

Regional Implementation Team (RIT) of the
Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands (MADIO)
Biodiversity Hotspot

NEWSLETTER

February 2026

Black River Gorges National Park © O. Langrand

A message from the RIT Leader

As we step into 2026, I am thrilled to share some important updates and inspirational stories of impact from our grantees across the hotspot. As a result of our last call for small grants, launched in August 2025, under the current investment phase, we have contracted eleven new small grants within our four countries of implementation, who will work on capacity building for young conservationists, early warning systems, and forest restoration initiatives.

To date, we have launched three calls for large grants (over USD 50,000), five for small grants (under USD 50,000) and one combined call for both. There was also a specific call for the conservation of endangered trees with support from the Franklina foundation. So far, we have mobilised USD 15.9 million in funding for Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) projects across the hotspot.



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

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A message from the RIT Leader

News from the RIT

Grantee stories

Fundraising & training opportunities

CEPF investment within the
RIT MADIO until January 2026

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

I am delighted to share some great news about the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) members. Mrs Marie-May Jeremie, former CEO of SeyCCAT has been appointed as the Seychelles Minister of Environment, Climate, Energy and Natural Resources for the Republic of the Seychelles. While we wait for a new CEO to join SeyCCAT and the RIT in the near future, we have welcomed Mrs Gabrielle Savalle, who is joining us as Indian Ocean country Director of ID-ONG, and Mr Aina Rakotondrazaka, the new Director of SAF/FJKM. We wish them all the best in their new roles and are looking forward to continuing a fruitful collaboration to achieve CEPF's mission for the hotspot.

This year marks a pivotal milestone in the first phase of CEPF's current investment in the Hotspot. Alongside consolidating the impact of our investments, the RIT and CEPF will prioritise developing knowledge products that promote EbA, updating the ecosystem profile and designing a long-term vision, in consultation with stakeholders. These actions will collectively reinforce our commitment to strengthening the resilience of biodiversity, ecosystems and communities across the region.

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 2026 and beyond.

Best regards,

Monique Randriatsivery,

RIT Leader for the Madagascar
and the Indian Ocean Islands
Biodiversity Hotspot

(monique.randriatsivery@iucn.nl)



NEWS FROM THE RIT

New Small Grants contractualization

Following the ninth call for proposals for small grants launched in August 2025, CEPF awarded small grants to eleven organisations in Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles. Among the selected organisation, two are from Madagascar (Durrell Madagascar and Welt Hunger Hilfe Madagascar), one is from the Comoros (Club des Amis pour la Paix Durable en Afrique), six are from Mauritius (Coral Garden Conservation, Durrell Conservation Training Center, ER Group, Ferney Ltd, Saska Consulting and the University of Mauritius), and two are from the Seychelles (Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles and Gaea Conservation Network).

The call had different scopes aiming to strengthen EbA efforts. In particular, grantees will implement projects on Disaster Risk Reduction; Capacity building of young conservation professionals; as well as forest restoration and removal of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in Mauritius. The projects started in January and will end in December 2026.

Project evaluation in the Comoros

Between November and December 2025, the members of the Regional Implementation Team (IUCN NL and ID) conducted monitoring visits to small grant projects across all three islands of the Union of the Comoros. This was done to provide direct support to grantees, identify any potential challenges or opportunities to achieving objectives and to propose strategic guidance aimed at strengthening and optimising impact.



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.



Through its role in the RIT, SeyCCAT has helped coordinate funding for local civil society organisations implementing EbA initiatives across Seychelles and the broader Indian Ocean biodiversity hotspot.

GRANTEE STORIES

Strong stakeholder engagement within CEPF funded projects in Mauritius

Cap Business Océan Indien mobilises the regional private sector around EbA

On Tuesday, 4 November 2025, Cap Business Océan Indien organised the second edition of The Move – Accompagner le changement in Port-Louis, Mauritius. Held in a hybrid format, this regional conference focused on “Exploring Finance and Action for Private Sector Engagement in EbA”. The event was organised under the project “Strengthening Private Sector Engagement in Ecosystem-based Adaptation”, supported by the CEPF.

The conference brought together nearly one hundred participants from the private sector, public institutions, development partners, academia and civil society, marking a key milestone in regional efforts to integrate EbA into business models and growth strategies.

