Labor Management Procedures

Date: 16/11/2023

CEPF Grant 113803

Grantee: Ebony Forest Ltd

Project Title: Restoring degraded forests in Mauritius

Project Location:
Vallée De L'Est (MUS-02)
Ebony Forest Chamarel (MUS-03)
Mauritius, Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands

Grant Summary

1) **Grantee organization – Ebony Forest Ltd**
2) **Grant title – Restoring degraded forest in Mauritius**
3) **Grant number - 113803**
4) **Grant amount (US dollars) - $272,500**
5) **Proposed dates of grant – 12/1/2023 – 12/31/2026**
6) **Countries or territories where project will be undertaken - Mauritius**
7) **Summary of the project**

PROJECT RATIONALE

Climate change impacts on Mauritius

Mauritius is amongst the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. Tidal surges, cyclones, droughts, and floods will directly affect food security, human health, crop and livestock diseases and ultimately our daily lives. The greatest challenges identified in the National Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework for the Republic of Mauritius are severe reduction in water supply, with projected demand outstripping supply; declines in agriculture production due to rainfall variability; loss of natural terrestrial and marine habitats; and the loss of natural assets such as beaches that are the pillar of the tourism industry. While climate change and climate variability will affect all Mauritian residents, it is and will continue to disproportionately impact those more disadvantaged.

Climate change impacts at the local scale

This application is to work at two sites that occur in the poorest areas of Mauritius: Vallée De L'Est in the Bambous Mountain Range (MUS-02) and Ebony Forest in the Chamarel-Le Morne KBA (MUS-03). Both forested sites are important water catchment areas and supply groundwater reserves. Ebony Forest is a feeder site for the proposed Chamarel dam, which could supply the dry west and south-west regions, where water shortages are common throughout the year.

In the last decade, the intensity and frequency of flash flooding has increased leading to damage to public and private infrastructure, loss of income and in some instances life. Flooding and landslides in both areas will be further exacerbated by the conversion of forested and agricultural land for development. Despite being an Environmentally Sensitive Area, forested land is being cleared to construct residential housing on the boundaries of Ebony Forest.

Agricultural land, mainly banana and sugar cane crops, in the Anse Jonchée valley, where Vallée De L'Est is found on the mountain top, is being abandoned due to low soil fertility, poor productivity and frequent crop loss due to flash flooding. Soil erosion due to overgrazing, the limited water retention and infiltration capacity of the above ground biomass, and poor soil fertility is increasing sea water turbidity in the Anse Jonchée bay and affecting marine habitats, fish populations and possible the aquaculture farm, Ferme Marine de Mahebourg, which provides fish for the local and international market. The majority of inhabitants around Anse Jonchée are fisherpeople and/or small planters, relying heavily on nature. Degradation of the terrestrial and marine ecosystems instantly affects their livelihoods. The South Eastern Highway, a road project abandoned in 2005, is being re-discussed with proposed routes crossing the Bambous Mountain Range, close to Ferney Valley. The construction of this road and subsequent associated infrastructure and development would further stress this degraded landscape.

Conserving and restoring remnant endemic forest, such as at Ebony Forest and Vallée De L'Est, will contribute to mitigating some of the effects of climate change in the short and long term on the local people, simultaneously benefitting society and biodiversity. Biodiverse rich forests are more resilient to climate change, offering greater ecosystem services in terms of ecotourism value, soil fertility, reduced risk of soil erosion, water purification and replenishment of groundwater, and have greater above and below-ground carbon sequestration potential, which can help reduce global warming.

The need to control invasive alien plants and to plant natives

Threat: Invasive alien plants

Rapid deforestation following the arrival of humans around 400 years ago and the introduction of invasive alien plants has resulted in highly fragmented and degraded native forests (Virah-Sawmy et al. 2009, Baider & Florens, 2011). Today less than 2% (c. 2600 ha.) of reasonable quality native forest (i.e. that with more than 50 % native plant canopy cover) remains (Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, 2017). Mauritius has the third most threatened flora in the World, with over 57% of plants threatened with extinction (Botanical Gardens Conservation International 2021). Controlling exotic plants in Mauritius improves native plant survivorship, growth and fruit and flower production (Baider & Florens 2011).

