

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund  
40<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the CEPF Donor Council  
In-Person, Hotel Place d'Armes, Montreal and Virtual Meeting  
Monday 12 December 2022  
8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)**

**Action Points Review**

Conservation Achievements of the Investment in the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot

- **Action Item: The EU will help CEPF gain access to the EU DG NEAR.**
- **Action Item: The grant director will send the Donor Council the country fact sheet for Palestine, which includes the summary of the investment and the different organizations.**
  - ✓ Please see "CEPF Projects in Palestine" on pages 3 and 4 of this document.
- **Action Item: The Secretariat will prepare a presentation on the role of the RIT in strengthening civil society organizations.**
  - ✓ Please see the Report on the Role of the Regional Implementation Team in Capacity Building of Civil Society in the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot, which starts on page 5 of this document.

Granting in Myanmar in the Current Political Context

- **Action Item: CEPF will look at the restrictions from the U.S. government as well as the EU countries' restrictions on working in Myanmar.**
  - ✓ The Secretariat has reviewed restrictions related to Myanmar. The U.S. Department of the Treasury has issued a general license allowing certain transactions in support of NGOs' activities. This makes explicit allowance for "activities to support environmental and natural resource protection in Burma, including the preservation and protection of threatened or endangered species, responsible and transparent management of natural resources, and the remediation of pollution or other environmental damage." The EU has sanctions in place on Myanmar that focus on arms and equipment that could be used for internal repression. The sanctions

do not extend to support to NGOs for environmental protection activities.

- **Action Item: CEPF will monitor grantees to know if they become politicized.**
  - ✓ In line with these activities, CEPF has awarded three grants to civil society organizations in Myanmar since the Donor Council approved a resumption of grant making in December 2021. Several other applications are currently under review. All grants are made to non-political, wildlife conservation NGOs. The Secretariat has monitored these grants and none of the grantees have shown any signs of becoming politicized. No CEPF funds are being used to support government.

How can CEPF take advantage of the CBD COP15 and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

- **Action Item: The Donor Council will make sure to identify opportunities for CEPF, inserting it in relevant conversations during the preparation leading to COP15.**

Could CEPF invest in CSOs of non-OECD/DAC countries if funding becomes available?

- **Action Item: The CEPF secretariat will propose text for statute changes to allow such investment.**
  - ✓ Please see agenda item 4, which includes recommended statute changes.

Next steps for the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)

- **Action Item: The CEPF Secretariat will update its Environmental and Social Management Framework for review by the Working Group and approval by the Donor Council.**
  - ✓ The updated ESMF was reviewed by the CEPF Working Group at its meeting on 30 March 2022, and was then approved by the Donor Council, on a no-objection basis, on 18 May 2022.

## CEPF Projects in Palestine

### **Palestine Wildlife Society**

#### **Safeguarding Jebal Al Khalil and Wadi Al-Quff Cultural Landscapes, Palestine, Through Innovative Approaches**

**\$151,591.57**

Promote biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices with local farmers and communities from Jebal al Khalil and Wali el Quff, and ensure integration in local land-use planning. Implement actions for replanting and sustainable harvesting of sumac, and for preservation of the threatened plant species *Bellevalia warburgii*.

### **Bethlehem University**

#### **Green Oasis in Bethlehem for Plant and Ecosystem Conservation, Palestinian Territory**

**\$20,000.00**

Develop a botanical garden for the conservation of rare plant species and unique ecosystem. Build capacity of young researchers, and create modules of awareness, education and empowerment that benefit the local community. Undertake workshops and meetings to raise the awareness of the local community on plant conservation.

### **Biodiversity and Environment Research Centre**

#### **Engagement of Local Communities in the Conservation of the Threatened Ecosystem and Plant Species in the Nablus Region, Focusing on the Iris of Nablus, Palestine**

**\$25,709.00**

Conduct an assessment of the status of endemic plants, focusing on the *Iris lortetii*. Identify and map the locations of the species communities, raise awareness of the local communities on plant biodiversity and conservation. Build capacity of community teams to develop and improve their practical plant skills including in situ surveying and protection. Support the incorporation of plant conservation in the management of proposed protected area. Increase the numbers of Iris population in their natural locations using the Seed Ball technique.

