

**Mid-term Assessment**  
**(September 2012- July 2015)**  
**of CEPF investment in the Eastern Afromontane**  
**Biodiversity Hotspot**

**July, 2015**

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## Acronyms

CEPF	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
CfP	Call for Proposals
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAM	East Afromontane
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EWNHS	Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society
FFI	Fauna & Flora International
IP	Investment Priority
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
LOI	Letter of Inquiry
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
REDD+	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation. "REDD+" goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
RIT	Regional Implementation Team
SD	Strategic Direction
USD	United States Dollars

## Executive Summary

1. This report aims to assess progress towards the goals set out in the CEPF Eastern Afromontane ecosystem profile, evaluate gaps in the CEPF grant portfolio and set priorities for the remainder of the 5-year investment period. It draws on experience, lessons learned and project reports generated by civil society organizations implementing CEPF grants.
2. The Eastern Afromontane hotspot programme was designed through a multi-stakeholder process by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and is being implemented by a Regional Implementation Team (RIT), consisting of BirdLife International, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS).
3. The hotspot incorporates 15 diverse countries, ranging from the Arabian Peninsula and running the eastern length of Africa to Mozambique in southern Africa. It incorporates a vast array of cultures, political systems, social systems and languages. The main objective of the programme is to **strengthen the involvement and effectiveness of civil society in achieving conservation and management of globally important biodiversity in the Eastern Afromontane hotspot**. Strategic priorities were agreed as strengthening the links between biodiversity conservation, local livelihoods and economic development, Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) management and protection, payment for ecosystem services (PES) and sustainable financing, and strengthening of civil society organizations (CSOs).
4. This midterm evaluation spans from project launch in late 2012 to the 1st of July, 2015. It details progress to date against investment priorities, and explores how efficiently this has been done, the relevance of the original programme objectives today and outcome sustainability.
5. From September 2012 to the end of June 2015, 11 calls for proposals (CfPs) were made by the program, with 83 projects funded to date. This includes 3 grants awarded to the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for investment co-ordination. Average rejection rate for submissions under the CfPs (with 715 LOIs received in total) was 84.51%. The most common reasons for rejection were that the project described was ineligible under the call, the projects described were not relevant and/or not feasible and/or the applicants were assessed to not have the capacity required to implement the project as described.
6. Investment budget is \$9.8 million. Of this, \$1.5 million has been allocated to the RIT and \$8.3 million for projects. To date \$6,408,769 has been awarded to grantees for projects, with \$619,105 awarded in small grants (61.91% of the \$1 million available for small grant funds), and \$5,798,664 awarded in large grants (79.31% of the \$7.3 million available for large grant funds). Of the activity Strategic Directions (SD), SD 2 (Strengthening KBAs) is slightly overspent whilst SD1 (conservation and livelihoods) and SD3 (Sustainable financing) are currently under budget. National NGOs have been granted approximately twice that given to international NGOs for small grants. However, international NGOs have received the majority of the amount given out for large grants.

7. Some investment priorities within the portfolio are undersubscribed. This is directly related to the lack of viable projects submitted for funding in these areas. This has been attributed to a number of factors including that CSOs in the region lack capacity and confidence on certain issues e.g. with the private sector, or with forest carbon. Similarly, complex projects such as REDD+ are unlikely to be successfully developed and implemented with the time and funding available from CEPF grants<sup>1</sup>. This suggests that when Investment Priorities are set, they undergo a 'reality check' in terms of the feasibility of implementing them given the grant size and length restrictions, and the capacity of the target grantees.
8. Following 3 years of implementation, the program is well on track for a number of targets, in particular those related to the strengthening of the involvement and effectiveness of civil society in conservation, although the RIT have struggled to source grantees to work in certain countries. The significant efforts to develop local and national CSO skills in project design, proposal writing and project management are reported by both the RIT and the grantees as having resulted in improved confidence and effectiveness in these areas. Grantees also report a number of positive impacts outside of those measured by indicators, including improved relationships with local partners, better capacity to connect science to conservation action and the increased organisational ability to influence decision making.
9. At this stage of the program, it is not yet clear whether this increased capacity has led to the improved conservation and management of globally important biodiversity in the Eastern Afromontane hotspot. This is largely due to only 17 projects having yet been completed, making it difficult to assess progress towards program targets. A number of investment indicators seem well on track to achieve their targets, for example those relating to the strengthening of management in KBAs, and the amount of production landscape under improved management for biodiversity conservation. However, it seems unlikely that the program will meet its targets in a number of other areas, predominately focussing on national level plans and processes and establishing new sustainable financing schemes and forest carbon partnerships.
10. In terms of efficiency, the program is noted for its strong internal communications system including annual face to face meetings, monthly team meetings over skype and the capturing and regular circulation of minutes of important discussions to all members of a diverse RIT, spread between five countries. Program operational efficiency was also improved by the commissioning of a RIT lessons learned assessment in 2012 (final version produced in 2013).
11. The majority of program inefficiencies relate to the scale and scope of its implementation area. The diversity of languages affects the efficiency of the program in reaching out to local CSOs across the hotspot, both to raise program awareness and to support them subsequently. The geographical scale of the program also results in inefficiencies. Spread across 15 countries and over 1 million square kilometres, the sheer geographical spread of the program makes meetings, exchanges and field visits both expensive and inefficient. In terms of design, this report

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the hotspot profile recognises the 'serious practical constraints' to implementing REDD on the ground and doesn't expect the development and implementation of new forest carbon initiatives within the investment period- rather the strategy aims to either support existing initiatives or support the planning of new ones in priority KBAs. Nevertheless, the indicator of success for this IP is the 'Number of forest carbon partnerships and projects established and achieving biodiversity conservation objectives in each of three priority corridors and in two individual KBAs'.

highlights the importance of realistically assessing the effectiveness of a program which spans such a wide geographical, political and cultural area, and incorporates a diversity of languages, and the reality of expecting a coherent conservation community to be created in light of this.

12. In terms of program implementation, the value of supporting CSO learning throughout cannot be underestimated and has clearly paid dividends, both in terms of immediate impact and as being recognised as one of the key impacts which will be sustained beyond the length of the program. Other key learnings include the importance of flexibility with regards to responding to emerging needs, the value of strong networks (both within and between RITs and with the CEPF secretariat), and the value of field visits.

## 1 Introduction

13. CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. CEPF provides grants for nongovernmental and other private organizations to help protect biodiversity hotspots in developing, or transitional countries.
14. The Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot was first recognized as globally important for species conservation in 2004 (Mittermeier et al. 2004). It spans 15 countries and comprises roughly four mountain ranges, with high levels of biodiversity and over 3,300 endemic species (CEPF 2012). The hotspot contains 261 terrestrial and 49 freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and 14 conservation corridors (CEPF 2012).
15. Prior to awarding grants in each biodiversity hotspot selected for investment, CEPF prepares an ecosystem profile which includes a situation analysis and assessment of regional conservation priorities for investment. This is created using a participatory approach engaging local, national and international stakeholders. The design process for the Eastern Afromontane hotspot program took place from 2010 to 2011 and involved:
  - Over 200 individuals (national and international scientific experts; donors; and national and regional stakeholders)
  - Over 100 institutions
  - 5 national workshops in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda (combining Rwanda, Burundi and DRC) and Uganda
  - 2 electronic meetings with an International Advisory Committee
  - 1 consultative meeting for the Arabian Peninsula in Jordan
  - 7 expert consultancies focusing on East African plants, Middle Eastern plants, Southern Montane Islands (Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe), freshwater biodiversity, climate change, current investments, socioeconomics and threats.

## 2 CEPF Niche

16. CEPF's investment niche in the areas was agreed as ***'to support civil society to apply innovative approaches to conservation in under-capacitated and underfunded protected areas, KBAs and priority corridors.***
17. ***Thematic priorities*** were agreed as: KBA management and protection, payment for ecosystem services and sustainable financing, and alternative nature-based livelihoods.

18. **Geographic focus** for the hotspot investment was agreed to be on six priority corridors containing 28 KBAs: the Itombwe-Nyungwe Landscape; the Northern Lake Niassa (Malawi) Mountain Complex; the Western part of the Kaffa and Yayu Coffee Biosphere Reserve in Ethiopia, and the Lake Tana Catchment in Ethiopia. Two other corridors were identified as high priority and eligible for support under some investment priorities, namely the Arabian Peninsula Highlands and the Chimanimani-Nyanga Mountains. In total 47 KBAs (37 terrestrial and 10 freshwater) were prioritised for CEPF investment.
19. The full consultative process resulted in the production of a 2012 Ecosystem Profile for the EAM hotspot, containing a five-year investment strategy for CEPF in the region. This strategy is comprised of four strategic directions and 12 investment priorities (Annex A), with targets associated with each. Total program budget is \$9.8 million.
20. **Strategic Directions are as follows:**
  1. Mainstream biodiversity into wider development policies, plans and projects to deliver the co-benefits of biodiversity conservation, improved local livelihoods and economic development in priority corridors. **(\$3,200,000)**
  2. Improve the protection and management of the KBA network throughout the hotspot. **(\$2,800,000)**
  3. Initiate and support sustainable financing and related actions for the conservation of priority KBAs and corridors. **(\$2,300,000)**
  4. Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of CEPF investment through a RIT. **(\$1,500,000)**
21. BirdLife International holds the main grant for acting as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the program. IUCN are sub-granted by BirdLife to support the RIT with both high level fundraising and networking support, and grantee level support in Mozambique and Tanzania due to particular staff experience in those regions, as well as other countries as appropriate. The Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS) were also awarded a separate contract by CEPF to support program implementation in Ethiopia, including co-ordinating the small and large grants and helping organise various events in country.
22. Together, these three organizations form the RIT, with the intention of incorporating a range of team members with different backgrounds, experiences and languages to support the implementation of the investment in a highly complex region with variety of languages, socio-economic and environmental contexts. Individuals working for the RIT are spread between offices in Cambridge (BirdLife), Nairobi (BirdLife and IUCN), Ethiopia (EWNHS), Mozambique (IUCN) and Jordan (BirdLife).

