GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Project Information

Project Title	
Consolidating the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)'s achievements in fostering CSO leadership in biodiversity conservation in global biodiversity hotspots	
Region Global	GEF Project ID 12293
Country(ies) Global	Type of Project FSP
GEF Agency(ies): CI	GEF Agency ID
Executing Partner TBD	Executing Partner Type
GEF Focal Area (s) Biodiversity	Submission Date 3/2/2026
Project Sector (CCM Only)	

Taxonomy

Focal Areas, Biodiversity, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Coastal and Marine Protected Areas, Community Based Natural Resource Mngt, Terrestrial Protected Areas, Productive Seascapes, Species, Threatened Species, Wildlife for Sustainable Development, Financial and Accounting, Conservation Finance, Conservation Trust Funds, Biomes, Mangroves, Sea Grasses, Coral Reefs, Temperate Forests, Tropical Rain Forests, Grasslands, Wetlands, Desert, International Waters, Marine Protected Area, Learning, SIDS : Small Island Dev States, Climate Change, Forest, Congo, Amazon, Climate Change Adaptation, Community-based adaptation, Livelihoods, Small Island Developing States, Ecosystem-based Adaptation, Climate resilience, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Ecosystem Approach, Sustainable Forest, Sustainable Pasture Management, Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands, Community-Based Natural Resource Management, Influencing models, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Demonstrate innovative approache, Stakeholders, Private Sector, SMEs, Individuals/Entrepreneurs, Type of Engagement, Partnership, Participation, Information Dissemination, Civil Society, Community Based Organization, Non-Governmental Organization, Academia, Communications, Awareness Raising, Strategic Communications, Education, Behavior change, Public Campaigns, Indigenous Peoples, Beneficiaries, Local Communities, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Women groups, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Gender-sensitive indicators, Gender results areas, Capacity Development, Access and control over natural resources, Participation and leadership, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration, Integrated Programs, Landscape Restoration, Commodity Supply Chains, High Carbon Stocks Forests, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Enabling Activities, Adaptive management, Indicators to measure change, Theory of change, Knowledge Exchange, Knowledge Generation, Professional Development, Training, Workshop, Twinning, Conference, Field Visit, Peer-to-Peer, South-South

Type of Trust Fund GET	Project Duration (Months) 60
GEF Project Grant: (a) 18,048,625.00	GEF Project Non-Grant: (b) 0.00

Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c) 1,624,375.00	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d) 0.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d) 19,673,000.00	Total Co-financing 24,100,000.00
PPG Amount: (e) 300,000.00	PPG Agency Fee(s): (f) 27,000.00
PPG total amount: (e+f) 327,000.00	Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f) 20,000,000.00
Project Tags CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No Competitive Window: No	

Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, including: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? (ii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative, how will this be achieved? iii), how will this be achieved (approach to deliver on objectives), and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. The purpose of the summary is to provide a short, coherent summary for readers. The explanation and justification of the project should be in section B “project description”.(max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

The project will promote active leadership of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including those led by women, youth and Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), for them to address critical threats to biodiversity and ecosystems and improve human wellbeing in innovative and practical ways through a nature-based and socially inclusive grantmaking approach, implemented in four biodiversity hotspots. It will support CSO projects that focus on community-based management of threatened ecosystems and species and on sustainable natural resource management, and will tie grant making to tailored capacity building of CSOs in terms of M&E, safeguards, social inclusion, gender, communication and financial management, as well as organizational development, thereby contributing to strengthening civil society in the conservation space, globally. The project will capitalize on and further consolidate CEPF’s results in the biodiversity hotspots. In practical terms, Regional Implementation Teams (RIT), often larger national or regional NGOs or CSOs, will implement the biodiversity conservation investment strategies set out in the hotspots’ Ecosystem Profiles under the CEPF Secretariat’s supervision, whilst benefiting from targeted support and capacity building from the CEPF Secretariat. The project places a strong emphasis on peer-to-peer networking and learning, both across RITs as well as across supported CSOs in the same geographical region. It will deliver Global Environmental Benefits through improved management of 389,000 ha of terrestrial and 11,000 ha of marine protected areas, restoring of 67,930 ha of land and ecosystems, and bringing 1,080,000 ha of terrestrial landscapes and 35,000 ha of marine habitats under improved practices.

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

To support and foster the effective leadership of CSOs in biodiversity conservation and management in globally important biodiversity hotspots

Project Components

Component 1: Establishing and enabling Regional Implementation Teams in each of the four biodiversity hotspots

Component Type	Trust Fund

Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
2,776,972.00	3,708,037.00

Outcome:

Outcome 1.1. Regional Implementation Teams implement the biodiversity conservation investment strategies set out in the hotspots' Ecosystem Profiles under the CEPF Secretariat's supervision

Output:

)utput 1.1.1.
:ITs are trained in GEF and CEPF policies

)utput 1.1.2. RITs make progress with their own organizational development

Output 1.1.3. RITs engage in networking and cross-learning

Component 2: Grant making

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
11,829,471.00	15,795,677.00

Outcome:

Outcome 2.1. CSOs conserve globally significant biodiversity through the inclusive projects they design and implement

Output:

)utput 2.1.1. CSOs receive technical assistance so they can develop proposals that focus on priorities identified in the hotspot :cosystem Profile

)utput 2.1.2. Small grant projects designed by CSOs are granted and implemented

Output 2.1.3. Invited CSOs design and implement large grant projects

Component 3: Organizational development and mentoring for larger scale impact

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
1,884,470.00	2,516,298.00

Outcome:

Outcome 3.1. Grantees upscale their biodiversity conservation impact after targeted organisational development support

Output:

Output 3.1.1
Selected CSOs linked to suitable coach, mentor or partner organizations for long-term organizational development

Output 3.1.2

CSOs report improvements towards their self-defined organizational development goals

Component 4: Knowledge management and tools for increasing synergies, upscaling and replication

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
354,471.00	473,321.00

Outcome:

Outcome 4.1. Knowledge created and lessons learned in the context of the project are managed and shared in an inclusive way

Output:

Output 4.1.1. Knowledge is shared in existing regional civil society networks and platforms in an inclusive way

Output 4.1.2. Synergies with the GEF IPs and SGP are explored and leveraged as are successful approaches to common and specific challenges in SIDS and LDCs

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
343,783.00	459,047.00

Outcome:

Outcome 5.1

A gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework is established and operational, and M&E activities are conducted

Output:

Output 5.1.1. A project M&E framework that incorporates gender-disaggregated data and gender-specific indicators is established

Output 5.1.2. Periodic M&E reports with gender-disaggregated data generated and submitted to CI-GEF on a regular basis

Output 5.1.3. Mid-term Review (MTR) and Terminal Evaluation (TE) executed

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
Component 1: Establishing and enabling Regional Implementation Teams in each of the four biodiversity hotspots	2,776,972.00	3,708,037.00
Component 2: Grant making	11,829,471.00	15,795,677.00
Component 3: Organizational development and mentoring for larger scale impact	1,884,470.00	2,516,298.00
Component 4: Knowledge management and tools for increasing synergies, upscaling and replication	354,471.00	473,321.00
M&E	343,783.00	459,047.00
Subtotal	**17,189,167.00**	**22,952,380.00**
Project Management Cost	859,458.00	1,147,620.00
Total Project Cost ($)	**18,048,625.00**	**24,100,000.00**

Please provide justification

PROJECT OUTLINE

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

Briefly describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Problem statement

The intertwinement of biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, and other problems create complex and escalating challenges, both globally as well as locally[1]. The importance of ecosystems and their services for planetary and human health and wellbeing is widely accepted[2] but, despite their ecological importance, the world's biodiversity hotspots face severe threats from habitat loss, invasive species, overexploitation and climate change. In turn, overuse of natural resources, combined with climate-related disruptions, can lead to conflicts and social instability.

Rural communities relying on local natural resources for their livelihoods bear the brunt of the impacts of these global problems. Women, youth, IPLCs and minority groups in these communities are disproportionately affected[3], as they often have limited rights, powers and possibilities in terms of ownership, access, and use of natural resources or assets. They have

limited access to land and credit, and they are often excluded from decision-making processes related to environmental management. Women often also have limited access to education. Combined with typically being responsible for securing food, water and firewood for their families, women are hence more likely to rely on natural resources for their livelihoods. This dependence makes them highly exposed and vulnerable to ecosystem degradation.

IPLCs are similarly disproportionately affected, due to their deep connection to nature and reliance on natural resources for their livelihoods and cultural practices.[4] They often experience negative impacts on their health, food security, and cultural identity as a result of environmental degradation. Deforestation and land-use changes disrupt ecosystems, reduce biodiversity, and threaten the livelihoods of IPLCs that depend on forests for food, medicine, and other resources. IPLCs are often exposed to higher levels of pollution, due to the siting of polluting industries in their territories or the degradation of their traditional lands and waterways. The decline of natural resources and ecosystems impacts traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering practices, which are crucial for the survival and cultural identity of many of these communities.

CSOs working in and with local communities and marginalized groups therein are well placed to address environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. Rooted in local realities and identities, they have first-hand knowledge of the pressures and needs of their communities, and the challenges they face in managing their ecosystems sustainably.[5] In addition, CSOs led by women, youth, or IPLCs are often well placed to come up with local solutions to these problems due to their higher degree of experiencing them as described above.

The positive impact of grassroot civil society-led action is evidenced by the significant contribution to Global Environmental Benefits and the achievement of SDGs through the seven operational phases of the GEF Small Grants Programme. Similarly, the combined effort of 3,379 civil-society-led projects in 112 countries and territories within 25 global biodiversity hotspots under CEPF has led to 60 million hectares of Key Biodiversity Areas been brought under strengthened management, as well as the creation of 17.3 million hectares of protected areas since its start in 2001.[6]

Civil society, despite its potential to contribute significantly to national targets under Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), remains under-utilized, under-valued and under-financed in many countries. Moreover, while some donors are committed to support civil society, governments still receive the majority of environment-related aid. In fact, civil society remains the least funded sector in this respect.

On the other hand, the under-utilization, under-valuing and under-financing of CSOs is thought to be partially due to their limited organizational, operational, and financial absorption capacities. They also face substantial political barriers to funding as they often address marginalized problems or at the very least, not prioritized by national governments.

The proposed project aims to address the challenges faced by civil society actors in the conservation space, in selected biodiversity hotspots.

Description of potential target hotspots

The project will be located in four biodiversity hotspots: one in each of Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa/Europe and Central Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific. A final selection of geographies will be made at the beginning of the PPG phase, based on consultations with national stakeholders. Once the geographies are selected, a signed Letter of Endorsement from the GEF Operation Focal Point will be obtained during the PPG phase and prior to the project endorsement. Candidates include the Cerrado, East Melanesian Islands, Guinean Forests of West Africa, and Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspots, where CEPF has supported civil society in conserving globally threatened species and their habitats since 2016, 2013, 2001 and 2012, respectively. During this period, CEPF has provided capacity-building support and $62 million in grants to civil society organizations in these four hotspots. A new five-year phase of CEPF investment in each of the first three hotspots is due to begin in 2026. A new investment phase started in the Mediterranean Basin in 2025.

Cerrado Hotspot

The Cerrado is a large savanna biome in South America, covering over 2 million km² and described as one of the world's most **biologically diverse savanna ecosystems**. It contains more than 14,000 plant species (roughly one-third of which are endemic) and over 2,300 vertebrate species. The hotspot is a mosaic of vegetation types, where ecological connectivity and landscape-scale processes are critical to maintaining biodiversity and endemism. In addition to its global biodiversity value, the Cerrado plays a strategic role in regulating water and climate systems, including sustaining the headwaters of major South American rivers and storing substantial carbon in vegetation and soils. The hotspot also carries a high conservation burden, with recent assessments indicating 1,444 nationally threatened species and 485 globally threatened species associated with the biome.[7],[8] At the same time, biodiversity inventories remain incomplete; a single survey period (1998–2008) identified 347

newly described vertebrate species in the Cerrado, indicating ongoing discovery and knowledge gaps for conservation planning.[9]

The **conservation and natural resource management (NRM) context** is characterized by converging pressures, with deforestation and land conversion identified as the most severe and pervasive threats, driven primarily by agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, and associated changes in fire regimes. Long-term monitoring based on MapBiomas analyses indicates the Cerrado lost 40.5 million hectares of native vegetation between 1985 and 2024.[10] Despite their importance, protected areas cover only about 8.3% of the Cerrado, or only about 6.5% when areas not covered by native vegetation are excluded.[11] Fire is increasingly destabilizing, interacting with vegetation loss, altered climate conditions, and land management practices that accelerate degradation. Recent monitoring indicates that annual deforestation in 2025 still exceeds 700,000 hectares, underscoring the urgency of addressing conversion pressures alongside fire and climate risks. Additional compounding pressures include agrochemical pollution, water scarcity, and social conflict, particularly in intensively farmed and frontier regions. Mining, large-scale infrastructure, and climate change are emerging drivers that amplify existing threats, with climate analyses indicating ongoing warming and increasing rainfall variability.[12]

These pressures interact with **governance and tenure challenges that constrain effective conservation**. Specifically, land-use pressures in the Cerrado are compounded by tenure insecurity, contested claims, and land speculation, which can undermine conservation planning and on-the-ground compliance. In 2023, the Pastoral Land Commission recorded 1,267 land conflicts, most occurring in the Cerrado, linked to agrarian expansion and illegal land grabbing ("grilagem"). Irregular land titles and overlapping claims remain persistent constraints, as does incomplete land cadaster coverage in parts of the hotspot.[13]

Gender inequalities in natural resource management are shaped by broader structural disparities in environmental governance and socio-economic systems in the hotspot, where women (especially rural, traditional, indigenous and quilombola women) often have limited access to land, decision-making authority and economic benefits from biodiversity and ecosystem services compared with men. A CEPAL-supported analysis on gender and sustainability[14] emphasized that environmental and climate challenges deepen existing gender inequalities, as women tend to have less income, time and access to tools to cope with climate impacts and ecological degradation, directly affecting how they participate in natural resource governance and benefit from conservation investments.