## **An-Najah National University**

### **Plant Biodiversity Conservation in Ancient Olive Orchards, Palestine**

**\$19,600.00**

Conduct a study to identify the distribution of endemic plant species in North-eastern Slopes region Key Biodiversity Area-KBA. Promote biodiversity friendly agricultural practices to key local stakeholders. Build capacity of local community and stakeholders in plant conservation through training on biodiversity friendly agricultural practices. Promote and increase awareness of in situ conservation to the local communities in the area.

## **Nature Palestine Society**

### **Assessment and Conservation of Threatened Iris in the North Eastern Slopes Region Key Biodiversity Area, Palestine**

**\$19,910.00**

Assess the distribution of near endemic and threatened plant species, including *Iris atrofusca*. Support the integration of plant conservation into future management plans and the conservation framework of Key Biodiversity Areas and protected areas in Palestine. Promote and support the engagement of stakeholders and decision makers in conservation planning. Build capacity of local communities to contribute to data collection on flora, focusing on endemic and threatened species.

## **Palestine Wildlife Society**

### **Towards the Sustainability of the National Flower of Palestine Through an In Situ Scientific Garden**

**\$19,354.08**

Conduct a study to assess the current status and distribution of the national flower of Palestine *Iris haynei* in the Faqua'a area and surrounding mountains, and implement in-situ conservation actions for this threatened and endemic Iris. Increase knowledge and skills of the stakeholders to support plant conservation planning, and promote the emergence of a new generation of young professionals in plant conservation. Support innovative measures to conserve important plant communities through collaboration with local communities.

## **International Union for Conservation of Nature – Jordan**

### **Protected Area Network Review for Palestine**

**\$196,945.12**

Review and update the protected areas network in Palestine, using systematic conservation planning principles and the protected area design criteria of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to result in a connected, representative, efficient and climate resilient network of protected areas.



**Report on the Role  
of the Regional Implementation Team  
in Capacity Building of Civil Society  
in the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot**

## 1. Introduction

During the 40th Meeting of the CEPF Donor Council, participants requested CEPF to provide an overview of the activities of the regional implementation team (RIT) as regards capacity building of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Mediterranean Basin.

The report includes:

- Introduction to the RIT in the Mediterranean Basin
- Regular Capacity-Building Activities
- Preliminary Impact Assessment Based on the Civil Society Tracking Tool
- Specific Program of Work to Support Capacities in Fundraising (2020-2022)

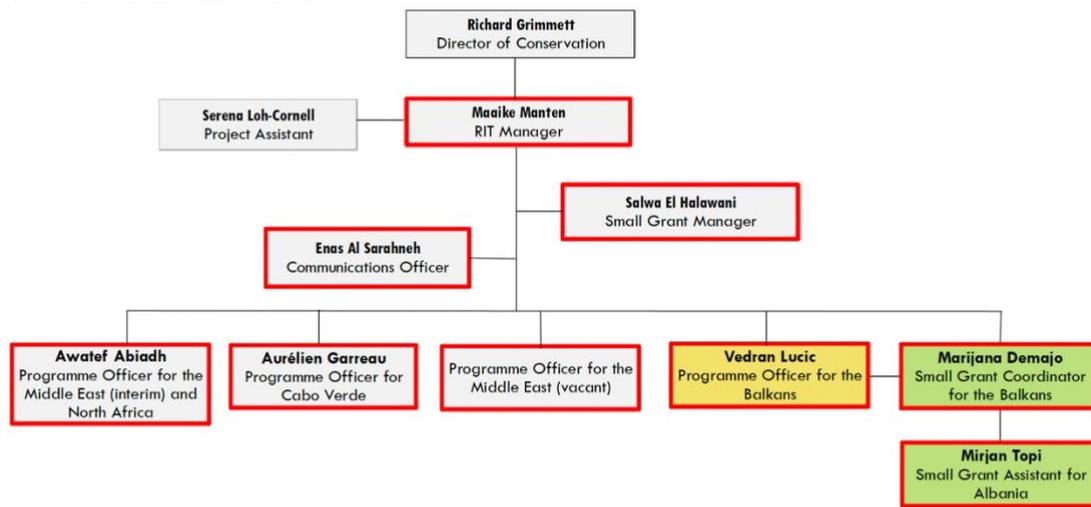


The MED Regional Implementation Team and Grant Director Pierre Carret. © Enas El Halawani

## 2. The Regional Implementation Team in the Mediterranean Hotspot

The Mediterranean RIT is composed today of eight persons, most of whom work part-time (overall representing about five full-time), from BirdLife International and two BirdLife partners (BPSSS/BirdLife in Serbia and DOPPS/BirdLife in Slovenia). The RIT had to cope with several challenges in recent years (staff turnover, COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions, etc.) while pursuing the capacity-building effort.