### 3 Approach & Methods

23. This MTE asked 4 key questions:

- What has been done to date? (Activities and expenditure)
- What has been the impact to date? (Assessed in terms of effectiveness, relevance, efficiency and sustainability).
- What are the current outstanding capacity development needs for CSOs in the region?
- What lessons can be learned from the program so far?

24. Note that the exploration of what regional capacity gaps may be limiting investment impact are intended to feed into a series of regional training events planned in 2015-2017 within the CEPF portfolio.

25. An initial desk review was conducted, including the following documents:

- The 2012 Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot Ecosystem Profile
- RIT progress reports (administrative and programmatic) (2012-2015)
- Final reports submitted by grantees
- Regional capacity needs assessments (Yemen, Tanzania, Eritrea and South Sudan)
- A 2015 report on the baseline of Protected Area Management Effectiveness (using the METT tool) in the region
- A 2012/2013 Lessons Learned report on experiences from CEPF investments past and present

26. A questionnaire was subsequently designed to explore the evaluation questions in more depth directly with key stakeholders. It was designed to be self-administered and was hosted by Typeform, an online survey application. It was made available in French, Portuguese and English. The lead contacts for all past and current grants were contacted to request the completion of the survey. In addition, other key stakeholders contacted included:

- Experts present at original program design meetings
- Donors, including staff from GEF, EU, USFWS and the MacArthur Foundation
- Other regional experts

In total, 74 people completed the questionnaire, including 29 people who had not received a grant from the program.

27. In addition to the online questionnaire, we also conducted 11 remote semi-structured interviews to explore key issues raised by the desk review and the questionnaire in more depth. Key informants who participated included:

- Past and current grantees
- Experts present at original program design meetings
- Members of the CEPF Secretariat
- Members of the RIT
- Other donors active in the region

These interviews took place over Skype or, where logistics allowed, in person. Note that the grant budget did not support travel or workshops conducted specifically for this purpose.

## 4 Implementing the Strategy

### 4.1 What has been done to date: portfolio status

28. From the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 to the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 2015, 11 calls for proposals under the program were made. 715 letters of inquiry (LOIs) were received, with 83 projects funded to date. This includes 3 grants awarded to the RIT, all under SD 4.

29. The table below shows how many LOIs were received for each call for proposals, and the percentage that subsequently received a grant.

Call for proposals	Strategic Direction	Grant Type	LOIs received	Grants awarded	% LOIs successful
<b>RIT</b>	4	Large	N/A	3	N/A
<b>CfP 1</b>	2	Large	46	11	23.9
<b>CfP 2</b>	1+3	Large	66	7	10.6
		Small	111	15	13.5
<b>CfP 3</b>	3	Small	10	3	30.0
<b>CfP 4</b>	1+3	Large	45	3	6.7
		Small	45	3	6.7
<b>CfP 5</b>	2	Large	98	9	9.2
<b>CfP 6</b>	2+3	Small	26	1	3.8
<b>CfP 7</b>		Small	106	8	7.5
<b>CfP 8</b>	1+2	Large	62	6	9.7
		Small	79	5	6.3
<b>CfP 9</b>	3	Large	2	2	100.0
<b>CfP 10</b>	1+2+3	Large	4	2	50.0
		Small	9	2	22.2
<b>CfP 11</b>	3	Small	3	Pending	Pending
<b>Single Sourced</b>	1	Large	2	2	N/A
	3	Small	1	1	N/A

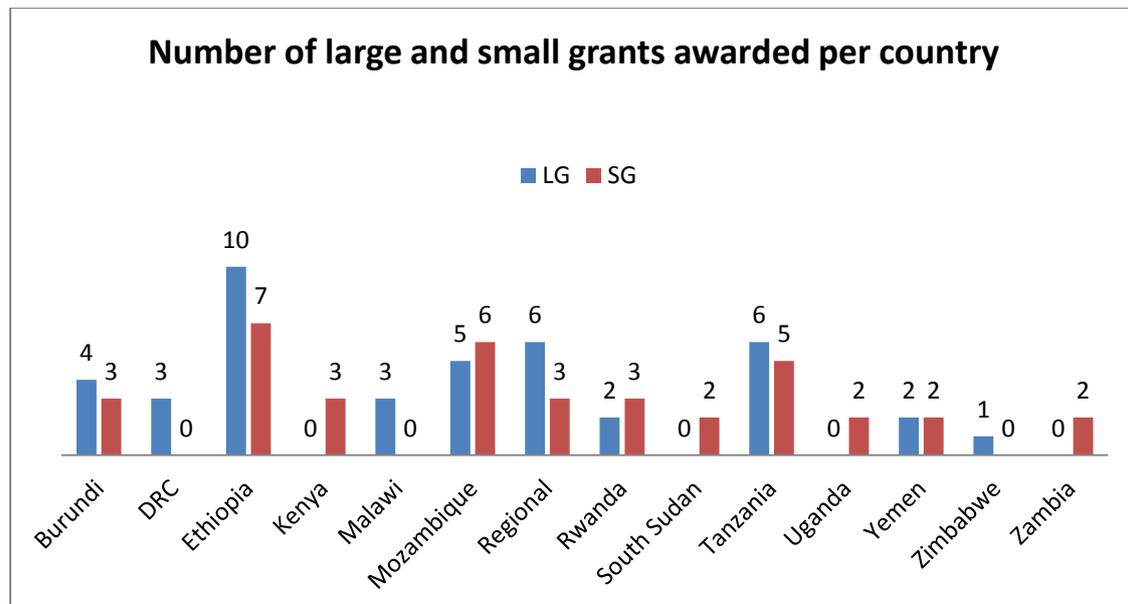
30. Calls for proposals (CfPs) were initially broad, covering the 14 eligible countries and all investment priorities in turn. As more grants were awarded, gaps in the portfolio became clearer and calls for proposals became more targeted. For example, CfP 5 was for large grants under SD 2 only, and CfP 6 was for projects in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi only.

31. Rejection rates varied from 50% to 96%, averaging 84.51% (this calculation does not include 3 grants that were single sourced outside of the formal CfPs). The most common reason for rejection of the LOI were that the project described was ineligible under the call, most commonly because it was for an investment priority or a site which was not listed in the call for proposals. This suggests that applicants either did not read and/or understand the call for proposal and/or the investment strategy very well. A number of LOIs were also rejected as the

projects described were not relevant and/or not feasible and/or the applicants were assessed to not have the capacity required to implement the project as described. This appears to be in direct contrast to the experience of other RITs working in other hotspot areas, with ...”*Most RITs reported receiving predominantly eligible Lols of a high quality, from the stakeholder groups envisioned.*” (Johnson, 2013: pg.5)

32. This has resulted in significant efforts by the RIT to further develop capacity in project design and proposal writing in the region, both through spending considerable amounts of time coaching organizations in person and over email, as well as contracting a number of organizations to develop learning activities, including training workshops, exchange visits and regional networks- see section 4.3 for more details.

33. Of the 80 projects funded to date (not including the 3 grants to the RIT under SD 4), 70 focussed within a single country, and 10 were implemented in two or more countries in the region. Of the 15 countries in the hotspot, Eritrea and Saudi Arabia, have had no projects to date, although Eritrea was the focus of a capacity needs assessment funded by CEPF. This assessment revealed that there was no viable civil society that CEPF could work with, resulting in all efforts to work in Eritrea coming to a halt. Saudi Arabia has also not been targeted by the program as it is not eligible for funding from the World Bank given its status as a high income country. Nevertheless, there has been some work to date in Saudi Arabia promoting the CEPF hotspot investment priorities with a view to leverage alternative funding for in-country implementation. This was also the aim for Yemen, although efforts have halted due to the current crisis.

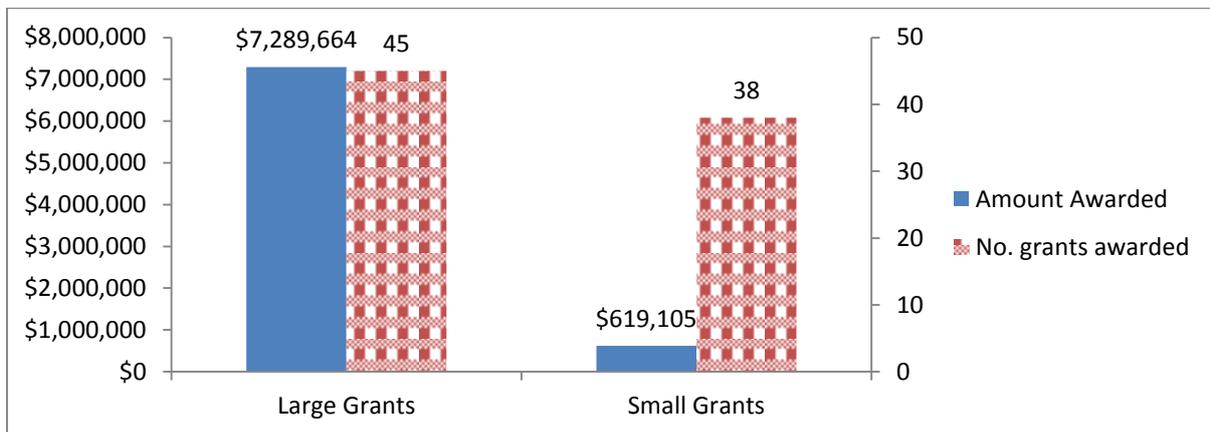
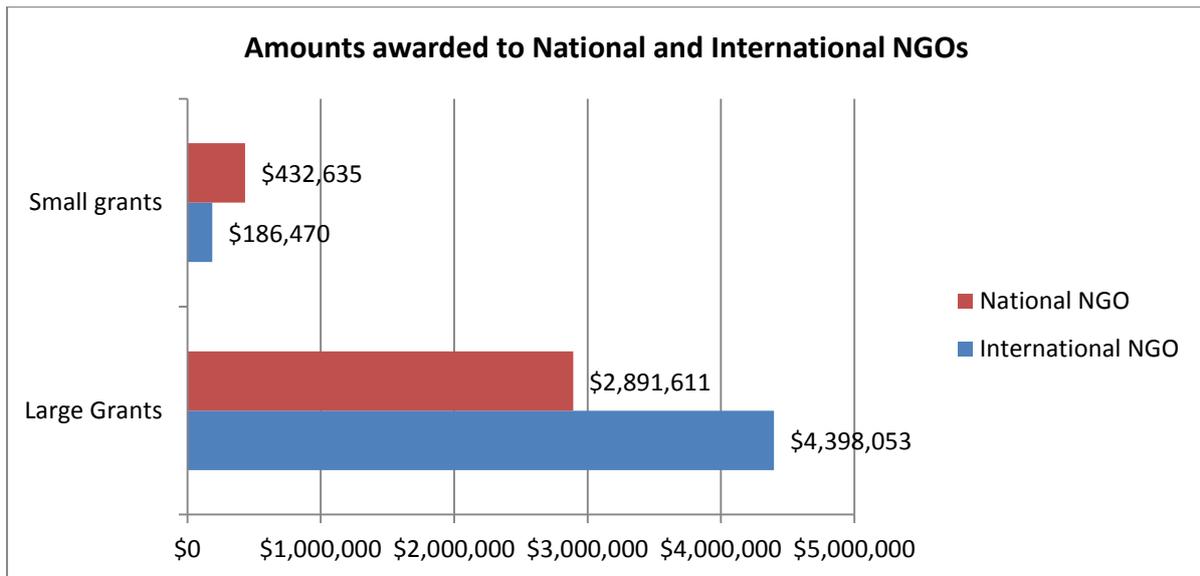


