



CRITICAL | **ECOSYSTEM**
PARTNERSHIP FUND

Summary Report for the Mid-term Evaluation

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)
Caribbean islands Biodiversity Hotspot investment
(2010 - 2015)**

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), January 2014

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Executive summary

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) [Caribbean Islands Programme](#) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. The goal of the CEPF is to support the work of civil society in developing and implementing conservation strategies, as well as in raising public awareness on the implications of loss of biodiversity. The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), in its capacity as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) for the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot, is managing a US\$6.9 million grant fund to support civil society's contribution to biodiversity conservation in eleven Caribbean islands for 2010-2015. Countries eligible for CEPF support in the region are: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, The Bahamas, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

A mid-term evaluation of the CEPF Caribbean islands programme was required and a participatory mid-term evaluation was conducted by the RIT with support from the CEPF Secretariat during the period May to October 2013. A [framework](#) was developed to guide the assessment of relevance, results, efficiency and effectiveness of the process, and sustainability. The evaluation included: a desk review of reports prepared by the RIT and CEPF Secretariat; three national focus group sessions held with grantees, key partners, and RACC members in Haiti, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic; an online survey; interviews with grantees and members of the Regional Advisory Committee for CEPF (RACC); a regional workshop with grantees, RACC members, donors, government partners, the CEPF Secretariat and the RIT; and a focus group session with RIT staff based in Trinidad.

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders felt that the CEPF Caribbean islands programme was very relevant in addressing the needs, expectations and capacities of Caribbean stakeholders particularly in supporting strengthening of civil society, networking, biodiversity conservation action on priorities, complementing other initiatives, and building knowledge about biodiversity.

Stakeholders also felt that the CEPF Caribbean islands programme is making excellent progress with the portfolio and achieving strong results. Although at the mid-term in programme implementation, excellent or good progress is being made in all result areas except for CEPF Strategic Direction 5 (emergency support to Haitian civil society to mitigate the impacts of the 2010 earthquake), especially with improved protection and management of 45 priority key biodiversity areas. However, little or no change with respect to the CEPF Global Goal Matrix was made in the opinion of the few stakeholders who examined this in the regional workshop. This was seen to be a useful tool but one that would require systematic assessment via national consultation processes in each of the countries before any reliable assessments could be made.

Stakeholders assessed what results were being seen in terms of the contribution of CEPF to changes in behaviour and relationships of Caribbean civil society organisations (CSOs) and donors. Significant positive changes were identified for CSOs in terms of: enhanced biodiversity conservation actions and project development and management; improved organisational development and management; increased networking with other CSOs, government agencies, and the private sector; and more engagement of local communities. Some positive changes were also identified for donors including

increased awareness of the CEPF Caribbean islands programme, improved grant making practices and enhanced collaboration.

The most significant changes identified by stakeholders were that the CEPF Caribbean islands programme:

- Put biodiversity conservation on the agenda
- Filled a niche in biodiversity conservation
- Provided new information to inform on the ground action
- Facilitated knowledge sharing and enhanced awareness
- Improved capacity of CSOs, including local groups
- Facilitated networking and building partnerships at national and regional levels
- Strengthened participation of local communities in biodiversity conservation
- Brought new actors into the biodiversity conservation field
- Built understanding of the importance of biodiversity conservation and valuing it
- Achieved positive results for conservation of biodiversity and supported civil society initiatives that added value to the work of government agencies
- Supported innovative approaches to conservation
- Supported a rigorous regional Caribbean-owned approach
- Enabled CANARI to build its capacity, to expand its work and to influence implementation of a grant programme in the Caribbean

In general, stakeholders felt that the processes used by the CEPF Caribbean islands programme were effective, and in some cases very effective. However, many critical recommendations were made for improving administrative processes, especially in terms of the application process and also for enhancing monitoring and reporting. The need to clarify roles of the CEPF Secretariat and the RIT was highlighted. Improvement in communication about the work being done under CEPF projects is needed to raise awareness, facilitate collaboration, and influence policy. More support should also be given for catalysing and facilitating networking amongst grantees and building capacity of civil society organisations for sustainability. More collaboration is needed with other regional initiatives in the Caribbean.

Stakeholders gave recommendations to help ensure that the results of the CEPF Caribbean islands programme are likely to remain sustained beyond the end of the project in September, 2015. These included:

- Enhancing communication of results, best practices and key issues
- Conducting advocacy programmes and building the capacity of CSOs to use results of CEPF projects to influence policy
- Strengthening the organisational and technical capacity of individual CSOs
- Facilitating networking among civil society, government and private sector partners
- Building a strong knowledge base
- Extending the timeframe for support to allow more or better assimilation of key concepts and delivery of results
- Providing a phase of follow-up funding to build on and consolidate results achieved
- Assisting civil society to develop sustainable financing mechanisms
- Facilitating evaluation and learning on what works best in financing and supporting initiatives by and with CSOs in the Caribbean

Strategic recommendations on future CEPF investments to achieve conservation results were also identified and included focusing on sustainable livelihoods, mainstreaming biodiversity conservation, and supporting continued strategic civil society capacity building and networking.

1. Introduction

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) [Caribbean Islands Programme](#) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. The goal of the CEPF is to support the work of civil society in developing and implementing conservation strategies, as well as in raising public awareness on the implications of loss of biodiversity. The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), in its capacity as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) for the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot, is managing a US\$6.9 million grant fund to support civil society's contribution to biodiversity conservation in eleven Caribbean islands for 2010-2015. Countries eligible for CEPF support in the region are: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, The Bahamas, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

A mid-term evaluation of the CEPF Caribbean islands programme was required and this report summarises key findings of the participatory mid-term evaluation that was conducted.

2. Methodology

A [framework](#) was developed for the mid-term evaluation and guided the analysis of reports to assess relevance, results, efficiency and effectiveness of the process, and sustainability. This participatory evaluation was conducted by CANARI in collaboration with the CEPF Secretariat during the period May – October 2013.