The control of invasive alien plants is a long-term commitment and is futile if maintenance weeding is not sustained. Following the removal of woody exotics such as guava or tecoma in the first or initial weeding process, regular maintenance weeding is needed to prevent infestations of fast growing light-loving herbaceous weeds and vines. Without maintenance weeding, the slow-growing natives, planted or natural regenerating, struggle to survive. Restoration of degraded sites typically requires maintenance weeding 3-5 times annually for the first couple of years to ensure natives grow and form a canopy. Thereafter, the frequency and intensity of maintenance weeding decreases to 2-3 times per annum. Even mature sites at Ebony Forest and Vallée De L'Est continue to be weeded once a year to remove exotic vines like *Hiptage benghalensis*. Our goal is to restore 50 ha. at Ebony Forest and at least 26 ha. at Vallée De L'Est. as large areas of native forest are needed to provide essential ecosystem services and support viable fauna and flora populations,

Threat: lack of native plant recruitment

Conservation efforts have focused primarily only on weeding invaded forest. However, native plant recruitment is limited due to a lack of native seeds in the soil seed bank or a nearby stand of intact native forest that can produce viable seed/material to be dispersed to a site suitable for germination and establishment, and the lack of effective seed dispersers. While some native plant species may return naturally to a site, overall the native species composition is skewed towards wind dispersed species. Large fleshy fruited species are invariably the most threatened species; they have lost their large seed dispersers, and their seeds are most at risk of predation from rats and monkeys. Exotic plants are more likely to establish following weeding as they are, in general, prolific seed producers, have high seed germination rates and probability, are faster-growers, dominate the soil seed bank in degraded areas, and produce wind-dispersed seeds. Planting native species helps to overcome their plant recruitment

limitations and accelerates the restoration process, ultimately decreasing the costs associated with maintenance weeding.

The need to control invasive mammalian predators

Invasive mammalian predators, accidentally or intentionally introduced to Mauritius, are prevalent in forests. Rats, monkeys, deers, pigs and tenrecs limit plant recruitment by predating seeds, fruits and seedlings. Monkeys rip orchids from trees, and uproot young palms. Indirectly, rats, cats, mongoose, and monkeys affect plants by killing seed dispersers (Pink Pigeon, Echo Parakeet, Mauritius Bulbul) and pollinators (Mauritius White-eyes, Mauritius Fody, Phelsuma species) at their different life stages (egg, juvenile, adult). They also decrease fruit available for endemic frugivores such as the Mascarene flying fox. The control of these introduced mammalian predators is essentially to restore forest dynamics, resilience and conserve biodiversity, which will in turn help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

A 50 ha. predator control grid at Ebony Forest targeting rats, cats, monkeys, mongoose and tenrecs has significantly reduced the number of predators. There has been an observed increase in the number of seedlings, specifically of large-seeded species, and an increase in the population of endemic birds, notably the Mauritius Grey White-eye (Least Concern), Mauritius Paradise Flycatcher (not assessed), and Pink Pigeon (Vulnerable). Predator control is an integral part of forest restoration in Mauritius as endemic fauna are reliant on endemic forest. Simply restoring the flora is insufficient for bird, reptile populations, and their associated ecosystem functions, to naturally recover.

There is currently no predator control implemented at Vallée De L'Est and bird diversity and abundance is limited, even exotic avifauna. The control of predators at Vallée De L'Est will enable threatened bird species such as the Pink Pigeon, an important seed disperser, and Mauritian passerines (Mauritius Fody, Mauritius Olive White-eye, Mauritius Cuckoo-shrike) to be reintroduced, improving ecosystem resilience, seed dispersal and pollination functions. Besides the aforementioned benefits, the establishment of new bird subpopulations would reduce their risk of extinction.