34. Of the 47 priority KBAs listed in the hotspot profile, 36 are already targeted by one or more projects under the CEPF investment. Of the priority KBAs which have not yet received funding, five were in Yemen, where investment has been limited by war.
35. Of the \$ 9.8 million allocated to the project, \$7,908,769 has been spent to date (80.7%), including \$1.5 million to the RIT. This is consistent with the RITs stated plan to award the majority of grants in the first three years of the programme to allow for completed implementation within the CEPF investment time frame of five years.
36. Of the \$6,408,769 awarded to grantees for projects (i.e. excluding the \$1.5 million allocated for RIT activities), \$619,105 has been awarded in small grants (61.91% of the \$1 million available for small grant funds), whilst \$5,798,664 has been awarded in large grants (79.31% of the \$7.3 million available for large grant funds). The RITs stated strategy for the final two years of the program is to use the remaining funding for large and small grants to add value to the existing large grants, consolidate results, add local civil society components, build capacities and enhance sustainability of conservation outcome.
37. CEPF investment in the region to date is distributed approximately across the four strategic directions as follows:

Strategic Direction		Budget (Million USD)	Contracted grants			% Contracted
			Total Amount (USD)	No. large grants	No. small grants	
SD 1	Conservation & Livelihoods	3,200,000	2,251,192	14	18	70.3%
SD 2	Strengthening KBAs	2,800,000	3,166,020	24	9	113.1%
SD 3	Sustainable finance	2,300,000	991,557	4	11	43.1%
SD 4	RIT	1,500,000	1,500,000	3	0	100.0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>9,800,000</b>	<b>7,908,769</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>80.7%</b>

38. The portfolio is shared between international and national NGOs as follows:

	International NGO		National NGO	
	Expenditure	Grant No.	Expenditure	Grant No.
SD1	1,214,482	11	1,036,710	21
SD2	1,197,243	8	1,968,777	25
SD3	775,686	9	215,871	6
SD4	1,397,112	2	\$102,888	1



39. Of the 32 projects funded under **SD 1**, the majority focus on working at the local level and livelihood activities under **IP 1.1**. Only a handful include focus at the national level policies and plans (**IP 1.2**) and/or working with the private sector (**IP 1.3**). Within **SD2**, of the 33 projects funded, 19 focusing on increase KBA protection status and improving management (**IP 2.1**), and 12 look at site safeguard policies, including Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) (**IP 2.2**). Few address the identification and prioritization of KBAs in Africa and Arabian Peninsula (**IP 2.3**) and no specific calls have been issued for this IP, due to the RIT awaiting the new KBA standards/protocols from the IUCN. **SD 3** 'Initiate and support sustainable financing and related actions for the conservation of priority KBAs and corridors', is under-subscribed for both **IP 3.1** (Support CSOs to develop forest carbon partnerships) and **IP 3.2**. (Support CSOs to develop forest carbon partnerships and projects). The majority of the 15 grants awarded under SD3 have been granted under **IP 3.3** (Support training for civil society organizations in fundraising and project management, including civil society at all levels, especially with respect to emerging opportunities for sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management in Africa) and **IP 3.4** (Support the institutional development of civil society

organizations in Eritrea, South Sudan and Yemen, and their role in the conservation of KBAs in their respective countries).

40. The lack of grants in some IPs is directly related to the lack of viable LOIs submitted for funding. This is not unusual, with a number of CEPF RITs working in other hotspots reporting a 'reluctance' to address certain thematic areas and species (Johnson, 2013). Even where CfP 4 specifically requested LOIs focussing on the undersubscribed IPs 1.3; 3.1; 3.2 and 3.3., out of 45 small grant LOIs received, only 3 were thought to be sufficiently viable to be approved for funding. This has been attributed by stakeholders to a number of factors including:

- The lack of experience amongst CSOs in the region in working with the private sector, or with forest carbon, PES and sustainable financing, meaning applicants both lack capacity and confidence to develop projects in these areas.
- Many CSOs in the hotspot do not feel confident operating at a national level, and do not yet have the contacts to enable them to do so.
- Small grants of \$20,000 have been deemed by a number of respondents as not being adequate for developing PES/REDD projects, and even the larger grants of \$21,000- \$210,000 considered by a number of people interviewed for this evaluation as not sufficient to develop a robust, viable REDD/PES project.<sup>2</sup>
- The timescale allowed is insufficient, with few large grants running longer than 2 years, and small grants running under a year. These timescales are unlikely to be sufficient to establish a functioning PES or REDD+ project (See footnote below).

41. The program has also experienced difficulties in sourcing viable LOIs from a number of countries. CfP 6 focussed on KBAs in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, with the low LOI success rate thought to be due to a general lack of CSO capacity in the areas covered, with many LOIs rejected due to ineligibility. Round 8 focussed on Ethiopia, Rwanda, DRC, Tanzania and Zambia; areas where investment was relatively low in the portfolio for small grants, with unfortunately no applications from DRC were found to be fundable and only one small proposal from Rwanda. This was attributed to proposed projects not relevant under the call, or not thought to be viable.

## 4.2 Performance of CEPF's Investment

### 4.2.1 Program Effectiveness

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<sup>2</sup> Note that the hotspot profile recognises the 'serious practical constraints' to implementing REDD on the ground and doesn't expect the development and implementation of new forest carbon initiatives- rather the strategy aims to either support existing initiatives or plan new ones in priority KBAs. Nevertheless, the indicator of success for this IP is the 'Number of forest carbon partnerships and projects established and achieving biodiversity conservation objectives in each of three priority corridors and in two individual KBAs'.

42. The table below reports against program targets to be achieved by close in 2017. It should be noted that much of this information is based on various assessments of completed projects (final project reports; civil society tracking tool), of which only 17 of the 80 projects funded to date have completed. It is therefore too early for anything but the most preliminary of results against a number of these targets.

Objective	Targets	Progress report
Strengthening the involvement and effectiveness of civil society in achieving conservation and management of globally important biodiversity in the Eastern Afrotropical Hotspot	At least 60 civil society actors participate in conservation programs guided by the ecosystem profile.	On track. With 2 years to go, 66 separate CSOs have been supported so far to deliver projects under the CEPF EAMH profile.
	The conservation community in the Hotspot is better organized, show improved capacities, and has improved collaboration with development stakeholders.	On track. Of the 45 grantees who responded to the online questionnaire, 39 (87%) reported increased capacity of their organisation in project management and/or fundraising. 38 (84%) reported improved collaboration with development stakeholders. Of the 29 non-grantees who responded to the questionnaire, 9 (31%) reported an observable increase in CSO organisation in the region, 10 (34%) reported improved CSO capacities and 11 (38%) reported improved collaborations with development stakeholders.
	At least 25 priority key biodiversity areas with strengthened protection and management, representing at least 1.2 million hectares, and including at least 500,000 hectares of new protected areas.	17 projects have completed their final reports, with strengthened management reported in 4 unique priority key biodiversity areas. This translates into 55,255 hectares (5% of the target). To date, no new protected areas have been created.
	At least 1.7 million hectares of production landscapes under improved management for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services.	The 17 completion reports report that 280,024 ha of production landscapes are under improved management (16.4% of target).
	New sustainable financing schemes exist for at least one priority site in each of the priority corridors.	Of the 17 projects completed, none have sustainable financing schemes. While there are a number of projects under SD3 which are focussed on sustainable development, these are focussed on the early stages –feasibility, capacity building and