RIT members and support staff

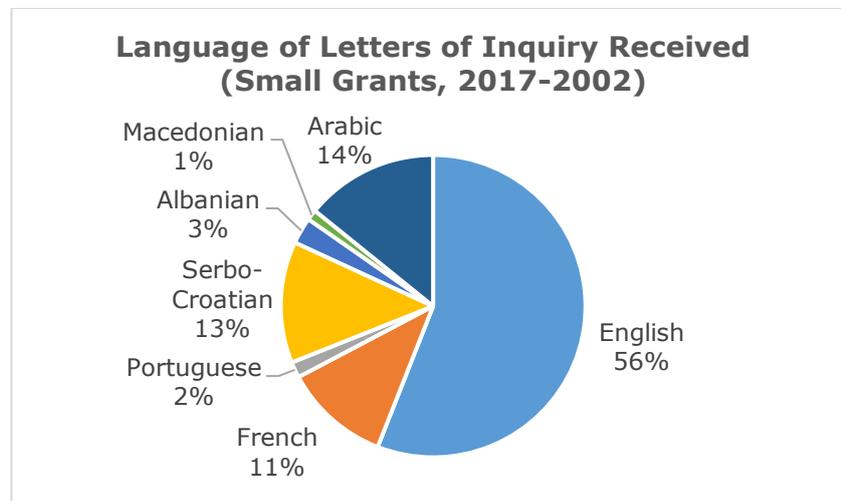


**Key:**

— Lines of communication

BirdLife International
  DOPPS (BirdLife Slovenia)
  BPSSS (BirdLife Serbia)
  Core RIT Staff

The RIT can speak the following languages: English, Arabic, French, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian and Albanian, which allows support to be provided to organizations in their local language all over the hotspot. Small-grant applications are received in all these languages as well. The Mediterranean Hotspot is the only one where CEPF receives letters of Inquiry in three alphabets: Latin, Arabic and Cyrillic.



### 3. Regular Capacity-Building Activities

The RIT supports CSOs through personalized mentoring all along the project cycle:

- At **letter of inquiry level**, by providing personalized rejection letters to organizations that are not selected, highlighting why their project was unsuccessful.
- At **project preparation stage**, supporting the organization in the preparation of a logical framework and budget, with technical input when required—sometimes calling on external experts (CEPF MED Plant Expert Group, for instance).
- **During project implementation**, through:
  - o Regular calls and videoconferences to check on project implementation and respond to questions, with hands-on support when needed.
  - o Site-visits, with each project being visited at least once during implementation (generally more often).
  - o Organization of thematic workshops or trainings (see also section 5).
  - o Information (newsletters) and experience-sharing, in particular through organization of peer-to-peer exchanges or participation in regional events.
  - o Revision and commenting on technical (and financial) reports.
- **After project implementation**, through comments on final reports, but also through maintaining the relationship (CEPF community), inviting former grantees to training or workshops, and informing them about (and sometimes supporting) funding opportunities.

These activities, and notably the day-to-day, regular mentoring and support, are very time consuming due to the large portfolio of grants in the region, with **148 grants awarded (54 large and 94 small), with 92% to local organizations**. Between January and June 2022 only, the RIT performed 11 visits to 8 countries:

- o **Cabo Verde** (February and April): 4 large-grant and small-grant recipients visited.
- o **Montenegro** (February): 2 large-grant recipients met, and project site of 1 small-grant recipient visited.
- o **North Macedonia** (March): 3 large-grant recipients visited in-office and in the field, and other project stakeholders met; and 6 small-grant recipients and their project partners met.
- o **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (March): 1 large-grant recipient visit and workshop for PA Livanjsko polje; 3 small-grant recipients met.
- o **Tunisia** (March and June): 8 grantees visited in combination of field and office visits; and 5 on second visit with grant director in June.
- o **Palestine** (March): All 5 small-grant recipients visited—3 visited in both offices and sites, 2 in the project sites.
- o **Jordan** (April and June): 2 small-grant recipients visited, 5 large-grant recipients visited in April, and 2 grantees visited in June.
- o **Egypt (April)**: 1 organization visited at their office (with 2 small-grant recipients).

