

LESSONS LEARNED IN RELATION TO THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION TEAM (RIT) FOR THE WALLACEA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT, PHASE II



REPORT FOR CEPF BY:

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Public Report

Lessons Learned in Relation to the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspot, Phase II

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1. Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an independent evaluation of Burung Indonesia's role as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) in the Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspot during Phase II (2021–2023). The evaluation assessed RIT performance across coordination, capacity building, grant management, stakeholder engagement, and impact delivery, using a strength-based and participatory approach. Data were collected through document reviews, online questionnaires, and in-depth interviews with grantees, donors, government partners, and private sector actors.

Findings indicate that Burung Indonesia's facilitation was widely appreciated for its contextual understanding, relational approach, and consistent technical support. The RIT enabled effective grantmaking in remote and underserved areas and significantly contributed to capacity strengthening among local civil society organizations. Key challenges included delays in fund disbursement, administrative complexity, and staff transitions. Despite this, the RIT demonstrated strong adaptive management and delivered tangible conservation and institutional outcomes.

The report concludes with recommendations to enhance administrative efficiency, sustain organizational learning, and strengthen collaboration mechanisms. These insights are intended to inform future RIT models and support the continued success of conservation partnerships in Wallacea.

2. Introduction and Methodology

This evaluation seeks to inform future CEPF investment in the biodiversity hotspot by documenting lessons from Burung Indonesia's role as the RIT for Wallacea Phase II. A strength-based methodology was applied, focusing on effective practices and areas for growth.

There were seven evaluation criteria used, as requested by CEPF:

1. **Relevance**

Were the activities undertaken relevant to the ecosystem profile, RIT terms of reference, the geography of the hotspot, the capacity of civil society there, and the global monitoring framework of CEPF?

2. **Efficiency**

How efficiently was the budget allocated to the RIT converted into results?

3. **Effectiveness**

What were the strengths and weakness of the RIT structure and capacities with regard to effective delivery of results?

4. **Coverage**

To what extent does the portfolio of grants awarded to date cover the strategic directions and investment priorities set out in the investment strategy for the hotspot?

5. **Impact**

To what extent have the targets set in the hotspot ecosystem profile for impacts on biodiversity conservation, human wellbeing, civil society capacity and enabling conditions been met?

6. **Accessibility**

Does the grant portfolio involve an appropriate balance of international and local grantees, taking into account the relative strengths of different organizations with regard to delivery of the investment strategy and considering the priority given by CEPF to building the capacity of local civil society?

7. **Adaptive management**

In what ways has the development of the grant portfolio been constrained by risks (political/institutional/security/health) or taken advantage of unanticipated opportunities?

In addition, the evaluation also explored partners' perception on RIT's nine components and each function in the components as stated in its Terms of Reference.

Methods included:

- Desk review of grant documents and reports
- Interviews with 7 grantees, 2 donors, 3 members of CEPF Secretariat, and 3 RIT staff
- Questionnaire responses from 15 grantees, 3 private sector, 1 government partner

The questionnaires were tailored to each respondent type, meaning not all nine RIT components were rated quantitatively. Each component was presented based on each group's response. Qualitative analysis covers all components using interview and open-ended questionnaire responses.

3. Questionnaire Analysis

The questionnaire results across Components 1 to 7 reveals the trends in how Burung Indonesia's performance as RIT was perceived by grantees, private sector partners, and government respondents. Each figure represents a specific component, and within those, each function is scored on a 1–5 scale. This narrative highlights the highest and lowest scoring functions within each component and across all respondent types. In addition to the scoring, the respondents also provided inputs on what went well and what needs to be improved for each Component.

3.1. Component 1 – Coordinate CEPF’s program implementation in Wallacea

Grantees gave the highest scores to Function 3 (F3C1), which relates to Burung Indonesia’s engagement with conservation and development stakeholders to ensure collaboration and coordination, and Function 5 (F5C1), which deals with building partnerships among grantees. These scores reflect appreciation for Burung Indonesia’s visibility and networking facilitation. The lowest score among grantees in this component was for Function 2 (F2C1), which concerns promoting collaboration and funding opportunities — an area seen as slightly less impactful. Figure 2 shows similar trends from private sector respondents: they rated Functions 3 (engagement with stakeholders) as highest, while Function 2 again received the lowest rating. Meanwhile, in Figure 3, the government respondent gave a score of 5 across all functions, suggesting high satisfaction. However, all scores in average are above 4.0 which means the respondents considered all functions were considered very good or excellent in its achievements.

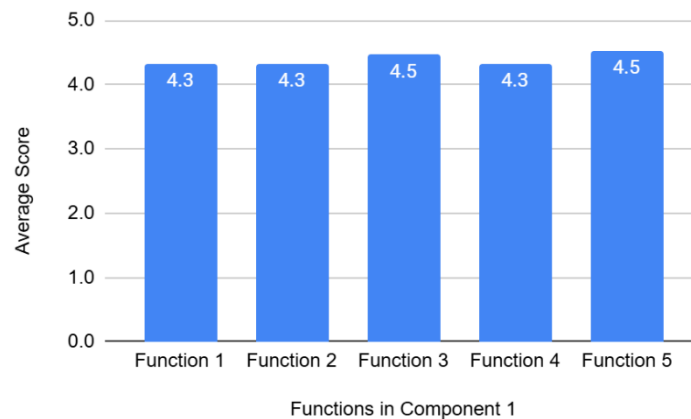


Figure 1. Grantee Ratings – Component 1

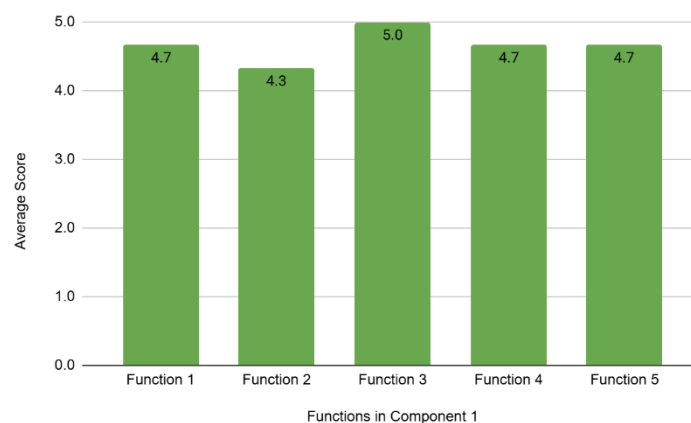


Figure 2. Private Sector Ratings – Component 1

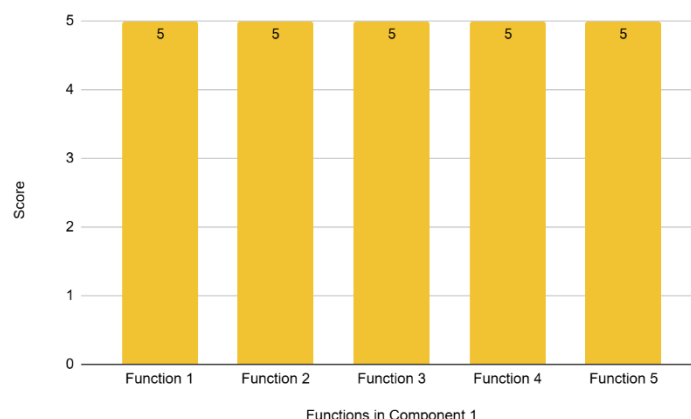


Figure 3. Government Rating – Component 1

Grantees consistently provided positive feedback to Burung Indonesia’s coordination, noting effective communication, field-based support, and relational trust. Coordination was described as responsive, grounded, and inclusive. Government respondents echoed this, citing Burung Indonesia’s empowerment of community institutions and its local field presence. They suggested, however, that Burung Indonesia could further strengthen inter-agency linkages and commitment beyond the civil society network.