The need for restoring ecosystem processes

Threat: missing species interactions

Prior to the arrival of humans in 1598, Mauritius, which was covered largely in native forest, had 53 native species of forest vertebrate. Today, 25 are extinct and the remaining fauna are found either on offshore islands or in small pockets of native forest. The resilience and resistance of Mauritius' forests to climate change has thus been significantly reduced due to the extinction and/or local extinction of pollinators, seed dispersers, nutrient cyclers and grazers. Introduced mammals and birds are poor substitutes, and in many cases introduced frugivores or grazers predate seeds, fruits, seedlings, flowers and plants.

Forest restoration projects must not solely focus on restoring the plant community, but include the reinstatement of missing ecosystem processes and functions to limit the need for future human intervention. Seven of nine of endemic bird species occur at Ebony Forest; four naturally occur (Mauritius

Bulbul, Mauritius Paradise Flycatcher, Mauritius Grey White-eye, Mauritius Kestrel) and three have been reintroduced (Pink Pigeon, Echo Parakeet, Olive White-eye), with plans to reintroduced the Mauritius Fody and Cuckoo-shrike.

There are four endemic bird species at Vallée De L'Est, albeit in low numbers: Mauritius Kestrel, Echo Parakeet, Mauritius Grey White-eye, Mauritius Bulbul. Low avifauna diversity and abundance in the Bambous Mountain Range is attributed to heavy use of organochlorine pesticides in the 1970s, which wiped out many species (Safford & Jones 1997). The Mauritius Kestrel was the first species to be reintroduced to the Bambous Mountain Range in the 1990s, followed by Echo Parakeet in 2015 and Pink Pigeon in 2016, which were released at Ferney Valley. A few Echo Parakeet have naturally colonized Vallée De L'Est, but Pink Pigeon remain near the release site at Ferney Valley as the population has not grown significantly due to limited predator control. Fortunately, DDT exposure is no longer a threat to bird survival. Recognizing the importance of creating a stronghold for threatened bird species in the isolated Bambous Mountain Range, the National Parks & Conservation Service included the reintroduction of birds to Vallée De L'Est in an MOU with Ebony Forest as there will be long-term management of the species and habitat by an experienced organization. The reintroduction of Pink Pigeon, important seed dispersers of small-medium sized fleshy fruits, to the proposed 26 ha. predator control grid, encompassing one of the best-preserved upland humid forests in Mauritius, will restore this missing function.

Threat: missing seed dispersal functions

Large-seeded Mauritian plants, many of which are threatened with extinction, are reliant on large frugivores, and so have a limited repertoire of effective dispersers. Giant tortoises weighing up to 100 kg were the largest native frugivores on Mauritius; today, the title goes to a fruitbat weighing only 0.54 kg. Thus, the loss of the island giants—tortoises, lizards, and flightless birds such as the dodo, has left many large-seeded fruits anachronistic in relation to the current frugivore assemblages in defaunated and invaded Mauritian forests (Hansen & Galetti 2009).

Failure to restore frugivore assemblages or guilds results in fruits accumulating under maternal trees, increasing seed and seedling mortality and predation from herbivores and pathogens. Greater competition between siblings and with the parent tree also increases seedling mortality. Poor dispersal also limits the opportunity of offspring to find suitable habitats. Thus, the extinction and severe reduction in abundance and diversity of Mauritius' frugivores has resulted in poor recruitment, hindering restoration efforts (Griffiths et al. 2011). Ultimately, this has important implications for plant populations, species diversity and ecosystem resilience.

Opportunity: restore tortoise grazing functions

Introduced herbivores, such as deers and pigs, predate most native plants and should be excluded from restoration sites. Aldabra giant tortoises are used as ecological replacements for the two extinct giant tortoises on offshore Mauritian islands, Round Island and Ile aux Aigrettes, to cost-effectively control exotic vegetation (Griffiths et al. 2013). Giant tortoises avoid the foliage of most native species, many of which exhibit anti-herbivorous traits, favouring fast-growing exotic grasses, herbs and shrubs, reducing

their above ground biomass and limiting exotic seed production. This “weeding” enables limited resources to be directed elsewhere. Furthermore, the consumption of large seeds, subsequent defecation in moist faeces on grazed areas i.e. limited competition, increases seed germination and seedling survivorship (Griffiths et al. 2011). Giant tortoises improve nutrient cycling, benefiting the soil microbiome and thus its carbon sequestration and water retention capacity. Aldabra giant tortoises will be released in Ebony Forest in 2023 to reinstate seed dispersal, grazing and nutrient cycling functions.