Civil society engagement in the Cerrado is substantial, with long-standing networks and social movements that link biodiversity conservation to territorial rights, livelihoods, and socio-biodiversity value chains. A central actor is Rede Cerrado, which reports mobilizing more than 300 organizations across the biome and operating as a platform for coordination, advocacy, and collective action.[15] In addition, civil society initiatives such as *Caminhos da Onça* (Paths of the Jaguar)[16] exemplify how women-led grassroots groups are working at the intersection of biodiversity protection, ecological restoration and community sustainable livelihoods in the Cerrado, combining traditional ecological knowledge with territorial governance and climate-resilient restoration practices. Capacity, however, is uneven: while there are experienced intermediary NGOs, thematic networks, and advocacy coalitions, many grassroots and territorially based organizations face constraints in securing stable financing, complying with requirements, staffing with technical expertise, and maintaining sustained access to decision-making spaces (particularly in remote frontier zones and conflict-affected areas).

East Melanesian Islands Hotspot

The East Melanesian Islands hotspot comprises the island nations of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and the island region of Papua New Guinea (Bougainville, East New Britain, Manus, New Ireland, and West New Britain). An estimated 2.6 million people live in the hotspot, roughly 90% of whom live in rural areas and rely largely on subsistence-based livelihoods, with agriculture and fisheries central to livelihoods.[17] All countries are SIDS; the Solomon Islands is an LDC. Geographic isolation and island complexity have driven **exceptionally high endemism across the islands**, including an estimated 3,000 endemic vascular plant species and high levels of vertebrate endemism. The hotspot also includes globally significant nearshore marine ecosystems, with strong ridge-to-reef connectivity shaping biodiversity patterns and ecosystem services important for local livelihoods and food security.[18] In addition to biological richness, the hotspot has exceptional cultural and linguistic diversity; language loss is linked to the erosion of traditional knowledge and practices essential to how communities manage land and sea.[19]

The **conservation and NRM context** is characterized by severe and interacting pressures on forests, freshwater systems, and ridge-to-reef connectivity. Accelerating habitat loss is driven primarily by commercial logging and mining, expansion

of subsistence and plantation agriculture**,** population growth, and the impacts of climate change and variability. Invasive species are an additional driver of biodiversity loss in island ecosystems, and deforestation and land conversion can increase erosion and sediment runoff, degrading downstream coastal and marine habitats. Conventional protected area coverage remains limited in the hotspot, where most land and natural resources are under customary ownership.[20]

Climate change further amplifies these pressures. More intense rainfall is projected to increase flooding, erosion, and sediment runoff, with knock-on impacts from upland catchments to nearshore ecosystems. ENSO-related droughts increase water stress and fire risk, heightening vulnerability for endemic species with narrow ecological tolerances. Sea-level rise is already affecting coastal communities and ecosystems; observed rates are reported at 8–10 mm per year, with coastal and nearshore systems (including mangroves, seagrass beds, and low-lying islands) identified as particularly vulnerable, alongside increasing risks of extreme events and marine heat stress affecting coral reefs.[21]

Governance and tenure conditions strongly shape how conservation can be implemented. More than 90% of the hotspot's land and natural resources are under customary ownership, and customary systems are recognized in national constitutions, making the participation and consent of customary land and sea owners central to effective conservation.[22] Customary tenure predominates throughout the hotspot[23,24,25]. Traditional ecological knowledge remains an important foundation for local resource governance and climate resilience, including customary rules such as restricted areas and seasonal harvesting norms that can support conservation outcomes when aligned with community priorities and equitable[26] [27]

Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) are working to advance **gender equality and women's empowerment**. They increasingly engage on normative platforms (CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the CSW) and have also made commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment through the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and the Pacific Platform for Action for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (2018 – 2030).[28] Violence against women remains worryingly high however in the Pacific, with almost 29 per cent of women suffering from physical or sexual violence at the hands of their intimate partner in the past 12 months. It is the case in the East Melanesian Islands, where national sources[29] document high prevalence of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the three countries.

Across the East Melanesian Islands, official data[30] consistently show that **gender inequalities in natural resource management** are rooted in unequal access to land, decision-making, and benefits, despite women's central roles in subsistence production and resource use. More precisely, gender inequalities in natural resource governance are deeply rooted in male-dominated customary land tenure systems that limit women's formal decision-making power over land, forests, fisheries, and extractive resources. Although women play substantial roles in agriculture and resource-dependent livelihoods and rely heavily on natural resources for food security and income, their access to land rights, compensation, and governance structures is often mediated through male relatives or customary authorities. This exclusion contributes not only to inequitable benefit-sharing but also to broader social grievances and weakened environmental outcomes, as women's limited voice in land-use, conservation, climate, and disaster risk governance undermines both gender equality and sustainable resource management across the hotspot countries. **Civil society engagement** is essential but operates under significant constraints. Environmental civil society is characterized by a loose network of formal and informal actors dominated by small, locally based and community-based organizations, clustered around a smaller number of national and international NGOs. Many groups face high transaction costs due to dispersed geographies, transport constraints, and limited connectivity, as well as capacity constraints, including limited technical staffing, high turnover, and weaknesses in financial management and compliance systems.[31]

Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot

The Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot spans 617,719 km² across the Upper Guinean forests, (Guinea through Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and marginally Benin) to the Lower Guinean forests, (southern Nigeria into southwestern Cameroon, plus São Tomé and Príncipe and the Equatorial Guinean islands of Bioko and Annobón). **The hotspot supports exceptionally high biodiversity**, including more than 9,000 vascular plant species, with around 20% thought to be endemic, and includes globally important sites for forest-dependent species and range-restricted endemics. Beyond biodiversity, these forests provide ecosystem services that are central to local livelihoods and national economies, including provisioning and regulating services (e.g., timber and non-timber forest products, fuel, and climate regulation through carbon storage and sequestration). They also support a large population living in and around hotspot landscapes, which, in turn, rely indirectly on natural ecosystem services.[32]

A significant share of hotspot countries faces structural development constraints that affect the feasibility of sustained conservation investment and enforcement. Regional dynamics described in recent analyses include legacies of unrest and epidemics, high poverty, and extractive industry histories (mining, oil and gas, forestry) that have generated pressures while not necessarily building social capital; factors that can shape the feasibility and durability of conservation action.[33] Five of the hotspot's 11 countries (Benin, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Togo) are currently designated by the United Nations as LDCs (based on the UN list dated December 2024), reflecting persistent constraints in productive capacity and fiscal space.[34] The hotspot also includes São Tomé and Príncipe, which is recognized internationally as a SIDS[35] and (like other SIDS) faces well-documented structural vulnerabilities linked to small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export bases, and exposure to shocks. [36] São Tomé and Príncipe graduated from LDC status on 13 December 2024, but its SIDS-related vulnerabilities remain relevant for conservation planning and delivery.[37]

The conservation and NRM context is shaped by interacting land-use and extraction pressures. Conversion and degradation of forests are strongly linked to the expansion of commodity and subsistence agriculture. Cocoa is a major driver of forest loss in parts of the hotspot**.** In parallel, the expansion of oil palm and rubber plantations is increasing pressure on remaining forests in parts of the hotspot. Large land concessions for plantations have repeatedly led to disputes with local land users over land rights, consultation, and compensation.[38] These pressures are compounded by **governance and tenure challenges**. In several cases, plantation development has triggered prolonged community resistance and legal or administrative challenges and sustained civil society engagement has sometimes contributed to delays, restrictions, or changes in planned conversion. [39]

Additional drivers include pollution and hydrological impacts associated with land conversion. Agricultural runoff (including agrochemical use in plantation contexts) and erosion linked to catchment deforestation are identified as threats to freshwater habitats, with sedimentation impacts noted as particularly acute in certain systems (e.g. volcanic crater lakes). In island and coastal-linked landscapes, invasive species and land-cover change can interact to degrade habitats and ecosystem functions, including through introduced species that become invasive and outcompete native vegetation. Climate change is an amplifying risk multiplier. Observed increases in extreme heat events and projections of a ~1.5°C to 3°C rise in mean annual temperature between 2020 and 2050 across the hotspot are expected to increase ecosystem stress; rainfall projections are characterized by higher uncertainty, but with concern around variability; conditions that can intensify impacts and interact with land-use drivers. [40]

Gender inequality remains a significant structural issue in the geographies covered by the hotspot, particularly in rural areas where livelihoods depend heavily on land, forests, fisheries, and other natural resources. Women play central roles in smallholder agriculture, agroforestry, fuelwood collection, water management, fish processing, and the harvesting of non-timber forest products, yet they often lack secure land tenure, equal inheritance rights, access to credit, agricultural extension services, and representation in decision-making bodies related to natural resource governance. Customary land systems (prevalent across much of West and Central Africa) tend to favor male ownership and authority, limiting women's participation in forest management committees, protected area governance, and community-based conservation structures. While national gender policies and international commitments (e.g., CEDAW, SDGs) have prompted legal reforms and gender mainstreaming in environmental and climate strategies, implementation gaps remain substantial. Women are also disproportionately affected by biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, and climate change, yet their traditional ecological knowledge and leadership are increasingly recognized as critical to sustainable resource management and community resilience.

Although all countries have national gender policies, as well as National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), these are often weakly implemented or insufficiently gender responsive. Differences lie mainly in the extent of legal reform and policy integration, with some countries showing progressive recent land and gender legislation, and more explicit efforts to integrate gender into biodiversity and land governance frameworks, while others have enabling legal frameworks but low female land ownership in practice. Overall, while structural barriers are widespread, countries differ in how far reforms have translated into meaningful participation and tenure security for women in natural resource management. **Civil society engagement in biodiversity and natural resource management** is present across hotspot countries, but capacity and enabling conditions vary substantially. Civil society is active across all countries, and an indicative scale has been documented, alongside recurring needs related to organizational development, coordination, and sustained capacity support. Constraints include uneven technical and fiduciary capacity among locally rooted organizations, limited access to stable funding, and political and operational risks in some contexts (including civic space pressures in parts of the region).

Women's civil society organizations emerge as active and recognized actors in national policy dialogues in the hotspot, including through the Beijing+30 reporting processes, which reflect structured consultation mechanisms involving government institutions, gender-focused agencies, and development partners. The ecosystem of women's organizations is diverse and networked, comprising grassroots associations (e.g., women farmers' groups), national federations and umbrella coalitions, youth and professional organizations, and, in some cases, links to regional networks. These organizations play important roles in advocacy, monitoring gender equality commitments, and community-level land governance and dispute resolution. At the same time, common challenges persist across contexts, including fragmentation, limited reach in rural areas, funding constraints, and disparities in organizational capacity between urban and rural constituencies, which affect the depth and sustainability of their engagement in policy and natural resource governance processes.