Private sector respondents contributed additional perspectives, emphasizing Burung Indonesia’s professionalism, strong internal team, and extensive network. They particularly appreciated timely and organized communication. Recommendations from this group focused on deeper interaction with local stakeholders and increased public outreach, especially around species protection efforts.

3.2. Component 2 – Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices

Component 2 reveals more variation. As illustrated in Figures 4 and 5, both grantees and private sector respondents rated Function 1 (F1C2), concerning the support to civil society to engage with government and private sector, as the most effective. However, Function 2 (F3C2), which relates to the direct engagement with private sector partners and government officials and ensure their participation in implementation of key strategies is lower according to grantees, while the private sector and the government respondents rated all functions highly. Once again, the average total scoring for Component 2 is still above 4.

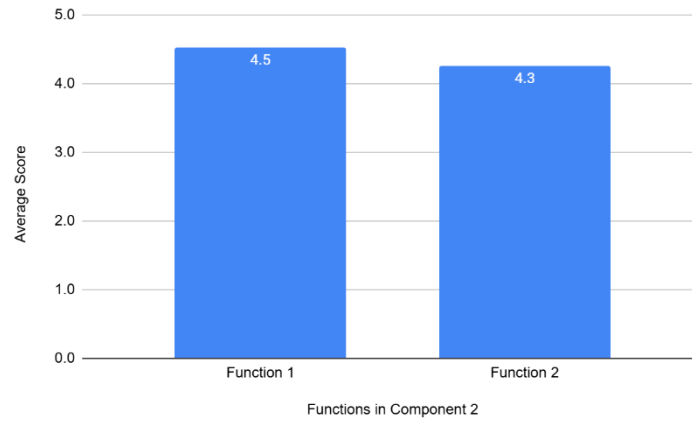


Figure 4. Grantee Ratings – Component 2

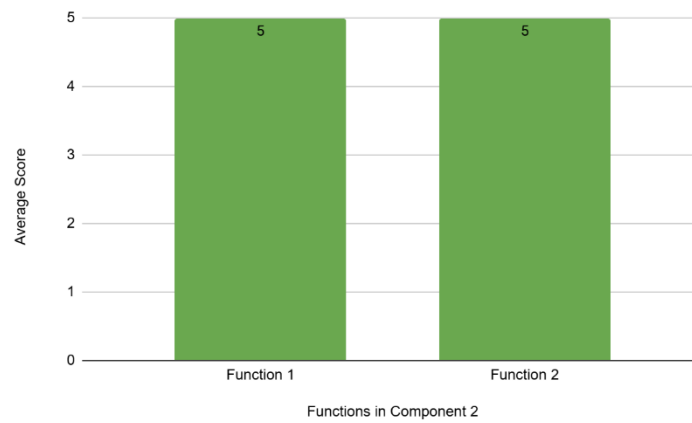


Figure 5. Private Sector Ratings – Component 2

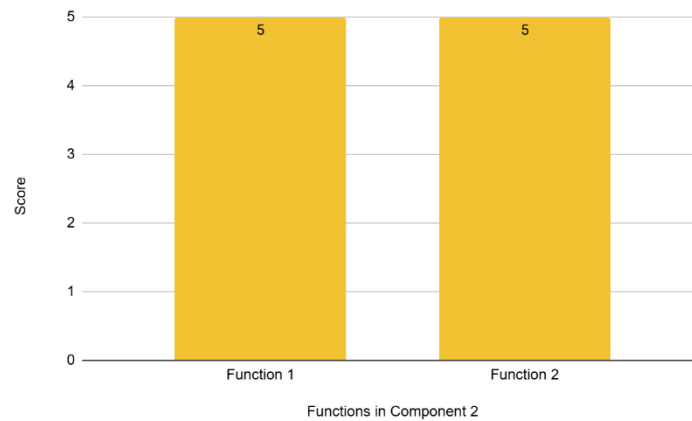


Figure 6. Government Rating – Component 2

Grantees highlighted the value of Burung Indonesia’s facilitation in community engagement and co-management strategies, noting contributions to local policy influence. Government responses credited Burung Indonesia with enhancing institutional governance. Both groups encouraged stronger engagement with public and private institutions and formal policy integration.

The private sector saw value in Burung Indonesia’s alignment of biodiversity goals with local planning and recognized its role in collaborative management. However, they called for longer-term support, broader engagement of private actors, and clearer outreach to sectors beyond conservation NGOs — reinforcing suggestions for more structured cross-sectoral strategies.

3.3.Component 3 – Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot

In Component 3, the pattern shifts slightly. Figure 7 shows that grantees found Function 4 (F4C3), on disseminating program’s lessons learned, to be the strongest function, whereas Function 2 (F2C3), developing communication materials, received the lowest score. Private sector ratings (Figure 8) showed strong appreciation for communication efforts (F1C3) but slightly lower enthusiasm for public-facing media tools (F3C3). Government ratings in Figure 9 were again high.

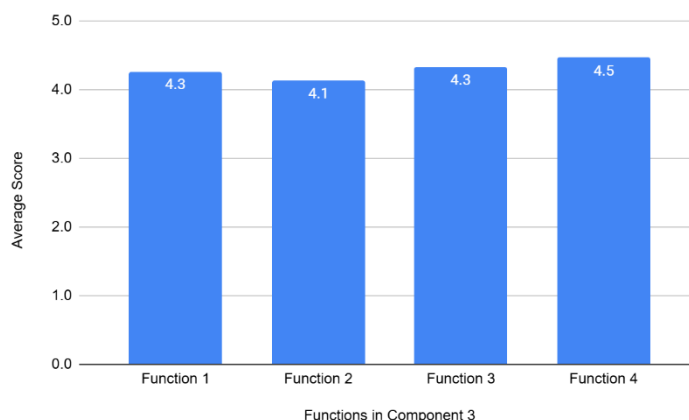


Figure 7. Grantee Ratings – Component 3

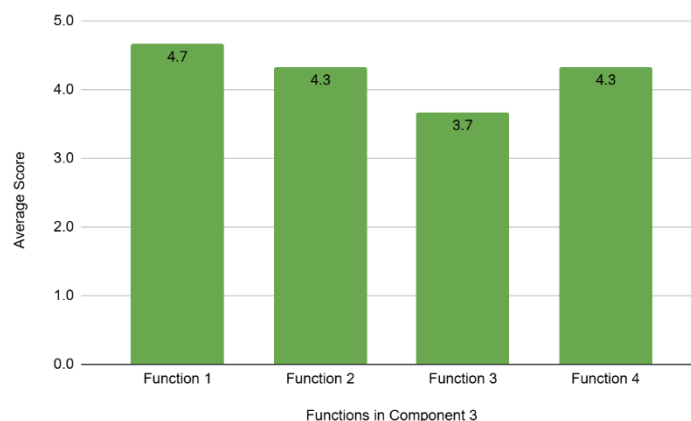


Figure 8. Private Sector Ratings – Component 3

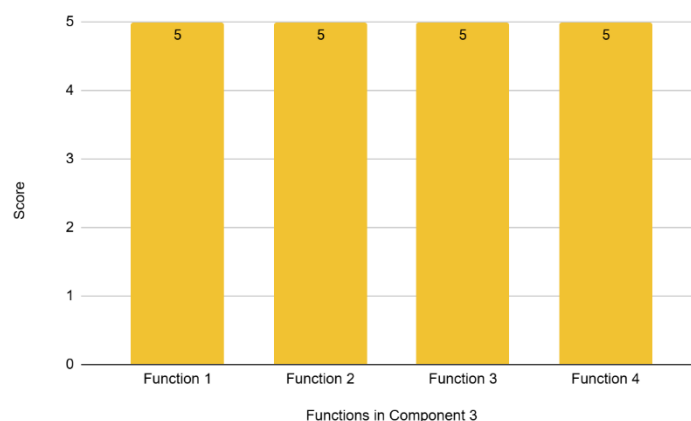


Figure 9. Government Rating – Component 3

Grantees acknowledged Burung Indonesia’s open and multi-platform communication approach, which fostered clarity and trust. Suggestions for improvement included greater visibility of success stories and more structured communication planning. Government input aligned, noting Burung Indonesia’s effective use of digital platforms, while encouraging more community-inclusive storytelling.