In the face of increasing climate change impacts across Indian Ocean islands, EbA is emerging as a practical, economically viable and sustainable approach. Through panel discussions and case studies, participants explored the economic viability of EbA, existing financing opportunities, and the conditions required to foster its uptake by the private sector.

The first panel discussion focused on access to finance for EbA and gathered representatives from the European Union, the Indian Ocean Commission, UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme and the banking sector.

Site visits to projects led by Wandzani Wazi Mbwedza (WWM), Groupe d'Intervention pour le Développement Durable (GIDD), Association d'Intervention pour le Développement de l'Environnement (AIDE), Ulanga Mayesha Mayendreleyo (UMAMA), Collaboration-Action-Pérennisation (CAP), Initiative pour une Alternative Citoyenne (IPAC) and Assistance aux Initiatives Innovantes pour la Protection de l'Environnement aux Comores (AIPEC), provided the opportunity for the RIT and the grantees to assess project progress, monitoring practices, information sharing and communication. The meetings highlighted the grantees' commitment and ongoing efforts in EbA, particularly those relating to wetlands and forests.

Following the visits, recommendations were made and further capacity-building activities will be planned to strengthen the local organisations' operational and project management capabilities. The evaluation also identified projects where further support could help to maximise the impact of their ongoing efforts and contribute more effectively to CEPF's initiatives in the Comoros.

SeyCCAT celebrates 10th Anniversary

Our Seychelles RIT member, the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), marked ten years since its establishment in 2015. Born from a pioneering debt conversion designed to redirect national debt into marine conservation, SeyCCAT has since raised and distributed significant funding to empower local NGOs, government agencies, community organisations, youth groups and entrepreneurs to advance sustainable ocean stewardship.

To celebrate its first decade of success, SeyCCAT hosted a series of events from 16 to 19 November 2025, bringing together international partners, local grantees, and community stakeholders. As part of the celebration, a three-day exhibition, open to the public, highlighted SeyCCAT's ten most significant achievements. The exhibition showcased initiatives undertaken from national policy development to community-driven actions.



Regional panel discussion on EbA financing mechanisms, bringing together public institutions, development partners and financial sector representatives © CAP Business IO

SMPI Workshop Showcases Mauritius' Collaborative EbA Approach to Climate Resilience

The Sustainable Mauritius Partnership Initiative (SMPI) Workshop, organised by the Ecosystem Restoration Alliance (ERA) on 9 December 2025, brought together a diverse range of stakeholders to explore practical solutions for advancing sustainability in Mauritius. Funded by the CEPF, the SMPI project promotes EbA practices aimed at strengthening climate resilience across the island.

The workshop provided a dynamic platform for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among private sector representatives, international institutions, universities, NGOs, government bodies, private landowners, and local communities. Participants reflected on current environmental challenges while exploring practical pathways toward a more resilient and sustainable future for Mauritius.

Discussions throughout the day focused on sustainable land use, ecosystem restoration, climate resilience, and innovative practices across sectors. Presentations and panel discussions highlighted real-world experiences, lessons learned, and evidence-based approaches that can support national environmental and development goals. Local and international case studies helped ground the conversations, showcasing successful initiatives while also drawing attention to persistent barriers such as funding constraints, policy gaps, and capacity limitations.

Discussions highlighted persistent barriers — including limited information and the complexity of financial mechanisms — as well as existing levers to turn private sector engagement into concrete investment. Findings from a regional assessment conducted by Cap Business Océan Indien with CEPF support notably underlined the need for tailored financial instruments and stronger coordination among stakeholders.

The second panel gave the floor to companies from Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles that have integrated EbA into their operations. Their initiatives demonstrated that partnerships between businesses, public institutions, NGOs and universities are a key success factor for the implementation and replication of nature-based solutions.

The conference concluded with a case study presented by Constance Hotels & Resorts, illustrating the practical application of EbA within the hospitality sector and highlighting key lessons learned from this experience.



The Sustainable Mauritius Partnership Initiative (SMPI)
© ERA



Watch a video presenting highlights from the conference [here](#)



Sophie Berlouis taking her Fish identification skills underwater © BERI

Southern African Shark and Ray Symposium

At the SASRS conference in Makhanda, UniSey-BERI partners presented national BRUVS (Baited Remote Underwater Video System) data in a talk titled 'Sharks and Rays in the Seychelles: A National BRUVS Collaboration'. The findings offer valuable insights into species that are essential for healthy reef ecosystems, which is essential to the management of MPAs and ensure climate resilience. The work, presented by UniSey student Amelia Desire, was well received, earning her the Best Student Presentation award and highlighting the project's growing role in capacity building.

