

Consolidating the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)?s achievements in fostering CSO leadership in biodiversity conservation in global biodiversity hotspots

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

12293

Countries

Global

Project Name

Consolidating the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)?s achievements in fostering CSO leadership in biodiversity conservation in global biodiversity hotspots

Agencies

CI

Date received by PM

3/3/2026

Review completed by PM

Program Manager

Sarah Wyatt

Focal Area

Biodiversity

Project Type

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF) REVIEW SHEET

1. General Project Information / Eligibility

a) Does the project meet the criteria for eligibility for GEF funding?

b) Is the General Project Information table correctly populated?

Secretariat's Comments

3/23/2026

Yes, thank you.

3/5/2026

Yes. Would it be possible to revise the title to be more specific, concise and include CEPF?

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

We propose the following revised title: *Consolidating the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)'s achievements in fostering CSO leadership in biodiversity conservation in global biodiversity hotspots*

2. Project Summary

Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected results?

Secretariat's Comments

3/23/2026

Yes.

3/5/2026

No.

- Please make sure that the terminology "Indigenous Peoples and local communities" (note plurals and capitalizations) or IPLCs or IPs & LCs consistently throughout the document.

- While you're editing the summary, please move the core indicator section to the end and expand on the 'what' and 'how' of the project (rather than the stating alignment with priorities).

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

- we have harmonized the use of 'Indigenous People and local communities' throughout, as well as the use of 'IPLCs'
- we have moved the core indicator section to the end and replaced the alignment with priorities sentence with: *The project will capitalize on and further consolidate CEPF's results in the biodiversity hotspots. In practical terms, Regional Implementation Teams 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*

3 Indicative Project Overview

- 3.1 a) Is the project objective presented as a concise statement and clear?
- b) Are the components, outcomes and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?

Secretariat's Comments

3/23/2026

Yes. This is excellent.

3/12/2026

No. Please make this more concise.

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

We propose: *To support and foster the effective leadership of CSOs in biodiversity conservation and management in globally important biodiversity hotspots* in section Project Description Overview.

We have also adjusted this in the ToC description and ToC figure in section B. Project description.

- 3.2 Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation included within the project components and appropriately funded?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

3.3 a) Are the components adequately funded?

b) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?

c) Is the PMC equal to or below 5% of the total GEF grant for FSPs or 10% for MSPs? If the requested PMC is above the caps, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

3/23/2026

Yes.

3/12/2026

No, please spell out EAAF Partnership as a source of cofinancier and provide the amount under cofinancing table.

Co-financing resources allocated to PMC represents 4.6% while GEF resources represent 5.0%. For a cofinancing of \$23,025,647, \$1,151,282 will represent 5.0% - please amend.

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

The EAAF Partnership is not a source of co-financing for this project; this may be a misunderstanding.

PMC co-financing has been adjusted to 5% of the subtotal (22,952,380).

4 Project Outline

A. Project Rationale

4.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key contextual drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective?

b) Are the key barriers and enablers identified?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

4.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT

a) Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?

b) Does it ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers?

c) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?

d) are the relevant stakeholders and their roles adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

3/23/2026

Yes.

3/12/2026

No.

a. Making the case for this approach - Overall, this PIF does not make the case enough for the approach of CEPF as a solution for how the GEF should invest its money. CEPF has an excellent track record of success and accomplishments that can serve as the background and baseline for this project and help make the case for the additional investments.

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

Additional text, summarizing CEPF's track record of success and accomplishments, has been added to section A: Project Rationale

5 B. Project Description

5.1 THEORY OF CHANGE

a) Is there a concise theory of change that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements will contribute to the objective, the expected causal pathways, and the key assumptions underlying these?

b) Are the key outputs of each component defined (where possible)?

Secretariat's Comments

4/1/2026

Yes.

3/23/2026

No.

Please remove all highlighting for a final version.

Please remove the table with the RIT names.

3/12/2026

No.

RITs - It would be good to clarify the role and value of RITs, noting that they are often national NGOs from the countries receiving the grant which in and of itself has a value.

Component 2 - It would be good to expand on expected results from this component. The description focuses so much on the process but not what are projected to be the results (number of organizations, number of women's groups, number of threatened species, number of KBAs/OECMs/PAs, etc.) that will come from this substantial investment of resources. We understand that this would be a projection or estimate based on past experience and not a guarantee, but given the size of this grant it's important to show that there will be substantial on the ground results.

Component 5 - Aren't some of the activities for PPG not during the project? Is there a separate M&E framework for this project apart from the CEPF? Is there a way to avoid this duplication?

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/24/2026

-Highlights have been removed.

-Table with the RIT names has been removed.

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

We have added a description of the added value of the RITs under the description of Component 1 in section A. Project Rationale.

We have also clarified that working through RITs is part of the ideal solution (in section B. Project description).

Component 2: We have included expected results in terms of number of CSOs receiving grants (100), number of women-led CSOs receiving grants (30), number of grantees with improves organizational capacity (40), number of KBAs with improved management (40), and number of globally threatened species benefiting from conservation action (45) in the description of component 2 in the section B. Project Description.

Component 5: There is no overlap between activities for PPG and those during the project.