		fundraising for further development of the scheme. It is therefore unclear how a sustainable financing scheme can be put in place by 2017 without significant further investment being secured to consolidate the initial investment by CEPF.
<b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>	<b>Intermediate Indicators</b>	<b>Progress report</b>
Biodiversity mainstreamed into wider development policies, plans and projects, delivering the co-benefits of biodiversity conservation, improved local livelihoods and economic development in 4 priority corridors (and associated KBA groups) and 7 countries.	Number of local and community development plans or other processes in which biodiversity conservation priorities and actions are incorporated through civil society engagement in the process.	Of the 17 completed projects, 15 local development plans have been developed, all under one project in Burundi.
	Number of national development plans or other processes in which biodiversity conservation priorities and actions are incorporated through civil society engagement.	Of the 17 completed projects, no national development plans have been developed to date. There are two further projects under IP 1.2 yet to report.
	Amount of funding directed at livelihood activities (using CEPF investment as leverage) which also benefit biodiversity conservation in and around KBAs in priority corridors.	Of the 17 completed projects. \$208,000 has been leveraged for livelihood activities. This included \$98,000 being leveraged by CSO participants of an African Wildlife Foundation fundraising workshop, supported by CEPF.
	Number of private sector ventures which benefit biodiversity and local livelihoods.	One developed to date: A project based near Nyungwe national park, Rwanda, developed a business plan for beekeeping development in the landscape, reported as being implemented post-closure.
Improved protection and management of the KBA network through involvement of civil society.	Number of terrestrial KBAs under enhanced protection status and number of hectares covered.	17 projects have completed their final reports, with strengthened management reported in 8 KBAs. This translates into 55,255 ha
	Number of management plans developed or improved, with enhanced implementation underway, and number of hectares covered.	One management plan has been produced to date with 238,750 ha covered.
	Number of engagements of civil society in EIA and site safeguard processes resulting in	Following training in EIAs by Arcos in the Albertine Rift, technical input was provided

	strengthened implementation at the most urgently threatened sites	into two EIA reports.
	Number of new KBAs identified and changes in KBAs status resulting from an improved knowledge and information (including sites for irreplaceable plant diversity)	One new KBA has been identified in 2015: Ol ari Nyiro in Laikipia, Kenya
Financing mechanisms established in 4 priority corridors and 2 additional sites ensuring substantial long-term financing for conservation activities in the most important sites, and conservation community enabled to raise funds and develop similar mechanisms in the Hotspot.	Number of forest carbon partnerships and projects established and achieving biodiversity conservation objectives in each of three priority corridors and in two individual KBAs	None to date
	Increased levels of CSO capacity in all Hotspot countries for conservation fund raising and project management	Of the 17 projects completed, a rather remarkable 3,424 people (36% women) have been trained in fundraising and/or project management (including in conservation agriculture).
	New conservation community developed and playing an effective role in KBA conservation in Eritrea, South Sudan, and Yemen	No activities are currently taking place in Eritrea. There are two small projects in South Sudan, not completed at time of writing. One individual attended a training of trainers in Jordan, subsequently providing training to 15 Yemeni conservationists. Two further large grants are aimed at strengthening CSOs in Yemen.
Strategic leadership and effective coordination of CEPF investment provide, and a broad constituency of civil society groups built across institutional and political boundaries, through a regional implementation team (RIT).	All groups receiving grants achieve a satisfactory score on final performance scorecard	Not implemented
	RIT performance in fulfilling approved terms of reference	All RIT targets, both administrative and programmatic, appear on track. The RIT has disbursed 45 and 38 large and small grants respectively (target 50 each).
	All civil society groups in investment areas know CEPF and are given equal chance to participate in calls for proposals	Not assessed
	Amount of co-funding (for activities implemented by CEPF grantees) that have been	Of the 11 projects completed, \$148,308 has been leveraged in co-funding from other donors.

	facilitated by the RIT	
	At least 60% of the CEPF grantees have improved management capacities thanks to RIT capacity building activities.	Of the 45 grantees who responded to the questionnaire, 36 (80%) reported increased management capacity.

43. When considering program impact, those not formally measured by indicators should also be considered. In the online questionnaire, responding grantees were asked to identify the most significant change for their organization as a result of working with CEPF. Responses included:

**Internal capacity:**

- Broader understanding of the challenges and issues for conservation in the hotspot area.
- Increased organizational ability to influence decision making.
- Increased number of staff within the organization.
- Increased internal awareness of capacity gaps.
- Better capacity to connect science to conservation practice.
- Improved fundraising capacity, including in applying for larger grants
- Improved organisational capacity in administration and financial management.
- A better understanding of the conservation significance of the areas in which grantees work.
- Improved ability to standardise internal procedures.
- An understanding that political and security issues can radically change an intended program of work.
- A greater embracing of community-based planning in projects.

**External relationships/networks:**

- Improved relationships with local communities and other local partners
- Improved relationships with government representatives, predominantly at the local and regional levels.
- Stronger networks with other biodiversity conservation organizations, including across borders, and wider stakeholder groups.
- The linking together with other projects, funded by different donors.

44. Following three years of implementation, the program is well on track in terms of its stated targets of strengthening the involvement and effectiveness of civil society in conservation, although the RIT have struggled to source grantees to work with in certain countries. The significant efforts to develop local and national CSO skills in project design, proposal writing and project management are reported by both the RIT and the grantees as having resulted in improved confidence and effectiveness in these areas.

45. However, at this stage of the program, it is not yet clear whether this increased capacity has yet led to the improved conservation and management of globally important biodiversity in the Eastern Afrotropical Hotspot. This is largely due to only 17 projects having yet been completed, making it difficult to assess progress towards conservation targets. Even taking this into account, it seems unlikely that the program will meet its targets to:

- Develop a new sustainable financing schemes for at least one priority site in each of the priority corridors.

- Develop a number of national development plans or other processes which incorporate biodiversity conservation priorities and actions through civil society engagement.
  - Establish a number of forest carbon partnerships and projects in each of three priority corridors and in two individual KBAs
46. The emphasis placed by both CEPF and the RIT on the linking together of projects, or more specifically of the CSOs implementing them, is clearly a key impact of the project, with both grantees and CEPF/RIT representatives emphasising how well this approach can work in terms of facilitating the sharing of success and problems, and reducing the sense of isolation that a small CSO can sometimes face.
47. It is worth noting that no negative impacts from the program were highlighted during this exercise, although the question was neutrally worded (see full questionnaire in Annex B).

#### 4.2.2 Program Relevance

##### **How well has the program addressed the problems of the region?**

48. The question of current relevance of the IPs was posed to both those who completed the online questionnaire and during the semi-structured interviews. Of the 12 investment priorities, all were found to still be relevant, three years after they were agreed, with 77% of respondents happy that they strongly represented the conservation problems of the region. The three IPs which were found to be less relevant than the others (although still considered somewhat relevant) were:
- **IP 3.1** Support CSOs to develop forest carbon partnerships and projects that advance biodiversity conservation in priority key biodiversity areas in Africa.
  - **IP 3.2** Support CSOs to develop partnerships and projects for non-carbon payment for ecosystem services schemes and other market mechanisms in priority key biodiversity areas in Africa, particularly priority freshwater key biodiversity areas that influence freshwater biodiversity, livelihoods and health.
  - **IP 3.4** Support the institutional development of CSOs in Eritrea, South Sudan and Yemen, and their role in the conservation of key biodiversity areas in their respective countries.

This also reflects findings related to IP 3.1 and IP 3.2 also being undersubscribed within the funding portfolio, as discussed earlier.

49. The original 2012 hotspot profile suggested REDD and PES as “some of the best future mechanisms for linking poverty reduction and natural resources conservation and management.”(pg.66). Whilst the profile found only 6 PES projects in the 15 country hotspot at the time of writing, seven countries had prepared national REDD+ strategies/REDD readiness plans, with five countries piloting REDD schemes. The participants at the joint consultation workshop in Rwanda for Rwanda, Burundi and DRC in 2011 suggested that further financial support was needed for PES evaluations and implementation. REDD+ and PES schemes therefore exist in the region, and participants in the profiling exercise supported their inclusion in the investment priorities. The lower ranking in terms of relevance to the region may therefore be less about relevance to the region and more linked to personal relevance to the organizations responding to the questionnaire, given the known lack of regional CSO experience in these areas. This is further suggested by the lower ranking of IP 3.4 in terms of regional relevance appears to be linked to respondents experience in the countries in question, with the IP thought to be a lot more relevant by respondents currently working in Yemen, Eritrea and/or South Sudan.

50. There is therefore a general agreement that the programs’ IPs agreed in 2011 remain as relevant in 2015. However, the lack of projects addressing particular IPs raises the interesting question of the appropriateness of targeting investment in areas where the capacity of target grantees may not be sufficient to allow effective delivery. The program has a deliberate focus on supporting smaller CSOs in under-capacitated areas, and that the interests and experiences of these CSOs were known from the profiling work to be largely focused on livelihood and local development activities. This is echoed in the bulk of LOIs for the open calls submitted under IP 1.1 and including a local poverty alleviation component, highlighting where most CSOs operating in the EAM hotspot feel most comfortable and/or are currently strategically focussed. The setting of the IPs should also take into account the suitability of the grant terms in terms of size and length in addressing the issues raised.

51. Responses to the question: ***Are there any other conservation issues/priorities you think CEPF should invest in (in your region)?*** Included the responses:

- Protection of endangered species
- Migratory and transboundary species
- The establishment of transboundary protected areas
- Political conservation- i.e. more consideration of political systems and leadership structures
- Biodiversity offsetting
- Educating children about conservation
- Enhanced policy and advocacy work
- Work with the oil palm sector
- Buffer zones around KBAs
- Conservation at the molecular level

- Ex-situ conservation
- Conservation of agri-cultural heritage
- Focus on endemic species
- Renewable energy

Note that these suggestions probably reflect the prioritisations and interests of the individuals, interviewed- or areas of strategic interest for their organisations- rather than what might fill 'gaps' due to low regional capacity to deliver certain kinds of projects. Certain items on the list were also mentioned in the initial profiling work but not being included in the final investment priority for various reasons, including that other donors are focussing significant resources to these areas.