Mediterranean Basin Hotspot

The Mediterranean Basin is the **second-largest biodiversity hotspot globally** and the largest of the world's five Mediterranean-climate regions. It covers approximately 2,085,292 km², extending from Portugal to Jordan and from northern Italy to Tunisia, and includes around 5,000 islands across the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic island groups, such as the Canary Islands, Madeira, the Azores, and Cabo Verde.[41] The hotspot's biodiversity is sustained by a mosaic of terrestrial, freshwater, and coastal–marine ecosystems, including "cultural landscapes" shaped by long-term land use. These ecosystems provide services that are central to livelihoods and economies: food and materials, freshwater regulation, and hazard buffering against flooding, sea-level rise, and erosion. The region is also a globally recognized **climate hotspot**. Recent scientific assessments indicate that the Mediterranean is warming faster than the global average, thereby increasing stress on ecosystems already under pressure.[42]

The conservation and NRM context is shaped by interacting pressures on land, freshwater, and coastal systems. Key drivers include habitat fragmentation and loss linked to land-use change and coastal development, such as tourism-driven urban sprawl and resort/infrastructure expansion. This is further exacerbated by the overexploitation of wild species and natural resources, physical modification of rivers, high water withdrawals, multiple forms of pollution (e.g., plastic leakage and sewage), and the spread of invasive non-native species. Water stress is a persistent constraint across much of the region, affecting both people and biodiversity. Mediterranean countries already allocate a large share of water supply to irrigation (approximately 50–90%), and irrigation demand is projected to increase further as temperatures rise and drought risk intensifies, underscoring the importance of catchment-scale governance and enforcement. [43]

Climate change amplifies these pressures through warming and more frequent/intense droughts and heat extremes. Recent regional assessments highlight increasing risks for ecosystems and societies, and note that some climate responses, if poorly planned or sited, can create additional biodiversity pressure (e.g., some forms of afforestation, bioenergy, renewable energy siting, and hydropower).[44]

Gender issues vary across the countries in the hotspot. Across all geographies covered in the hotspot, a common pattern is the gap between formal gender equality commitments and persistent structural inequalities in land ownership, water access, and participation in natural resources and biodiversity governance. Women are heavily involved in agriculture and rural livelihoods everywhere, yet land tenure and decision-making bodies in forest, water, and environmental institutions remain male-dominated. Climate change, water scarcity (especially in North Africa and the Levant), and rural economic pressures further intensify gendered vulnerabilities. Differences are mainly subregional: Western Balkan countries tend to have stronger gender-equal legal frameworks aligned with EU standards but face entrenched patriarchal practices in implementation; North African countries show more pronounced inheritance- and land-related disparities, though Morocco has advanced reforms; and Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Libya face added constraints from water stress, political instability, or conflict, which limit progress in gender-responsive environmental governance.

Civil society engagement is substantial but uneven across the hotspot, reflecting wide variation in political context, civic space, and institutional maturity. A recurring constraint is that resources remain limited for parts of the conservation community (notably plant conservation in some contexts), and many local organizations face gaps that limit sustained action and scaling. This supports a continued focus on capacity strengthening, paired with grantmaking (technical support, compliance, fiduciary strengthening, and learning), tailored to diverse operating environments across the region.[45]

Preferred solution and baseline situation

At a global level, habitat protection and biodiversity conservation are of paramount importance for enabling green and blue economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for increasing the resilience of natural capital and the economic sectors it supports to combat the impacts of climate change. Engaging with and strengthening local CSOs are critical to the

sustainability of environmental and conservation outcomes, because CSOs offer innovative ideas and practical solutions to solving local challenges. Grassroot CSOs often have the trust of local communities and hence the leverage to foster behavioural change.

One of the most effective mechanisms to strengthen and engage CSOs in responding to global environmental challenges over the past quarter century has been the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF): a joint initiative of the GEF and other global donors: l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Conservation International (CI), the European Union, Fondation Franklinia, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Government of Canada, the Government of Japan, the Nature Conservancy and the World Bank. CI administers the Fund on behalf of the global donors. CEPF provides strategic assistance to NGOs, community groups and other civil society partners to help safeguard Earth's biodiversity hotspots: the biologically richest yet most threatened ecosystems. The fundamental goal of CEPF is to strengthen civil society's involvement and effectiveness in the conservation and management of globally important biodiversity.

Since its creation, CEPF has awarded grants totaling $329 million to 2,863 civil society partners in 112 countries and territories. These grants have leveraged a further $497 million in cofinancing. Through these grants, 60 million hectares within Key Biodiversity Areas have received strengthened protection and management, through protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and 6,453 IPLCs have received benefits, including increased income, improved food security, and enhanced and more resilient delivery of ecosystem services. Other impacts include strengthened management of biodiversity within 12.8 million hectares of production landscapes, conservation action for 1,376 globally threatened species, provision of structured training to more than 270,000 people, more than 135,000 people with cash-benefits derived from livelihood programs and conservation-related employment, and 274 companies adopting biodiversity-friendly practices.

By adopting a cost-efficient business model that emphasizes working through IPLCs, CEPF has consistently over-performed in terms of impact per unit of investment. For example, CEPF has supported the creation of 17.3 million hectares of new protected areas since 2000, accounting for around 4% of the total global expansion of terrestrial protected areas over that period, yet this was achieved with less than 0.25% of annual bilateral biodiversity-related Official Development Assistance from OECD DAC members.

CEPF grants are paired with support to CSOs in terms of networking, technical capacity building and organizational development. This ensures that the community of CSOs working on environmental challenges in the biodiversity hotspots becomes more resilient and better able to maintain and build upon the results of CEPF-supported grants. Seventy-nine percent of local CSO partners report an increase in organizational capacity over the period of CEPF support. CEPF pays particular attention to gender, in line with the fund's gender policy, with 71 percent of grantees reporting increased understanding of and commitment to gender issues. CEPF also encourages its grantees to create and support partnerships and networks. These alliances are especially important as they can make a huge difference in assuring the sustainability of conservation outcomes. They can secure broad support for conservation actions, promote inclusion among diverse stakeholders, and increase the likelihood that conservation efforts and activities will be sustainable. Since inception, CEPF has supported the creation of 786 networks and partnerships and strengthening of a further 318 existing networks.

The preferred solution for the four example hotspots that could be covered by the proposed project contains the following elements in a strategy to support CSO-led environmental action:

> The practical constraints faced by CBOs in terms of organizational management and development, coordination, and sustained capacity, combined with the overall limited access to resources, speaks for combining the provision of grants with organizational development for strengthening and engaging CSOs in conservation and environmental protection.
>
> Engaging with women's, youth and IPLCs organizations is crucial to strengthen their unique capacities to address the intersection of challenges faced by them.
>
> The highly variable socio-economic, political and environmental contexts of the areas in which conservation CSOs operate calls for locally grounded delivery support and networking, enabling locally legitimate action at priority sites while improving organizations' and networks' ability to deliver, learn, and sustain results over time.[46]
>
> To obtain sustained, transformational change in the target countries, CSO grant making should be tied to targeted organisational development support, so that CSOs can measure and increase their impact and influence in national (conservation) fora.

To assist grantee CSOs better, larger national CSOs or NGOs that can translate CEPF's global strategy into credible, context specific support on the ground should be supported

To address conservation issues that no one actor can address in isolation, catalysing collaborative action would be highly beneficial. Networks and partnerships created or supported by CEPF grantees for example, have been shown to make a huge difference in assuring the sustainability of conservation outcomes, by securing broad support for conservation actions, promoting inclusion among diverse stakeholders, and increasing the likelihood that conservation efforts and activities will be socially inclusive and financially sustainable.

The baseline situation in the example hotspots, in terms of CEPF investments and engagement, can be summarized as follows:

CEPF has an established operational platform in the **Cerrado** and is positioned to support a new phase of civil society-led conservation through demand-driven grantmaking anchored in an updated investment strategy and coordinated through an RIT. CEPF documentation for the Cerrado investment reports an allocation of approximately US$8 million for the first phase, delivered through 65 grants to a predominantly local partner portfolio, and notes the RIT's role in coordinating grantmaking and supporting implementation across priority geographies and themes.[47] These results were built upon by a subsequent investment of $4 million, through 35 grants, all to local organizations. The CEPF RIT in the Cerrado is the Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (IEB), which has an important role in coordinating the portfolio, supporting grantees, and strengthening delivery capacity.[48] In parallel, CEPF has prepared for the next phase of grant making by updating the Cerrado Ecosystem Profile to identify and prioritize civil society conservation actions for a five-year investment period.

There is a strong case for investment in the **East Melanesian Islands Hotspot,** given the high number of threatened and endemic species and the limited availability of other conservation funding. The countries in the hotspot have relatively few other sources of support for conservation, in part due to remoteness and the high costs of implementation across dispersed islands.[49] CEPF has an established delivery platform in the hotspot: the first investment phase (2013–2022) provided 116 grants totaling US$8.5 million to 65 organizations, supporting improved management of priority sites and targeted actions for globally threatened species.[50] This platform supported and strengthened organizational capacity and networks across all three countries, thereby amplifying locally led action at priority sites. A second phase of investment is planned. To this end, CEPF has updated the East Melanesian Islands Ecosystem Profile, and issued a call for expression of interests for organizations to act as the RIT.

In the **Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot**, CEPF has an established platform for investment and a current strategy for scaling support. CEPF has made prior investments of approximately US$6.0 million (2001–2006)**,** US$1.9 million (2008–2012)**,** US$10.0 million (2016–2022), and US$800,000 (2024–2025).[51] A new, five-year phase of investment will begin in 2026, guided by an updated Ecosystem Profile for the Guinean Forests of West Africa. A Rocha Ghana, in consortium with Ajemalebu Self Help (AJESH) and Biopolis-CIBIO, will act as the RIT for the hotspot. This provides a ready mechanism to implement the investment strategy across biological boundaries, channel small and medium grants to national and local CSOs, and pair grantmaking with structured organizational development and learning to support delivery at the regional scale.[52]

CEPF readiness in the **Mediterranean Basin Hotspot** is supported by an established regional platform and a documented track record of grantmaking across diverse contexts. Since 2012, CEPF has operated two investment phases in the hotspot: the first phase (2012–2017) awarded 108 grants totaling US$11 million to organizations in 12 countries, while the second phase (2017–2024, including extensions) awarded a further 170 grants totaling US$13.9 million, with a strong share of funding flowing to local organizations. These investments supported KBA and protected-area management and contribute to gains in civil society capacity, including in settings where access to conservation finance remains limited for domestic actors.[53] The RIT role for the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot is performed by BirdLife International.

Further baseline conditions in the example hotspots are captured in the following table:

Hotspot	Key environmental and social policies, frameworks or initiatives in the hotspot	Sources of investment in nature and biodiversity conservation in the hotspot	Support for CSO environmental action in the hotspot through small grants
Cerrado	Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Cerrado IV (Decree 11 367/2023)	Federal government, including Ministry of	National Environmen t Fund

	National Program for Conversion of Degraded Pastures (PNCPD) Forest Code (Law 12 651/2012), which imposes a legal requirement to establish Permanent Preservation Areas (APPs) and Legal Reserves (LRs) National Policy for Territorial and Environmental Management of Quilombola Territories (PNGTAQ, 2023), which establishes principles for territorial management in indigenous and Quilombola lands National Policy for the Territorial and Environmental Management of Indigenous Lands (PNGATI), Decree No. 7,747/2012, which supports the protection and sustainable management of Indigenous Lands National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (PNPCT), which recognizes territorial and productive rights, including extractivism and socio-biodiversity value chains. Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation and Wildfires in the Cerrado (PPCerrado).	the Environment (MMA) BNDES Florestas initiative of the National Bank for Economic and Social Development Amazon Fund (supported by Norway, Germany, etc.) Multilateral donors (GEF, GCF, CIF, etc.) Bilateral donors (Canada, France, Germany, Norway, UK, etc.)	Casa Socioambiental Fund GEF Small Grants Program Biodiversity Brazilian Fund (FUNBIO) Ecos Fund (ISPN)
East Melanesian Islands	2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent of the Pacific Islands Forum Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas (2026–2030) Environment Act 2000, the Climate Change (Management) Act 2015 and the Protected Areas Act 2024 (PNG) Environment Act 1998 and National Forest Policy 2020 (Solomon Islands) Forestry Act 2001 and Environmental Protection and Conservation Act 2002 (Vanuatu)	National government budgets Multilateral donors (GEF, GCF) Bilateral donors (Australia, EU, Germany, New Zealand)	Kiwa Initiative (EU, France, Australia, New Zealand and Canada) Papua New Guinea Biodiversity Conservation Fund (UNDP) North Efate Conservation Trust Global Greengrants Fund GEF Small Grants Program

Guinean Forests of West Africa	Sacred Forest Law 2012 (Benin) Forestry and Wildlife Law 2024 (Cameroon) Forestry Code 2019 (Côte d'Ivoire) Law on the Use and Management of Forests 1997 (Equatorial Guinea) Forestry and Wildlife Law 2023 (Ghana) Forest Code 1999 (Guinea) National Forestry Reform Law 2006 (Liberia) National Cross-sectoral Forest Policy 2006 (Nigeria) Basic Forest Law 2001 (São Tomé and Príncipe) Revised Forest Policy 2010 (Sierra Leone) Forest Code 2008 (Togo) Gola Forest Transboundary Conservation Plan 2019 (Liberia and Sierra Leone)	National government budgets Multilateral donors (GEF, GCF, IFAD, World Bank) Bilateral donors (EU, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, UK)	Programme de Petites Initiatives (Fondation Hans Wilsdorf) Terrafund (financing mechanism of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative) GEF Small Grants Program
Mediterranean Basin	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) 1995 Specially Protected Areas and Biodiversity Protocol 1995, which provides for designation of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean 2008 Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (under Convention on Migratory Species)	National government budgets Multilateral donors (GEF, GCF, World Bank) Bilateral donors (EU, France, Germany, Spain, Turkey, UK) Philanthropies (Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, Fondation Prince Albert II de Monaco, Fondation Audemars-Watkins)	Donor Initiative for Mediterranean Freshwater Ecosystems MedFund Prespa-Ohrid Nature Trust Programme de Petites Initiatives for Civil Society Organisations in North Africa (FFEM and MAVA) TransCap (IUCN Med)

Barriers to implementing the preferred solution

The ongoing Ecosystem Profile updating processes revealed several barriers faced by the CSOs currently operating in the example target hotspots:

Barrier 1: CSOs have **limited access to funding.** When it is available (e.g., through private donations), it is often limited and insufficient to effectively address larger conservation issues. Moreover, funding tends to be project-based, *ad hoc* and bound within short time frames.