The need for greater awareness and public involvement

Threat: lack of public awareness and connection

Local awareness about the climate and biodiversity crises and what can be done by individuals and our nation is limited. Habitat destruction, the introduction of exotic species, species extinctions, overexploitation, pollution, and land use change continue to occur in Mauritius. High levels of urbanization have exacerbated the threats to native forests as the human population is disconnected from nature and lack experiences and an appreciation of the value of native biodiversity and how its health is intricately linked to ours. Expectations about what a healthy ecosystem looks like have shifted as each generation grows up with a more impoverished natural biodiversity. This is curtailing the ability of both the general public and political powers to identify problems and implement solutions at the scale needed to protect biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Local visitors to Ebony Forest are astounded by the variety of endemic biodiversity, many not having seen a black ebony tree, the commonest native hardwood, or a Pink Pigeon. More children and the public need to see, touch and partake in restoration activities as such experiences can have a profound impact on people’s views.

Opportunities: strengthened management

This project provides an opportunity to build on work previously supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and Fondation Franklinia, among others, and which has been ongoing since 2004 at Vallée De L’Est and 2006 at Ebony Forest. Since 2006, Ebony Forest has weeded 25 ha. and planted over 152,000 native plants. 25 ha. remains to be weeded and restored. Ebony Forest is the best preserved semi-humid forest in Mauritius and is home to 197 indigenous flowering plant species, 2 reptile species, 2 mammals, and 8 bird species. Vallée De L’Est harbours one of the best upland humid forests in Mauritius and is home to a more than 170 indigenous plants, 2 reptile species, 2 mammal species, 8 bird species and 4 molluscs. Since 2004, 12 ha. have been weeded and over 52,000 plants planted in an effort to conserve biodiversity.

The directors of Ebony Forest Ltd are fully committed to conservation, education and supporting the local community and in 2021 the company was converted to a non-profit organisation. Permits to weed in the mountain reserve at both sites have already been obtained from the Forestry Service. Ebony Forest has a five year Memorandum of Understanding with the National Parks and Conservation Service to introduce

fauna to both sites. There are no other authorities that influence the proposed project, nor are there any country laws or strategies in place specifically for either site.

The proposed project is in line with national policies such as the National Forest Policy 2006; National Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework 2022; Strategic Plan 2016-2020 for the Food Crop, Livestock and Forestry Sectors and the Mauritius INDC (2015); National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2025; National Invasive Alien Species Strategy and Action Plan 2010-2019, UNCCD, Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme 2018; Mauritius Vision 2030 and international targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (climate action, gender equality, life on land); United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; Agenda 2063; United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; FAO initiatives on Integrated Landscape Management & Sustainable Land Management; the Paris Agreement; to name a few. The project also contributes to Mauritius' Intended Nationally Determined Contributions under the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry, including social security, education and gender. As Ebony Forest and parts of Vallée De L'Est are private, there are no other stakeholders interested in undertaking the proposed project.

PROJECT APPROACH

Threat: Invasive alien plants

Four men and four women will be recruited at each site and trained in restoration activities by the Site Supervisor at Vallée De L'Est (Helene Bertille), team leaders at Ebony Forest (Bryan Quint, Marie-France Leopold) and Conservation Manager (Nicolas Zuël). The Conservation Manager and the conservation team (Jevika Atwaroo; Helene Bertille; Kentish Bundhoo; Estelle De Sornay; Christelle Ferriere; Naomie Lagesse; Elisa Laverdant; Denis Li; Adisha Sewydal) will demarcate sites for restoration and develop a weeding and planting plan.