52. No direct questions were asked regarding the relevance of the geographic focus. However, a number of people commented on the high value of CEPF focussing both attention in general and investment in particular on lesser known KBAs in the hotspot. This spotlighting of neglected areas has facilitated, in the short term, a better understanding of the conservation issues and needs of these areas and, in the longer term, a much greater awareness in both CSOs and other donors of the existence and importance of some of these lesser known KBAs, potentially catalysing further support.

#### **To what extent is the program able to adapt to changing needs?**

53. The RIT has illustrated flexibility of approach in a number of areas. A key issue throughout the program has been the low quality of the LOIs from particular countries. This prompted the RIT to focus RIT attention and funding on capacity building, particularly on proposal writing, as well as spend significant amounts of time advising applicants on process and content. This is clearly illustrated with the RITs response to CfP2. No proposals from the Arabian Peninsula matched the strategic direction under which the call was issued. As a result, the RIT decided to issue a specific call for proposals (CfP 6) addressing capacity needs for CSOs in Yemen with focus on institutional capacity building to deliver conservation work.

54. During the first three years of implementation, the difficulties of working in Yemen, Eritrea and South Sudan also led to a number of changes in approach. These include the decision not to invest in Eritrea, to reduce investment in South Sudan, and to move training activities from Yemen to Jordan.

55. Initially only certain KBAs were eligible for funding under particular IPs. However, this became a major limiting factor for fundable projects in those KBAs, with many applications rejected on this basis. As a result, the RIT decided to make all KBAs eligible for all IPs, and then use targeted calls for proposals to focus the investment. If not already adopted, it may be useful to heed a suggestion from a previous RIT member of another hotspot that a CfP could even include mention of who should *not* apply (Johnson, 2013).

### 4.2.3 Program Efficiency

#### **Efficiency within and between the RIT and the CEPF secretariat**

56. One of the first activities undertaken by the RIT was to commission a review of lessons learned by RITs contracted to run other hotspot investment programs across the globe. This resulted in a number of recommendations for the newly formed EAM RIT team to take on board. This allowed a more efficient start to the program, and helped the RIT avoid common pitfalls. It also directly contributed to the decision made subsequently by the CEPF secretariat to incorporate a lessons learned section in all new RIT orientation workshops, with individuals from previous or current RITs invited to the event to share their learning with others. Program efficiency has also been improved by having an RIT member who also works within the CEPF hotspot RIT in the Mediterranean. This allows for strong links between the two RITs.
57. The complexity of the hotspot resulted in the creation of a diverse RIT, spread over a number of countries and sited within a number of offices. To support the effective functioning of this, the head of the RIT initiated a strong internal communications system including annual face to face meetings, monthly team meetings over skype and the capturing and regular circulation of minutes of important discussions to all team members. In addition, a number of shared internal systems have been developed and consistently maintained, giving RIT members clear guidance and accessible resources. For example, this includes shared live excel documents kept constantly up to date with information on LOIs, CfPs and approved projects. These meetings and systems have been greatly appreciated by the RIT members and the CEPF secretariat and have been credited with ensuring a more efficient functioning of a diverse team. The RIT has also plugged resource gaps with a number of volunteers who have worked on discrete projects such as file sharing systems and website design.
58. A few teething problems were encountered in 2013, with a number of delays experienced with the granting processes for both large and small grants. These delays occurred both at the level of CEPF and within the RIT, attributed by participants predominantly to misunderstandings about both the process, and individual roles and responsibilities between the CEPF secretariat and the Regional Implementation Team. There were also complications attached to the fact that initially the EAM hotspot investment program had two grant directors, although this was later reduced to one, at least partly due to the operational difficulties inherent in joint leadership.
59. It is recognized that the emphasis on capacity building by necessity often increases the length of the granting process. For example, a lot of time can be spent by RIT members working directly with potential grantees to improve proposals, including budgets and workplans. This time, while inefficient in the short term, is seen as a long term investment in the region, and that the benefits may well be accrued after the five year investment by CEPF has ended.

#### **Efficiency within the investment program**

60. The program hotspot features at least five major languages (English, French, Amharic, Arabic and Portuguese). While the RIT has been careful to include at least one fluent speaker of each language within the team, the diversity of languages has affected the RITs ability at reach out to local CSOs across the hotspot, both to raise awareness of the program and to support them subsequently. For example, the ecosystem profile is only available in English, with a summary translated into French, Portugese and Arabic.
61. Language issues may also impact the ability of the program to develop cross-country networks and organize visits and learning exchanges between projects. The translation costs of doing this between countries with different languages make many such desirable activities logistically difficult and prohibitively expensive.
62. Program efficiency is also impacted by the sheer scale of the program- across 15 countries and over 1 million square kilometres, making meetings, exchanges and field visits both expensive and inefficient. This is compounded by the fact that for several countries, the hotspot only touches a few small areas within that country. This very restrictive selection of sites within particular countries is also reported as making it difficult to explain and promote the CEPF investment within those countries.

#### **Efficiency between the grantees and the investment program**

63. Grantees who responded to the online questionnaire were asked to highlight any part of the CEPF grant-making process which they thought could be improved (if any).

	<b>% of respondents (n=45)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The calls for proposals	27%	Informing current grantees of upcoming relevant opportunities would be helpful; Calls should include more KBAs; An initial 10 minute skype discussion to outline procedures and ask questions would be helpful; budget for small grants are too small.
Processing time between application and funding	24%	Delays up to three months for funds disbursement can derail project implementation.
The ecosystem profile	20%	Could be updated; More consultative meetings at the regional level.
The general administration burden	20%	Consider making financial reporting every six rather than every three months to reduce admin burden; A lot is asked even for small grants, with a lot of time spent responding to queries and fulfilling requirements rather than concentrating on the implementation of the project.
Reporting systems	18%	We found the proposal very detailed, but appreciated the efficiency when reporting against outputs and outcomes; The final narrative report in addition to the matrix seemed to be a duplication of effort

Entering full proposals in Grantwriter	16%	The resulting proposal form is difficult to read and refer back to; Formats could be more user friendly. It would be helpful to have spell check on the online form; Should be simpler to encourage local organizations to apply
Support from the CEPF secretariat and Regional Implementation Team	16%	Assistance from the RIT would be helpful to write the full proposal; Organizational capacity building and key staff development on biodiversity conservation and project implementation including fund management should be conducted through experience sharing, workshops and training
Communication with the CEPF secretariat and Regional Implementation Team	16%	None given
The Letters of Inquiry format	13%	None given
Safeguards	4%	None given
No improvements necessary	22%	None given

64. Small grants (under \$20,000) were perceived by stakeholders to be quicker and more efficient to set up than the larger grants. Nevertheless, there were still a number of comments from grantees that given the small size of the grant, the administration required was too demanding. There were also complaints that the size of the small grants was too small for operation in the region, citing things such as very high travel and operational costs in particular countries, due to poor infrastructure.

65. The request for further coaching/mentoring from the RIT in a number of areas, including in the writing of LOIs and full proposals, is heartening, as it highlights the strength of the relationship developed over the past three years between the grantees and the RIT as well as emphasising the demand for the support currently being offered- relatively unique in a donor. However, it is simultaneously concerning as there are clearly limits to how much support an RIT should be giving a CSO in this respect, as a lack of capacity to design a project and complete a proposal may also mean there is not sufficient capacity to effectively implement and close the project. These expectations are also clearly unrealistic, given there are only four full time RIT members, who are already stretched in providing full feedback to all LOIs received, in addition to ad-hoc responding to requests for support from potential grantees and current grantees. The RIT also report regular follow up on the implementation of projects is very important as most of them are likely to deviate from the implementation plan and proposed project objectives (especially organizations which are new or with limited capacity).

#### 4.2.4 Program Sustainability

**To what extent do key stakeholders perceive that the benefits of their CEPF-funded projects will continue beyond donor involvement?**

66. Interestingly, the majority of responses to the question of longer term sustainability focussed less on a direct contribution to conservation (e.g. improved direct management of KBAs) and more on supporting factors. These included:

- **Regional Capacity.** E.g. increased capacity of local CSOs to engage in and carry out activities in support of conservation; Greater access by CSOs to further funding;
- **Awareness of the value of the hotspot amongst stakeholders from communities to government,** and key priority areas within this, including previously neglected ones. This includes an increased awareness of ecosystem values of KBAs and their importance for sustainable development. It may also serve as an illustration of global interest in otherwise neglected areas to host countries.
- **Regional Information.** Better understanding of the hotspot, including of conservation gaps and issues, including status and threats to threatened species. Particularly of value to decision makers.
- **Partnerships and collaboration.** Stronger synergies and more co-ordination between and within CSOs, communities and government institutions.
- **Improved local livelihoods and/or sustainable development,** which in turn has led to increased community awareness of, and participation in, biodiversity conservation.

**What do you think CEPF could do to ensure sustainability of its positive results?**

67. A number of suggestions were given, listed below. The majority of these the RIT/CEPF are already engaging in to a certain extent, but they are included below in case helpful to show both ideas and appetite:

- On-going support for successful projects- either direct or through introductions to other donor agencies.
- Sharing of good and bad experiences between CEPF grantees.
- Further capacity building of local and national NGOs to source alternative funding.
- Increase replication and further support (financial and otherwise) through promotion of achievements.
- On-going mentoring contact by the RIT with grantees.
- On-going support of networks between grantees.
- Maintain collaboration with international and national NGOs in promoting conservation work in priority KBAs.
- Ensure projects with shared geographical or thematic themes are connected to each other.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of projects to ensure healthier projects in the future.

- Work with grantees from the LOI stage to ensure improved engagement with all project stakeholders.
- Increase linkages with other ongoing initiatives in the region, including with government institutions.
- Support fewer organisations and provide core operational funds.
- Encourage longer projects.