Video analysis advancement

Video analysts Sebastian Cowin and Sophie Berlouis have processed over 130 hours of stereo-BRUVS footage, generating critical biodiversity information about which species exist in Seychelles waters, and also how marine organisms act. This information offers a better understanding of the marine ecosystems that will contribute to design better adaptation approaches. The work has also strengthened local expertise: Sophie, who began with limited species-ID skills, now confidently recognises fish, often by scientific name; and applies accurate length estimates in the field. These growing capacities are vital for supporting climate-resilient marine management in Seychelles.

The project continues to provide valuable scientific insights while empowering the next generation of Seychellois researchers.

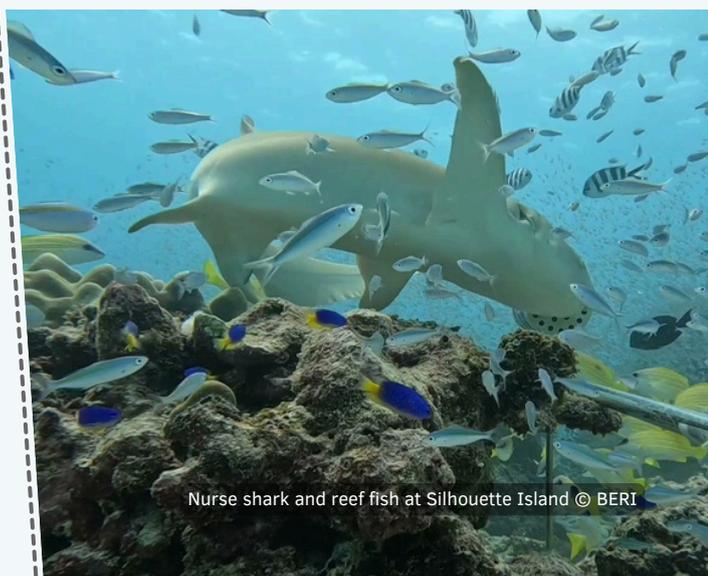
A key strength of the SMPI Workshop was its participatory approach. Attendees actively contributed through discussions and feedback sessions, enabling the identification of shared priorities and opportunities for collaboration. The event also strengthened cross-sector partnerships, reinforcing the importance of coordinated action in addressing complex environmental challenges.

One of the recurring issues raised was the challenge surrounding permits and regulatory processes. Participants highlighted that lengthy approval procedures, overlapping institutional mandates, and unclear permitting requirements often delay or discourage sustainability and conservation projects, creating significant bottlenecks for timely action on the ground.

Overall, the SMPI Workshop successfully fostered constructive dialogue, raised awareness of key implementation barriers, and strengthened partnerships across sectors. The outcomes are expected to inform future policy discussions and support more efficient pathways for sustainable action in Mauritius.

Capacity building in the Seychelles to increase climate resilience

The UniSey-BERI, through the project titled "Building capacity in Seychelles to advance marine monitoring and ecosystem management to increase climate resilience", primarily aims to fill important knowledge gaps and build capacity to expand marine monitoring initiatives by improving the understanding of the status and distribution of coral reefs and threatened species in selected marine protected areas (MPAs). The project also works on increasing awareness and education, by engaging with key stakeholders and civil society organisations. Ultimately, all these activities aim to strengthen MPA management. In the past three months, two highlights marked the project's progress: participation in the Southern African Shark and Ray Symposium (SASRS) and major advancements in video data analysis.



Nurse shark and reef fish at Silhouette Island © BERI



Daniel Mohamed samples invasive species in the Mjimandra agroforestry, Mount Ntringui National Park, Anjouan, Comoros © BEE Comoros

Promotion of medicinal and cosmetic species for conservation purposes

In June 2025, ANYD (Association les Amis de Nyoubadjou-Djoumoichongo) started the implementation of their project 'Ulanga Unono-Mwema - Valorisation of plant species most commonly used for medicinal and cosmetic purposes by the local community around the Nyoubadjou Humid Forest on Grande Comore Island'.