Private sector respondents reinforced this, citing in-person and digital interaction as effective. They recommended strengthening direct engagement with private partners, continuing joint meetings, and improving survey mechanisms to enhance feedback and follow-up.

3.4. Component 4 – Build the capacity of local civil society

For Component 4, the grantee responses (Figure 10) highlighted Function 3 (F3C4) — assisting the project design as the most valued. Function 6 (F6C4), focused on building the capacity of civil society to engage and influence the private sector, received lower ratings, possibly due to uneven training experiences. In Figure 11, the private sector rated Function 1 (F1C4), assessing capacity needs assessment, and Function 6, the highest. On Function 6, it is interesting to observe that the grantees and private sector and government have different perspectives, although the score is still above 4. Meanwhile, technical mentoring (F4C4) appeared less relevant to their role, earning the lowest scores. Government perception in Figure 12 remained highly positive and consistent.

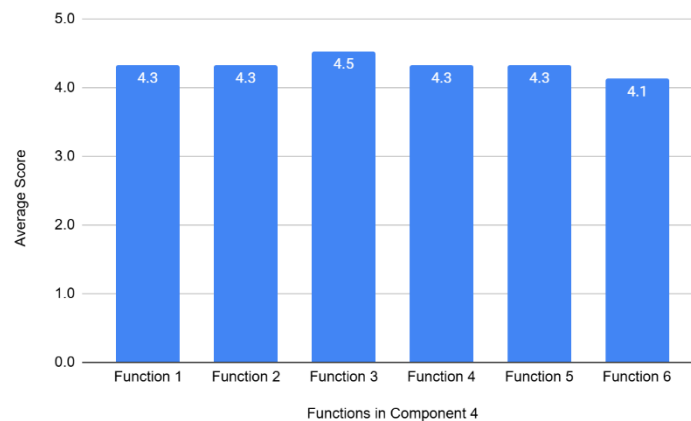


Figure 10. Grantee Ratings – Component 4

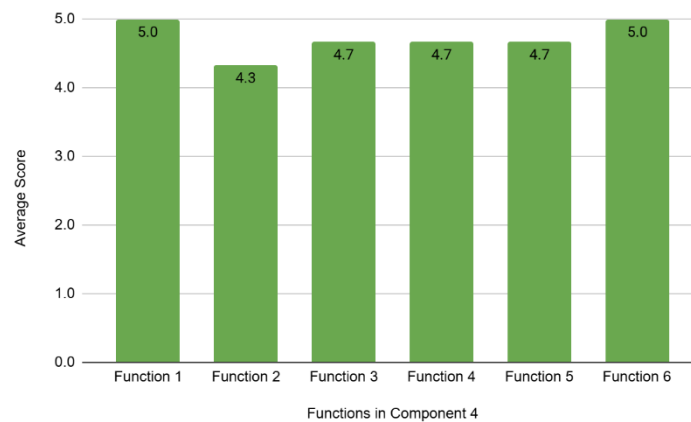


Figure 11. Private Sector Ratings – Component 4

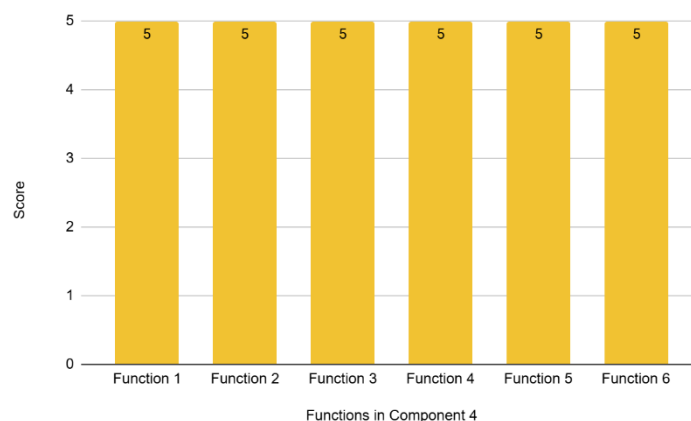


Figure 12. Government Rating – Component 4

Grantees credited Burung Indonesia with accessible and context-sensitive technical mentoring, particularly for local and emerging CSOs. Government feedback emphasized Burung Indonesia’s contribution to gender-inclusive capacity building and its community-level impact. A shared concern across both groups was the need for stronger sustainability planning beyond training events.

Private sector respondents identified financial and administrative management as capacity-building highlights. However, they suggested more structured follow-up, especially in program sustainability and on-the-ground accompaniment, to embed skills and ensure continuity.

3.5. Component 5 – Support the CEPF Secretariat process for solicitation and review of proposals for large grants (above threshold amount of between US\$ 20,000 and US\$ 50,000)

Component 5 shows clear support for Burung Indonesia’s mentorship role, particularly in proposal development. As seen in Figure 13, grantees gave the highest ratings to Function 2 (F2C5), which involved announcing the availability of CEPF grants. The rest of the Functions in component 5 received a similar score of 4.5, quite high and in line with grantees’ elaboration in the open-ended question that dividing themes to propose based on grantees’ seascape corridor have helped them tremendously. In Figure 14, the private sector respondents gave their highest rating to Function 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8 — the communication of proposal opportunities — but rated due diligence and proposal review (F4, F5 and F6C5) slightly lower, likely due to minimal engagement with that process. Government ratings, again seen in Figure 15, were high across all functions.