We have clarified that The M&E system *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.? Under the description of component 5, in section B. Project Description
5.2 INCREMENTAL/ADDITIONAL COST REASONING

Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

5.3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

a) Is the institutional setting, including potential executing partners, outlined and a rationale provided?

b) Comments to proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception).

c) is there a description of potential coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area

d) are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

4/7/2026

Yes.

4/6/2026

No.

b. Please remove agency execution.

3/23/2026

Yes. However, it still is entirely top-down. Could the version at PPG look at what goes the other direction or between levels and among them?

3/12/2026

No. The implementation arrangement graphic concerns me as it appears everything flows down and, thus, looks very much top down. What flows back up? What about support and capacity building?

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 04/07/2026

b. Agency execution removed.

CI-GEF 03/24/2026

Noted. During the PPG phase, the project team will look into the other direction or between levels and among the actors.

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

We have adjusted the implementation framework figure. It now makes the capacity building dimension clearer. It also includes reporting as well as learning dimensions, both jointly between actors as well as for each actor internally.

5.4 a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)?

b) Are the project's indicative targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

5.5 NGI Only: Is there a justification of financial structure and use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

5.6 RISKS

a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category?

b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?

c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately screened and rated at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat's Comments

3/23/32026

Yes.

3/12/2026

No,

1. Under risk table, please explain how the overall risk was identified.

2. The rating under the Environmental and Social risk category (currently low) should be the same as the rating under the key risk table, Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) risk, as per the GEF risk appetite GEF/C.66/13.

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

1. This is included.
2. The rating for Environmental and Social risk has been adjusted to moderate.

5.7 Qualitative assessment

- a) Does the project intend to be well integrated, durable, and transformative?
- b) Is there potential for innovation and scaling-up?
- c) Will the project contribute to an improved alignment of national policies (policy coherence)?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities

6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with focal area and integrated program strategies and objectives, and/or adaptation priorities?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors)

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e. BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

7.2 Is a list of stakeholders consulted during PIF development, including dates of these consultations, provided?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

8 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

8.1 Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):

STAR allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

8.2 Is the PPG requested within the allowable cap (per size of project)? If requested, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

8.3 Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

Annex B: Endorsements

8.4 Has the project been endorsed by the country's(ies) GEF OFP and has the OFP at the time of PIF submission name and position been checked against the GEF database?

Secretariat's Comments

4/1/2026

Yes.

3/23/2026

No, sorry for not being more clear. Please include this commitment in the PIF text.

3/12/2026

Yes. The agency has committed to obtaining endorsement letters for CEO Endorsement.

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/24/2026

The following actions have been made in the PIF:

-on the Risk Table, we removed the text "CEPF will request grantees to provide letters of support from government partners, to mitigate the risk of them being denied permission to work at a particular site or on a particular species." under Political and Governance

-In the PIF under Section A Project Rationale - Description of potential target hotspots , we added the text "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." No text box/field is available in the LOE section in the portal.

Are the OFP endorsement letters uploaded to the GEF Portal (compiled as a single document, if applicable)?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

Do the letters follow the correct format and are the endorsed amounts consistent with the amounts included in the Portal?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

8.5 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project to be submitted?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

Annex C: Project Location

8.6 Is there preliminary georeferenced information and a map of the project's intended location?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes. This is a global project so no maps at this time.

Agency's Comments

Annex D: Safeguards Screen and Rating

8.7 If there are safeguard screening documents or other ESS documents prepared, have these been uploaded to the GEF Portal?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

Annex E: Rio Markers

8.8 Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?

Secretariat's Comments

3/23/2026

Yes.

3/12/2026

No, CCA doesn't appear to be a real focus on this project - please remove. CCM would be more appropriate as a 2 than a 1.

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

We have adjusted the Rio Markers to "0" for CCA and "2" for CCM

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments

3/12/2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

Annex G: NGI Relevant Annexes

8.10 Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to

assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. Is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat's Comments NA

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

9.1 Is the PIF and PPG (if requested) recommended for technical clearance?

Secretariat's Comments

4/7/2026

Yes.

4/1/2026

No. Please address the execution issue.

3/23/2026

No. A few small issues remain.

3/12/2026

Not at this time. Please revise and resubmit.

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 04/07/2026

Agency execution revised as requested.

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

Revised and resubmitted

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency at the time of CEO Endorsement/ Approval

Secretariat's Comments

Safeguards -

1. Please ensure conducting consultations with key stakeholders including Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the four hotspots and integrating results of consultations into the project design during PPG.
2. Please consider integrate supports for Indigenous Peoples governance, traditional and local knowledge and capacity building as a part of project activities where relevant, particularly in Component 2 and 3

3. Please also consider including integration of vulnerable communities and Indigenous Peoples governance, traditional and local knowledge, capacity building, and number of Indigenous Peoples beneficiaries as monitoring indicators where appropriate during PPG

Gender

•In the development of the Gender Analysis and Action Plan, please ensure that the activities developed are included in the project documents, and that the GAP aligns with the project components. Please ensure that in the development of the results framework, gender-specific indicators are included to facilitate monitoring and reporting. Please indicate measures to facilitate and support the implementation of the GAP (e.g., budgets, regular monitoring, adaptive management, etc.). Please make a reference to include in PIRs, MTRs and TE, reports on gender-specific results, including the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

Agency's Comments

CI-GEF 03/23/2026

Noted

Review Dates

First Review

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)

PIF Review

Agency Response

3/23/2026

3/24/2026

4/7/2026