being implemented in the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Seychelles. Madagascar receives additional support from the Franklania Foundation for the conservation of Madagascar's endangered trees.



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.