Barrier 2: CSOs typically emerge out of concrete needs in communities and are typically led by community members. They often have **limited organizational capacity**, in particular in the areas of administrative, technical, and financial management. Skills crucial for accessing funding, scaling operations or simply handing larger budgets and transparency requirements are often insufficient. Staff turnover in CSOs is another problem[54].

Barrier 3: Local CSOs have **limited technical skills** in conservation and natural resource management. They are usually aware of the problems to be addressed but lack specific know-how on how to address them.

Barriers 4: Women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities (where present) and minority groups face an intersection of challenges, and their needs are often poorly understood. In some contexts, it is challenging for women and youth to lead organizations openly, since CSOs are typically led by older men. As other issues often are more pressing for women, youth, IP and marginalized groups, CSOs led by them typically focus on development or social issues, rather than environmental or conservation issues. Due to this, women, youth and IP-led CSOs may need specific additional support, compared to men-led CSOs, to be able to apply for grants and contribute to addressing rural and urban environmental challenges.

Barrier 5: Many local organizations face **gaps that limit sustained action and scaling**. CSOs have a limited understanding of and capacity in terms of organizational development, demonstrating impact of their activities and leveraging either political influence or additional funding.

Barrier 6: Many smaller CSOs operate in a highly localized context, forming a loose network of formal and informal actors, clustered around a smaller number of national and international NGOs. Many groups face high transaction costs due to dispersed geographies, transport constraints, and limited connectivity, and this limits **knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning**. In addition, resource-constrained CSOs typically have few resources to spare, beyond dealing with the immediate issue at hand. Limited or missed opportunities for smaller CSOs to become part of a larger network or to form partnerships leads to limited new opportunities, cost sharing and impact. Stronger networking and collaboration are important for reducing duplication, supporting underrepresented voices (including women-led organizations), and enhancing collective influence with government and private-sector actors. [55]

Incremental cost reasoning

In the absence of this project, ecosystem degradation would continue or accelerate and combined with climate risks this would outpace response capacity, especially at the local level. Structural governance and equity constraints in natural resource and ecosystem management and decision making would remain entrenched and civil-society-led delivery of Global Environmental Benefits would stay fragmented and under-resourced. The table below provides a summary of the Incremental Benefits of the project's interventions.

Business as Usual *(without project)*	Incremental Benefits *(with the project – contributions to baseline)*
Ecosystem degradation would accelerate through continued deforestation/land conversion and fire-regime disruption (e.g. Cerrado), ongoing logging/mining-driven habitat loss and ridge-to-reef impacts (e.g. East Melanesia), plantation/commodity expansion and associated forest conversion (e.g. Guinean Forests), and land-use change plus tourism/coastal development and resource overexploitation (e.g. Mediterranean).	**Slower ecosystem degradation via targeted, locally led action:** GEF funding enables *direct grants* to CSOs to implement hotspot ecosystem investment priorities (priority sites/corridors and thematic priorities), so locally legitimate actors can deliver concrete conservation/restoration and sustainable resource management actions that counter land/sea-use conversion pressures.
Climate and water-related risks would exacerbate the challenges and combined they increasingly outpacing local (and national) response capacity.	Funding pairs grants with tailored capacity building (e.g., scenario planning, risk assessment, ecosystem-based approaches) plus iterative learning/feedback, improving civil society's ability to anticipate and adapt to multiple and

	compounding ecosystem stressors (including climate variability and change) rather than reacting ad hoc.
Structural governance and equity constraints would remain entrenched	**More inclusive and effective governance outcomes (gender, youth, IPLCs):** funding operationalizes a strong focus on women, youth (15–35) and Indigenous Peoples and local communities in grant targeting and accompanying support, strengthening leadership and participation of underrepresented groups in conservation delivery and influence.
Civil-society-led delivery would stay fragmented and under-resourced, as limited and short-term funding, organizational/technical capacity gaps, high transaction costs in dispersed geographies, and uneven civic space continue to constrain scaling, coordination, learning, and sustained impact across all four hotspots.	**Reduced fragmentation and stronger CSO performance at scale:** funding strengthens organizational, fiduciary and technical capacity (including mentoring and compliance support), enables networking/cross-learning via Regional Implementation Teams and knowledge platforms, and institutionalizes gender-sensitive M&E—together improving delivery quality, accountability, scaling and collective influence.

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project description

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the PIF guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

The project will engage and support CSOs in four biodiversity hotspots, building on the success, systems and networks established through CEPF's consecutive strategies, programmes and projects in these hotspots, while piloting and testing new approaches informed by its own experience as a grant maker. It will catalyze and mobilize civil society actors and local actions needed to address major drivers of ecosystem degradation and destruction and help deliver multiple benefits across the GEF's thematic dimensions, while promoting sustainable development and improved livelihoods.

The project's **Theory of Change** can be summarized as 'If civil society actors, and in particular women, youth and Indigenous Peoples and local communities, are strengthened and further enabled to take local action against ecosystem degradation, threats to biodiversity and human well-being, through the delivery of targeted grants and accompanying tailored capacity building and knowledge, advocacy and partnership management training and activities, then these actors can become major drivers of and contributors to achieving Global Environmental Benefits'.

The project will support direct access to grants for CSOs for projects that focus on the thematic priorities as set out in each hotspot's ecosystem profile. These grants will reach organizations that are closest to priority places and communities, while structured support (mentoring, fiduciary strengthening, learning exchanges) will improve delivery and accountability over time.

The proposed project will adopt a strong gender, women, youth (15-35 years old) and Indigenous Peoples and local communities focused approach, to ensure those mostly vulnerable have their needs addressed. The fundamental aim is to address major drivers of local ecosystem degradation and threats to biodiversity, address climate change impacts, improve human wellbeing and support and strengthen the agency of civil society in delivering Global Environmental Benefits in an inclusive and equitable way.

The project's **main objective** is to support and foster the effective leadership of CSOs in biodiversity conservation and management in globally important biodiversity hotspots .

To help lower the barriers to civil society-led conservation action and achieve the main objective, the project will implement a mix of interventions that will target: i) the enabling environment at national and local level; ii) the institutional, organizational and technical capacities of CSOs to apply for and obtain grants, manage and document projects successfully, sustain and upscale their actions and impacts; and iii) networking and cross-learning and knowledge exchange to increase momentum, global influence and conservation action at scale.

The project objective (Sphere of Control) will be achieved through **five (5) interlinked outcomes** defined below:

- **OUTCOME 1.1.:** Regional Implementation Teams implement the biodiversity conservation investment strategies set out in the hotspots' Ecosystem Profiles under the CEPF Secretariat's supervision

- **OUTCOME 2.1.:** CSOs conserve globally significant biodiversity through the inclusive projects they design and implement

- **OUTCOME 3.1.:** Grantees upscale their biodiversity conservation impact after targeted organisational development support

- **OUTCOME 4.1.:** Knowledge created and lessons learned in the context of the project are managed and shared in an inclusive way

- **OUTCOME 5.1.:** A gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework is established and operational, and M&E activities are conducted

Subsequently, through both the project and other initiatives, **Medium-Term Outcomes** could be achieved (Sphere of Influence of the project). These Medium-Term Outcomes are defined as:

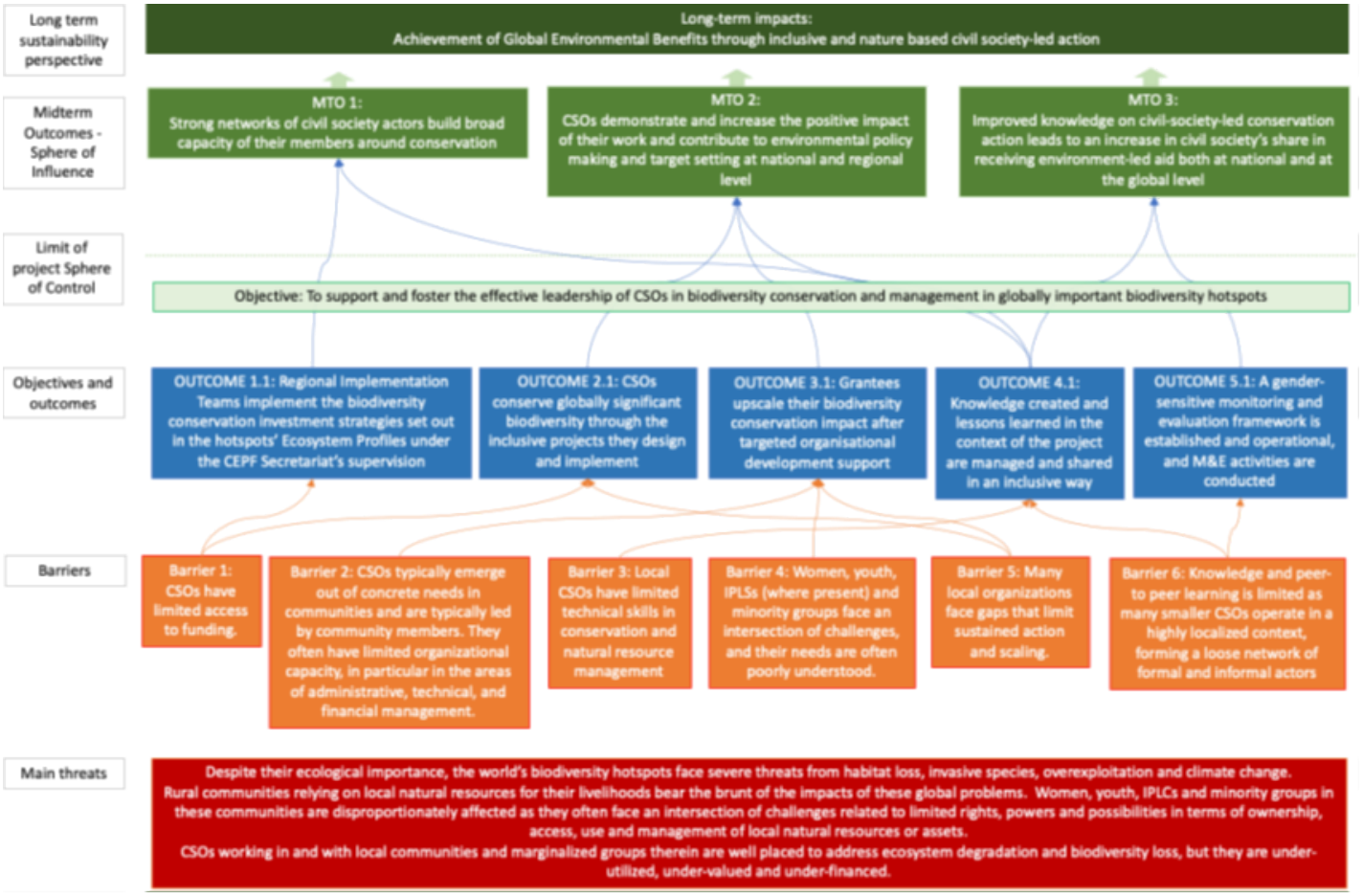
- **MTO 1**: Strong networks of civil society actors build broad capacity of their members around conservation

- **MTO 2:** CSOs demonstrate and increase the positive impact of their work and contribute to environmental policy making and target setting at national and regional level

- **MTO 3:** Improved knowledge on civil-society-led conservation action leads to an increase in civil society's share in receiving environment-led aid both at national and at the global level

To strengthen resilience to future changes in environmental drivers and ensure adaptive management, the project will incorporate a dynamic learning and feedback mechanism throughout its implementation. This includes regular monitoring and evaluation cycles, participatory assessments with grantees and stakeholders, and the integration of lessons learned into ongoing and future activities. Ecosystem Profiles are designed to remain flexible and responsive to emerging threats and opportunities, allowing for the adjustment of priorities and interventions as needed. Capacity-building efforts under Component 2 of the proposed project will emphasize adaptive skills, such as scenario planning, risk assessment and ecosystem-based approaches, to equip civil society actors with the tools to respond to shifting conditions. By fostering networks for peer learning and knowledge exchange, the project will also enable communities to share innovations and adapt successful models across contexts. These measures will ensure that the project not only addresses current challenges but also builds long-term resilience and agility within civil society to navigate future uncertainties.