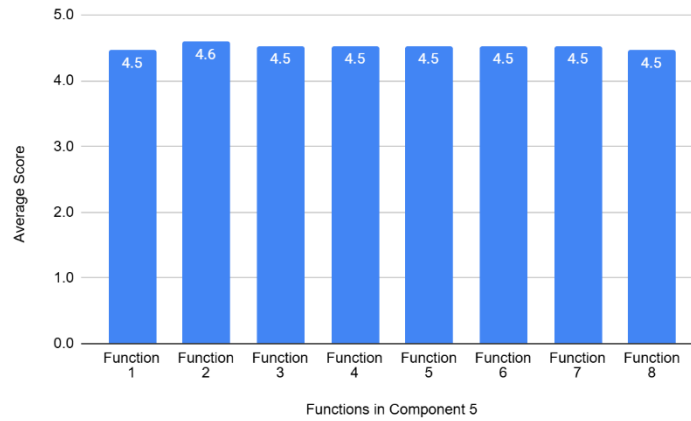


Figure 13. Grantee Ratings – Component 5

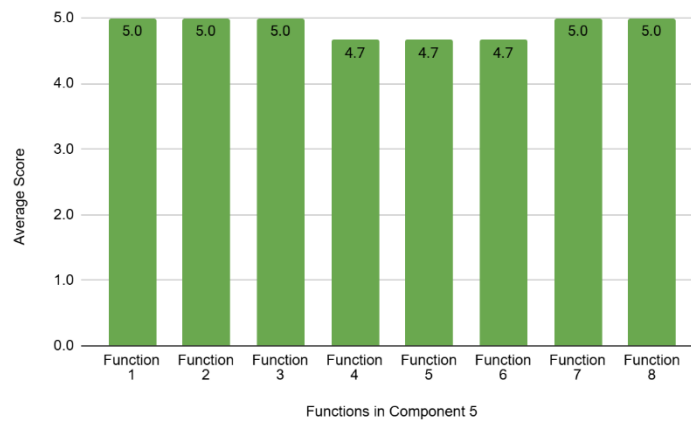


Figure 14. Private Sector Ratings – Component 5

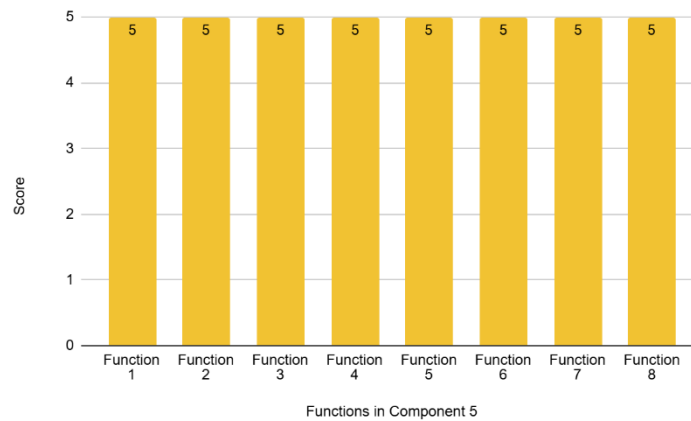


Figure 15. Government Rating – Component 5

Grantees appreciated Burung Indonesia’s clarity and fairness in the proposal process, especially the support provided to new applicants. However, they suggested more transparency in feedback and timelines, and adjustment between the funding provided compared to outcome expectations once the proposal was granted with adjustments. Government stakeholders endorsed the accessibility of the process but emphasized preparing community organizations for grant absorption.

Private sector actors described the process as generally effective but suggested clearer outreach, stronger communication during proposal phases, and improved involvement of partners in reviewing or shaping programs.

3.6. Component 6 – Manage a program of small grants (<\$20,000)

Component 6 has the most Functions that the respondents had to score. Grantees (Figure 16) rated Function 2 (F2C6) — announcing the availability of small grants — and Function 3 (F3C6) — supporting compliance — as most effective. Function 7 (F7C6) on managing fund disbursement, received a comparatively lower rating, indicating administrative challenges in reviewing the requirements or clarity of expectations. In the private sector (Figure 17), almost all Functions receive a 5 score except for Function 5, 7 and 13, echoing the grantee concerns. Figure 18 confirms that the government respondent viewed all functions under this component favorably.

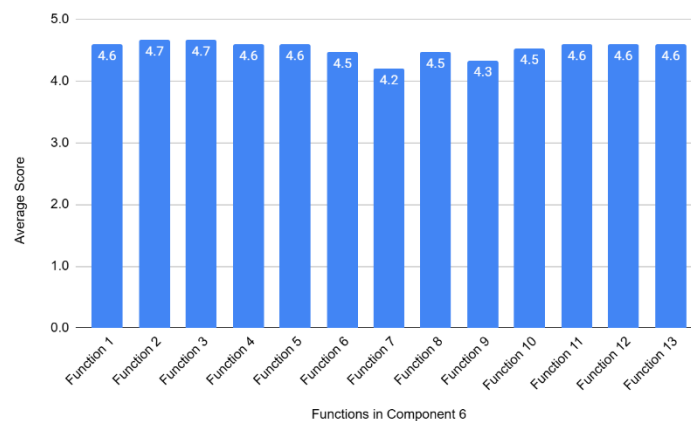


Figure 16. Grantee Ratings – Component 6

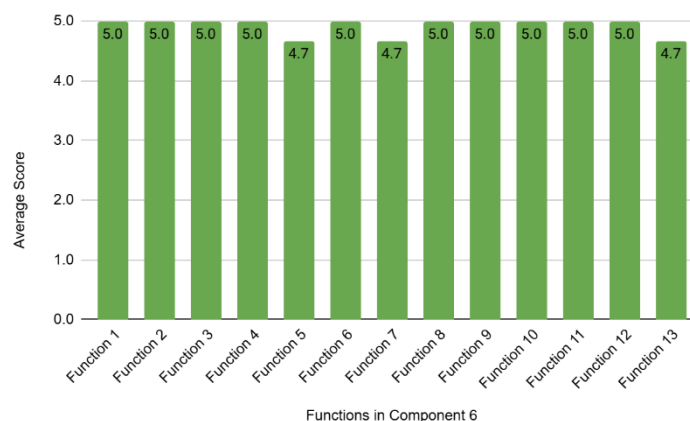


Figure 17. Private Sector Ratings – Component 6

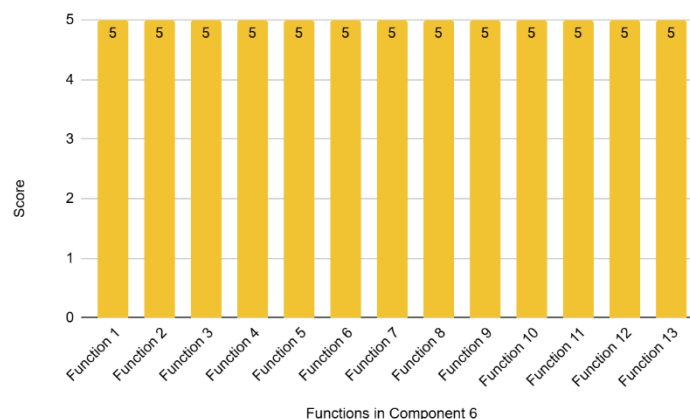


Figure 18. Government Rating – Component 6

Grantees emphasized Burung Indonesia’s supportive approach, its flexibility, and simplified administrative procedures. Nonetheless, delays in disbursement and complexity in financial reporting were noted. The government echoed these points, highlighting improved governance but calling for enhanced financial management training.

Private sector respondents found the grant structure accessible and appreciated the templates and guidance. Suggestions included extending implementation timeframes, improving transparency in announcements, and enhancing consistency in mentoring and follow-up.

3.7.Component 7 – Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF’s large and small grants

Component 7 displayed an interesting dynamic. In Figure 19, there are only slight differences across all functions, with Functions 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 have 4.5 ratings, suggesting strong appreciation for hands-on engagement. The lowest rating was for Function 8 (F8C7), site visits, a function often burdened by time and resource availability. Grantees expressed their needs for in-person mentoring during site visits – with ample time of preparation prior to the visit. For private sector respondents (Figure 20), Functions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7 were rated 5, all related to data collection and impact, while Functions 4, 6, 8 and 9 received the lowest. Figure 21 shows that the government respondent gave a top score to all M&E-related functions.