The RIT also organized specifically structured training, led by RIT members, in the last nine months:

- **Online trainings in fundraising** for 85 individuals (see section 5 for details).
- An online **Zoom training on writing final reports** for Balkan small-grant recipients over two days (June); for each Large Grantee (40+ concerned), a one

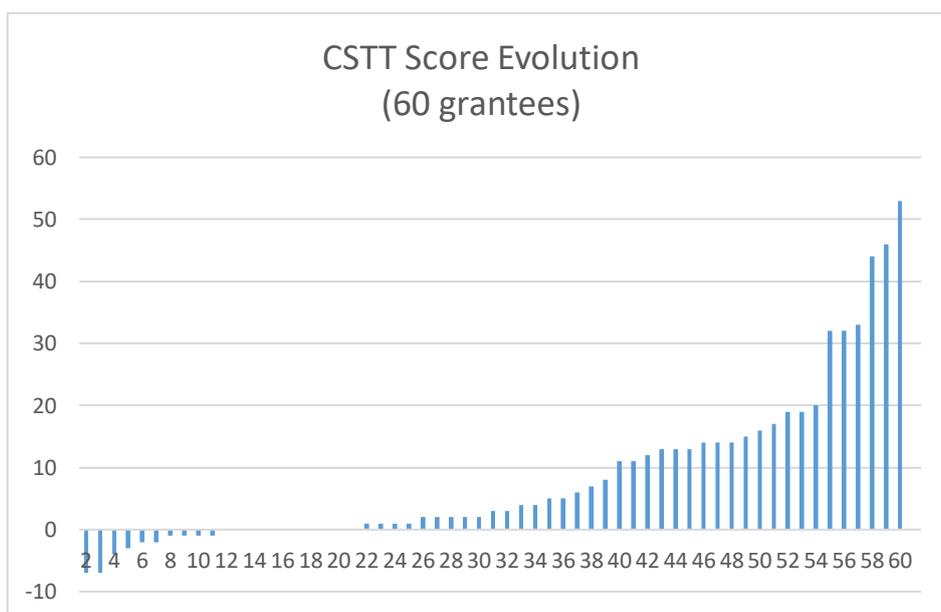
to two-hour online meeting was organized specifically on monitoring and presentation of data ("ending a project well").

- Support for the organization of a training on **Primaveira accounting software** for 5 of the Cabo Verdean large grantees together.
- Support for the organization of a **drone training** for the large grantees in Cabo Verde.
- RIT-led webinar on the topic "**In-situ Plant Conservation - Experience from the Middle-East**" (March), 23 participants from Balkans and Cabo Verde. Presenters were Sharif Jbour, former Middel East Program Officer, and Bertrand de Montmollin, Chair of the Mediterranean Plants Specialist Group (IUCN / SSC), with other RIT members present to answer questions.

## 4. Preliminary Impact Assessment Based on the Civil Society Tracking Tool

Results in terms of civil society capacity building are still preliminary, as about 40% of small grants and 30% of large grants are yet to be closed (many have been extended). Data is currently available for 60 CEPF grantees. In summary:

- 58% have an increased tracking tool score (2 or more points increase).
- 30% have a stable score (score variation from -1 to +1).
- 10% have a decrease of score (2 or more point decrease).



## 5. Specific Program of Work to Support Capacities in Fundraising (2020-2022)

During the CEPF Mediterranean Basin Hotspot Mid-Term Review in 2020, grantees identified fundraising as one of the topics on which they wanted additional training and support. With many CEPF- and MAVFA-funded projects coming to an end in 2022, the RIT suggested putting additional effort into a targeted support program for civil society organizations in the hotspot. This program aimed to provide them with better knowledge

and skills to financially sustain their projects and organizations, and thus to also sustain donor investments already made in these projects and organizations.

The training consisted of two main components:

- (1) Delivery of an interactive training program (“live” on Zoom), consisting of theory, exercises, and Q&A sessions.
- (2) Individual support to grantees who requested an independent review of proposals they were planning to submit to non-CEPF donors.