Figure 1: Schematic overview of the project's Theory of Change



Component 1 will focus on establishing the enabling environment for civil society actors to participate in the proposed project. The Ecosystem Profile and the Regional Implementation Teams (RITs) in each of the four biodiversity hotspots will reflect and enable a demand-driven grant-making approach, adhering to principles of independent civil society leadership and independence in its grant making.

The Ecosystem Profile is an essential tool in CEPF's strategy. It lays out a strategic framework for the implementation of CEPF's grant-making program for the conservation of a hotspot, ensuring that the investment generates the greatest possible impact. It also sets out a broader conservation agenda in the region which aims to encourage more stakeholders to support it. In each hotspot, CEPF works towards an end point at which local civil society graduates from its support with sufficient capacity, access to resources and credibility to respond to future conservation challenges.

In each of the proposed project's four example focus hotspots, the Ecosystem Profile was recently updated through a highly participatory process, involving extensive stakeholder consultations. The exercise aimed to enhance the understanding of the concerns of key stakeholders[56] and to identify key opportunities and gaps for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of the hotspot's species and ecosystems, while providing valuable insights into the current status of civil society organizations in the hotspot. The purpose of the participatory process, usually lasting about one year, is to provide an overview of biodiversity conservation in the hotspot, to analyse priorities for action and to identify ways to strengthen the constituency for conservation in the hotspot.

The methodology for updating a hotspot's Ecosystem Profile typically is structured in three interconnected phases:

1. Baseline Study and Literature Review: Survey of scientific publications, socioeconomic data, and recent conservation results from the last Ecosystem Profile and the Long-Term Vision for the hotspot

2. Stakeholder Consultations and Engagement: Conducting broad and participatory consultations to build consensus on biological and strategic priorities.

3. Prioritization of Conservation Outcomes: Review and validation of KBAs and ecological corridors, integrating ecological and socio-environmental data to guide the investment strategy.

At the moment of writing, updated Ecosystem Profiles exist for the Cerrado and East Melanesian Islands Hotspots. The documents are being finalized, prior to approval by the CEPF Donor Council in the first half of 2026. The updated Ecosystem Profiles for the Guinean Forests of West Africa and Mediterranean Basin Hotspots were approved by the CEPF Donor Council in May 2025 and December 2024, respectively[57].

In each hotspot, CEPF works with a Regional Implementation Team (RIT) to provide local presence and coordination. The RITs can translate CEPF's global strategy into credible, context-specific support on the ground. Because RITs are based in or near the biodiversity hotspot and are composed of conservation organizations active in the region, they provide strategic leadership, direct accompaniment to grantees, local capacity strengthening, and coordination among civil society, donors and other stakeholders. In practice, this makes CEPF's delivery model more accessible, responsive and effective: the RIT helps identify and mentor suitable local actors, align individual grants into a coherent portfolio, and ensure that biodiversity action is locally rooted rather than externally driven.

Over the period of the project, the RITs will organize various trainings and events, to strength the capacity of civil society organizations working on biodiversity conservation and promote exchange of knowledge and good practice. Grantees of the proposed project will be able to take advantage of these activities and be integrated into the regional conservation community in each hotspot (see Component 4). RITs are selected through an open competition, and typically serve for one investment period at a time, with the option of renewal, subject to satisfactory performance, as verified through an independent evaluation. At the time of writing, RITs are in place for the Cerrado, Guinean Forests of West Africa and Mediterranean Basin Hotspots. Selection of the RIT for the East Melanesian Islands Hotspot is ongoing and will be concluded in the first half of 2026.

While some of the RITs have previous experience implementing investment strategies set out in the Ecosystem Profiles, others are new to the scene. RITs, therefore, will receive training on GEF and CEPF guidelines and policies, including gender and safeguard policies, as well as monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements. RITs will also receive training on any related tool used by CEPF (e.g., CEPF's existing online grants management system, ConservationGrants, and its full array of grantmaking tools and templates). Some of the selected RITs have excellent technical skills and capacities but lack knowledge on organisational development. These RITs will receive support from the CEPF Secretariat in organisational development so they can sustain and deliver efficient and effective implementation of the hotspot investment strategy over the project's implementation period. Finally, to further increase RIT capacity and learning, the RITs will benefit from CEPF's regional networks, as well as CEPF's global community of RITs.

Component 1 will be delivered through one outcome and three outputs:

Outcome 1.1. Regional Implementation Teams implement the biodiversity conservation investment strategies set out in the hotspots' Ecosystem Profiles under the CEPF's Secretariat's supervision

- Output 1.1.1. RITs are trained in GEF and CEPF policies

- Output 1.1.2. RITs make progress with their own organizational development

- Output 1.1.3. RITs engage in networking and cross-learning

Indicative activities include:

- Capacity building workshops on GEF and CEPF guidelines, tools, policies, M&E and reporting

- Helpdesk and access to technical backstopping at the CEPF Secretariat

- Assessment of RIT organisation development capacity and targeted capacity building workshops to respond to needs

- RIT staff participating in regional workshops organised by the CEPF Secretariat

Component 2 will focus on the grant-making process itself. Eligible grantees include international and local NGOs, CBOs and women, youth, IPLCs groups and associations, as well as primary producers' organizations and associations. They might also include producer organizations, such as not-for-profit unions and cooperatives. Eligible grantees also include private sector organizations, such as social enterprises, tourism companies, and consulting companies, working on a non-profit

basis. Each grantee will be a legally registered organization, with full accountability for all aspects of programmatic performance, financial management and compliance with environmental and social safeguards. CSOs will be encouraged to design and implement projects in close collaboration with local communities, and public and private sector actors, in line with CEPF's policy on Stakeholder Engagement.

Addressing CEPFs cross-cutting strategic priorities in grant selection, the project aims to dedicate the majority of grants to local organizations (including an estimated 30 women-led and women-founded organizations, IPLCs community organizations and youth organizations, as relevant). Targets for different categories of CSO will be set at the PPG stage; estimations at project level can be set at 100 CSOs receiving grants and 40 grantees having improved organizational capacity through the project. Dedicated calls may be launched for each of the above categories of CSO.

The project will apply and build on key principles established by CEPF with respect to grant making to civil society:

- Capacity-building activities will be integrated into or 'tied to' the grants, and targeted towards the grantee's specific capacity requirements, informed by the results of the civil society organizational capacity tracking tool conducted after the grant has been awarded. Grantees typically will receive training on administrative, technical and financial management, on policy coherence and gender.

- Capacity building will also be provided to interested grantees during the application stage.

- Social inclusion is integrated into all of CEPF's work on conservation and natural resource management. CEPF has developed a Social Sustainability Policy, which ensures that work supported by CEPF is inclusive (of diverse people and groups, especially those who are marginalised or vulnerable), equitable (with a fair sharing of benefits and burdens), respectful of rights (human, customary and legal) and rooted in lived realities (local knowledge, priorities and social structures).

- CEPF also applies an environmental and social management framework that meets the GEF's minimum standards, and has extensive experience working with IPLCs and their organizations. CEPF's investment strategies explicitly prioritize engaging and building the capacity of IPOs, women's groups and youth groups.

- CEPF grant making also integrates gender equality outcomes, recognizing that supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the best way to build a more peaceful, more inclusive and more prosperous world. CEPF has developed a gender policy, as well as tools to help its grantees adopt a gender-responsive approach. These include a gender toolkit and training materials on empowering women in conservation. All of these materials are available in multiple languages. Awareness raising on the tools and policies will be an integral part of the call for proposals. In addition, CEPF and the RIT will provide capacity building in applying the tools.

All CEPF grantees working in areas with Indigenous Peoples and local communities present are required to (i) respect IPLCs' rights, including their rights to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC); (ii) assess, avoid and minimize potential adverse impacts, through a participatory and consultative approach; and (iii) ensure that IPLCs receive culturally appropriate benefits that are negotiated and agreed upon through meaningful consultations.

The grant-making process will go through the following steps:

1. An open call for proposals is announced on CEPF and RIT websites and circulated by newsletters, email, social media, etc. The call identifies geographic priorities (priority sites and corridors), thematic priorities (strategic directions and investment priorities) and target group priorities (women, IPLCs, youth) for grant making. It also identifies the maximum duration of grants.

2. Applicants submit Letters of Inquiry (LOIs). Applicants can apply for a "small grant" of up to US$50,000, contracted and overseen by the RIT, or a "large grant" of greater than US$50,000, contracted and overseen directly by the CEPF Secretariat.

3. LOIs are screened for eligibility and then reviewed by the RIT, expert peer reviewers and (for large grants only) the CEPF Secretariat.

4. Shortlisted applicants may be invited to present their project concepts to a technical review committee (or similar) and respond to questions. The RIT or the CEPF Secretariat ensures that the selection and approval of strategically targeted grants adhere to the principles of objectivity, transparency, responsiveness, and inclusivity.

5. Successful applicants are invited to develop a full proposal (in the case of large grants) or proceed directly to contracting (small grants). Targeted capacity building can be provided to support grantees during the application process.

6. Large grant applicants are invited to attend proposal development workshops ("masterclasses"), where they receive guidance and hands-on support with preparing their full proposals from CEPF and RIT staff.

7. Additional due diligence of successful applicants is carried out, with a particular emphasis on financial management and management of environmental and social risks, which follows CEPF's Environmental and Social Management Framework.

While most grants will be awarded through open, competitive calls, other modalities, such as grants by invitation, are also used, for instance to fill long-standing gaps in a grant portfolio or to respond to an urgent need. The granting process will build on and benefit from CEPF's existing online grants management system, ConservationGrants, and its full array of grant-making tools and templates. Key results include an estimated 40 Key Biodiversity Areas with improved management and an estimate 45 globally threatened species benefiting from conservation actions.

Component 2 will be delivered through one outcome and three outputs:

Outcome 2.1. CSOs conserve globally significant biodiversity through the inclusive projects they design and implement

- Output 2.1.1. CSOs receive technical assistance so they can develop proposals that focus on priorities identified in the hotspot Ecosystem Profile

- Output 2.1.2. Small grant projects designed by CSOs are granted and implemented

- Output 2.1.3. Invited CSOs design and implement large grant projects

Indicative activities include:

- Wide awareness raising campaigns of CEPF and the opportunities it presents for conservation CSOs

- Initial support and capacity building during the application process

- Launching and accompanying specific calls and applying the granting process steps as described above

- Assisting selected grantees to undertake a self-assessment to identify technical and capacity gaps and how the RIT and/or CEPF Secretariat can best support in addressing these

- Conducting trainings and hands-on mentoring in

  - administrative, financial and technical skills

  - financial sustainability strategies

  - gender and social sustainability

- Invited selected CSOs to apply for large grant projects

Component 3 focuses on organizational development for larger-scale impact. CSO grantees typically are very knowledgeable about the conservation of particular species or ecosystems but often lack the systems, structures, and processes to improve their operations for increased success. Under this component, grantees will receive tailored support, focused on strengthening organizational functions such as leadership, structure, policies and practices by developing resources within the organization and creating strategies for better performance. The organizational development activities could include training employees on new skills or technologies, establishing formal management systems and processes, developing communication plans or policies that support collaboration among staff members, or investing in research activities. The CEPF Secretariat will launch calls for technical assistance service providers

to accompany grantees in their organizational capacity growth. In each hotspot, the RIT will act as a clearing house for the third-party delivery of technical assistance (TA).