## 4.3 Capacity development

The EAM hotspot profile strongly recognized the need for further capacity development of the regional CSO groups being targeted, stating that:

*“This is not capacity building for the sake of capacity building; rather, it is targeted specifically to appropriate strategic stakeholders and ensures delivery of our conservation objectives through improved projects and higher quality implementation. History has shown that these capacity building efforts are essential to ensuring good projects that are integrated into a wider hotspot strategy and a common conservation vision.” (Pg. 194)*

Capacity development is targeted through two investment priorities:

**IP 3.3:** Support training for civil society organizations in fundraising and project management, especially with respect to emerging opportunities for sustainable financing of KBAs in Africa.

I.e. targeting, through sub-grants and collaborations, the specific technical areas of project management, proposal writing and fundraising through workshops, longer term mentoring and on-the-job support, and the production of tools such as handbooks.

And

**IP 4.2:** Build a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries toward achieving the shared conservation goals described in the ecosystem profile.

This IP is designed to be led by the RIT as one of their core responsibilities, *“...ensuring that partners have the institutional and individual ability to design and implement projects that are essential to achievement of CEPF’s objectives.”*

### 4.3.1 Capacity needs assessments to date

68. The 2012 EAM hotspot profile requested a number of NGOs active in the region to complete a capacity self-assessment tool, 16 responded. Findings included:

- Inadequate human resources, with insufficient staff to perform the tasks, insufficient experience and skills (in particular in specialities such as GIS, as well as more general aspects such as administration and accounting).
- Inadequate funding, often due to the difficulty of accessing donor funds even when they are available.
- Governance issues (transparency and insufficient oversight by, for example, a Board), especially in countries that have been subject to civil strife.

- CSOs are often dependent on a few individuals and are not necessarily sustainable
- Large differences in capacities between countries, with very high scores on Kenya and Uganda, but lower scores in Yemen, attributed to factors such as the lack of long-term capacity building, less access to resources and very different national contexts.

69. Building on this assessment, and as recommended by the RIT best practice review (Johnson, 2013), detailed CSO capacity needs assessments were undertaken in four countries: Yemen, Eritrea, South Sudan and Tanzania. A capacity needs assessment is also currently being conducted for Eastern DRC.

70. The capacity needs assessment for South Sudan was conducted using an electronic questionnaire, administered remotely, and a five day visit to Juba. Results showed a need to strengthen CSO capacity in the following ways:

- Conservation project design and management
- Human resource development
- Sustainability strategy and diversification of financial resources
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Networking and communication

71. In Tanzania 10 CSOs were assessed using a bespoke capacity assessment tool. Results showed that:

- Most of the CSOs assessed focussed predominately on livelihoods activities.
- A weak resource base (financial and human) was attributed to poor resource mobilisation and funders' priorities.
- Low levels of understanding of climate change and associated areas (e.g. carbon emissions, REDD).
- Underdeveloped advocacy skills.
- Limited skills in investigating threats to conservation related to human activities.
- Weak understanding of national conservation policies.
- Little co-operative working when engaging with the government and other powerful bodies.

72. The capacity needs assessment for Eritrea showed that there was no viable CSOs that CEPF could work with, so all efforts to work in Eritrea were halted.

73. The capacity needs assessment in Yemen was conducted using an electronic questionnaire and a subsequent workshop during which CSOs were invited to complete a SWOT analysis for their individual organizations. The main capacity gaps were identified as:

- Internal governance
- CSO identify, strategic direction and branding
- Insufficient staffing (about 50% of consulted CSOs have no full or part time employees)
- Poor project and grant management skills
- Capacity to stimulate productive partnerships and engagement with the private sector

- Limited understanding of threats to biodiversity and management approaches

74. RIT experience relating to both responses to CfPs and subsequent support to grantees has also highlighted often very limited expertise in project design, proposal writing and project management. This is reflected in responses to the online questionnaire. Grantees only were asked which, if any, skills within their organization they would like to strengthen. Results (see table below) showed a strong recognition for further capacity development in fundraising in particular, with monitoring and evaluation a close second.

Area for organizational strengthening	% of respondents (n=45)
Fundraising	64%
Monitoring & evaluation	62%
External communications	38%
Partnerships and networks	27%
Financial management	24%
Human resources and volunteer management	22%
Project planning and management	22%
Organizational planning and management	20%
Leadership	18%
Technical skills	16%
Governance	11%
Internal communications	11%
None of the above	2%

75. The technical skills that the grantees said they would most like to strengthen were:

- Project management (administration, time management, reporting) (2)
- Geographical Information Systems (2)
- Biodiversity monitoring (1)
- Integrated Valuation of Ecosystem Services and trade-offs (1)
- Problem analysis and theory of change application in overcoming persistent and acute issues in the region related to conservation (1)
- Participatory Forest Management/community based natural resources management (1)

#### 4.3.2 Capacity development activities to date by the RIT team

76. In response to the relatively high rate of ineligible and poor quality LOIs, combined with the deliberate targeting of CSOs who do not have a great deal of experience with grant management, the RIT are currently providing an extremely high level of support to both potential applicants, and subsequent grantees. This includes the following:

- Responding to questions before or outside the scope of a specific call
- Pre-submission advice with regard to a specific call (through the RIT ‘advisory service’) to potential grantees. This pertains in particular to the strategic directions and eligible sites targeted by projects, the importance of meeting the deadlines and the appropriate address for submission. Over 350 requests for advice have been met.
- Every single rejected LOI receives feedback as to why it was rejected, and advice on how to write a stronger proposal in future.
- Advice is provided to applicants preparing their full proposals in Grant Writer (for large grants) or in an Excel logical framework (for small grants), including advice on budgets, project rationale and approach, logical frameworks, supporting documents, safeguards, etc.
- Follow up on the implementation of projects, to help prevent the deviation from the implementation plan and proposed project objectives and advise on proposals and reports. This support is provided by telephone, email, skype, visits by grantees to the RIT offices, and RIT site visits.

77. Support to potential and existing grantees is provided by a range of RIT members, with the team wide approach worth noting- for example the finance officer based in Nairobi has been empowered to directly mentor grantees in financial management practice and reporting, including visiting their project offices and field sites.

78. Field trips have been reported by a number of RIT members as being particularly helpful in embedding the project and the reports received in reality, and strengthening both the RIT understanding of the implementation context, and the grantee understanding of CEPFs expectations, as well as allowing one-on-one mentoring in areas of need.

79. Respondents to the online questionnaire were asked if they had received training and/or other support in a number of areas. Results (see table below) revealed a very high level of support in a range of areas. Nearly half of the grantees who had responded to the questionnaire reported receiving comments on written drafts of LOIs and/or full proposals and/or report<sup>3</sup>. Nearly a third reported receiving verbal mentoring and/or coaching. A third reported receiving introductions to other regional stakeholders and over a third reported attending some sort of training workshop. That this level of support has been achieved in a hotspot covering 15 countries by an RIT consisting of only four full time members of staff is remarkable.

	Attended a training workshop	Verbal mentoring &/or coaching	Comments on written drafts	Intros to other regional stakeholders	Further resources	No support received
Grantees	38%	29%	47%	36%	33%	7%

<sup>3</sup> Note that the RIT provide feedback to all LOIs received, suggesting this is being underreported by respondents

(n=45)						
Non grantees (n=29)	21%	0%	17%	7%	14%	52%
Total (n=74)	31%	18%	35%	24%	26%	24%

80. The RIT have also been involved in facilitating networking amongst CSOs in the region, which has shown to be more successful in some countries (e.g. in Yemen there is a 'Yemeni conservationists group') than others (e.g. Tanzania). Catalysing partnerships amongst potential grantees in a country (e.g. by creating a new country network) and across the hotspot (e.g. by also involving Saudi experts in the training to the Yemenis) has proved to be a fruitful approach driven by the RIT. Donor organizations should capitalize on strengthening such networking and build on CEPF's efforts in formation of the conservation NGOs coalition in Yemen.

81. Nevertheless the limitations of such a small team developing capacity through a one-on-one approach across 15 countries is recognized, leading to the sub-contracting of a number of learning events, discussed in the next section.

### 4.3.3 Capacity development activities by grantees

82. Driven by the strong recognition by the RIT and CEPF of the importance of formal training provision in the region and the isolation of organisations with little opportunity for cross-pollination of skills and ideas, CfP 9 sought a training provider to deliver both a series of training events in key areas across the region, in addition to developing and strengthen CSO networks. With the contract awarded in March 2015, the project will be rolled out between 2015 and 2017 across the whole region, with a minimum of 128 CEPF grantees anticipated to have increased capacity to deliver greater impact for conservation after attending one of seven regional learning exchange and training events by July 2017.

83. In South Sudan, limited training has been provided through two small grants (developing national capacity in plant conservation and building organisational capacity in biodiversity management and conservation) but a third effort had to be halted as the result of both the political situation in the country and the low levels of collaboration shown by local partners. During an October 2014 training workshop organised by Wetlands International, seven CSOs were trained in conservation, human resource development, and networking skills. A training workshop on strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation was due to take place in February 2015 but the workshop was cancelled due to the limited number of CSOs that showed interest in the activity, with a several stating that they had such knowledge already. It was subsequently decided to allow CSOs time to agree areas where they welcomed training.

84. In Tanzania, of the shortlist of local CSOs that CEPF was recommended to invest in by the capacity gap analysis, four subsequently received CEPF funding. In addition, as a consequence of the meeting to approve the findings of the capacity assessment, an 'East Afromontane Tanzania

Network' was also created. The groups' key focal areas for capacity development were policy and advocacy, resource mobilization and networking.

85. For Yemen, a small grant was issued to a Yemeni individual to attend a training of trainers in Jordan. This individual then provided training in environmental safeguards, project design and conservation techniques to 16 Yemeni conservationists. The United Society for Developing Water Resources and Environment (USDWE) are also working in Yemen through a CEPF grant to strengthen CSOs to support the enforcement and implementation of international accepted environmental safeguard policies and environmental impact assessment systems, and to advocate for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in development planning in Yemen's KBAs.
86. A large grant was also awarded under IP 3.3 to the Conservation Leadership Programme, through FFI, to support 45 young or mid-career conservation professionals from national NGOs in the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot in building their capacities to write proposals, raise funds for their projects and develop long-term financing strategies. The young professionals chosen will join the Conservation Leadership Programme alumni network to enable them to benefit from the experience of hundreds of conservation leaders worldwide. To date 16 individuals have been trained in Ethiopia, with the next courses due to be held in Mozambique in September 2015 and Rwanda in 2016.