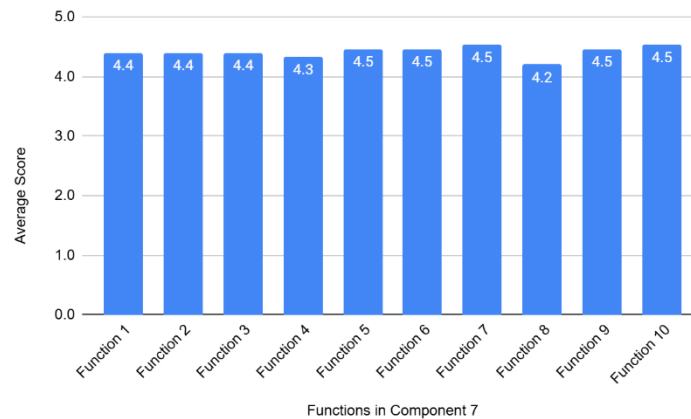


Figure 19. Grantee Ratings – Component 7

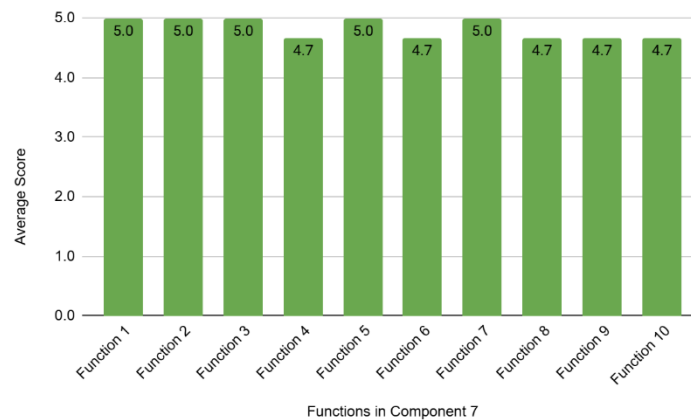


Figure 20. Private Sector Ratings – Component 7

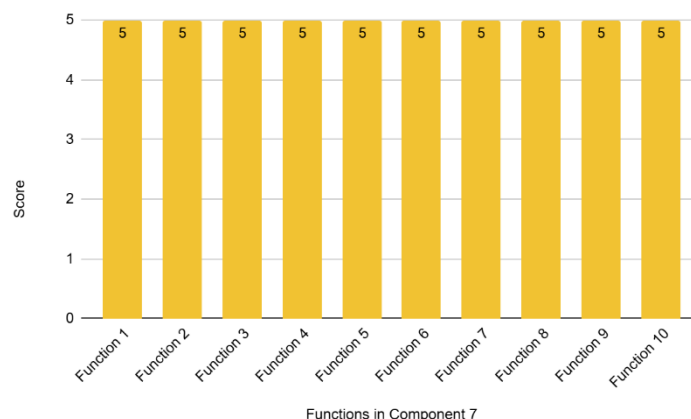


Figure 21. Government Rating – Component 7

Grantees valued Burung Indonesia’s participatory M&E processes, including field visits and adaptive learning opportunities. Recommendations included improving feedback mechanisms, expanding qualitative assessment, and enhancing the link between findings and organizational learning. Government respondents viewed M&E as a tool for strengthening institutional capacity and suggested improving participatory evaluation and linking outcomes to governance.

Private sector responses were aligned, highlighting field visits, regular check-ins, and clear guidance as strengths. They proposed retaining these practices while deepening documentation, feedback loops, and follow-through on evaluation findings.

Overall, this analysis indicates that across all components, the most consistently appreciated functions were those involving direct field engagement, mentoring, and policy interface — especially under Components 1, 4, and 7. Functions that required heavy administrative processing, such as reporting, risk review, and due diligence (seen particularly in Components 5, 6, and 7), were rated comparatively lower, especially by grantees and private sector stakeholders. Government responses, on the other hand, showed a positive view of Burung Indonesia’s performance, suggesting strong institutional alignment and satisfaction with the RIT’s delivery across the board.

4. Interview Analysis

Interview was conducted to Donors and Grantees. The interview analysis presents aggregated insights from seven civil society organizations and three donors in the Wallacea Phase II program. These grantee interviews were conducted to explore their experiences working with Burung Indonesia as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT), complementing findings from the quantitative and open-ended questionnaire responses. While the questionnaire explored the partners' perspective on each Function within the 7 out of 9 Components that are relevant to them, interview responses were analyzed thematically based on the seven themes as evaluation criteria.

The interview captured both consistent patterns and nuanced feedback across diverse local contexts. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of the RIT's relational, technical, and facilitative roles, offering qualitative depth to the performance evaluation and highlighting lessons for future program design and grantee support.

4.1 Grantees Interview Analysis

1. Relevance

Grantee reflections consistently affirm that the design and delivery of support by Burung Indonesia as the Regional Implementation Team was highly relevant to the strategic objectives of CEPF and the local context of the Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspot. From the outset, Burung Indonesia guided grantees in aligning their proposals with the ecosystem profile, CEPF's investment priorities, and the strengths and needs of their respective communities. Interviewees described this alignment process as "a lot of discussion" and "active communication from the beginning," often involving direct feedback on concept notes, problem trees, and indicators. This early support helped partners focus not only on what was urgent for biodiversity conservation, but also on what was realistic given their field realities.

For several grantees, Burung Indonesia's role in refining proposals helped expand their focus. In one case, Burung Indonesia encouraged a partner to integrate species conservation into what was initially an advocacy-focused initiative. This shifted the program from purely awareness-building to direct ecological intervention, which the grantee later described as a breakthrough that "now protects specific species on our site." Others reported that Burung Indonesia helped ensure their geographic and thematic focus met CEPF's corridor and strategic direction criteria, without compromising community relevance. Terms like "strengthening local regulation," "building multi-stakeholder agreement," and "linking to government village planning" appear frequently, reflecting a consistent emphasis on contextual relevance.

Burung Indonesia also helped grantees understand CEPF's global monitoring framework and how their outputs contributed to it. Many said they gained new skills in articulating outcomes and tracking conservation metrics. This was particularly meaningful for small, community-based organizations that had never engaged with a results-based funding framework before. As a result, the partnership was not just about funding. It created clarity, structure, and strategic focus that reinforced both conservation and institutional development goals. In this sense, Burung Indonesia's support was not only relevant, it was catalytic.

2. Efficiency

Efficiency in project implementation was shaped by Burung Indonesia's relational approach, real-time responsiveness, and active field presence. Grantees often emphasized that Burung Indonesia was "quick to respond," "open to discussion," and "easily reachable via WhatsApp or Zoom." These qualities allowed for smooth troubleshooting and minimized potential delays at the operational level. Interviewees cited the availability of regional coordinators and finance staff as an efficient support system, helping organizations adapt workplans, clarify budget lines, and submit required documentation without unnecessary procedural burden.

However, despite these relational strengths, many grantees flagged challenges related to administrative efficiency. Delays in fund disbursement emerged as a common constraint. This was especially difficult for grassroots organizations that lacked reserves to pre-finance activities. While most acknowledged that Burung Indonesia staff were communicative and empathetic, the structural bottlenecks around financial processing and report verification sometimes slowed implementation. One grantee noted that "we had to look for bridge funds just to run the activities while waiting."

Yet even in these moments, Burung Indonesia was recognized for its efforts to find practical solutions. Several interviewees noted that Burung Indonesia remained committed to helping grantees stay on schedule, whether by assisting with justification letters, adjusting milestones, or revising workplans. Some mentioned that the templates provided by Burung Indonesia, though initially daunting, ultimately helped them develop internal systems that improved their long-term efficiency. Grantees who had worked with other donors compared Burung Indonesia's approach favorably, stating that the reporting system was "still manageable" and "less rigid" compared to larger institutions.

Ultimately, while there were identifiable delays at the administrative level, grantees perceived that Burung Indonesia worked diligently to minimize disruptions. The combination of personal commitment, field-level communication, and adaptive flexibility allowed most organizations to achieve their objectives on time and within budget albeit sometimes with strain. The experience reinforced for many grantees the value of responsive facilitation and efficient systems that are grounded in mutual understanding.

3. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of Burung Indonesia as the RIT was most visible in how it enabled grantees to navigate complexity, whether administrative, ecological, or relational. Across the interviews, grantees described Burung Indonesia not merely as a fund manager, but as a “mentor,” “collaborator,” and “thought partner.” Burung Indonesia’s guidance went beyond form-filling; it extended into helping grantees clarify their strategies, identify gaps in their interventions, and rethink their engagement with stakeholders. In many cases, Burung Indonesia helped transform abstract ideas into actionable and community-rooted conservation work.

For instance, Burung Indonesia’s suggestion to include species conservation in a previously advocacy-only project led one grantee to identify and protect two turtle species, eventually forming a dedicated community group. Another grantee shared how Burung Indonesia’s accompaniment during field visits helped them negotiate with local governments and pass a village regulation, something they might not have pursued on their own. These examples underscore the impact of Burung Indonesia’s contextual and constructive support, particularly in bridging policy with field-level practice.

At the organizational level, effectiveness was seen in Burung Indonesia’s ability to “respond quickly,” “tailor their advice,” and “speak in the same language” as local implementers. The capacity development provided, whether through formal mentoring or informal conversations, improved institutional readiness, sharpened project implementation, and enhanced the overall delivery of outcomes. Several grantees explicitly stated that their ability to meet targets and report comprehensively was due in part to Burung Indonesia’s patient and structured guidance.

However, grantees also identified some areas for strengthening effectiveness. Staff turnover was mentioned as disruptive—new contacts were sometimes unfamiliar with previous discussions, requiring re-explanation and reducing momentum. Others pointed to delays in feedback on reports or approvals as moments when effectiveness could have been higher.

Despite these challenges, Burung Indonesia was widely seen as an effective enabler of success. Their approach to partnership—grounded in trust, field-level presence, and technical competence, empowered grantees to deliver on biodiversity outcomes while growing in their own capacities.

4. Coverage

Although grantees did not always use the term “coverage,” their feedback indicates that Burung Indonesia played a crucial role in guiding CEPF funding toward geographies and thematic areas aligned with the Wallacea ecosystem profile. Many partners mentioned that their projects took place in areas often overlooked by larger donors or government programs. These were villages with limited infrastructure, weak state presence, or few conservation actors. With Burung Indonesia’s support, these organizations were able to work in such areas and introduce context-sensitive conservation actions.

Grantees also shared how Burung Indonesia supported them in aligning their proposals with CEPF's strategic directions. This included protecting threatened species, supporting community-based marine management, and integrating biodiversity into village-level planning. Some projects were initially focused on environmental education or community awareness but were then refined to include measurable biodiversity outcomes based on Burung Indonesia's guidance. For example, a grantee aiming to engage youth was encouraged to link their activities to marine turtle conservation and coastal habitat protection.

Thematically, the portfolio benefitted from Burung Indonesia's role in encouraging diverse approaches. Projects supported included shark and turtle conservation, mangrove protection, sustainable fisheries, and ecotourism. Grantees also noted that Burung Indonesia promoted the inclusion of cross-cutting themes such as gender, community economic resilience, and stakeholder dialogues. This broadened the impact and reach of each project, ensuring that grant activities not only met biodiversity targets but also contributed to social inclusion and local development.

Furthermore, Burung Indonesia's coordination helped grantees connect with one another. In some cases, organizations discovered that they were working in neighboring locations or shared the same marine corridor. While these collaborations were often informal, they reflect Burung Indonesia's success in fostering a well-distributed and coherent grant portfolio that addressed both geographic priorities and thematic depth.

5. Impact

Grantees provided a rich array of examples illustrating the impact of their projects and the role of Burung Indonesia in enabling them. These impacts were visible not only in biodiversity outcomes but also in strengthened local governance, improved livelihoods, and increased organizational capacity. Several interviewees spoke of ecological achievements such as the establishment of marine protected areas, increased nesting success for sea turtles, and the recovery of traditional fisheries zones. These successes were often backed by newly enacted village regulations or multi-stakeholder agreements facilitated through Burung Indonesia's support.

Human wellbeing impacts were also reported. In many cases, project activities supported alternative livelihoods such as ecotourism, community-led fish processing, and craft-based micro-enterprises. These were especially meaningful in areas where economic opportunities were limited and pressure on natural resources was high. Grantees credited Burung Indonesia for helping communities recognize the long-term benefits of conservation and for creating opportunities to strengthen social cohesion and pride in place-based identity.

Institutional impact was equally significant. Organizations described how working with Burung Indonesia improved their ability to manage donor funds, track progress, and document results. One grantee shared that after working with Burung Indonesia, they were invited to present at regional forums and later received funding from other international donors. Others reported that

their internal systems became more organized, and that their staff gained confidence in engaging with government and private stakeholders.

Grantees were candid about the challenges they faced, particularly around delays in fund disbursement, but they did not allow these to overshadow the broader transformative outcomes of their projects. With Burung Indonesia's consistent mentoring and flexibility, many partners not only met their targets but also planted seeds for longer-term impact in conservation, governance, and community empowerment.

6. Accessibility

Accessibility was one of the most valued aspects of Burung Indonesia's facilitation. For many grantees, particularly those that were small or community-based, this was their first experience applying for and managing international donor funds. Despite the emphasis that the evaluation focus was on Phase II, they could not separate their experience in the first phase of the program. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized that Burung Indonesia was approachable, non-intimidating, and open to engaging with organizations that had not previously worked in donor-funded environments. This accessibility began at the concept note stage, where Burung Indonesia supported applicants through discussions and feedback, helping them clarify their ideas and align their proposals with CEPF priorities.

Several respondents contrasted Burung Indonesia's approach with past experiences, noting that Burung Indonesia "did not judge us for being small" and "really listened to what we wanted to do." Burung Indonesia's staff were commended for their patience and practical support, especially in navigating proposal formats, budget planning, and compliance with donor standards. These practices allowed many grassroots organizations to access resources that had previously been out of reach.

Some areas for improvement were also mentioned. A few grantees noted that more transparency during the proposal selection process would be helpful. Others suggested simplifying budget formats and offering clearer explanations about funding ceilings and component restrictions. In some cases, adjustments had to be made mid-project due to initial mismatches between expectations and final grant size. Nevertheless, these were not seen as barriers but as areas for refinement in an otherwise inclusive process.

The overall sentiment was that Burung Indonesia opened doors to a broader range of actors and made space for authentic, locally rooted conservation initiatives. By doing so, Burung Indonesia helped fulfill CEPF's commitment to strengthening local civil society, ensuring that funding mechanisms supported not only professional NGOs but also emerging grassroots groups with deep community ties.

7. Adaptive Management

Grantees strongly affirmed Burung Indonesia's capacity to support adaptive management throughout project implementation. Several described how Burung Indonesia's flexibility allowed

them to adjust activities in response to changing local conditions. This included shifts in village leadership, natural disasters, political transitions, or delays in government endorsement. Interviewees frequently used terms like “very flexible,” “helped us revise,” and “not rigid” to describe how Burung Indonesia responded to such situations.

In one case, a project that faced local resistance was able to pivot and reallocate resources to a more receptive site. Another grantee shared that Burung Indonesia allowed them to change their training module when new stakeholders joined the program mid-cycle. These kinds of changes were often made with Burung Indonesia’s support in planning, justification, and reporting, helping grantees maintain compliance while remaining responsive to local dynamics.