Component 3 will be delivered through one outcome and two outputs:

Outcome 3.1. Grantees upscale their conservation impact after targeted organisational development support

- Output 3.1.1. Selected CSOs linked to suitable coach, mentor or partner organizations for long-term organizational development

- Output 3.1.2. CSOs report improvements towards their self-defined organizational development goals

Indicative activities include:

- CEPF Secretariat launches calls for TA in CSO organisational development

- TA providers are trained on CEPFs organizational development strategy and the needs of the grantees

- TA providers submit a detailed implementation plan for the CSOs under their responsibility

- RITs monitor the delivery of the TA in their hotspot

Component 4 focuses on knowledge management and tools for increasing synergies, upscaling and replication. Networks and partnerships created or supported by CEPF grantees have been shown to make a huge difference in assuring the sustainability of conservation outcomes, by securing broad support for conservation actions, promoting inclusion among diverse stakeholders, and increasing the likelihood that conservation efforts and activities will be socially inclusive and financially sustainable. As mentioned above, under Component 3, support will be provided for organizational development, engaging the expertise of TA providers with a demonstrated track record of helping local and grassroots organizations to overcome barriers to their institutional development. In addition, CEPF will organise trainings and mentoring programs, as well as workshops and events for grantees in the same geographies, focusing on networks and partnerships

High quality, innovative knowledge products will be produced, in multiple languages and published on the CEPF website. The knowledge products will be promoted among grantees, leading to the uptake of good practices[63]. Areas for increasing awareness, knowledge, capacity and collaboration among grantees, and with decision makers will be identified, so that each consecutive round of granting can encourage scaling-up of innovative solutions through funded initiatives. The knowledge products capturing best practices from the grant portfolio will also be used to facilitate replication by organizations in other countries and contexts[64]. Grantees and other stakeholders will be encouraged to participate in South-South multi-stakeholder platforms at the hotspot level, where exchange, reflection and learning around challenges, limitations, and failures along with good practice, success stories, innovative approaches and opportunities for collaboration can be discussed and identified. The approach can build on practices under existing CI grant making programs, which incorporate platforms that convene stakeholders and partners for practical learning and exchange. For example, the Conservation Stewards Program maintains a global learning network for advancing best practices for community-based conservation.

More widely, the insights gained from the consecutive rounds of granting, will be used to inform and foster wider initiatives that, for example, can influence private sector business practices[65], or influence public policy and global environmental discourse.

The project will actively contribute to knowledge and learning activities at GEF level, including aggregating lessons learned in reporting. The RITs will disseminate information about results, impact, and contributions to return on investment at the hotspot and country level, where possible, and human-centred storytelling will be used to show the impact of GEF-funded activities at the individual level.

The project will also focus on knowledge exchange at a higher level by actively seeking collaboration with the GEF SGP projects. Structural dialogues can be set up to exchange knowledge, understand incentives and pathways to behavioral change that will drive systems change, and facilitate collaboration and scaling up. Furthermore, CEPF will facilitate the knowledge gained through the project, to further work with the GEF to engage civil society in the participating countries in GEF other initiatives under GEF-8, in particular the Integrated Programs on the Amazon, Congo and Critical Forest Biomes, Ecosystem Restoration and Green and Blue Islands.

Example Hotspot	LDC included in the example hotspot	SIDS included in the example hotspot	GEF-8 IPs
Cerrado Hotspot			Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Ecosystem Restoration
East Melanesian Islands Hotspot	Yes	Yes	Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Blue and Green Islands
Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot	Yes	Yes	Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Ecosystem Restoration
Mediterranean Basin Hotspot		Yes	Blue and Green Islands

Component 4 will be delivered through one outcome and two outputs

Outcome 4.1. Knowledge created and lessons learned in the context of the project are managed and shared in an inclusive way

- Output 4.1.1. Knowledge is shared in existing regional civil society networks and platforms in an inclusive way

- Output 4.1.2. Synergies with the GEF IPs and SGP are explored and leveraged as are successful approaches to common and specific challenges in SIDS and LDCs

Indicative activities include:

- Develop a communication strategy for dissemination of project results to key audiences

- Develop knowledge products

- Facilitate collaborative learning among grantees, by sharing the knowledge products and organizing national and regional knowledge exchange events (participatory assessments, peer-to-peer learning)

- Organize trainings, mentoring programs and workshops for grantees in the same geographies, focusing on networks and partnerships

- Identify areas for increasing awareness, knowledge, capacity and collaboration among grantees, and with decision makers, so that consecutive round of granting can encourage scaling-up of innovative solutions through funded initiatives.

- Exchange, reflection and learning around challenges, limitations, and failures along with good practice, success stories, innovative approaches and opportunities through South-South Exchanges at the hotspot level.

- Participate with GEF IP and SGP multistakeholder platforms to exchange knowledge, understand incentives and pathways to behavioural change that will drive systems change, and facilitate collaboration and scale up. Targeted exchanges around specific challenges for SIDS and LDCs to identify opportunities for synergy and share approaches and best practices.

A fifth component will focus on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). A dedicated M&E framework will be developed, and M&E activities will be performed.

The M&E framework will include the following activities:

- Conducting an Inception Workshop and Report

- Establishing an M&E framework to collect evidence on progress towards GEF Core Indicators, including gender disaggregated data on participation of men and women, youth and IPLCs in the program; and Project Results

- Conducting annual field missions with the purpose of verifying the data collected

- Report through the annual GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR) on implementation and disbursement progress, i.e. list of organizations to which grants were awarded, grant amounts, as well as the geographic locations of grant activities and progress of the grantees' initiatives

- Monitoring of Project Safeguards Management Frameworks and Gender Action Plans

- Conducting learning missions

- Conducting the independent Mid-term Review (MTR)

- Conducting the independent Terminal Evaluation (TE)

The M&E framework will be developed by CEPF. It will take point of departure in CEPF's own M&E system, which measures 18 global indicators, but which also allows for incorporation of project specific indicators (e.g. GEF Core Indicators), and donor-specific reporting. CEPF will ensure that the M&E framework is well communicated to the national coordinators as they will perform a key role in its operationalization. The M&E framework will be operationalised through the generation and submission of periodic M&E reports. The activities supporting this include conducting regular monitoring missions to collect gender-disaggregated data by CEPF and RIT, and ensuring this information is reported from RIT to CEPF, and from CEPF to CI, including inputs for the annual Project Implementation Report (PIR). The outcome also captures the processes that are needed to contract an independent party to conduct the mid-term and terminal evaluation of the project

Component 5 will be delivered through one outcome and three outputs:

Outcome 5.1 A gender-sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation framework is established and operational, and M&E activities are conducted.

- Output 5.1.1. A project M&E framework that incorporates gender-disaggregated data and gender-specific indicators is established

- Output 5.1.2. Periodic M&E reports with gender-disaggregated data generated and submitted to CI-GEF on a regular basis

- Output 5.1.3. Mid-term Review (MTR) and Terminal Evaluation (TE) executed

Activities include:

- CEPF to develop a project M&E framework that includes the activities as described above

- CEPF develop a project M&E framework, with a full list of indicators and targets, with definitions and updated baselines of each, and clear roles and responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on them

- CEPF and national coordinators to conduct regular monitoring missions and collect gender-disaggregated data

- Reporting by the national coordinators to CEPF

- CEPF to provide financial and technical reports to CI

- CEPF to contribute and provide inputs to the annual PIR process

- CI to fulfil annual PIR obligations with GEF

- CI to write the ToRs for the MTR/TE

- CI to publish the call for consulting team

- CI to contract consultant team and review results of the evaluations

- CI to share evaluation results with GEF

Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Does the GEF Agency expect to play an execution role on this project?

No

If so, please describe that role here. Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing

This will be determined at the PPG phase.

Cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing:

Example Hotspot	Other initiatives to coordinate with
Cerrado Hotspot	- GEF IPs (Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes; Ecosystem Restoration) - GEF SGPs - Other GEF-funded projects - Other small grants programmes (see table under Description of potential target hotspots) - Other biodiversity focused projects funded either through vertical funds, bilateral cooperation or national funds
East Melanesian Islands Hotspot	- GEF IPs (Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes; Blue and Green Islands) - GEF SGPs - Other GEF-funded projects - Other small grants programmes (see table under Description of potential target hotspots) - Other biodiversity focused projects funded either through vertical funds, bilateral cooperation or national funds
Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot	- GEF IPs (Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes; Ecosystem Restoration) - GEF SGPs - Other GEF-funded projects - Other small grants programmes (see table under Description of potential target hotspots) - Other biodiversity focused projects funded either through vertical funds, bilateral cooperation or national funds
Mediterranean Basin Hotspot	- GEF IP (Blue and Green Islands) - GEF SGPs - Other GEF-funded projects - Other small grants programmes (see table under Description of potential target hotspots) - Other biodiversity focused projects funded either through vertical funds, bilateral cooperation or national funds

The proposed project will be aligned with CEPF's investment strategy in the target hotspots. This brings the following benefits:

Operational costs will be kept to a minimum by making use of CEPF's existing systems and processes, and integrating the project's grants into the wider CEPF grant portfolios in the biodiversity hotspots, which creates opportunities for cost sharing on capacity building, knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, etc. In particular, CEPF's RITs may function as local

Executing Agencies for other GEF-funded programs, such as SGP 2.0, creating economies of scale with administration of the small-grant-making process, including solicitation, review and due diligence of proposals. CI is a GEF Implementing Agency for SGP 2.0, with CEPF as the Executing Agency. In those countries where both SGP 2.0 and the proposed project are implemented, CI and CEPF will closely coordinate activities and maximise complementarity and additionality.

- Using CEPF's online grants management system, ConservationGrants, and its full array of grant-making tools and templates, all of which will be available in local languages[1][1], thereby facilitating access by local and grassroots organizations in the hotspots.
- The project's grantees will be able to participate in trainings and mentoring programs organized by CEPF in the same geographies, to realize opportunities for networking and cost-sharing.

Delivery of the proposed project will draw on the experience, systems and capabilities of established grant-making mechanisms for civil society actors at CEPF.

CI will be the Implementing Agency

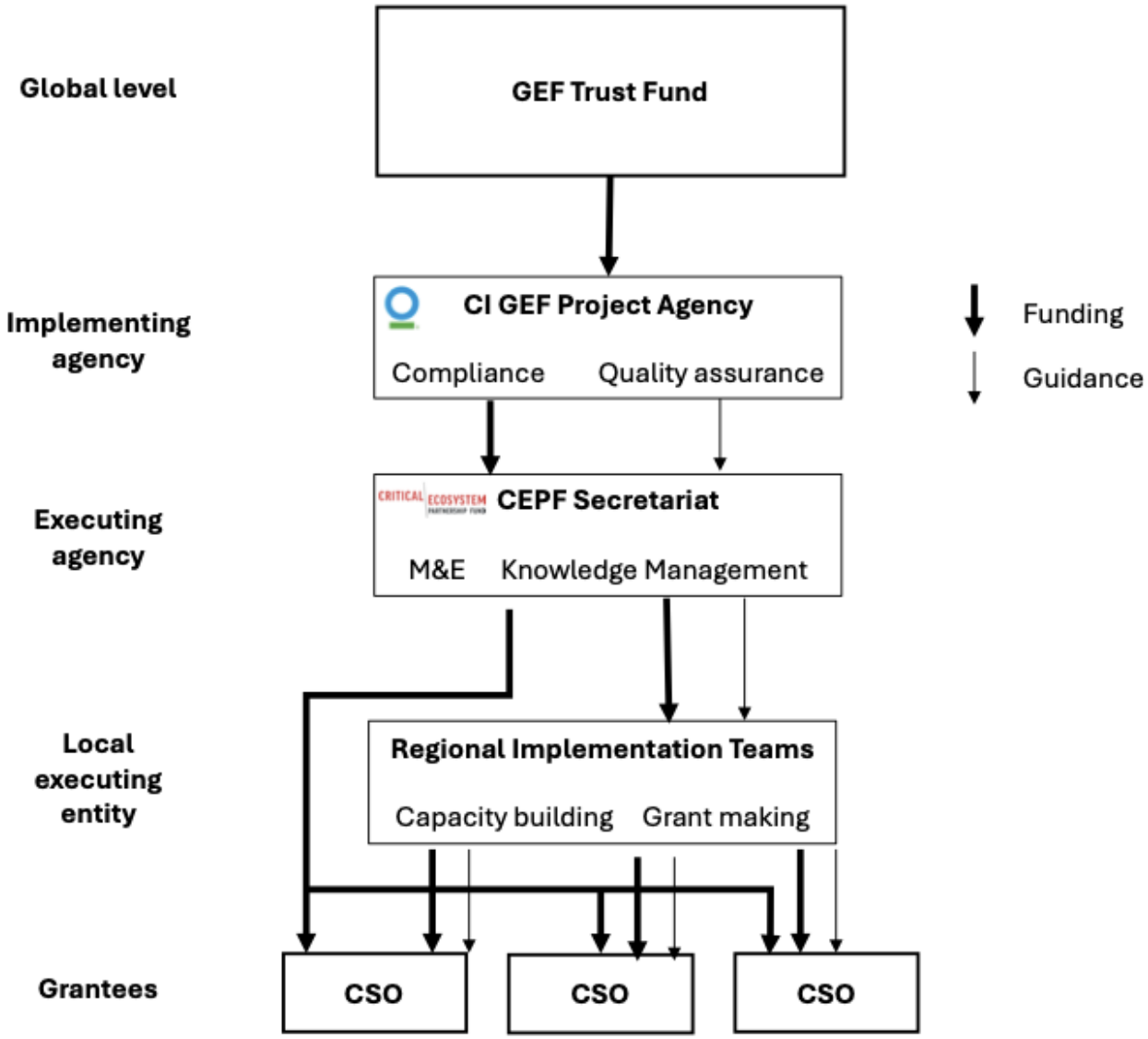
CI recognizes that civil society is a key agent of change that makes a vital contribution to all areas of sustainable development, including the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change. To this end, CI has partnered with a range of public, private and community organizations to design and implement multiple programs that involve community-driven grant-making related to management and restoration of threatened species and ecosystems. CI will leverage its experience with external grant-making with a wide range of partners, including IPLCs, while managing financial and compliance risks of the proposed project.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund will be the primary Executing Agency.