The men's teams will weed 3.5 ha. per annum per site using machetes and chainsaws to remove large woody exotics such as guava, tecoma and bois d'oiseaux, while the women will do the maintenance weeding using sickles to prevent reinvasion. Maintenance weeding by the women's teams will be done 2-5 times per annum, depending on the level of site degradation, to control exotic vegetation and enable the slower-growing native plants to compete. Initial and maintenance weeding will occur throughout the year.

The Conservation Manager and the Site Supervisor will communicate monthly to the team leaders at Ebony Forest and Vallée De L'Est, respectively, which sites to weed and the expected time taken to complete each site. Progress is monitored monthly.

Threat: lack of native plant recruitment

Following finalization of the weeding plan, the Ebony Forest Nursery Officer (Jevika Atwaroo), Vallée De L'Est (VDL) Site Supervisor, Plant Coordinator (Adisha Sewydal) and Conservation Manager will plan which species to plant at each restoration site based on the site characteristics and plant survivorship data of adjacent sites. Restoration sites will be planted with a mix of pioneer and hardwood species at the same time. Planting will be done during the rainy season, with efforts to plant the maximum at the start of the rainy season to increase survivorship.

The VDL Site Supervisor and the Nursery Officer at Ebony Forest will be responsible for propagating the species needed for the upcoming planting season. Plant material (seeds, seedlings, cuttings) will be sourced from onsite, neighbouring areas, the Forestry Services or other partners. The plants will be grown in the native plant propagation nurseries at Ebony Forest and Vallée De L'Est until they are healthy and around 30 cm in height, then hardened by increasing sun exposure and reducing water prior to planting to acclimatize them to the harsher field conditions.

The restoration teams at each site, together with the conservation team, and when possible volunteers, school children, corporates, will plant 300-600 plants per day depending on the site characteristics (accessibility, surface area, slope). Planting will be only done in sites that have <70 percent native cover. Holes will be dug around 1.5 m apart or more depending on the species that will be planted. Planting at higher densities leads to competition and tree death, whereas when planted at lower densities, a native canopy takes longer to form and necessitates more maintenance weeding, increasing weeding costs. Once planted, woodchip mulch, generated from the weeding process, will be placed around the base of the seedlings to increase humidity and reduce competition from weeds. The only post-planting aftercare will be maintenance weeding.

The conservation team will monitor plant survivorship at each restoration site 6 months and 1 year after planting. The Nursery Officer and VDL Site Supervisor will write monthly and annual reports, with the assistance of the Plant Coordinator. The planting season is reviewed annually by the Nursery Officer, VDL Site Supervisor, Plant Coordinator and Conservation Manager to identify lessons learnt and plan for the subsequent season.

Threat: invasive mammalian predators

A Conservation Staff will be employed and trained to oversee the predator control grid and the bird work. Self-setting and species-specific kill traps, which are more costly, will be used as they reduce the amount of time spent by staff and hence are more cost-effective and enable a larger area to be maintained predator-free. The grid will be established in a fenced area of high-quality native forest. The A24 traps will be located 25 m apart and the A18 every 50 m in a grid to intercept rats and mongoose respectively. The Timm's traps will be placed every 75 m to target cats, tenrecs and mongoose. The set up of the grid will be done by the VDL Conservation Staff with the assistance of the Ebony Forest conservation team. Thereafter the monitoring of the grid will be done by the Conservation staff.

The effectiveness of the grid will be measured every 2 weeks by comparing the grid's predator index to an area where there is no predator management, the control. Chew cubes, a mix of wax and cocoa, and camera traps will be used to detect rats, and cats and mongooses, respectively. The Conservation Staff will send a monthly report to the Predator Control Supervisor and Conservation Manager so adaptive management can be taken if needed. Volunteers and other staff will be trained to assist in the management of the grid, which will be done indefinitely.

Threat: missing seed dispersal and grazing functions

Reinstate seed dispersal functions by reintroducing Pink Pigeon to Vallée De L'Est

An MOU with the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security was signed for the establishment of 50 Pink Pigeon at Vallée De L'Est in April 2022. The Conservation and General Managers and the conservation team will meet with the National Parks & Conservation Service, the division responsible of the aforementioned Ministry, to approve source of the Pink Pigeon and to finalise the translocation protocol.