The project aims to improve the ecological balance of the Nyoubadjou Forest Reserve and preserve the various ecosystem services provided by forests, with an approach offering economic opportunities to the community through the sustainable and inclusive exploitation of these forest species without compromising biodiversity. In addition to supporting conservation efforts and local communities, the project will offer training in the sustainable management of natural resources and techniques for processing endemic medicinal and cosmetic plants to local communities. It also provides entrepreneurship training for the members of the association.

So far, the project has conducted an inventory of medicinal and cosmetic forest species [report in French available [here](#)] and is restoring at least one hectare of degraded forest through the production of one thousand medicinal and cosmetic forest plants.

Ecosystem assessment and knowledge dissemination to guide conservation efforts in the Comoros

Between July 2023 and May 2025, BEE (Bureau d'Etudes Environnementale des Comores) led its CEPF supported project 'Improving knowledge of social and ecological impacts to promote sustainable management of coastal and terrestrial ecosystems' in two priority KBAs of the Comoros: Mount Ntringui, and Bimbini area and La Selle islet. The project assessed the health of natural habitats and proposed participatory management strategies for the protection and conservation of endemic biodiversity and ecosystems in the two sites.

Some key impacts of the project include:

- Capacity building for 19 men and 17 women from 5 local CSOs in conservation related topics,
- Two research activities on (i) the study of the distribution of invasive alien plant species in Shisiwani and Mount Ntringui National Parks, covering a total area of 950 and 945 hectares respectively; and (ii) the assessment of the ecological condition of endangered endemic and native trees,
- Production of a series of three videos as part of their knowledge dissemination and awareness raising



Watch the videos:
[video 1](#), [video 2](#), [video 3](#)

The valuable achievements of BEE will guide the future conservation and management of IAS in these areas. These achievements are backed by deliverables from their project, including the mapping of priority restoration areas and a strategic action plan to guide future actions. Even after the project ended, BEE has continued to support national CSOs in their conservation endeavours. The project leader Dr. Amelaïd Houmadi stated that thanks to the partnership with CEPF, he now has a strong network of conservationists across the South Western Indian Ocean region and is eager to pursue sharing knowledge and supporting conservation efforts at both national and regional levels.



[Read full article here](#)



Women working in a tree nursery © ANYD



Tree nursery of AMI VOI © Ny Tanintsika

Community-led forest restoration initiative in the Ambositra-Vondrozo Corridor

The 'Building Community-Led Climate Resilience in the Ambositra-Vondrozo Corridor, Madagascar' project, implemented by Ny Tanintsika was launched in October 2023. It aims to empower communities and civil society to strengthen the resilience of ecosystems, species, and local populations in the face of climate change. The project addresses major challenges such as the drying of forest habitats and the shifting of agricultural calendars by employing integrated approaches, including forest restoration, agroforestry, climate-smart agriculture, raising awareness, community engagement, building capacity, and mobilising youth.

To date, it has achieved the following significant results:

- 62.13 hectares of forest have been restored and 124,261 seedlings from 84 native species have been planted.
- 112,940 additional seedlings have been planted in households' plots for agroforestry, construction, and fuelwood purposes.
- 28 'Feed the Future' youth clubs are active, with 261 households adopting agroecological farming techniques.
- 34 climate resilience awareness sessions have been conducted and 28 agroforestry demonstration sites established.

These achievements pave the way for even bolder action, demonstrating the determination and resilience of the project team and the communities as they continue to drive transformative climate solutions.



Compost production in LOvasoa VOI Ambohimahamasina © Ny Tanintsika



Young lady ready for the forest restoration in Miarinarivo © Ny Tanintsika



Interview of Pastor Boniface, Antafotenina © SAF/FJKM

When young people and the community join forces to restore Antafitenona.

In the hills of Antafitenona, an agroecological experiment is transforming the daily lives of local residents. Combining tradition and innovation, young people and families are joining forces to revive land that has long been weakened by slash-and-burn farming.

Due to its isolation from other towns and with no alternatives, residents of Antafitenona have continued to practice ancestral slash-and-burn farming, a method that depletes the soil. *"We knew it wasn't sustainable, but it was the only method we knew,"* says Pastor Razanakolona Alahady Boniface, President of the Fitia Association.

The arrival of the Young Progress : the energy of change and reconciliation with the SALT (Sloping Agricultural Land Technology) method, science and tradition.