The evaluation used a combination of methods to facilitate effective participation of all key stakeholders:

1. **Desk review of key reports:** A [desk review](#) was conducted by the RIT, drawing from the following reports submitted by the RIT and other RIT and Secretariat reports:
 - a. [The Caribbean islands Biodiversity Hotspot Ecosystem Profile](#)
 - b. 20 small grant project proposals
 - c. Small grantee interim progress reports
 - d. Small grantee Final Project Completion Reports
 - e. 35 large grant project proposals
 - f. Large grantee performance reports (submitted on a 6-monthly basis)
 - g. Large grantee Final Project Completion Reports
 - h. [Annual Portfolio Overview Report October 2010 - December 2011](#)
 - i. Annual Report on the Logframe October 2010 - December 2011
 - j. Annual Report on the Logframe January 2012 - December 2012
 - k. CEPF-RIT Supervision Mission Report - June 2011
 - l. CEPF-RIT Supervision Mission Report - October 2011
 - m. CEPF-RIT Supervision Mission Report - April 2012
 - n. CEPF-RIT Supervision Mission Report - November 2012 (Draft report)
 - o. Project Site Visit Reports (prepared by the RIT as part of monitoring the portfolio)

2. **Written online survey:** This [survey](#) was developed and administered by the RIT using Survey Monkey. The survey was provided in English, French and Spanish. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent directly to key stakeholders of the CEPF Caribbean islands programme including all CEPF applicants and grantees, members of the Regional Advisory Committee for CEPF (RACC), donors, government partners and other organisations working on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the region. Apart from direct email invitation, the RIT posted the opportunity to participate in the survey via the following Caribbean listservs: GLISPA Discuss, BirdsCaribbean and the IUCN Caribbean Members as well as CANARI's Facebook page. There were 32 respondents in the survey.
3. **Interviews with RACC members:** The RIT conducted telephone/skype semi-structured interviews in September 2013 with five RACC members to elicit additional information on key achievements, lessons and recommendations for the way forward.
4. **Interviews with grantees:** The RIT conducted telephone/skype semi-structured interviews in September 2013 with four selected grantees (including those based abroad who will not be able to participate in the focus group meetings or regional workshop) to elicit additional information on key achievements, lessons and recommendations for the way forward.
5. **A focus group session with the RIT:** Staff of the RIT based in Trinidad met to assess results and analyse lessons and recommendations on process.
6. **Three national focus group sessions with grantees and key partners:** Focus groups were held in June 2013 with 14 participants in [Jamaica](#), 20 participants in [Haiti](#) and 22 participants in the [Dominican Republic](#) and facilitated by the RIT Country Coordinators. These brought together CEPF applicants, grantees, the GEF focal point and key government agencies, donors, RACC members, and mentors. The focus groups facilitated sharing and analysis at the project and national level on results and lessons.
 - i. **A regional workshop with grantees and key partners:** A [regional workshop](#) was held in July 2013 in Jamaica. This was facilitated by 6 members of the RIT and attended by three members of the CEPF Secretariat. There were 38 participants representing grantees, donors, key partners, and representatives of the RACC. This workshop had additional objectives focused on facilitating networking for knowledge sharing and enhanced coordination and collaboration among CEPF grantees and with their partners as well as building awareness and commitment of CEPF grantees, synergies and coordination.

Separate [reports](#) are available for each of these processes on CANARI's website except for the interviews and RIT focus group which are confidential reports.

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance

The mid-term evaluation assessed relevance, i.e. the extent to which the CEPF Caribbean islands programme that was conceived and the activities that were planned are consistent with the needs,

expectations and capacities of the various stakeholders and respond adequately to the needs, goals and objectives in the region.

Overwhelmingly the CEPF Caribbean islands programme and the projects being implemented were felt to be consistent with the needs, expectations and capacities of the various stakeholders and responded adequately to identify needs, goals and objectives. There is very limited funding currently being directed to the Caribbean and at the national level within countries to support biodiversity conservation, especially funding that is committed to civil society. In this sense, CEPF remains very relevant for local and regional CSOs working on biodiversity conservation in the Caribbean as a means of financial support for priority actions in key biodiversity areas and conservation corridors.

The following areas were identified where CEPF was felt to be particularly relevant:

1. **Supporting strengthening of civil society:** CEPF is building capacity in local and regional CSOs in several priority areas including: core organisational development (e.g. strategic planning, financial management); technical competencies for biodiversity conservation (e.g. invasive species management); competencies for protected area management (e.g. sustainable financing, management planning); and communication and advocacy.
2. **Supporting networking of civil society:** CEPF is facilitating networking at national, bi-national (in the case of Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and regional levels, which is seen to be a high priority.
3. **Supporting biodiversity conservation action:** There is very limited funding currently being directed to the Caribbean and at the national level within countries to support biodiversity conservation, especially funding that is committed to civil society. CEPF is filling an important niche in a number of areas not always supported by donors, for example, collecting baseline data, and supporting communication for development as part of a biodiversity conservation agenda.
4. **Focusing work on biodiversity priorities:** The Ecosystem Profile and KBA approach focuses attention on specific areas of biological importance. Areas chosen were felt to be generally relevant. However, nomenclature of KBAs is in some cases different to national nomenclature. For example, a few of the KBAs as listed in the Ecosystem Profile and other CEPF documents are not “known” in Jamaica by the names used. It was suggested that most Jamaicans would be hard pressed to identify or locate Peckham Woods, for example. In addition, some KBAs have no CSOs working in or near them, so while the importance of some areas may be known or acknowledged the absence of a CSO with a mandate to work in these areas and the absorptive capacity of existing organisations and the parameters of their interests and mandates mean that some KBAs are unlikely to see a wellspring of action.
5. **Complementing other efforts:** CEPF is complementing the work and strategies of donors which are supporting biodiversity conservation in the Caribbean at the national and regional level.
6. **Building knowledge about biodiversity:** CEPF is facilitating the collection of baseline data which is broadly important to conservation efforts beyond CEPF.

The Ecosystem Profile was also identified as a useful reference document outlining regional priorities.