In year 2, a four compartment aviary will be constructed for the release of 30 Pink Pigeon, in batches of ten, to increase translocation success. The number translocated subsequent years will depend on the number of birds that establish. Pink Pigeon fledglings will be collected from the source populations in the Black River Gorges National Park during the peak breeding period between October and March, and translocated to the Vallée De L'Est aviary, where they will remain for around one month to monitor their health and allow them to acclimatize and anchor to their new location. While in the aviary, they will be provided daily with freshly chopped fruit, maize in a feeding hopper to habituate them to the supplementary feeder, and fresh water. Following release of the 10 birds, one compartment will remain open and the other three will be disinfected and prepared for the next batch of ten birds. The above process will be repeated until the desired number of Pink Pigeon is released per season.

The VDL Conservation Staff will monitor the released birds daily and continue to provide supplementary food.

Reinstate nutrient cycling, grazing and seed dispersal functions by introducing Aldabra giant tortoises to Vallée De L'Est

Ten juvenile (c. 20 kg +) Aldabra giant tortoises will be released in Vallée De L'Est with gps locators and their movement, behaviour, diet and impact on the vegetation monitored.

Threat: lack of public awareness and connection

Awareness activities will be implemented at Ebony Forest where there is a Visitor Centre and trained guides and conservation staff. VDL is a 30 minute jeep drive inland and is not readily accessible to the public.

The Conservation Manager will develop a short course to train seven Ebony Forest guides and eleven conservation staff about the consequences of the climate and biodiversity crises, their connection and the importance of ecosystem-based adaptation approaches such as forest restoration, so that the staff can then communicate to the public, school children and corporate partners about the importance of restoring the degraded watershed. To reinforce the verbal message communicated during guided tours, a graphic highlighting the importance of forests for biodiversity and as nature based solutions will be printed on a signboard erected along the most popular hiking trail and on 500 posters that will be distributed to visiting schools and corporates over the three years. The conservation team will train 5-10 international and local volunteers per annum in forest restoration activities and raise awareness about the link between climate change and forests.

The Operations & Marketing Coordinator will be responsible to communicate to schools that children can plant a native tree at Ebony Forest during the rainy season, with the aim of school children planting 500 natives over the three years. The General Manager and Operations & Marketing Coordinator will contact private sector companies to encourage them to visit and participate in the restoration activities (weeding, planting, plant propagation). A member of the conservation team will give a 15 minute presentation about ecosystem-based adaptation to explain the importance of their contribution and the urgency for action to mitigate further biodiversity and climate disasters.

The Conservation Manager will organise three webinars about ecosystem-based adaptation approaches in Mauritius to tackle climate change and the consequences of a business as usual approach. The General Manager will write 20 social media posts (Facebook, Instagram) per annum and 1 blog per annum about the climate crisis and how healthy forests can mitigate global warming impacts with the aim of raising awareness among the public.

Sustainability

To ensure financial sustainability the reoccurring costs of the different activities will be budgeted and a financial sustainability plan developed by the General Manager. A minimum of USD30,000 will be sought from local and international grants and local partners. The General Manager will continue to liaise with the Forestry Services to obtain a Special Lease for the long-term management of the state forest at Vallée De L'Est as currently this does not exist.

8) Date of preparation of this document

16th November 2023

9) Overview of labor use on the project:

This section should describe the main types of workers who will be employed or engaged on the project, as follows:

Number of Project Workers: The total number of workers to be employed on the project, and the different types of workers: direct workers (people employed or engaged directly by the grantee to work on the project); and contracted workers (people engaged through third parties (sub-grantees, consultants, etc.) to perform work related to core functions of the project for a substantial duration). Where numbers are not yet firm, an estimate should be provided.

Employed workers = 28, of which 20 dealing with herbicide
Contracted workers = 0. The Pink Pigeon aviary will be contracted off site and mounted by Ebony Forest staff.

Characteristics of Project Workers: To the extent possible, a broad description and an indication of the likely characteristics of the project workers (e.g. locally hired workers, female workers, expatriate workers).
All staff are locally hired from nearby villages. 50% of the team are female.