Young Progress started their initiative in May 2025 within their CEPF-funded project. Once the groundwork had been completed, including clearing the land, installing irrigation channels, and establishing contour lines, in collaboration with the local communities and Young Progress, the Fitia Association, led by Pastor Boniface, took over. Its 21 member households were committed to maintaining the plots and farming according to the new methods.

"The strength of young people was essential to get started. But without the daily involvement of families, nothing would last," he emphasizes. At the heart of this transformation is an agroecological technique called SALT. Contour lines help retain water, protect the soil, and prevent erosion. *"Before, we thought that burning was the only solution. Now we see that SALT gives us better harvests while respecting our land,"* says the pastor.

Visible results: autonomy and pride

The fields of Antafitenona are now covered with corn, cassava, and orange trees. *"What touches me the most is that the inhabitants are starting to apply these techniques on their own land. It's a sign that the project lives on beyond us,"* says Pastor Boniface.

The growth and diversification of agricultural products and landscape management, as well as the skills acquired, all contribute to the community's resilience, transforming climate challenges into thriving opportunities.

Antafitenona proves that no area is too remote to embrace innovation. Agroecology is not just a technique: it is a vision for the future of Madagascar's countryside



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



Rice field in Antafotenina © SAF/FJKM

TRAINING & FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES

- Since June 2024, Ebony Forest has been leading a capacity building initiative for CSOs across the Indian Ocean to enable them to implement EbA activities more effectively. With funding from the CEPF, they have developed tailored courses for conservationists in project design, forest and mangrove restoration, GIS, plant propagation and nursery management, team leadership, predator control, grant management and communication. To further increase opportunities for those keen to learn more about EbA, Ebony Forest have also held multiple online webinars covering different topics such as coral and forest restoration, or agroforestry. In case you missed any, you can access previous recordings via the links:

- [Reef Revival in the Indian Ocean: Science, Hope, and Action Beneath the Waves](#)
- [Forest restoration in Action - Approaches from Madagascar & the Indian Ocean](#)
- Beyond Trees: Why Restoring Interactions is Key to Climate Resilience, [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)
- [The potential of agroforestry to transform lives and landscapes in the region](#)
- [The Hidden Power of Mangroves: Climate Allies, Biodiversity Havens, Community Shields](#)

They also now offer regional training placements for predator control, forest restoration, and bird translocation in both [English](#) and [French](#).

Join [Ebony Forest](#) in Mauritius for a one-month training placement in forest restoration, funded by the CEPF.

Eligibility: staff from civil society organisations registered and operating in Madagascar, Comoros and the Seychelles implementing EbA projects.

[See here](#) for more information.

Register [here](#).

Closing date: 31st March 2026

- The IUCN Academy offers a wide range of courses related to conservation skills and biodiversity leadership. From the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-Based Solutions to mapping biodiversity priorities and integrating gender into environmental programming, the platform offers free and paid-for courses that are of interest to conservationists. Find more information [here](#)



- Tropical Biology Association is offering a month-long immersive field course for people at an early stage of their ecological or conservation research journey. Participants learn by doing in Uganda's Kibale National Park through guided workshops, field exercises, and evening seminars delivered by leading researchers within an international cohort. The course concludes with paired independent research projects, each written up and presented as a short scientific paper. Learn more [here](#).
- The IUCN NL Land Acquisition Fund calls on local conservation NGOs and CSOs worldwide to submit proposals to acquire threatened nature, create safe reserves, and connect habitats for endangered species. The fund supports land purchase, long-term lease of land, and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific region. Grants are available to qualified and experienced local non-profit conservation organisations. Local conservation NGOs and CSOs are eligible for this programme and are invited to submit their proposals. The deadline for applications is Friday, 1 May, 2026. For more details, click [here](#).
 - 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 within the RIT MADIO until January 2026



**USD 15.9 million
granted so far**



**Grants awarded: 109
(48 SG and 61 LG)**



**Active projects in 4 countries
(Madagascar: 69, Comores:15,
Mauritius: 13, Seychelles: 10)
Regional: 2**

Active Projects by CEPF Pillar



**Biodiversity
73 projects**



**Civil Society
17 projects**



**Enabling Conditions
8 projects**



**Human Well-being
11 projects**



Species of lemur spotted during the Ecological monitoring training of the Youth Club
© SAF/FJKM

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 Franklinia Foundation for the conservation of Madagascar's endangered trees.