The RIT used the following selection criteria for the training and individual support:

- One person per organization could attend the online trainings, but everybody was allowed to access and use the available training tools and products. Participants were encouraged to train other people within their organizations (and their subgrantees, if they had any). Grantees needed to subscribe to the trainings in advance so the RIT knew who they were, and how many people would attend (for planning purposes).
- Because the RIT expected high demand vs limited time available for the individual support, the RIT announced that it would:
  - o Apply a “first come, first served” policy (to avoid a surge at the end).
  - o Only be able to review applications once—so the more developed the proposal would be the more targeted feedback the grantee would get.
  - o Prioritize support to grantees/individuals who attended (multiple) live sessions of the training (to encourage grantees to attend the training).
  - o Only support applications that were relevant to the grantee organization, to the selected donor, and to the CEPF program in the hotspot.
- The RIT aimed to spread support to as many grantees as possible, so it indicated that they would not be able to look at multiple proposals coming from one organization.
- If multiple organizations planned to apply to the same donor, the RIT promised to review them all equally and fairly.

## **5.1 Preparations and Documentation**

The RIT produced targeted materials for the fundraising training in English, French, Portuguese and Arabic, based on the [Institutional Fundraising for Conservation Projects](#) manual, which is available in all four languages (and Spanish).

All training documents are available on a targeted OneDrive directory [here](#), and include:

- Relevant sections of the manual, per topic, per language.
- Pre-recorded presentations (in English) for self-learning, per topic.
- Templates to be used by participants.

The team also added all PowerPoints used for the trainings to the OneDrive, as well as the links to the Zoom recordings of the trainings, so everybody could use and view these tools. All documents have now also been transferred to the BirdLife training platform called *Hatch*, which will be used for further CEPF training programs.

## 5.2 Delivery or Trainings

Three sets of trainings were prepared and delivered, spread over seven days each:

- A first training of four days, in English, to CEPF grantees in the Balkans.
- A first training of four days, in English and French, to CEPF grantees in the Middle East, North Africa and Cabo Verde.
- A first training of four days, in Arabic, to CEPF grantees in Libya.
- A second training of three days, in English, to CEPF grantees in the Balkans.
- A second training of three days, in English and French, to CEPF grantees in the Middle East, North Africa and Cabo Verde.
- A second training of three days, in Arabic, to CEPF grantees in Libya.

Topics	Countries	Dates	Number of men attending	Number of women attending	Total	Total excluding overlap
Stakeholder analysis, SWOT analysis; problem analysis; objectives and interventions; logical frameworks / theory of change; donor selection; proposal writing (4 days)	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia	11-14 April 2022	4	20	24	24
	Algeria, Cabo Verde, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia	9-12 May 2022	7	22	29	29
	Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia	20-23 June 2022	16	5	21	21
Refresher training; budgeting, work planning and monitoring, evaluation and learning; donor relations and fundraising plans/ strategies (3 days)	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia	19-21 July 2022	13	5	18	8 new
	Algeria, Cabo Verde, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia	26-28 July 2022	3	14	17	3 new
	Egypt, Libya	1-3 August 2022	8	3	11	0 new
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>85</b>	

## 5.3 Mentoring

CEPF grantees were also invited to send their non-CEPF applications to the RIT for review and advice. Three grantees used this opportunity:

- Friends of Nature from Lebanon sent a draft application to the Darwin Initiative for review.
- Terrimar from Cabo Verde sent a draft application to the IUCN/FFEM PPI for review.
- ATVS from Tunisia sent a draft application to the Audemars-Watkins Foundation for review.

All proposals were reviewed, and comments were sent back to the CEPF grantees. So far, only the application from Terrimar has been submitted and is still under review; the other two proposals are still to be submitted to the donor.

## 5.4 Feedback from Participants

*Email, 18/4/2022:*

"Thank you for the wonderful training and all the material you provided online. I will share them with "Une, Gruaja" staff and some of our stakeholders. The list with participants' contacts is also very important, UG would like to create as many connections as possible with associations working in the field of environment."

*Afroviti & Une, Gruaja staff*

*Email, 15/4/2022:*

"Thank you for creating the opportunity for such useful training. Your methodology of conveying your knowledge and experience on this matter has evoked a new way of understanding the whole process of writing a project. Comprehending the logical and critical thinking on carrying it out has been crucial to future involvement in this process."

"Thank you dearly and I wish you and the participating colleagues all the best ahead in your journeys as important actors in your fields of operation."

*Liridona ura, architect, project manager at GO2 Albania*

*Email, 15/4/2022:*

"Thank you so much for organising such a wonderful workshop. It was immensely enjoyable and educational."

"Looking forward to the second part of the training and getting your invaluable feedback on our next proposal. Thank you for offering us that opportunity."

*prof. dr Lejla Riđanović, Nastavnički fakultet. Univerzitet "Džemal Bijedić" Mostar*