Burung Indonesia also encouraged reflection and learning. Several partners noted that Burung Indonesia welcomed honest reporting about challenges and failures, rather than focusing only on achievements. This created a culture of trust that empowered grantees to propose solutions rather than feel constrained by static workplans. Some mentioned that Burung Indonesia was proactive in helping them identify new opportunities as they emerged, such as collaborating with other projects or leveraging government programs for co-financing.

A few challenges were noted. Staff transitions at Burung Indonesia sometimes slowed decision-making, and some adaptive changes took longer to approve due to procedural steps. However, these issues were seen as manageable within the broader context of Burung Indonesia’s commitment to flexibility.

In summary, adaptive management was a defining strength of the RIT’s facilitation. Grantees felt supported not just in executing a fixed plan but in responding creatively and effectively to evolving conditions. This adaptability contributed significantly to the overall success and relevance of the projects.

4.2 Donor Interview Analysis

1. Relevance

Donor representatives affirmed that Burung Indonesia’s role as the Regional Implementation Team was highly relevant to their strategic focus areas and added strong value to the implementation of conservation goals in Wallacea. Burung Indonesia was credited with directing support to community-based organizations that donors would not otherwise have been able to reach directly. This helped ensure that funding not only aligned with ecosystem priorities but also responded to local realities. Burung Indonesia’s contextual understanding, especially in coastal, marine, and terrestrial systems, helped donors meet their broader environmental and development objectives. Its facilitation allowed for a portfolio that reflected both field-based conservation priorities and donor expectations, including the promotion of equity, sustainability,

and inclusive local development. Interviewees acknowledged that Burung Indonesia successfully helped bridge the strategic direction of the investment with grassroots relevance and, in doing so, enhanced both the substance and the legitimacy of the program.

2. Efficiency

Donors recognized Burung Indonesia for its careful, structured financial and programmatic management. Burung Indonesia was viewed as having solid internal systems that ensured accuracy and accountability. Finance and grant teams were described as diligent and precise in preparing documentation and handling multiple grants. These qualities helped donors fulfill their own reporting obligations and contributed to trust in Burung Indonesia's institutional reliability. However, it was also noted that the same level of thoroughness occasionally resulted in delays in data processing and grant closure. Suggestions were made to simplify the volume of data entry required and to delegate some responsibilities across more personnel to ease pressure on key staff. The balance between rigor and responsiveness was seen as an area for continued refinement. Still, Burung Indonesia's overall commitment to accountability, transparency, and partner support was praised as a major asset to the efficiency of the grantmaking process.

3. Effectiveness

Donors consistently viewed Burung Indonesia as an effective and reliable partner in delivering conservation outcomes. The organization was praised for its technical guidance, field presence, and ability to build trust with grantees and stakeholders. One interviewee pointed to a successful regional event facilitated by Burung Indonesia as evidence of its convening power and credibility with government, civil society, and the donor community. Others noted Burung Indonesia's strength in training delivery, support for gender integration, and mentoring of small organizations. Burung Indonesia was seen not only as a competent administrator but also as a learning partner that supported grantees to meet donor standards while maintaining their own identity and approach. Its embeddedness in the local context allowed it to anticipate challenges and navigate field dynamics with sensitivity and effectiveness. Donors agreed that Burung Indonesia played a critical role in ensuring that grantees had the support they needed to succeed while simultaneously advancing strategic conservation goals.

4. Coverage

Interviewees shared that Burung Indonesia had contributed to broadening the geographic and thematic reach of the investment. By actively supporting community-based and underrepresented organizations, Burung Indonesia helped ensure that grantmaking was not concentrated in urban centers or among elite institutions. Donors valued Burung Indonesia's ability to engage with local actors in remote and ecologically important areas, including island and coastal communities with limited institutional access. In doing so, Burung Indonesia ensured that conservation funds reached communities working at the frontlines of biodiversity management. Thematic coverage was also enhanced through Burung Indonesia's facilitation, with projects spanning issues such as species conservation, marine management, and local governance. Donors appreciated that Burung Indonesia was able to translate strategic investment priorities into a

balanced portfolio that reflected both ecological significance and social inclusion. This breadth of coverage reinforced the relevance and impact of the grantmaking process as a whole.

5. Impact

Donors highlighted a range of program impacts that were enabled by Burung Indonesia's coordination. These included stronger local ownership of conservation initiatives, improved grantee capacity, and increased recognition of biodiversity in regional policy dialogue. One donor reflected on how community-based organizations, initially unfamiliar with donor systems, were now submitting high-quality reports and participating confidently in multi-stakeholder events. The visibility of smaller organizations increased substantially, with some grantees gaining invitations to national meetings or securing new funding sources. Burung Indonesia's mentoring and presence throughout the grant lifecycle contributed to this transformation. Additionally, Burung Indonesia's convening efforts brought together a diversity of actors, fostering joint learning and collaboration. Events supported by Burung Indonesia were noted for their inclusivity and impact, particularly in facilitating cross-sector understanding of conservation issues. While administrative challenges were acknowledged, donors affirmed that Burung Indonesia had significantly contributed to both ecological and institutional impact across the Wallacea hotspot.

Grantees were candid about the challenges they faced, particularly around delays in fund disbursement, but they did not allow these to overshadow the broader transformative outcomes of their projects. With Burung Indonesia's consistent mentoring and flexibility, many partners not only met their targets but also planted seeds for longer-term impact in conservation, governance, and community empowerment.

6. Accessibility

Donor perspectives clearly emphasized Burung Indonesia's critical role in making the grant mechanism more accessible to local and emerging organizations. Several interviewees acknowledged that the structure of the funding program would have been difficult for smaller groups to navigate without Burung Indonesia's guidance. Burung Indonesia was commended for helping potential grantees understand proposal requirements, develop their ideas, and align with strategic priorities. Their accessibility extended beyond proposal writing to include frequent communication and flexible support throughout implementation. Burung Indonesia's efforts to work across language barriers and varying levels of digital literacy were also appreciated. At the same time, it was suggested that the grant cycle could benefit from clearer budget guidance during the application stage, and from additional support staff to manage administrative processing of small grants. Despite these areas for improvement, donors agreed that Burung Indonesia played an indispensable role in ensuring the inclusivity and diversity of the portfolio by lowering the barrier to entry for civil society actors.

7. Adaptive Management

Donors affirmed that Burung Indonesia demonstrated strong adaptive management throughout the grant cycle. Its responsiveness to changing conditions, stakeholder needs, and emerging risks

was frequently cited as a key success factor. Burung Indonesia was acknowledged for maintaining open communication with donors and grantees and for proactively proposing solutions when plans required adjustment. Interviewees described how Burung Indonesia supported adaptation in response to logistical, political, or environmental disruptions, without compromising accountability or impact. The organization's familiarity with field realities allowed it to adjust timelines, revise approaches, and facilitate learning between partners in real time. Some concern was raised about the concentration of decision-making responsibilities among a few individuals, which posed challenges during periods of staff transition. Nevertheless, donors expressed confidence in Burung Indonesia's capacity to manage adaptively and encouraged investment in stronger systems and team-wide capacity to ensure resilience. The overall assessment highlighted Burung Indonesia's commitment to flexibility, problem-solving, and shared ownership of outcomes.