#### 4.3.4 Impact of capacity development to date

87. Grantees who responded to the online questionnaire were asked how their organisational capacity had changed since engagement with the EAM hotspot program. The majority reported increases in capacity in fundraising, project management and working with people in the development sector as well as, to a slightly lesser extent, working with government representatives.

	<b>The capacity of my organization to fundraise has:</b>	<b>The capacity of my organization to manage projects has:</b>	<b>The capacity of my organization to work with people in the development sector has:</b>	<b>The capacity of my organization to work with government representatives has:</b>
Increased	73%	80%	84%	69%
Not changed	24%	11%	11%	29%
Unknown	2%	9%	4%	2%

88. In 2013 RIT reported that targeted outreach into Rwanda, Burundi and DRC directly led to a larger number of LOIs received which were of better quality and show better understanding of the strategy than in previous calls - in some cases based on feedback provided by the RIT during

advisory services while calls were open. Members of the RIT also report that they are now seeing grantees that have successfully completed small grants early in the program moving on to develop large projects, due to their increased understanding of developing and management conservation projects.

89. An analysis by the RIT in 2013 revealed a significant increase in the chance of success of applications if applicants ask for advice- 31% of those applicants who had requested advice were successful, compared to an average success rate for all applications of 12%.

## 5 Priorities for June 2015 to June 2017 for CEPF Investment Strategy

90. **Focus remaining small grants on consolidating achievements already made.** There are a number of undersubscribed investment priorities in the portfolio, despite targeted calls for proposals in those areas. Given that the majority of the remaining grants to be administered will be small grants, it seems unlikely that the outstanding goals (new KBAs, PES/REDD+ schemes) will be achievable in the remaining 2 years, although the RIT hope to launch a targeted call for grants focussing on creating new KBAs once IUCN release the new protocol. The strategy already cited by the RIT to focus these small grants on consolidating achievements already made seems like a sensible one in terms of supporting sustainability of program impact.
91. **Capacity development activities are suggested to prioritise fundraising and monitoring and evaluation.** There remains a considerable appetite for capacity development by grantees in a wide range of areas across the hotspot. There is clearly a limit to the level of support that the small RIT can provide- if they can maintain their current level of support, it is clearly both appreciated and effective but they should be realistic about their capacity to meet demands for more. Attention therefore falls on the sub-grants which focus on capacity development in the region. It is recommended that efforts focus on the overlap between the CEPF focus on skills which improve projects and ensure higher quality implementation and areas identified by grantees as those of greatest need- according to the survey run as part of the MTE- in this case fundraising, in terms of supporting grantees secure further funding for their work, and M&E, to ensure grantees are more effective in monitoring conservation impact of their work.
92. **Develop an additional indicator to identify the impact of livelihood investments.** Sustainability is a key underlying theme of this hotspot investment- the program aims to demonstrate the link between biodiversity and people by developing environmentally and financially sustainable livelihoods. There are countless livelihood interventions across the region over the years which have received significant investment yet for various reasons have failed to display sustainability of any kind. Currently the target for measuring the success of livelihood interventions supported by this programme measures the amount of funding directed at livelihood activities (using CEPF investment as leverage) which also benefit biodiversity conservation in and around KBAs in priority corridors. It would be useful, and constructive, for CEPF/RIT to develop an additional

indicator to identify the impact of livelihood investments, rather than just the amount of funding invested.

**93. A dedicated staff member is resourced to focus on lobbying other donors for further support.**

The focus of this program is on neglected KBAs, resulting in CEPF often being one of the few, if not the only, donor to be investing in that area. Whilst this is a deliberate strategy to attract further attention and resources to the area, this is a high risk strategy in terms of the negative consequences if no further support is attracted within the five year program length. It is recommended that to consolidate their initial investment, rather than this activity being allocated to existing staff with a number of competing other priorities including grant management and capacity development of potential and current grantees, a dedicated staff member is resourced to focus on securing co-finance for the CEPF investment.

## 6 Wider Learning

From the above data and discussions, the following learning can be drawn, intended to support both the final two years of CEPF investment in the region in addition to future investment programmes in other regions.

### 6.1 Program design

**94. Hotspots which incorporate such a range of languages should be very carefully thought through in terms of their viability and cost effectiveness.** In the EAM hotspot, there are at least five major languages in use (English, French, Amharic, Arabic and Portuguese). While the RIT has been careful to include at least one fluent speaker of these languages within the team, the diversity of languages plus the size of their team has affected their ability to reach out to local CSOs across the hotspot, both to raise awareness of the program and to support them subsequently. Language issues also impact the ability of the program to develop cross-country networks and organize visits and learning exchanges between projects. The translation costs of doing this between countries with different languages make many such desirable trips logistically difficult and prohibitively expensive. It means that the emergence of a common conservation community across the region is highly unlikely, which leads to the question of the added value of such a broad hotspot.

**95. Future program budgets should be adequate to achieve the targets set.** The EAM hotspot program spans 15 countries and 41 Key Biodiversity Areas. Of the \$9.8 million designated to the project, \$8.3 million is for a minimum of 100 projects (50 large and 50 small grants). Taking into account that 11 of the projects are cross-cutting and not targeted at a particular KBA (e.g. workshops developing regional capacity in proposal writing), accounting for \$1,138,762, approximately \$174,664 is available per priority KBA over the five year period. Of course in practice funding is not evenly spread like this, but a number of regional stakeholders have

argued strongly that this level of funding is not sufficient to make a significant impact over the entire range of the hotspot. This is particular the case in countries known to have particularly high operating costs, e.g. Mozambique, and for neglected KBAs which have had minimal previous investment or co-funding. There is therefore a very high, and potentially distracting pressure on the RIT to secure co-funding to ensure program achievements within the five year program are viable and sustainable.

96. **Ensure the RIT has the resources to effectively implement the program.** While we have seen that grantee demand for support can be a considerable in some cases, it has been noted by many that currently the EAM RIT is stretched extremely thinly in terms of meeting needs of current grantees and supporting hundreds of other potential grantees to develop viable and eligible projects, in addition to their work publicizing the program amongst donors and future grantees and securing co-finance. The geographical spread of the hotspot alone makes it unviable in terms of both staff time and budget to visit every project in the field, even though there is little doubt that both CEPF/RIT and the grantees would benefit from such a visit. While costs have been kept down by operating through existing NGO offices in various countries, three full time members of staff to support programs across the hotspot is clearly not optimum staffing.
97. **Ensure that the size and length of grants are realistic for approaches supported by the Investment Priorities.** This is illustrated by the lack of LOIs submitted for PES and REDD+ projects by international NGOs who are known to have the experience of this type of work in the region, attributed to the fact that \$ 150,000 over two years is not sufficient in itself to enable the development and implementation of a viable complex PES or REDD+ project. To be relevant for a region, therefore, setting of the IPs should take into account the suitability of the grant terms, and the capacity of the potential grantees.
98. **Ensure approaches supported by the Investment Priorities are within the capacity of potential grantees.** When the focus for grantees is local and national level CSOs, IPs should be screened for both the regional appetite as well as an honest look at the capacity in-country to implement them. If the capacity does not already exist but it is still felt to be an absolute priority, the program should ensure that it incorporates capacity building efforts to encourage grantee engagement in these areas, preferably at the beginning of the investment.
99. **The value of supporting CSO learning to achieving program outcomes cannot be underestimated.** This program has placed a distinctive emphasis on developing an integrated capacity building programme which acts along the length of the grant giving programme. This has allowed a number of small and inexperienced CSOs in the region to access key project funding whilst simultaneously building capacity in proposal writing and project management, giving them a solid launch pad for future work. This support has both been greatly appreciated by grantees, and has also paid dividends in terms of being a key impact that will live beyond the duration of the program. This has been costly, however, in terms of the use of RIT staff time, which should be carefully considered when developing future programs in regions requiring similar intensity of support to the implementing agencies.

## 6.2 Program implementation- general

100. **Calls for proposals need to be carefully drafted to minimise ineligible applications.** A very high proportion of LOIs to date had to be rejected because applicants either did not read and/or understand the Investment Strategy very well, basing their projects on themes or areas not included in the call. Suggested solutions for this proposed by the RIT include both careful crafting of the texts of CFP to reduce the risk of misinterpretation, but also the need to produce more explanatory materials for potential applicants. It may also help to be clearer within the CFPs as to what is not eligible within the call.
101. **It is important to ensure programs are responsive to emerging needs.** This is clearly illustrated in this program by the ability of the RIT to respond to the inadequate quality of the proposals (especially from local CSOs, which are a specific CEPF target group) by mobilising funding to provide more support to applications before and during their LOI development stage. Targeted outreach into Rwanda, Burundi and DRC was shown to have led to a larger number of LOIs received after the most recent call which are of better quality and show better understanding of the strategy than in previous calls.
102. **Information sharing between RITs can be very valuable.** The gathering of lessons learned by the EAM RIT at the beginning of the program supported an efficient start, allowing them to avoid mistakes made by others, and benefit from lessons learned. The collaboration between the Mediterranean RIT and the EAM RIT has also been extremely valuable in terms of sharing on-going learning.
103. **Effective communications within the RIT is critical to program implementation.** The complexity of the hotspot resulted in the creation of a diverse RIT, spread over a number of countries and sited within a number of offices. To support the effective functioning of this, the head of the RIT initiated a strong internal communications system including annual face to face meetings, monthly team meetings over skype and the capturing and regular circulation of minutes of important discussions to all team members. In addition, a number of shared internal systems have been developed and consistently maintained. documents kept constantly up to date with information on LOIs, CFPs and approved projects. Greatly appreciated by the RIT members, these meetings and systems have been credited with ensuring the more efficient functioning of a diverse team.
104. **Field visits are a valuable component of the program.** Visits to grantees offices and/or project sites by the RIT team have been found to be particularly helpful giving the staff an improved understanding of the context within with the project is being implemented. Field visits have also helped with the monitoring of investment impact, and provided the time and space for one-on-one bespoke mentoring for grantees. As with other RITs (Johnson, 2013), both the restricted budget and the sheer geographical spread of the projects has meant fewer field visits could take place that would have been optimal for the EAM hotspot program. Nevertheless,

some creative thinking has allowed field visits to be incorporated into travel plans for other events.