However, CEPF was not felt to be as relevant in some areas:

1. ***There is sometimes a mismatch between CEPF priorities and priorities of a country:*** In the Dominican Republic, there are several protected areas that do not fall within the CEPF focus. There is also an urgent need for research to gather information on species. However, projects that focus on species, including nationally endangered species, are not acceptable to CEPF. However, they are an integral component of the ecosystem. Further, CEPF does not accept educational programmes because they do not directly target conservation.
2. ***CEPF priorities are perceived as constraining the types of actions for projects:*** In the Dominican Republic, grantees feel the pressure to only work on a management plan and said that “sometimes this feels like a straightjacket”.
3. ***CEPF does not support existing processes:*** In the Dominican Republic, it was felt that CEPF does not want to give funds for following processes in place and defined methodology for this; a process of systematisation is needed.
4. ***There are gaps in the KBAs identified in the Ecosystem Profile:*** In the Dominican Republic there are more protected areas than are mapped in the CEPF KBAs; the areas mapped in the Ecosystem Profile do not fully reflect the reality of the country and full information on biodiversity and threats. In addition, the exclusion of Dominica was a concern given the high biodiversity found in what is marketed as the nature isle of the Caribbean. It was felt that while Dominica should have been considered a priority it was omitted because of the lack of data on biodiversity there. The focus on using data on birds, which is more available than for many other taxa, was felt to have possibly skewed the prioritisation exercise. The exclusion of Trinidad and Tobago from a Caribbean islands programme was also a concern repeatedly raised.
5. ***The real capacity needs are not fully understood:*** Although CEPF places emphasis on building capacity of civil society, it was felt that the actual needs were not properly grasped. The CEPF programme started with expectations of the capacity of stakeholders which has not always reflected the reality on the ground. In addition, while lots of the funding is going to on the ground conservation activities, these may not necessarily be the most pressing capacity needs in the region.
6. ***Core problems are not being adequately addressed:*** Many projects focus more on awareness and sensitisation and less on core problems such as the economic constraints to biodiversity conservation and the need to develop conservation policies. A greater focus is needed on information sharing and collaboration.

3.2 Results

The mid-term evaluation assessed results, i.e. what are the measurable (quantitative and qualitative) outputs and outcomes. Results were examined by looking at:

- a. Status of the portfolio against desired results identified under strategic directions in the Ecosystem Profile (see full document in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#))
- b. Results under the [logical framework](#) (logframe) for the CEPF Caribbean islands programme
- c. Results under the CEPF Global Goal Matrix

- d. Results as changes in behaviour and relationships of key target groups (CSOs and donors) using an Outcome Mapping approach
- e. The Most Significant Change as a result of the CEPF Caribbean islands programme in the opinion of key stakeholders

Findings for each of these are given below.

a. Portfolio Status

As of 30 June, 2013, a total of 55 grants were contracted with a total value of US\$5,242,333, equivalent to 76 percent of the total allocation for the Caribbean islands Biodiversity Hotspot (US\$6.9 million). Of this sum, US\$4,497,157 (89 percent) was committed to local and regional CSOs (i.e. registered in a Caribbean country and with their primary focus and scope of work within a Caribbean country or the Caribbean region) with the remainder committed to international organisations (i.e. organisations registered outside of the Caribbean and with a scope of work extending beyond the Caribbean) (this includes funds committed to local organisations through sub-grants).

There has been greatest demand for projects that fall under CEPF Strategic Direction 1. There has also been great demand for funding under Strategic Direction 3 which focuses on capacity building of key organisations working within the priority key biodiversity areas (KBAs) in the region, as well as networking. There is still room for the portfolio to contribute to meeting the targets set out under Strategic Direction 2 which focuses on integrating biodiversity conservation into landscape and development planning. The RIT has found that the funds originally allocated under Strategic Direction 4 fall short of what is needed to effectively manage and coordinate the portfolio in the region. This is partly due to the cost of travel within the region (including in-country travel costs for project site visits) as well as funds to support staff working on the RIT. Less than half of the funds allocated under Strategic Direction 5 were committed to June 2013.

The three countries that were originally identified during the CEPF ecosystem profiling process as being the highest priority for CEPF investments received the bulk of CEPF funding to June 2013. A total of 59% of the funds went to the Dominican Republic (23%), Haiti (30%) and Jamaica (14%), and 22% of the funds were committed to projects that carry a regional focus either in their entirety or in part.

b. Results under the logframe

Participants in the online survey generally felt that excellent or good progress was being made with achievement of results under the CEPF logframe, especially with improved protection and management of the 45 priority key biodiversity areas. They noted that many of the areas will take a long time to deliver results on and it was still early in terms of implementation. The desk review concluded that significant progress was being made on achieving results as of June 2013 as follows:

Objective: Engage civil society in the conservation of globally threatened biodiversity through targeted investments with maximum impact on the highest conservation and ecosystem services priorities.

- 52 CSOs are directly engaged and benefiting from CEPF support.
- Development plans, projects and policies are being developed for enhancing watershed management, sustainable/eco-tourism, and sustainable agriculture.

- 50% of under-protected key biodiversity areas (14 priority KBAs in the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti and Jamaica) to be brought under new protection status.
- Management in the production landscape in 3 conservation corridors is being improved through forest carbon, reforestation, integrated management plans, agroforestry and sustainable tourism.
- Current activities are complementing MacArthur Foundation projects and grants are complementing investments by 12 other donors.

Outcome 1. Improve protection and management of 45 priority Key Biodiversity Areas.

- 691,506 hectares are undergoing improved protection and management across 19 KBAs.
- 27,649 hectares are being brought under new or upgraded protection across 7 sites in 4 countries.
- 6 sustainable funding schemes are being implemented across 3 countries.
- 4 co-management arrangements are being established or supported in 3 countries.
- Effective stewardship by local communities for biodiversity and ecosystem conservation is being supported in 80% of CEPF grants.

Outcome 2. Integrate biodiversity conservation into landscape and development planning and implementation in six conservation corridors.

