

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
45th Meeting of the CEPF Donor Council
Tuesday 25 November 2025
8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Brussels and Paris Time
10:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m. (+1 day) Tokyo Time**

Report on R2C2 Progress

Recommended Action Item:

The Donor Council is asked to review the document and provide comments.

Background

On 15 November 2024, l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) entered into a contribution agreement with the European Commission to secure financing under European Union (EU) Action ACT-61938: Combatting Wildlife Trafficking. This action includes Objective 5: high value ecosystems are protected from emerging threats. Activities relating to Output 5 aim at providing emergency financial assistance to support swift reaction in unexpected situations threatening wildlife conservation efforts, through a "rapid response" mechanism.

AFD is currently negotiating a financing agreement with Conservation International (CI), to make this financing available for a "Rapid Rescue for Conservation Crises" (R2C2) facility, to be executed by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), taking advantage of its established systems, networks and experience. While waiting for the financing agreement to be finalized, the CEPF Secretariat developed, tested and refined mechanisms to operationalize the R2C2 facility, including by awarding pilot grants. This paper summarizes progress up to 15 October 2025.

Scope of the R2C2 Facility

The aim of the R2C2 facility is to address immediate conservation crises requiring an urgent response. The facility will address crises resulting from natural causes, such as wildfires, droughts, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, cyclones and mass strandings of animals and plants. It will also address human-induced crises, such as security threats to environmental activists or national park/protected areas rangers or managers; sudden spikes in poaching or illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; accidental or intentional pollution events; and acts of terrorism. To be eligible for support by the facility, a conservation crisis must be immediate, meaning that it must be presently occurring, not merely anticipated. It must also require an urgent response; conservation issues that can be resolved by provision of funding with a time lag greater than three months will not be eligible.

The R2C2 facility will respond to conservation crises in partner countries eligible to receive EU development aid.

Operationalization of the R2C2 Facility

A dedicated operational manual was prepared in mid-2024 to ensure that the facility is operated in an efficient, consistent and transparent manner, and that it is accessible to a broad range of civil society organizations (CSOs), including but not limited to international and local nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, community-based organizations, and private companies (on a not-for-profit basis). The manual contains the operating policies and procedures for the facility, grant application forms, information related to safeguard policies, the decision-making process, grant agreement, reporting forms, and provisions to avoid conflict of interest, among other procedures. The operational manual was prepared in close consultation with CEPF Working Group members from AFD and the EU, who approved its adoption in August 2024.

One of the main departures from CEPF's *modus operandi* for grant-making was to award grants using Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs), under which grantees are reimbursed on the basis of satisfactory completion of milestones, rather than Cost Reimbursement Grants, under which grantees are reimbursed for actual costs incurred. The FAA is intended to enable faster grant award times and reduce the reporting burden on grantees, features that make it an appropriate instrument for a rapid response mechanism.

In order to test the policies and procedures set out in the operational manual, four grants were awarded opportunistically, in response to conservation crises brought to the attention of the CEPF Secretariat. According to the operational manual, "for the first 12-months of the facility, applications will be restricted to countries in the 10 Biodiversity Hotspots where CEPF has active investments, before opening to all eligible countries." Therefore, these grants were restricted to active hotspots, specifically Indo-Burma, and Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands. They were all small grants (up to US\$50,000 in value), for which decision-making authority is delegated to the CEPF Secretariat.

Pilot Grants:

- **Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) Emergency Dam Construction to Restore Lake Sofia, Madagascar (CEPF-116489) US\$50,000**
WWT contacted CEPF for support to conduct emergency repairs to an earth embankment breached by floodwaters. Rapid action was necessary to prevent the permanent loss of Lake Sofia, a Ramsar site that supports the largest population of the Critically Endangered Madagascar pochard (*Aythya innotata*), as well as the livelihoods of about 10,000 local people who depend on the lake for flood control, irrigation of rice paddies and other crops, domestic water, fish and other natural resources. A Letter of Inquiry (LOI) was received on 6 January 2025 and the R2C2 grant agreement was signed on 4 February (four weeks later). Emergency repairs were implemented in March, water levels at the lake have returned to close to their previous levels, and most of the Madagascar pochards have returned.

- Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) Flood Relief, Facility Restoration and Emergency Care for Tortoises, Madagascar (CEPF-116538) US\$50,000**

TSA contacted CEPF for support to respond to the impacts of flooding on the Lavavolo Tortoise Center in southern Madagascar, which houses around 12,000 turtles from two Critically Endangered species: radiated tortoise (*Astrochelys radiata*) and spider tortoise (*Pyxis arachnoides*). The flooding was triggered by three tropical cyclones, from 16 January 2025 onward. An LOI was received on 24 January and the R2C2 grant agreement was signed on 7 February (two weeks later). The grant enabled TSA to rebuild infrastructure damaged in the flood, provide temporary enclosures for tortoises while the center was rebuilt, provide tortoises with veterinary care during the immediate emergency response period, and conduct ongoing assessments of tortoise health and rehabilitation.
- Rising Phoenix Translocation of a Threatened Banteng Herd to a Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia (CEPF-116572) US\$50,000**

Rising Phoenix contacted CEPF for support after the discovery of a herd of Critically Endangered banteng (*Bos javanicus*) in a degraded and isolated forest fragment, under immediate threat of poaching and forest clearance. Rising Phoenix proposed to translocate the herd to an enclosure within a nearby wildlife sanctuary to establish the nucleus of a breeding population for future reintroduction efforts, once conditions are appropriate. An LOI was received on 31 January 2025 and the R2C2 grant agreement was signed on 11 March (six weeks later). In May, 16 banteng were successfully captured and safely translocated to Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Center for Nature Conservation and Development (CCD) Conservation of Delacour's Langur at Huong Son Forest, Vietnam (CEPF-116698) US\$20,000**

CCD contacted CEPF to support urgent action in response to a hunting crisis facing Delacour's langur (*Trachypithecus delacouri*), a Critically Endangered primate endemic to Vietnam, and other threatened species, after essential funding for conservation efforts at Huong Son Forest was withdrawn by the funder. An LOI was received on 17 March 2025 and the R2C2 grant agreement was signed on 11 April (four weeks later). In collaboration with local communities and the management authorities for the site, CCD has initiated community patrol teams to conduct forest patrols, removed snares, established signage, and provided information to government agencies responsible for law enforcement. Since the start of the project, there have been no recorded cases of poaching. Moreover, in May, one female langur was filmed with a newborn baby: evidence that the population is starting to recover.