5. Key Findings

1. Burung Indonesia was widely appreciated for its relational and contextual approach, enabling strong alignment with local realities and ecosystem priorities. Its support helped grantees navigate complex donor requirements and successfully implement conservation programs in remote and underrepresented areas.
2. Field presence and technical mentoring were key strengths. Across all stakeholder groups, Burung Indonesia's participatory mentoring, hands-on accompaniment, and local facilitation were the most highly rated functions. These were especially effective under Components 1 (coordination), 4 (capacity building), and 7 (monitoring and evaluation).
3. Administrative burdens and delays in fund disbursement emerged as recurring challenges. Grantees and donors both cited efficiency gaps in financial reporting, disbursement timelines, and grant closure. Despite this, Burung Indonesia was recognized for its effort to remain communicative and solution-oriented.
4. Burung Indonesia played a critical role in enhancing accessibility for grassroots and community-based organizations, many of whom had no prior experience with international grants. Burung Indonesia's support was instrumental in increasing participation and ensuring an inclusive grant portfolio.
5. Thematic and geographic coverage was well distributed. Burung Indonesia enabled a balanced portfolio aligned with strategic priorities, covering marine and terrestrial biodiversity, community governance, gender equity, and sustainable livelihoods.
6. The program generated tangible impacts in biodiversity conservation, community empowerment, and institutional growth. This included strengthened local regulations, expanded protected areas, and improved organizational performance among grantees.

7. Adaptive management was a strong suit, particularly in response to field-level risks and changes. However, internal staffing bottlenecks and data processing responsibilities were noted as constraints to timely response in some instances.

6. Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Streamline financial and administrative processes by investing in dedicated staff and simplified tools for small grants management, including reporting, disbursement, and grant closure systems. This will reduce delays and improve overall delivery efficiency.
2. Enhance post-training follow-up and sustainability planning by integrating structured mentoring and cross-learning opportunities among grantees. Strengthening field accompaniment and long-term capacity strategies will reinforce the sustainability of conservation gains.
3. Strengthen internal continuity and team-wide capacity to manage adaptive decisions and stakeholder engagement, especially during staff transitions. This includes broader delegation and improved internal communication systems.
4. Expand strategic communication and visibility efforts, particularly to share success stories, lessons learned, and policy contributions more broadly with government, private sector, and the public.
5. Support more formalized collaboration among grantees and partners, including corridor-level convenings or learning clusters, to foster synergies, peer mentoring, and stronger collective impact across the hotspot.

7. Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all individuals and organizations who contributed to this evaluation. Special thank you to the grantees, government representatives, private sector partners, and philanthropic organizations who generously shared their time, insights, and reflections through interviews and surveys. Your perspectives were invaluable in understanding the achievements, challenges, and future potential of the program. I also extend my appreciation to the Regional Implementation Team at Burung Indonesia for their openness, cooperation, and professionalism throughout the process. This evaluation was enriched by your transparency and commitment to continuous improvement. Finally, I thank the CEPF Secretariat for their guidance and support in shaping the scope and focus of this work. While the findings and recommendations presented are those of the evaluator, they are deeply informed by the thoughtful contributions of all stakeholders involved. This report is dedicated to advancing collective learning in biodiversity conservation in Wallacea.

Appendix 1. Interview Narrative and Key Questions

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your insights are valuable in helping us evaluate the performance of Burung Indonesia as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the CEPF's Wallacea Partnership Program.

This interview is part of an independent evaluation conducted by myself, Galuh Sekar Arum, a consultant hired by CEPF. I would like to inform you of the following:

Your participation is entirely voluntary.

This interview will last for 45-60 minutes.

You may choose not to answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.

With your permission, we may take notes or record the interview for transcription purposes.

Any recordings will be securely stored and deleted after analysis.

The information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your responses will be anonymized in the report unless you explicitly agree to be identified.

The objective is to understand what went well and how future programs can be improved, not to evaluate individuals.

By proceeding with the interview, you acknowledge that you have understood this information and consent to participate. If you have any concerns or wish to withdraw at any point, please let me know.

Thank you again for your time and contribution.

Key Questions

a. Grantees

What kind of support from Burung Indonesia has been most helpful for your project's success?

Can you describe a positive experience or milestone in your project that was made possible by Burung Indonesia's support?

How would you describe Burung Indonesia's responsiveness and support during the implementation period?

What improvements would you suggest for future Burung Indonesia in supporting its partners' needs?

In what ways has your organization grown or improved its capacity through this partnership with Burung Indonesia?

b. Donors/Philanthropic Partners

- 1) Which aspects of Burung Indonesia's coordination and reporting added the most value to your organization?
- 2) Can you share a moment or output that, for you, illustrates Burung Indonesia's effectiveness in delivering the program?
- 3) How well did Burung Indonesia manage collaboration and alignment with your organization's priorities and expectations?
- 4) What could be enhanced in terms of strategic oversight and transparency from a future RIT?
- 5) How did Burung Indonesia contribute to your understanding of the regional conservation landscape?

c. Government Partners

- 1) What contributions did Burung Indonesia make to government-led conservation goals or policies?
- 2) How effective was Burung Indonesia in engaging and coordinating with your agency/institution?
- 3) Can you share an example of successful collaboration or support provided by Burung Indonesia?
- 4) What could a future RIT do better in aligning with government systems and priorities?
- 5) How has Burung Indonesia supported capacity development or knowledge exchange within your institution?

d. Private Sector Partners

- 1) How did Burung Indonesia help facilitate your involvement in conservation efforts in the region?
- 2) Can you describe a specific collaboration or activity with Burung Indonesia that stood out to you?
- 3) How did Burung Indonesia demonstrate value for your organization's conservation-related goals or CSR?
- 4) What future opportunities do you see for a RIT to engage more meaningfully with private sector actors?
- 5) How could Burung Indonesia better support innovation, co-investment, or shared value partnerships?

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

Introduction

RIT Performance Evaluation Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this evaluation. This questionnaire is part of the evaluation of lessons learned in relation to the performance of Burung Indonesia as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for CEPF's Project in the Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspot, Phase II or Wallacea Partnership Program II. Your responses will provide valuable insights into what worked well and how future efforts can be improved.

This questionnaire will take about 15-20 minutes of your time.

We are using a **strength-based approach**—this means we are particularly interested in understanding Burung Indonesia's strengths, best practices, and ways to enhance performance further.

Your participation is voluntary. All responses will be kept confidential and anonymized in the reporting process. No individual or organization will be identified in the final public report without explicit permission. Your honest and constructive feedback is deeply appreciated and will help shape future conservation investments in the region.

By proceeding with the questionnaire, you acknowledge that:

- You understand the purpose of this evaluation.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.
- You consent to the use of your anonymized data for analysis and reporting.

Instructions for Quantitative Questions

Burung Indonesia as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for CEPF's Project in the Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspot, Phase II or Wallacea Partnership Program II to implement 9 Project Components. Within each Component, there are functions required to be performed.

Please rate each function using the following scale:


- 1 = Poor
- 2 = Fair
- 3 = Good
- 4 = Very Good

5 = Excellent

Content of Questionnaire

Based on the discussion with Burung Indonesia on the Evaluation Framework, the questionnaire is differentiated for donors, grantees, governments and private sector. For donors, the questionnaire is in English and includes all 9 components and functions. For grantees, governments and private sector, component 9 is removed since it is not relevant in the context of their partnership with Burung Indonesia. The questionnaires could be found in the links and QR code in the table below.

Table 2. Link and QR code of the questionnaires

Audience	Questionnaire Link	Questionnaire QR Code
Donor	https://bit.ly/RITeval2025_1	
Grantee	https://bit.ly/RITeval2025_2	

Government	https://bit.ly/RITEval2025_3	 A square QR code with a black and white pixelated pattern. In the bottom right corner, the word "bitly" is written in a small, lowercase, sans-serif font.
Private Sector	https://bit.ly/RITEval2025_4	 A square QR code with a black and white pixelated pattern. In the bottom right corner, the word "bitly" is written in a small, lowercase, sans-serif font.