- 8 grants in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines integrating climate change, forest carbon and water resource management into policies, projects and plans.
- 132,871 hectares across 9 production landscapes in the Dominican Republic and Haiti are undergoing improved management for biodiversity conservation via reforestation, sustainable tourism and livelihood development and sustainable agriculture.
- Policy initiatives are underway to improve the EIA process in Jamaica and for the development of private protected areas in the Dominican Republic.
- 7 grants in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti and Jamaica are contributing to public-private partnerships that mainstream biodiversity in the tourism sector.
- 2 projects in the Dominican Republic and 2 in Haiti located outside protected areas are integrating biodiversity conservation in management practices.

Outcome 3. Caribbean civil society supported to achieve biodiversity conservation by building local and regional institutional capacity and by fostering stakeholder collaboration.

- Over 30 CSOs are benefitting from institutional capacity building in strategic planning, financial management, development of sustainable financing strategies and feasibility action plans, improvement of governance structures, development/improvement of websites, training and mentoring in proposal development and scientific writing, and effective communication, networking and outreach.
- 15 grants are supporting local initiatives focusing on networking for biodiversity conservation in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.
- 8 regional networking initiatives are being supported on amphibian conservation, invasive alien species management, communications and networking for biodiversity conservation.

Outcome 4. A Regional Implementation Team provides strategic leadership and effectively coordinates CEPF investment in the Caribbean Islands Hotspot.

- The RIT is fulfilling performance targets.

Outcome 5. Emergency support provided to Haitian civil society to mitigate the impacts of the 2010 earthquake.

- An environmental network resource centre has been established with detailed activities and an implementation plan for conservation efforts in Massif de la Selle and Massif de la Hotte developed in consultation with the Haitian NGO sector.

Areas where progress is slow or absent as of June 2013 are:

Outcome 2. Integrate biodiversity conservation into landscape and development planning and implementation in six conservation corridors.

- No co-management arrangements have been reported established or supported.
- Baselines for the CEPF Civil Society Tracking Tool have been completed by 9 organisations which have completed baselines but no final assessments have yet been reported to gauge any changes in the level of satisfactory scores.

Outcome 5. Emergency support provided to Haitian civil society to mitigate the impacts of the 2010 earthquake.

- No progress reported to date in preventing destruction of forests in Massif de la Selle and Massif de la Hotte.
- No progress reported to date on reconstruction and development policies and plans that incorporate environmental concerns.

Participants in the regional workshop endorsed recommendations proposed by the RIT in order to achieve results, namely to focus investment on:

1. Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation at the policy level
2. Facilitating bi-national cooperation and coordination in the Dominican Republic and Haiti
3. Reinforcing and consolidating current and past investments to ensure sustainability
4. Supporting strategic capacity building and networking for local CSOs
5. Enhancing conservation efforts in the high priority KBAs that are currently under-represented in the portfolio

c. Results under the CEPF Global Goal Matrix

The CEPF Global Goal Matrix is a tool that the CEPF Secretariat uses to track the status of biodiversity conservation at the country and regional levels which feeds into the CEPF's global monitoring framework. This was presented and discussed at the regional workshop. Participants were concerned about their capacity to complete the matrix given the knowledge requirements and the importance of eliciting various perspectives. While they felt the analysis could be useful if it was properly done by countries, they were also concerned as to how this information could be misinterpreted by governments and external partners and have deleterious effects on a country's international status and donor relations. Representatives of seven countries completed the matrices. The meeting agreed that these results were subjective and were the opinion of the workshop participants and merely a product of a workshop exercise and not a representation of the state of biodiversity conservation in the CEPF target countries. Most participants indicated no change in status of criterion evaluated from 2009 to present.

d. Changes in behaviour and relationships of target stakeholders

Generally for **CSOs**, participants in the focus groups and regional workshop felt that key changes contributed by the CEPF Caribbean programme were seen in the following areas:

1. **Biodiversity conservation action:** Some organisations are demonstrating the behaviour changes outlined, including identification of priorities, negotiation of co-management roles, implementing initiatives and monitoring impacts, and communicating to influence policy. In some cases, because of CEPF organisations are better at implementing projects and they are able to evaluate and report the impact of the conservation actions. The process of proposal development was identified as helping applicants to focus and prioritise.
2. **Project development and management:** Many organisations have applied to the CEPF Caribbean islands programme. Over 28% of organisations who have applied to the CEPF Caribbean programme have been successful in securing funds to contribute to their work in biodiversity conservation. Through specific components within some of its grants, CEPF has supported organisations in developing proposals for other donors to contribute to their work in biodiversity conservation. Some issues have been identified in terms of delivering results within budget and time for some grantees.
3. **Organisational capacity:** Some organisations have enhanced human resource capacity and financial management systems (including financial monitoring and reporting), and are better able to communicate the results to donors, beneficiaries and other target groups. Strategic planning has improved for some grantees as CEPF has forced grantees to closely reflect on organisational development needs to support effective project implementation. However, capacity gaps still exist and several organisations have accessed CEPF support to build internal capacity in areas such as strategic planning and financial management. The process of proposal development and coaching by the RIT were highlighted as important in facilitating capacity building. However, stakeholders generally felt that more work was needed to build organisational capacity for strong and sustainable CSOs, including for CSOs to evaluate and communicate project results and lessons.
4. **Networking:** Several organisations have demonstrated strong ability to network effectively and are able to identify potential partners, potential synergies and areas of collaboration with partners and to develop formal and informal partnerships. For example: many grantees brought on partners to implement CEPF projects; networking across civil society, government and increasingly some private sector partners is strong in the Dominican Republic; some bi-national networking between Haiti and the Dominican Republic; and networking at a regional level is taking place on invasive species management and among IUCN members. Strategic relationships are also being developed with organisations who do not traditionally work in the area of biodiversity conservation so that they are now more aware of the needs and priorities.

Generally for **donors**, participants in the focus groups and regional workshop felt that key changes contributed by the CEPF Caribbean programme were:

1. **Increased awareness** of the CEPF Caribbean islands programme and the priorities and strategic outcomes was demonstrated as participants in the regional workshop noted that donors are taking into consideration work being done in KBAs to guide their investment portfolios.