CEPF was established in 2000 as a mechanism to engage civil society in the conservation of critical ecosystems in the global biodiversity hotspots. CEPF is a joint initiative of CI and the GEF, in partnership with l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Union (EU), Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Government of Canada, the Government of Japan and the World Bank. CEPF's strategic focus, its transparent, efficient, measurable and value-for-money grant-making model, and its track record of engaging women, youth, IPLCs and other marginalized groups make it a stand-out candidate as a delivery partner for the proposed project.

At the global level, operational guidance and advice will be provided by the CEPF board.

At the national level, CEPF engages locally based structures, called Regional Implementation Teams (RITs), that work on the ground directly with CSOs to build local capacity and support implementation of grants. These engage as local Executing Agencies. The CEPF Secretariat will provide technical and financial backstopping to the RITs, and deliver some monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, and administrative functions centrally, for greater cost efficiency. A diagram of the proposed implementation arrangements is presented below:



[1] The tools are available in English, French, Spanish and Russian.

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
400000	0	0	0

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
389000	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
			389,000.00			

Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
11000	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
			11,000.00						

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
67930	0	0	0

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Cropland	7,500.00			

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
60,000.00			

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Woodlands	80.00			

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
350.00			

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1080000	0	0	0

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1,080,000.00			

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	137,500			
Male	137,500			
Total	**275,000**	**0**	0	**0**

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

Methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators:

The target levels for the Core and Sub-indicators are based upon the targets for the four example hotspots, as set out in the respective ecosystem profiles. For three of the hotspots, 100% of each target is incorporated, because (with the GEF financing) sufficient funding will be secured to finance the total budget for the investment strategy set out in the ecosystem profile. For the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot, the investment strategy has a very ambitious budget, only around half of which will have been

secured (with the GEF Financing). Therefore, the targets for the Mediterranean Basin are discounted by 50%. A final selection of hotspots will be made at the PPG stage, following which these targets will be updated and then validated through stakeholder consultations. The targets are based on the results expected to be achieved by the GEF project financing plus co-financing.

Key Risks

	Rating	Explanation of risk and mitigation measures
CONTEXT		
Climate	Moderate	The project areas will be impacted by extreme weather events that are projected to increase in intensity and duration under climate change. These may include droughts, storms, extreme rainfall events, floods, hurricanes, and cold spells, depending on the target country and the region where the successful grantee projects are implemented. The RIT will include climate risks in their pre-granting trainings and awareness raisings as well as in their capacity building support during the proposal writing and refinement process, so that grantees can identify potential climate risks to their proposed project as well as appropriate mitigation measures.
Environmental and Social	Moderate	A Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), Accountability Grievance Mechanism (AGM), Gender Mainstreaming Plan (GMP), Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF), and Project level ESMF Management Plan will be developed during the PPG phase to provide mitigation measures for the ESS risk identified. These mitigation plans will entail the following: The project will implement an IPPF (which complies with CI GEF's Environment and Social Standard on Indigenous People and CEPF's safeguard policy on Indigenous People). Both standards are aligned on how Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) will be sought as well as how the project will avoid negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples and local communities; ensuring their full and effective participation in decision making related to the project; and provide them with culturally appropriate social and economic benefits that have been negotiated with them. The project will implement CEPF's ESMF which complies with the CI-GEF ESMF and is adapted to the specific operational context of small grant making. This framework ensures that each sub-grant is screened for environmental and social risks and that appropriate mitigation measures are identified and applied. The ESMF also provides for the safeguard mitigation measures to be applied for Libya and any other country classified as a Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situation (FCS). These measures will be monitored by CEPF. In addition to the above, the project will also implement an AGM to manage grievances, an SEP to ensure inclusive and meaningful engagement, and a GMP to address gender-related risks and enhance positive impacts.
Political and Governance	Moderate	The project assumes that political space for civil society in the countries of the target hotspots remains sufficiently open for organizations to engage in the conservation of globally threatened habitats and ecosystems. Although there

		has been political instability in several of these countries over the last decade, most civil society organizations working in the field of conservation have found ways to operate and typically form constructive partnerships with government agencies. In addition: CEPF will continuously monitor the political situation and assess whether conditions allow to travel for workshops and for hands-on mentoring. In case the risks become too high, the project can consider providing online training or postponing in-person training until the situation is more stable. Also, CEPF and the RITs will hold smaller capacity building sessions for individual stakeholders during project implementation as needed
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Moderate	In some of the target countries, key stakeholders (outside of the aspiring grantees) may be challenged in engaging with the topics of the project. Institutional and policy risks are mitigated by the role of the RITs, which will supervise the implementation of investment strategies set out in the Ecosystem Profiles. The Ecosystem Profiles themselves are based on broad stakeholder consultations in the hotspots, engaging actors from the national institutional to the local level. The risk will be reduced by working with and strengthening the relevant actors' skills and capacities, from institutional to local levels. The project will invest in addressing key capacity institutional, organizational and individual gaps. The project includes broad awareness raising campaigns, also in media, to increase wider support for conservation projects.
Technological	Low	Addressing some of the conservation priorities set out in the Ecosystem Profiles may be challenging for aspiring grantees due to their technical complexity. The complexity of certain approaches will be overcome with adequate international and/or regional expertise of CEPF. In case more technical capacity is needed, the project will (i) leverage expertise of the RITs, (ii) engage qualified local consultants; and/or (iii) build costs into the grants so that the grantees could engage appropriate support
Financial and Business Model	Moderate	The grantees may not be able to keep up their activities after the project ends The project will focus on ensuring a grant-making approach. The risk related to the financial and business model will be mitigated by the role of grantees in monitoring and evaluating their projects, demonstrating their positive impact and accessing additional funding
EXECUTION		
Capacity	Low	CEPF has longstanding experience in small granting processes in the potential target Biodiversity Hotspots. In addition, CEPF conducted the Ecosystem Profile update in each potential target hotspot and was able to already identify potential challenges in specific target countries and prepare accordingly
Fiduciary	Moderate	Several of the countries in the target hotspots suffers from weak governance and have poor records regarding corruption. For example, Cameroon and Nigeria are jointly ranked 140th out of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2024, with the Comoros

		ranked 158th and Equatorial Guinea 173rd. Because corruption is most pervasive in the public sector, this risk is mitigated to some degree by not granting to government organizations. Moreover, CEPF has rigorous systems of financial management and oversight, to mitigate risks of corruption, fraud and financial malpractice regarding its grants. Relevant systems include financial risk assessment of all grantees, a closely monitored procurement policy, project-specific audits and financial site visits to grants flagged as high risk. In addition, CEPF supports local grantees to strengthen their organizational capacity in financial management and governance.
Stakeholder	Low	While not all civil society organizations have missions that explicitly address the conservation priorities set out in the ecosystem profiles, a large number are working on the conservation and/or restoration of ecosystems more generally. CEPF will actively target both the "usual suspects" and organizations that have not worked directly on specific themes or geographical areas to date, as well as actively seek women-led CSOs and groups. CEPF will make use of its established networks, and those of the RITs, to reach potential grantees (e.g. women and IP-led) and encourage them to apply. Webinars will be organized for potential grantees, to explain the scope of each call for proposal, and provide guidance on how organizations can adapt ongoing programs of work to address the identified priorities for conservation.

Other		

Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	Considering that the project has moderate risk in the areas of Climate, Environment and Social, Political and Governance, Institutional and Policy, Financial and Business Model, Capacity for Implementation and Stakeholder, in line also with the ESS Screening Form Report, the project overall risk rating is Moderate The main risks are related to possible exclusion from project activities and benefits of marginalized or vulnerable groups, negative impact of climate changes on climate resilience, weak mechanisms of governance and roles of institutions, negative impacts on social and environmental safeguards standards, weak design and management of financial and business models and to a weak capacity of implementation

C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Describe how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies and country and regional priorities, including how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements.

Confirm if any country policies that might contradict with intended outcomes of the project have been identified, and how the project will address this.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

The proposed project will deliver multiple global environmental benefits by fostering the engagement, capacities and leverage of CSOs and CBOs anchored in local communities, advancing the interests of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth and other marginalized groups to effectively tackle biodiversity loss.

Interventions under the proposed project will be implemented and closely aligned with relevant GEF-8 focal area strategies and Integrated Programs where possible, including but not limited to the Blue-Green Island Integrated Program, the Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Program, and the Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program.

The project will contribute to targets set under the three Rio conventions: the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (UNCBD), and the Land Degradation Neutrality targets (UNCCD). The results of the project will contribute to the and be aligned with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and other relevant global agreements.

With respect to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the project is expected to make contributions to targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23.

Consistency and Alignment with CI Institutional Priorities

The proposed project aligns closely with CI's three strategic priorities, which are (i) stabilizing our climate by protecting and restoring nature, (ii) doubling ocean protection, and (iii) expanding nature-positive economies. Through targeted support for grassroots civil society and CBOs in four hotspots, the project embodies CI's commitment to locally led conservation as a foundation for achieving global environmental goals.

First, the project directly contributes to stabilizing the climate through nature-based solutions. By enabling community-led management of ecosystems, and promoting sustainable natural resource management, the initiative helps reduce emissions and strengthen climate resilience. These efforts align with CI's emphasis on protecting and restoring natural systems to mitigate climate change while improving human well-being. Second, while the project is not explicitly marine-focused, its support for sustainable fisheries and coastal resource management in eligible areas can advance CI's goal of doubling ocean protection. Community-led action is essential for marine conservation, and the project's inclusive grant-making approach can strengthen local stewardship of marine and coastal ecosystems where relevant. Finally, the project supports CI's priority of expanding nature-positive economies by empowering local organizations, especially those led by women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities, to implement sustainable livelihood activities. Through capacity building, financial support, and policy engagement, the project creates conditions for communities to thrive economically while safeguarding biodiversity.

By placing local leadership at the center of its strategy, the project reflects CI's belief that durable environmental solutions must be rooted in the knowledge, priorities, and agency of local people.

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during PIF development as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes and plan to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan before CEO endorsement has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Yes

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector: Yes

Provide a brief summary and list of names and dates of consultations

Date	Stakeholders Consulted / Workshop or Meeting Title	Outcome of the consultation relevant to the PIF
Feb-Jun 2024	Online consultation with grantees, other experts, government stakeholders and donors regarding updating the ecosystem profile for the Mediterranean Basin	The input from this consultation informed the revision of thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
May 20-24, 2024	Meeting of Mediterranean Basin Regional Implementation Team, Nimes, France	The input from this consultation informed the revision of thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
June 13-15, 2024	Meeting of CEPF Mediterranean Basin Advisory Committee, Hyères, France	The input from this consultation informed the revision of thematic priorities (strategic directions and investment priorities) for CEPF in the hotspot
Jul 17, 2024	Stakeholder consultation for updating the ecosystem profile for the Guinean Forest of West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Aug 12-13, 2024	Stakeholder consultation for updating the ecosystem profile for the Guinean Forest of West Africa, Nigeria	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Aug 27-28, 2024	Stakeholder consultation for updating the ecosystem profile for the Guinean Forest of West Africa, Ghana	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Aug 29-30, 2024	Stakeholder consultation for updating the ecosystem profile for the Guinean Forest of West Africa, Liberia	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Jul 3-4, 2025	National workshop for updating the ecosystem profile for the East Melanesian Islands, Honiara, Solomon Islands	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Jul 9-10, 2025	National workshop for updating the ecosystem profile for the East Melanesian Islands, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Jul 17-18, 2025	National workshop for updating the ecosystem profile for the East Melanesian Islands, Port Vila, Vanuatu	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Jul-Sep 2025	In-country and online briefings for updating the ecosystem profile for the East Melanesian Islands	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Aug 6-7, 2025	Regional consultation for updating the ecosystem profile for the Cerrado, Cuiabá, Brazil	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot

Aug 13, 2025	Expert advisory group meeting for the East Melanesian Islands Hotspot (online)	The input from this consultation served to validate thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Aug 21-22, 2025	Regional consultation for updating the ecosystem profile for the Cerrado, Brasília, Brazil	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Aug 27-28, 2025	Regional consultation for updating the ecosystem profile for the Cerrado, Imperatriz, Brazil	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Sep 8-9, 2025	National CEPF Workshop, Brasília, Brazil	The input from this consultation served to establish thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Sep 11, 2025	11th Meeting of the Peoples of the Cerrado, Brasilia, Brazil	This meeting ensured broad participation of CSOs, Indigenous people, Quilombola and traditional communities
Sep 30, 2025	Workshop on Conservation Financing, Brasília, Brazil	The input from this consultation informed the review of conservation investment in the Cerrado Hotspot that underpins the investment strategy
Oct 14, 2025	Regional stakeholder workshop for the East Melanesian Islands Hotspot (online)	The input from this consultation served to validate thematic, geographic and taxonomic priorities for CEPF grant making in the hotspot
Feb 16-24, 2026	Online consultation with Regional Implementation Teams in three of the example hotspots	The input from this consultation served to check information in the PIF and validate the theory of change, results framework and targets
Future Stakeholder Engagement: The project will conduct further stakeholder engagement throughout the PPG phase which will include but not be limited to engagement of stakeholder groups in project geographies as identified, in-person and online meetings with relevant GEF Operational Focal Points, and consultations with other GEF initiatives, including relevant Integrated Programs and the SGP.		