## References

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## Annex A: Investment Priorities

Strategic Directions	Investment Priorities
<p>1. Mainstream biodiversity into wider development policies, plans and projects to deliver the co-benefits of biodiversity conservation, improved local livelihoods and economic development in priority corridors.</p>	<p>1.1 Enhance civil society efforts to develop and implement local government and community-level planning processes to mainstream biodiversity conservation, and leverage donor and project funding for livelihood activities that explicitly address causes of environmental degradation in and around priority KBAs in priority corridors.</p>
	<p>1.2 Promote civil society efforts and mechanisms to mainstream biodiversity conservation into national development policies and plans, and into territorial planning in priority corridors and countries.</p>
	<p>1.3 Support civil society to build positive relationships with the private sector to develop sustainable, long-term economic activities that will benefit biodiversity and reduce poverty in priority corridors.</p>
<p>2. Improve the protection and management of the KBA network throughout the hotspot.</p>	<p>2.1 Increase the protection status (via creation or expansion of protected areas) and/or develop, update and implement management plans for terrestrial priority KBAs.</p>
	<p>2.2 Support the role of civil society organizations in the application of site safeguard policies and procedures including the strengthening of environmental impact assessment implementation in order to address ongoing and emerging threats to priority KBAs, including freshwater KBAs.</p>
	<p>2.3 Advance the identification and prioritization of KBAs in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.</p>
<p>3. Initiate and support sustainable financing and related actions for the conservation of priority KBAs and corridors.</p>	<p>3.1 Support civil society organizations to develop forest carbon partnerships and projects that advance biodiversity conservation in priority KBAs in Africa.</p>
	<p>3.2 Support civil society organizations to develop partnerships and projects for non-carbon PES schemes and other market mechanisms in priority KBAs in Africa, in particular priority freshwater KBAs that influence freshwater biodiversity, livelihoods and health.</p>
	<p>3.3 Support training for civil society organizations in fundraising and project management, including civil society at all levels, especially with respect to emerging opportunities for sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management in Africa.</p>
	<p>3.4 Support the institutional development of civil society organizations in Eritrea, South Sudan and Yemen, and their role in the conservation of KBAs in their respective countries.</p>
<p>4. Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of CEPF investment through a regional implementation team.</p>	<p>4.1 Build a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries toward achieving the shared conservation goals described in the ecosystem profile.</p>
	<p>4.2 Act as a liaison unit for relevant networks throughout the Eastern Afrotropical Hotspot to harmonize investments and direct new funding to priority issues and sites.</p>

## **Annex B: Online Survey for the CEPF Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot mid-term evaluation**

### **Welcome!**

Many thanks for participating in this survey. Your expert input will help CEPF assess the impact of the Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot program to date and inform future work. It will take around 10 minutes to complete and your responses will be anonymous.

### **Section 1 Background Information**

**1) Please highlight the countries within the hotspot in which you/your organization currently works.**

- ✓ Saudi Arabia
- ✓ Yemen
- ✓ Eritrea
- ✓ Ethiopia
- ✓ Burundi
- ✓ DRC
- ✓ Rwanda
- ✓ Tanzania
- ✓ Uganda
- ✓ Kenya
- ✓ Malawi
- ✓ Mozambique
- ✓ South Sudan
- ✓ Zimbabwe
- ✓ Zambia

**2) How would you classify your organization? Please highlight**

- ✓ International NGO
- ✓ National NGO
- ✓ Local NGO
- ✓ Donor
- ✓ Educational Institution
- ✓ Research Institution
- ✓ Government
- ✓ Other

### **Section 2 Program Efficiency**

**3) Please highlight any support that you or others in your organization have received from the CEPF East Afromontane program**

- [Attended a training workshop]
- [Verbal mentoring or coaching]
- [Comments on written drafts]
- [Introduction to other regional stakeholders]
- [Further resources, e.g. useful documents]
- [No support received]
- [Other- please specify]

**4) Has your organization received a grant through the CEPF East Afromontane biodiversity hotspot program?**

- [No]
- [Yes- a small grant]
- [Yes- a large grant]
- [Yes- a rapid response grant]
- [No, but we received a sub-grant from a grantee]

**a. Please select the appropriate ending to the following sentence:**

As a result of CEPF investment in my organization:

- The capacity of my organization to fundraise has:  
[decreased] [not changed] [increased]
- The capacity of my organization to manage projects has:  
[decreased] [not changed] [increased]
- The capacity of my organization to work with people in development NGOs has:  
[decreased] [not changed] [increased]
- The capacity of my organization to work government representatives has:  
[decreased] [not changed] [increased]

[Does this increase/decrease in capacity apply to working with government representatives at the local, regional or national level?]

**b. What has been the most significant change for your organization as a result of working with CEPF (expected or unexpected)?**

**c. What do you consider to be the main areas which your organization may require further strengthening in (if any)?**

- ✓ External communications

- ✓ Financial management
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Human resources and volunteer management
- ✓ Internal communications
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Monitoring, evaluation and learning
- ✓ Organizational planning and management
- ✓ Project planning and management
- ✓ Partnerships and networks
- ✓ Technical Skills [Please specify which technical skills you would most like to strengthen]
- ✓ None of the above
- ✓ Other

[If highlighted Technical skills- Please specify which technical skills you would most like to strengthen?]

- d. **In what areas (if any) do you think your organization may be able to pass on skills, knowledge or experience to other CEPF grantees through a fully-funded learning exchange?**
- e. **Please highlight any part of the CEPF grant-making process which you think could be improved (if any).**
- ✓ The Ecosystem Profile
  - ✓ The calls for proposals
  - ✓ The Letters of Inquiry format
  - ✓ Entering full proposals in the Grantwriter
  - ✓ Processing time between application and funding
  - ✓ Reporting systems
  - ✓ Safeguards
  - ✓ General administration burdens
  - ✓ Support from the CEPF secretariat and Regional Implementation Team
  - ✓ Communication with the CEPF secretariat and Regional Implementation Team
- f. **For the areas which you think could be improved, please give details**

### Section 3 Program Effectiveness

The overall objective of the program is:

**'Strengthening the involvement and effectiveness of civil society in achieving conservation and**

**management of globally important biodiversity in the Eastern Afromontane hotspot'.**

The program launched in 2012 and has funded around 60 projects across the region to date

**5) Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.**

As a result of CEPF investment in the area:

- The conservation community in the hotspot is better organized  
[disagree][no change][agree][don't know].
- The conservation community in the hotspot has improved capacities  
[disagree][no change][agree][don't know].
- The conservation community in the hotspot has improved collaboration with development NGOs  
[disagree][no change][agree][don't know].

**Section 4 Program Sustainability**

The CEPF Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot program launched in 2012 and will close in 2017

**6) What do you think will be the positive results of CEPF investment in the region after 2017?**

**7) What do you think CEPF could do to ensure sustainability of the positive results of its investment? Please give details**

**Section 5 Program Relevance**

**8) The CEPF East Afromontane Hotspot investment program has a number of investment priorities. For the investment priorities listed below, please rank from 0 to 4 how relevant you believe they are for the region(s) in which you work?**

	<b>Rank (0=not at all relevant, to 4=Very relevant)</b>
Support civil society efforts to develop and implement local government and community-level planning processes to mainstream biodiversity conservation	

Leverage donor and project funding for livelihood activities that explicitly address causes of environmental degradation in and around priority Key Biodiversity Areas.	
Promote civil society efforts and mechanisms to mainstream biodiversity conservation into national development policies and plans, and into territorial planning	
Support civil society to build positive relationships with the private sector to develop sustainable, long-term economic activities that will benefit biodiversity and reduce poverty in priority corridors.	
Increase the protection status (via creation or expansion of protected areas) and/or develop, update and implement management plans for terrestrial priority Key Biodiversity Areas.	
Support the role of civil society organizations in the application of site safeguard policies and procedures, including the strengthening of environmental impact assessment implementation in order to address ongoing and emerging threats to priority Key Biodiversity Areas. ,including freshwater KBAs.	
Advance the identification and prioritization of Key Biodiversity Areas. in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.	
Support civil society organizations to develop forest carbon partnerships and projects that advance biodiversity conservation in priority KBAs in Africa.	
Support civil society organizations to develop partnerships and projects for non-carbon payment for ecosystem services schemes and other market mechanisms in priority Key Biodiversity Areas. in Africa, particularly priority freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas.	
Support training for civil society organizations in fund-raising, sustainable financing mechanisms and project management,	
Support the institutional development of civil society organizations in Eritrea, South Sudan and Yemen, and their role in the conservation of Key Biodiversity Areas. in their respective countries.	

**9) How well do you feel that these investment priorities address the conservation problems of your region?**

[Not at all] [A little] [A lot] [Don't know]

**10) Are there any other conservation issues/priorities you think CEPF should invest in (in your region) ?**

**11) Any final comments?**

**12) If there is anything within your responses which you would like CEPF to get in touch with you about directly, please enter you organisation name and contact details below.**

Thank you so much for your time.

Your input today will help CEPF assess the impact of the program to date and inform our future work