2. **Adoption of best practices in grant making** for example the European Union (EU) Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas (BEST) programme wanted to develop a profile based on the Caribbean Ecosystem Profile model.
3. **Built and enhanced partnerships** were catalysed at the country and regional level by CEPF. CEPF had allowed CSOs to identify partners not only among other CSOs but also with other various stakeholders in biodiversity conservation in the region and globally. For example, the CAB International (CABI) office based in Trinidad is currently implementing a networking project. There have also been several increased partnerships with governments and private sector. In the Dominican Republic and Haiti in particular there is much more collaboration between donors. Outreach by the RIT to donors operating in CEPF project countries (for example the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Haiti) was noted as being very valuable, especially at the stage of project implementation.

However, a greater emphasis on engaging other donors working in the Caribbean was recommended as stakeholders felt that there has not been adequate progress in some areas. They felt that systematic communication was needed on the results of CEPF and the contribution that CEPF is making to regional and global policy initiatives. In addition, CEPF needs to identify potential synergies with programmes of other donors and catalyse enhanced coordination among donors to improve the effectiveness of efforts in biodiversity conservation in the region. They also felt that there is a need to document which donors CEPF grantees are working with and where to guide investment in biodiversity conservation in the region.

e. Most Significant Change

Participants in the mid-term evaluation were asked what they thought were the most significant (positive or negative) changes as a result of the CEPF Caribbean islands programme.

Key points that arose from participants' stories and from the ensuing discussions included the following **positive** most significant changes where CEPF has:

1. **Put biodiversity conservation on the agenda:** CEPF funding has: contributed to ongoing initiatives to raising awareness on biodiversity conservation in the Caribbean; enabled research to be conducted which supported advocacy for valuing natural resources in national economic deliberations; and provided support for biodiversity conservation in protected areas that had little support from other sources. CEPF is useful in promoting a focus on global, rather than national, priorities.
2. **Filled a niche in biodiversity conservation:** CEPF has made it possible for CSOs to do work in areas of need, some of which are not always readily supported by other donors. For example: collection of baseline data; the application of communication for development theory and practice to biodiversity conservation; enabling policy advocacy work related to conservation; and support for organisational capacity building. Significant support is being provided to protected areas that previously had little support. Having sustained funding to focus on specific areas and attempt to influence longer term policy was also seen to be the most significant change.

3. ***Provided new information to inform on the ground action:*** The lack of up-to-date baseline data and information about conditions in KBAs hampers the effectiveness of conservation activities. Where CEPF grants allow for the generation of new information, this has usefulness beyond the scope of the funded activity/suite of activities.
4. ***Facilitated knowledge sharing and enhanced awareness:*** CEPF funding gave grantees the opportunity to produce and disseminate communication products to target audiences on their work and to share knowledge on biodiversity needs in the region.
5. ***Improved capacity of CSOs, including local groups:*** CEPF funding contributed to building the capacity of CSOs through strengthening organisational and technical capacity of the grantees, including through:
 - encouraging CSOs to identify donors, develop proposals and to mobilise funds for biodiversity conservation;
 - providing funds to pay for personnel time needed to engage in partnerships with the private sector for biodiversity conservation;
 - providing information and funds for personnel time for members of CSOs to support developing alternative livelihood opportunities in rural communities;
 - improving the prominence and credibility of the CSOs to policy makers;
 - improving technical skills and expertise in biodiversity conservation; and
 - building CSO capacity in project development and management through their experience in managing the CEPF grants.

In particular, CEPF funding contributed to empowering local groups by:

- building their confidence and capacity to seek funding from other sources;
 - enabling them to assume roles in the governance of protected areas;
 - building their capacity to play instrumental roles in achievement of conservation goals;
 - giving them tools to effect change and promote collaboration and the exchange of ideas; and
 - increasing their knowledge and awareness of biodiversity conservation issues.
6. ***Facilitated networking and building partnerships at national and regional levels:*** CEPF has provided opportunities to build partnerships and strengthened synergies to develop common goals among CSOs, between CSOs and local and national government agencies, and among CSOs, government and the private sector. Networks have been created at national and regional levels. CEPF has contributed to the creation of a regional vision and stakeholders in the Dominican Republic said that “we are beginning to see ourselves as CARIBBEAN”. CEPF funding also enabled local CSOs to enter into alliances with partners from outside the region to conduct scientific research that they did not have the capacity to perform themselves. This contributed to informing plans for protection and effective management of biodiversity in their islands. CEPF facilitated making links with initiatives that are taking place and has promoted working in an integrated manner towards the same goals. This amplified impact, for example in the Dominican Republic where enhanced collaboration with government agencies has in turn strengthened management policies.
 7. ***Strengthened participation of local communities in biodiversity conservation:*** Projects have promoted participatory processes including taking into account communities in and around the

protected areas. CSOs have been able to engage local communities in conservation and sustainable livelihoods work.

8. ***Brought new actors into the biodiversity conservation field:*** CSOs working on environmental issues but not directly involved in biodiversity conservation are now entering the field because funds are available.
9. ***Built understanding of the importance of biodiversity conservation and valuing it:*** CEPF contributed to a better understanding of where the most critical biodiversity of the island is located. The Ecosystem Profile is a resource and potential communication tool guiding conservation planning and action. It also improved awareness in civil society and communities linked to protected areas about biodiversity conservation. It has raised the voice of organisations working in biodiversity at the national level and increased communication and awareness about the work they are doing.
10. ***Achieving positive results for conservation of biodiversity and supported civil society initiatives that add value to the work of government agencies:*** CEPF is achieving results on the ground. For example it enabled the development and implementation of management plans that ensure better performance of KBAs, and supported established management plans taking into account all users and community groups in a participatory way. CEPF support for activities in KBAs where government agencies are active, or where they have an interest, is a useful complement and supports national priorities.
11. ***Supported innovative approaches to conservation:*** CEPF supported exploration of Payments for Environmental Services (PES), private protected areas, participatory approaches to protected area management planning, and integration of climate change elements in protected area management planning. It also supported development of sustainable livelihood alternatives. Action learning approaches enabled the sharing of ideas and experiences among groups involved in biodiversity conservation.
12. ***Supported a rigorous regional Caribbean-owned approach:*** CEPF is truly regional, working in three languages across a wide range of islands. There is rigour in the systems and procedures. The programme is managed by an organisation from the Caribbean and that knows and respects the Caribbean, and is able to provide a high quality of technical support from people based in the islands.
13. ***Enabled CANARI to build its capacity, to expand its work and to influence implementation of a grant programme in the Caribbean:*** The CEPF programme has allowed CANARI to continue the work the Institute has been doing and to expand its work and increase its visibility, especially in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. CEPF has added value to CANARI's work and has built the Institute's capacity in grant management. A significant change has also been the way CANARI, based on its experience, has been able to promote the use of participatory processes in CEPF. Stakeholders felt that the role played by CANARI as RIT is extremely significant in contributing to effective processes and delivery of results. Grantees said that having a local organisation advocating for their needs was a positive aspect of the programme. CANARI is seen as a conduit and an advocate. The RIT reported that CANARI has managed to clarify the perception of not being a donor, and being different and apart from CEPF. CANARI has also managed to bring its personality to the fund because of the way it has run it in a very participatory way.