The draft PIF was shared with the RITs in the Cerrado, Guinean Forest and Mediterranean Basin Hotspots in February 2026, and their feedback was incorporated. In addition, the above categories of stakeholders in the example hotspots were extensively consulted during the ecosystem profile updating process.

- During the update of the CEPF ecosystem profile for the Cerrado Hotspot, 200 stakeholders were consulted during six meetings held in Brazil in August and September 2025. These meetings enaged a total of 60 participants representing or belonging to IPLCs, 132 participants representing or belonging to local CSOs, and eight participants representing government agencies.
- During the update of the CEPF ecosystem profile for the East Melanesian Islands Hotspot, 82 stakeholders were consulted during meetings held in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, plus virtual consultations, between July and October 2025. These comprised 62 representatives of local CSOs, six from international CSOs, two from research institutions, six from government and six from donor agencies.
- During the update of the CEPF ecosystem profile for the Guinean Forests Hotspot, 108 stakeholders were consulted during four meetings held in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria in July and August 2024. These comprised 42 representatives of local CSOs, 14 from international CSOs, 17 from research institutions, 24 from government, four from the private sector and seven from donor agencies.
- During the update of the CEPF ecosystem profile for the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot, 110 stakeholders were engaged through an online consultation during February-June 2024, with a further 17 stakeholders consulted during two in-person meetings in May and June 2024. These comprised 84 representatives of local CSOs, 20 from international CSOs, eight from government and 15 from donor agencies.

(Please upload to the portal documents tab any stakeholder engagement plan or assessments that have been done during the PIF development phase.)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in the section B project description?

Yes

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

We confirm that we have provided indicative information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program and any measures to address such risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex D).

Yes

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Medium/Moderate			

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described in the Project Description (Section B)

Yes

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	GEF Project Grant($)	Agency Fee($)	Total GEF Financing ($)
CI	GET	Global	Biodiversity	BD Global/Regional Set-Aside	Grant	18,048,625.00	1,624,375.00	19,673,000.00
Total GEF Resources ($)						**18,048,625.00**	**1,624,375.00**	**19,673,000.00**

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount ($)

300000

PPG Agency Fee ($)

27000

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	PPG($)	Agency Fee($)	Total PPG Funding($)
CI	GET	Global	Biodiversity	BD Global/Regional Set-Aside	Grant	300,000.00	27,000.00	327,000.00
Total PPG Amount ($)						**300,000.00**	**27,000.00**	**327,000.00**

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total($)
Total GEF Resources					**0.00**

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing($)	Co-financing($)
BD-1-1	GET	18,048,625.00	24100000
Total Project Cost		**18,048,625.00**	**24,100,000.00**

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount($)
Others	EU	Grant	Investment mobilized	8800000
Civil Society Organization	Fondation Hans Wilsdorf	Grant	Investment mobilized	10000000

Civil Society Organization	Fondation Franklinia	Grant	Investment mobilized	5000000
Civil Society Organization	Foundation Audemars-Watkins	Grant	Investment mobilized	300000
Total Co-financing				**24,100,000.00**

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

The indicative investment mobilized amounts were identified by the partners through internal assessment and based on previous engagements with CEPF. This will be updated in the PPG phase.

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Type	Name	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator			Orissa Samaroo		osamaroo@conservation.org
Project Coordinator			Free de Koning		fdekoning@conservation.org

Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

Name	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place

ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

(PIF level) Attach agency safeguard screen form including rating of risk types and overall risk rating.

Title
20260224 Preliminary ESS Screening Report CEPF II

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
Principal Objective 2	No Contribution 0	Principal Objective 2	Significant Objective 1

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4

Focal Area/Theme	x Biodiversity		
		X Protected Areas and Landscapes	
			X Productive Seascapes
			Productive Landscapes
			X Coastal and Marine Protected Areas
			X Community Based Natural Resource Management
			X Terrestrial Protected Areas
		X Species	
			Livestock Wild Relatives
			X Threatened Species
			Plant Genetic Resources
			X Wildlife for Sustainable Development
			Animal Genetic Resources
			Illegal Wildlife Trade
			Invasive Alien Species (IAS)
			Crop Wild Relatives
		Supplementary Protocol to the CBD	
			Access to Genetic Resources Benefit Sharing
			Biosafety
		X Financial and Accounting	
			Payment for Ecosystem Services
			X Conservation Finance
			X Conservation Trust Funds
			Natural Capital Assessment and Accounting
		Mainstreaming	
			Agriculture C agrobiodiversity
			Certification (National Standards)
			Tourism

			Certification (International Standards)
			Infrastructure
			Fisheries
			Extractive Industries (oil, gas, mining)
			Forestry (Including HCVF and REDD+)
		X Biomes	
			X Mangroves
			X Sea Grasses
			Tropical Dry Forests
			Paramo
			Rivers
			Lakes
			X Coral Reefs
			X Temperate Forests
			X Tropical Rain Forests
			X Grasslands
			X Wetlands
			X Desert
	X Forest		
		X Forest	
			X Amazon
			X Congo
			Drylands
		Forest and Landscape Restoration	
			REDD/REDD+
	International Waters		
		Fisheries	
		Ship	
		Freshwater	

			Aquifer
			Lake Basin
			River Basin
		Pollution	
			Persistent toxic substances
			Plastics
			Nutrient pollution from wastewater
			Nutrient pollution from all sectors except Wastewater
		Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Plan Preparation	
		Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction	
		Strategic Action Plan Implementation	
		Coastal	
		Biomes	
			Polar Ecosystems
			Coral Reefs
			Mangrove
			Seagrasses
			Constructed Wetlands
		X Marine Protected Area	
		Aquaculture	
		X Learning	
		X SIDS : Small Island Dev States	
		Large Marine Ecosystems	
	X Climate Change		
		United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	
			Enabling Activities
			Paris Agreement
			Nationally Determined Contribution
			Capacity Building Initiative for

			Transparency
		X Climate Change Adaptation	
			Private Sector
			X Community-based Adaptation
			X Livelihoods
			Disaster Risk Management
			Least Developed Countries
			Adaptation Tech Transfer
			Sea-level rise
			Climate information
			National Adaptation Plan
			Innovation
			Climate Finance
			X Small Island Developing States
			National Adaptation Programme of Action
			X Ecosystem-based Adaptation
			Complementarity
			X Climate Resilience
			Mainstreaming Adaptation
		Climate Change Mitigation	
			Agriculture, Forestry, and other LandUse
			Sustainable Urban Systems and Transport
			Energy Efficiency
			Technology Transfer
			Renewable Energy
			Financing
	X Land Degradation		
		Land Degradation Neutrality	
			Land Cover and Land cover change
			Land Productivity

			Carbon stocks above or below ground
		X Sustainable Land Management	
			X Ecosystem Approach
			Sustainable Fire Management
			Income Generating Activities
			X Sustainable Forest
			Drought Mitigation
			X Sustainable Pasture Management
			Integrated and Cross-sectoral approach
			X Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands
			Improved Soil and Water Management Techniques
			X Community-Based Natural Resource Management
			Sustainable Livelihoods
			Sustainable Agriculture
		Food Security	
	Sustainable Development Goals		
	Chemicals and Waste		
		Open Burning	
		Eco-Efficiency	
		Waste Management	
			e-Waste
			Industrial Waste
			Hazardous Waste Management
		Emissions	
		Pesticides	
			DDT - Other
			DDT - Vector Management
		Ozone	

		Persistent Organic Pollutants	
			Polychlorinated Biphenyls
			Unintentional Persistent Organic Pollutants
			New Persistent Organic Pollutants
		Disposal	
		Sound Management of chemicals and Waste	
		Plastics	
		Best Available Technology / Best Environmental Practices	
		Green Chemistry	
		Industrial Emissions	
		Mercury	
			Cement
			Artisanal and Scale Gold Mining
			Coal Fired Power Plants
			Non-Ferrous Metals Production
			Coal Fired Industrial Boilers
Influencing Models			
	Transform policy and regulatory environments		
	Deploy innovative financial instruments		
	X Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making		
	X Convene multi-stakeholder alliances		
	X Demonstrate innovative approaches		
Stakeholders			
	X Private Sector		
		X SMEs	
		Financial intermediaries and market facilitators	
		Capital providers	
		X Individuals/Entrepreneurs	

		Large corporations	
		Non-Grant Pilot	
		Project Reflow	
	X Type of Engagement		
		X Partnership	
		X Participation	
		Consultation	
		X Information Dissemination	
	X Civil Society		
		X Community Based Organization	
		X Non-Governmental Organization	
		Trade Unions and Workers Unions	
		X Academia	
	X Communications		
		X Awareness Raising	
		X Strategic Communications	
		X Education	
		X Behavior Change	
		X Public Campaigns	
	X Indigenous Peoples		
	X Beneficiaries		
	X Local Communities		
X Gender Equality			
	X Gender Mainstreaming		
		X Women groups	
		X Sex-disaggregated indicators	
		X Gender-sensitive indicators	
		X Beneficiaries	
	X Gender results areas		
		X Capacity development	
		X Access and control over natural resources	

		X Awareness raising	
		Access to benefits and services	
		X Participation and leadership	
		X Knowledge generation and exchange	
	Food Security in Sub-Sahara Africa		
		Small and Medium Enterprises	
		Integrated Land and Water Management	
		Diversified Farming	
		Crop Genetic Diversity	
		Gender Dimensions	
		Land and Soil Health	
		Multi-stakeholder Platforms	
		Food Value Chains	
		Resilience to climate and shocks	
		Sustainable Production Systems	
		Agroecosystems	
		Smallholder Farming	
	X Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration		
		Integrated Landscapes	
		Sustainable Food Systems	
		Food Value Chains	
		Sustainable Commodity Production	
		Comprehensive Land Use Planning	
		Smallholder Farming	
		X Landscape Restoration	
		Deforestation-free Sourcing	
	Sustainable Cities		
		Transport and Mobility	
		Integrated urban planning	
		Green space	

		Urban sustainability framework	
		Buildings	
		Global Platform for Sustainable Cities	
		Urban Food Systems	
		Energy efficiency	
		Urban Resilience	
		Municipal Financing	
		Municipal waste management	
		Urban Biodiversity	
	X Commodity Supply Chains		
		Deforestation-free Sourcing	
		Adaptive Management	
		Sustainable Commodities Production	
		X High Conservation Value Forests	
		Financial Screening Tools	
		Oil Palm Supply Chain	
		Beef Supply Chain	
		Soybean Supply Chain	
		X High Carbon Stocks Forests	
		Smallholder Farmers	
X Capacity, Knowledge and Research			
	X Enabling Activities		
	X Learning		
		X Adaptive Management	
		X Indicators to Measure Change	
		X Theory of Change	
	X Knowledge Generation		
		X Professional Development	
		Master Classes	

		X Training	
		X Workshop	
		Course	
		Seminar	
	Innovation		
	X Capacity Development		
	X Knowledge Exchange		
		X Twinning	
		X Conference	
		X Field Visit	
		Exhibit	
		X Peer-to-Peer	
		North-South	
		X South-South	
	Targeted Research		
Focal Area/Theme			