Timing of Labor Requirements: The timing and sequencing of labor requirements in terms of numbers, locations, types of jobs and skills required.
8 men and 8 women will be employed as restoration labourers at the start of the project as from September 2023 on fixed term agreement contracts for a period of 3 years. Upon termination of their contract, they will be recruited indefinitely as is standard policy at Ebony Forest. Employment conditions with regards to salary, leaves, pension scheme, and benefits are the same as those recruited indefinitely.

Contracted Workers: The anticipated or known contracting structure for the project, with numbers and types of consultants/sub-grantees and the likely number of project workers to be employed or engaged by each consultant/sub-grantee.
There will be no contracted workers recruited as part of this project.

10) Assessment of key potential labor risks:

This section should identify key potential labor risks related to the project, assess each risk against criteria of probability and severity, and describe in detail all higher risks. Risks may include, for example:

- Conduct of hazardous work, such as working at heights or in confined spaces, use of heavy machinery, or use of hazardous materials.
- Use of child labor or forced labor, with reference to the sector or locality.
- Physical, psychological or sexual abuse of project workers
- Unfair treatment or discrimination.
- Possible accidents or emergencies, with reference to the sector or locality.
- General understanding and implementation of occupational health and safety requirements.

See attached excel Ebony Forest Risk Assessment November 2023

11) Risk mitigation measures:

This section will describe the measures that will be taken to mitigate all higher risks. Mitigation measures will be presented following the mitigation hierarchy, which requires that risks are anticipated and avoided where possible. Where avoidance is not possible, risks should be minimized to acceptable levels. Any risks that remain following avoidance and minimization should be mitigated.

See “Control measures” of excel Ebony Forest Risk Assessment April 2023

12) Brief overview of legislation: terms and conditions:

This section should present a brief overview of the ***key aspects*** of national labor and employment law relevant to terms and conditions of employment (e.g., wages, deductions, benefits, etc.).

Ebony Forest abides by The Worker’s Rights Act 2019 and its regulations. As part of a Service Level Agreement, Bioculture Ltd provide Ebony Forest Ltd with Human Resource services. In the event that the staff have a grievance and do not feel they can discuss it with an Ebony Forest staff, then they can speak directly to the HR team at Bioculture.

The wages are all well above the minimum rate, staff are provided with an attendance, incentive and performance bonus and a monthly payslip sent to their personal email account. They also receive an EOY bonus, regardless of whether their employment is terminated before the end of the year. Leaves – local, sick, mortality, maternity and paternity, wedding – are granted according the laws. All staff are enrolled

in a pension scheme and the company pays 50% of medical insurance costs for those wishing to take our personal medical insurance. All personnel are also covered by insurance in the event of an accident. Should a member of staff be injured at work, then they are granted injury leave, which is fully paid. Uniforms and all PPE are provided for all activities. Annually all staff have a health check (weight, blood pressure, diabetes) and a company doctor is available to them twice a week.

13) Brief overview of legislation: occupational health and safety:

This section should present a brief overview of the ***key aspects*** of national labor and employment law relevant to occupational health and safety.

Ebony Forest abides by The Occupational Safety & Health Act 2005 and its regulations. As part of a Service Level Agreement, Bioculture Ltd provide Ebony Forest Ltd with a Health and Safety Officer who annually delivers training and conducts site visits to ensure that the regulations are being met. For any accident or injury on site, an accident form is completed and submitted to the Health and Safety Officer who investigates the cause of the accident and what can be done to minimize future accidents.

14) Responsible staff:

This section identifies the functions and/or individuals within the project responsible for (as relevant):

- Engagement and management of direct workers = Dr Nicolas Zuël
- Engagement and management of contracted workers = not applicable
- Occupational health and safety = Mr Rajen Armoogum (Bioculture), Dr Nicolas Zuël
- Training of workers = Dr Nicolas Zuël, Ms Helene Bertille, Ms Marie-France Leopold, Mr Kenny Quint, Mr Bryan Quint
- Addressing worker grievances = Dr Christine Griffiths, Mrs Sandhya Teeluckaherry (Bioculture)

15) Policies and procedures:

This section should describe policies and procedures for managing each category of project staff, in accordance with national labor and employment law and Safeguard Policy 2 on Labor and Working Conditions. Wherever provisions of national law are relevant to project activities and satisfy the requirements of Safeguard Policy 2, these provisions do not need to be duplicated in this section.