Key points that arose from participants' stories and from the ensuing discussion included the following **negative** most significant changes:

1. **Drained capacity of civil society:** Stakeholders felt that the time consuming application review and approval process hampered the capacity of CSOs to develop other projects and to implement activities in the field. The CEPF application process is more involved (overly detailed and lengthy) than proposal writing processes for other donor agencies that grantees have been part of.
2. **Provided too small amounts of funding:** Stakeholders felt that considering the length of the projects and the activities to be implemented the size of grants was inadequate.

f. Other outputs, outcomes, impacts reported

Conservation of IUCN Red List Critically Endangered (CR) and Endangered (EN) Species: Even though conservation of specific species was not identified as a Strategic Direction or investment priority for the CEPF Caribbean programme, some projects have been able to have a positive impact on CR and EN species. For example, the International Iguana Foundation (IIF) has focused efforts in the Massif de la Selle KBA in Southern Haiti in the Anse-a-Pitres municipality where the critically endangered *Cyclura Ricordi* iguana resides. Through a site-based conservation approach, IIF is supporting local communities in the creation of a municipal wildlife reserve which will help to reduce poaching of the species. A key component of this project is also to train local community organisations and individuals in collecting data and monitoring the critical wildlife habitat to ensure longer term protection.

3.3 Effectiveness and efficiency

Findings from reports were analysed to assess effectiveness and efficiency, i.e. the extent to which CEPF processes have been executed as planned and have produced the desired outputs, as well as the extent to which they have been implemented with the optimal use of financial, human and technical resources and in a timely fashion, looking also at the suitability of project management arrangements.

Stakeholders in the online survey generally felt that the processes used were effective, with:

- Extremely or very effective processes being: setting and communicating strategic priorities, issuing calls for proposals, technical review and selection of proposals, supporting the application process, and monitoring projects.
- Less effective or not effective processes being: catalysing additional support, facilitating relationship building between governments and civil society, building capacity of civil society for sustainability, influencing policy and internal learning and performance in the RIT and the Secretariat.

Specific comments were made on the various processes as follows:

1. **Issuing calls for proposals:** Generally this is felt to be effective and with adequate call times, although more is needed to reach community and small organisations. The RIT noted that this process and the result achieved had improved since the first call was issued in the Caribbean.

2. **Technical review and selection of proposals:** This was widely felt to be too long a process. Applicants and the RIT commented that the CEPF LOI template does not allow for a logical approach to project design and proposal development and this needs to be redesigned. In addition, reviewers have noted that the LOI is also not conducive to efficient reviews and often, more information is needed from the applicant. The RIT also recognised that the role being played by the RACC in technical review is extremely valuable and working very well. RACC members interviewed felt that the process was simple, good and thorough, and has been working well. They suggested that more regular (monthly) communication could be used to keep them more updated for example on the results of the review process, what projects are being implemented in each country and how grants awarded are progressing on the ground. In addition, they recommended that if the CEPF investment programme were to be continued, the RACC could potentially play more of an advisory role at a strategic level.
3. **Supporting the application process:** Although some grantees identified the proposal development process and support from the RIT and CEPF Secretariat as being useful to improve the proposal and to build their capacity, the process was widely felt to be especially burdensome due to the length of time it takes to get approval and the need to rework and revise proposals and respond to detailed requests for clarification. The review process should be streamlined as applicants feel that different reviewers impose their perspectives, which are sometimes contradictory, at different stages in the processing of the application and this makes the process onerous and lengthy. In addition, small grant applications should require less information than large grants. The CEPF Secretariat and the RIT should share a full description of the application process with applicants to qualify their expectations on processing times. The RIT noted that there is some level of frustration from grantees because of how rigorous the process is (with organisations that have withdrawn from the process) in part because of their inexperience. CSOs noted that CEPF requirements for proposals are much more involved than those of other grant programmes. This comes at a huge cost to organisations which mostly have limited staff and resources to begin with and has been a barrier to applications and successful completion of proposals, even where the organisation had capacity and the project ideas were sound and approved. On the other hand, some organisations have noted that the CEPF proposal development process has helped them to build their capacity in project design and development. Some applicants have been confused by the many interfaces for the project in the RIT and CEPF Secretariat. Many criticisms of the online Grant Writer system were received, although some applicants were satisfied with it. Importantly, grantees noted that the CEPF Secretariat and the RIT need to ensure that the support given to the CEPF applicants does not distort the proposal to such an extent that the final proposal does not respond to the initial need identified by the applicant.
4. **Monitoring projects, supporting project implementation (including financial management), supporting project evaluation and reporting:** In general grantees felt that the process was constructive and supportive, with good support being provided by the RIT although too many reports are being asked for. Site monitoring visits by the RIT were useful. The RIT noted that guidance from the World Bank in one of their site visits was useful in improving financial monitoring and also that as expectations under the CEPF programme have become clearer they are able to provide more effective support to grantees. Stakeholders felt that greater clarity is needed in the respective roles of the CEPF Secretariat and the RIT for example in addressing project issues arising during implementation. In terms of reporting, some grantees find the online Grant Writer system helpful and systematic, while others find it rigid and limiting in terms

of not being able to capture the full story and unexpected project results. It was noted that Grant Writer does not have any feature to submit additional information on the large grants (such as supporting documents, reports, photos, etc). In addition, some of the sections in the reporting templates are found to be unclear or repetitive. Important recommendations were that the contracts for large grants need to be presented in French and Spanish to French and Spanish speaking grantees and the RIT should host induction sessions for grantees to present guidelines on reporting and financial management. Grantees felt that the role being played by in-country mentors¹ was extremely useful and the pool of mentors should be increased and they should be encouraged to further support applicants and grantees.

5. **Communication about CEPF and the work being achieved:** Although the work of the RIT via the newsletter was recognised, it was widely felt that communication needed to be improved by the RIT and more funds needed to be provided to grantees to communicate about their own work. In addition, RACC members suggested that more visibility could be attained through a wider dissemination of results on relevant listservs and having a representative of the CEPF programme (for example RACC members) at some key regional meetings and events. More regular and widespread communication of CEPF work and results using a variety of tools and media in the Caribbean was suggested, with translation into all three languages. There needs to be better communication of the relevance of the CEPF programme to existing regional initiatives as well as to global SIDS policy processes.
6. **Catalysing and facilitating networking amongst grantees:** It was widely felt that CEPF was successful in facilitating networking, both at the national and regional levels. However, grantees identified the need for more networking, especially between different countries (including between the Dominican Republic and Haiti) and at the regional level. More information sharing was needed among CEPF projects. Greater use of information and communication technologies for networking among grantees across the region was recommended. Supporting exchange visits, databases and establishment of CSOs thematic networks were also recommended.
7. **Facilitating relationship building between CSOs and government, other key partners:** This was widely felt to be one of the biggest strengths of CEPF in the Caribbean, with CEPF successfully facilitating relationship building among civil society, local and national government, and private sector, especially in the Dominican Republic. One recommendation to further enhance this was to establish a formal mechanism to take CEPF's work to government agencies and policy makers and keep them abreast of developments through its grants.
8. **Building capacity of CSOs for sustainability:** The support provided by CEPF was good and this capacity was being built.
9. **Managing portfolio investment:** The desk review highlighted that the portfolio was being well managed, with most conservation outcomes being addressed, targets for grant allocation being met and a good spread of grants across CEPF countries. The bulk of funds are going to the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica as the three priority countries. The RIT noted that the database developed by the CEPF Secretariat was a very useful tool in portfolio management.

¹ Under a complementary [project](#) funded separately by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, CANARI has identified and trained a pool of mentors based in the CEPF-eligible countries who are providing support to CSOs.

10. **Catalysing additional support:** Projects have catalysed very significant co-financing and in-kind support. However, some grantees felt that this needs to be improved, including via identifying areas of complementarity. Donor roundtables to share information were recommended.
11. **Providing strategic leadership on how civil society can play a role in biodiversity conservation:** CEPF was providing important strategic leadership in this area as providing funding to CSOs allowed them to demonstrate the valuable role that they can play. Further work can be done to enhance the role of local organisations.
12. **Policy influence:** Specific examples of policy influence are taking place, for instance through development of management plans. More work on this is needed, including using CEPF donors, particularly those that are very influential nationally (for example The World Bank), to leverage influence towards changing some of the government policies and practices that are inimical to biodiversity conservation and sound environmental management. Haitian stakeholders noted that “Although there is some capacity to influence policy, however, the CSOs are not able to influence the politics.”
13. **Internal learning and improving performance within the CEPF:** A need to streamline communications between the CEPF Secretariat, RIT and grantees was highlighted. Due to the complexities of the Caribbean portfolio, including 11 eligible countries, four languages and the challenges of communication in the region, grantees are often confused as to exactly who within the RIT or the CEPF Secretariat should be the point person for a particular communication. Lines of communication need to be streamlined to increase efficiency and effectiveness and to better support grantees in implementation. The RIT also highlighted a need for more efficient communication from the CEPF Secretariat. The RIT also noted that it had made recommendations for improvement or clarification in CEPF policies and processes, some of which had been implemented. The RIT noted several areas (for example providing support to applicants and project monitoring) where its capacity and performance had increased since inception of the programme.

The RIT also noted that an extraordinary investment of the RIT resources has been made in order to achieve the strong results seen under the CEPF Caribbean islands programme. Proposal writing and project reporting in particular have been challenging issues and have required the RIT to spend a lot of time working with applicants and grantees beyond what was originally envisaged. An increased allocation to the RIT was recommended to cover the required coaching involved in project development, monitoring, reporting and communication.

4. Recommendations for sustainability

The mid-term evaluation assessed sustainability, i.e. the extent to which the outcomes and outputs have been, and are likely to remain, sustained beyond the time frame of the project and its various activities, as well as the requirements for future activities that can help build such sustainability.

As the CEPF Caribbean investment programme is still at its mid-way point and the vast majority of projects are still in various stages of implementation, many of them having only just been contracted,

stakeholders felt that it is too early in most cases to draw meaningful conclusions on the sustainability of results. The emphasis of CEPF on capacity building, relationship-building, awareness-building and development of plans to guide future actions will all likely contribute to sustainability of results.

However, a number of contextual issues and challenges were identified that have implications for the CEPF's ability to meet its objectives and have sustained results over the long term. These included:

1. **National policies and practices that work against biodiversity conservation, including in protected areas:** Economic development imperatives continue to trump longer term environmental concerns, resulting in such things as proposals for large port development, quarrying, and the granting of prospecting licences for mining in KBAs.
2. **There are constraints to the absorptive capacity of CSOs in the short term:** CSOs cannot build their capacity (for example in terms of staffing) for short term projects and this affects their ability to develop proposals and implement projects.
3. **Although progress in some cases is being made on development of policies, implementation is weak or lacking.** For example, biodiversity continues to be lost due to the lack of regulation of protected areas.
4. **Weak and poor governance are fundamental and are hampering biodiversity conservation:** For example, laws and regulations are inadequate for the protection of the protected areas.
5. **Addressing the needs of people living in and around protected areas:** Working with local communities and addressing livelihoods needs are critical in order to achieve biodiversity conservation outcomes.