All staff (employed or contracted) are required to respect the Occupational Safety & Health Act 2005 and its regulations. Training is provided and guidance on best practice as per the Ebony Forest Risk Assessment is implemented. An Emergency Action Plan is in place.

16) Contracted workers:

This section will describe how the requirements of national labor and employment law and Safeguard Policy 2 will be incorporated into sub-grant agreements and/or service contracts with third parties who will employ or engage contracted workers.

Not applicable

17) Workplace grievance mechanism:

This section will describe how a mechanism will be provided for all direct workers and contracted workers (and, where relevant, their organizations) to raise workplace concerns. The mechanism must: be made easily accessible to such workers; address concerns promptly, using an understandable and transparent process that provides timely feedback to those concerned in a language they understand, without any retribution; and operate in an independent and objective manner. Please describe how you will put in place a workplace grievance mechanism that meets these requirements.

At Ebony Forest, we operate an open door policy and a grievance policy already exists for all personnel. Direct and contracted workers can raise their concerns with their direct line manager/reporting officer who subsequently informs their Manager and General Manager. In the cases, where they are not at ease to do so then they have access to HR personnel at Bioculture, who provide Ebony with HR support as stated by a Service Level Agreement. Concerns are addressed as rapidly as possible and with the consent of the worker. In the event that the General Manager cannot address the issues they are referred to the HR Manager. Upon recruitment, all staff are informed of the different procedures in French/English/Creole. Regular meetings are held to enable staff to raise any grievances so that they can be addressed. Workers are also able to speak on a one-one basis whenever they wish.

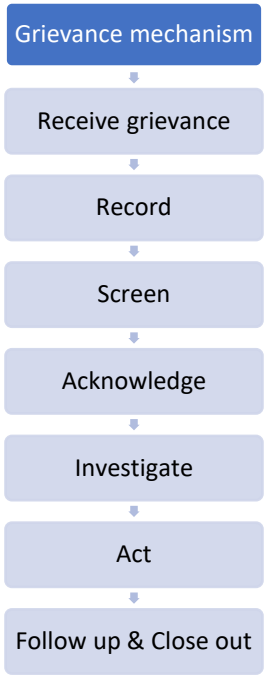
18) Disclosure:

CEPF requires that all direct and contracted workers be informed of the existence of the grievance mechanism and the measures put in place to protect them against any reprisal for its use, either at the time of recruitment or at the start of the project, whichever is later. CEPF also requires that all direct and contracted workers be provided with Conservation International's (CI's) Code of Ethics, and be informed that any violations of the Code of Ethics should be reported to CI via its Ethics Hotline at https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.html

Staff will be informed of the grievance mechanism and the CI's Code of Ethics via training provided in Creole and evidenced by a signed training sheet. Posters in Creole and infographics will be placed in the mess room at each site as some of the restoration staff are illiterate. The following text will be communicated in simplified terms.

"Ebony Forest Ltd has a grievance policy in place. Should you wish to raise an issue, concern, problem, or claim (perceived or actual) to Ebony Forest Ltd in a formal manner, we invite you contact us via email (christine@ebonyforest.com), telephone (460 3030 / 460 3031), or speak to a member of staff. For all grievances related to our projects funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF, primarily weeding, predator control and bird conservation activities and to a lesser extent education and volunteer activities [adjusted relevant to the site]), we will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team (FORENA, Roshan Baguant, roshan@forena.mu, +230 5250 4130) and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance via the CI Ethics Hotline (toll-free telephone line: +1-866-294-8674 / secure web portal: https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.html)

In summary, the following mechanism will be used:


Grievance mechanism
Receive grievance
Record
Screen
Acknowledge
Investigate
Act
Follow up & Close out