Key recommendations for contributing to sustainability of CEPF included:

1. **Enhancing communication of results, best practices and key issues** to increase effectiveness of biodiversity conservation efforts and public demand for conservation and environmental protection outcomes in the national interest. This also includes communicating about CEPF and increasing linkages with regional initiatives in the Caribbean.
2. **Conducting advocacy programmes and building the capacity of CSOs** to use results of CEPF projects to influence policy. For example, CEPF should fund, facilitate or support integration of conservation outcomes into national strategies under multi-lateral environmental agreements and expand IUCN Red List Assessments for example to reptiles, invertebrates, plants, invasive Species and develop National Red Lists. The wider conservation case should be communicated using economics, societal, and livelihoods values. CEPF should focus on ecosystem services/payment for ecosystem services as a vehicle to translate the importance of biodiversity conservation into economic terms. Influencing programmes of donors and overseas development assistance can in turn influence national policy and practice.
3. **Strengthening the organisational and technical capacity of individual CSOs** to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. Stronger organisations will increase capacity for sustained efforts in biodiversity conservation.

4. **Facilitating networking among civil society, government and private sector partners** for communication, coordination, and mutual learning, especially between different CEPF projects.
5. **Building a strong knowledge base** of CEPF project results and knowledge built. Information and databases created by CEPF projects can be housed in key national institutions and made openly accessible to help inform management planning and implementation as well as policies and plans to help to facilitate longer-term efforts.
6. **Extending the timeframe for support** to allow more or better assimilation of key concepts and delivery of results, beyond what can be achieved in three to four years of project implementation, especially for small projects.
7. **Providing a phase of follow-up funding** to build on and consolidate results achieved.
8. **Assisting civil society to develop sustainable financing mechanisms** including through establishing or supporting financing and technical assistance facilities to support civil society work in conservation. One recommendation was that this facility should be managed by a Caribbean entity and should not be a trust fund, but a financing window capitalised by partners that wish to support long-term processes in the region. Another recommendation was to assist civil society to learn more about fund raising from non-traditional sources (for example, private sector businesses, online fundraising such as crowdfunding).
9. **Facilitating evaluation and learning on what works best in financing and supporting initiatives by and with CSOs in the Caribbean** would contribute to strengthening regional and national initiatives by other donors, technical support partners and government agencies.

5. Looking ahead

A review of the impacts of the five year investment would enable re-focusing on the CEPF Caribbean islands programme. This would require updating of the Caribbean Ecosystem Profile including to prioritise threatened species, ecosystems, and strategies. Nevertheless, strategic recommendations on future CEPF investments to achieve conservation results identified during the mid-term evaluation were:

1. **Focus on catalysing and supporting development of sustainable livelihoods:** Enhancing livelihood opportunities for local people in the KBAs can be an important strategy towards achieving biodiversity conservation outcomes. Stakeholders felt that CEPF needs to increase its social vision as there is a close relationship between social and economic components of the community and the conservation of biodiversity. Sustainable livelihood alternatives for community groups need to be developed.
2. **Mainstream biodiversity conservation at the policy level:** Many of the threats and challenges to biodiversity conservation have their roots in policy and decision-making processes that undermine conservation and sound environmental management. Policy influencing action needs to be taken and civil society capacity to take such action needs to be strengthened to address fundamental contextual issues hampering biodiversity conservation. One area highlighted by participants was that of legal capacity/environmental law and advocacy. In particular, there is a need for more policies, projects and plans to be developed and implemented that incorporate

ecosystem services, climate change and biodiversity conservation. Along with projects that are focused on policy influence, there is a need to build the capacity of CSOs to effectively work within this space and have an impact at the policy level.

3. ***Provide strategic capacity building support and networking for local CSOs:*** There are a few core areas of capacity building that have been recognised as a need across the region for CEPF grantees and other key organisations working in the priority KBAs. For example, the need for organisations to have more diversified, innovative and sustainable funding streams and the need for increased communication of best practices and lessons learned from the region. Strengthening civil society capacity for policy advocacy is another cross-cutting need in the portfolio.
4. ***Facilitate bi-national cooperation and coordination in the Dominican Republic and Haiti:*** There is an opportunity for CEPF to contribute to increased bi-national coordination and collaboration in terms of conservation efforts between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Local organisations in both countries have called for this and it is evident in both the threats identified to biodiversity conservation as well as the opportunities being presented for increased exchange of knowledge, experience and technical expertise.
5. ***Reinforce and consolidate current and past investments to ensure sustainability:*** CEPF has invested in a lot of planning efforts - whether it is participatory development of management plans, data gathering to inform decision-making and action for conservation or feasibility assessments in various areas. There is a need to follow up on these investments at the implementation phase, to ensure concrete conservation results can be achieved within the high priority KBAs. The remaining time of the CEPF investment in the Caribbean is a relatively short period and so investing in efforts that will have long-term impacts and ensuring the relevant frameworks and structures are in place to safeguard biodiversity, will be important.
6. ***Provide more strategic support to access funding or counterpart funds from other donors to ensure project continuity and sustainability:*** CEPF could create a platform to raise funds by promoting an event in which other potential donors participate and become familiarised with the current projects. It is also important to include the private sector as future and strategic donors.
7. ***Broaden the scope of CEPF funding:*** Various recommendations were made to broaden the CEPF programme to expand the geographic focus, to include coastal and marine areas, to emphasise more conservation action rather than capacity building, to focus on organisational capacity of NGOs more than technical capacity, and to expand the focus on outreach, education and community engagement is urgently needed.
8. ***Encourage conservation action at priority sites (KBAs):*** In cases where no CSO clearly exists with a mandate covering a specific KBA, CEPF can encourage local, national and regional actors to consider conservation action to address identified biodiversity conservation priorities.

Stakeholders also recognised that having served as the RIT, CANARI is well placed to continue to seek support to build on what was achieved by the CEPF Caribbean islands programme to further support civil society in the Caribbean to engage in biodiversity conservation.