

Mid-term Assessment

**CEPF Investment in the
Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot**

June 2023

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. CEPF Niche	4
3. Implementing the Strategy	5
4. Performance of CEPF’s Investment	11
5. Priorities for July 2023 to September 2025 for CEPF Investment Strategy.....	17
6. Conclusion	18
Annex 1. Results Against Objective and Outcomes in the Portfolio Logframe	20
Annex 2. List of Awarded Grants	27
Annex 3. Progress towards Long-term Goals for CEPF in the Indo-Burma Hotspot ..	35
Annex 4. CEPF Investment in the Indo-Burma Hotspot as of 30 June 2023	45

1. Introduction

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is designed to safeguard the world's biologically richest and most threatened regions, known as biodiversity hotspots. It is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Conservation International (CI), the European Union (EU), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of Japan, and the World Bank. A fundamental purpose of CEPF is to engage civil society, such as community groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and private enterprises, in biodiversity conservation. This is done through a combination of grant making and capacity development.

Encompassing more than 2 million square kilometers of tropical Asia, Indo-Burma is the largest and one of the most geographically diverse of Earth's 36 biodiversity hotspots. The hotspot encompasses a number of major mountain ranges, including the Annamite Mountains and eastern extensions of the Himalayas, as well as extensive areas of limestone karst and five of Asia's largest rivers: the Ayeyarwady, Salween (Nujiang), Mekong, Red and Pearl (Zhujiang). Its sweeping expanse of level lowlands embraces several fertile floodplains and deltas and includes Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia, Southeast Asia's largest and most productive freshwater lake.

As a result of a high diversity of landforms and climatic zones, Indo-Burma supports a wide variety of habitats and, thus, high overall biodiversity. This diversity has been further increased by the development of endemism due to the hotspot's geological and evolutionary history. Centers of plant and animal endemism include the Annamite Mountains and the highlands of southern China and northern Vietnam. Consequently, Indo-Burma ranks in the top 10 hotspots for irreplaceability. Unfortunately, it is also ranked in the top five for threat, with only 5 percent of its original natural habitat remaining.

Indo-Burma holds more people than any other hotspot, the vast majority of whom depend for their livelihoods on the services provided by the hotspot's natural ecosystems. Of particular importance, in a region where paddy rice and fish protein provide the staple diet of more than 300 million people, are hydrological services and provisioning of fish and other freshwater products. The issues of poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation and climate change are inextricably linked.

In common with many of the world's biodiversity hotspots, a combination of economic development and human population growth is placing unprecedented pressures on Indo-Burma's natural capital. These pressures continue to increase, despite intensified efforts by government, civil society and the donor community to respond to them. In particular, there has been an acceleration of deforestation rates, with the rate of tree cover loss during 2010-2019 almost doubling compared with the rate during 2000-2010. Habitat loss and over-exploitation have placed increasing pressures on plant and animal populations, with the number of species recognized as globally threatened on the IUCN Red List increasing by more than 70 percent between 2011 and 2020. At the same time, the impacts of climate change are increasingly being observed in the hotspot: average temperatures have gone up; rainfall patterns have changed; sea levels have begun to rise; and extreme weather events are being recorded more frequently. These three trends (accelerating habitat loss, over-exploitation and climate change) have combined to create an ecological crisis with major implications for biodiversity, human health and economic development.

For the purposes of CEPF investment, the Indo-Burma Hotspot comprises all non-marine parts of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, plus parts of southern China, including Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Boundaries of the Indo-Burma Hotspot Followed for CEPF Investment



This report aims to assess progress towards the goals set out in the ecosystem profile, evaluate gaps in the CEPF grant portfolio and set priorities for the remainder of the five-year investment period. It draws on experience, lessons learned, and project reports generated by civil society organizations implementing CEPF grants. In addition, it incorporates the findings of the mid-term assessment workshop, held in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, on 27-29 June 2023. The workshop was attended by 100 representatives of 78 civil society, government and donor organizations.

2. CEPF Niche

2.1 Overview

CEPF began making grants to civil society groups in the Indo-Burma Hotspot in July 2008. The first phase of investment ran from 2008 to 2013, during which US\$9.7 million in grants was awarded. The second phase ran from 2013 to 2020, during which a further US\$15.4 million was awarded. Based upon the successful implementation of these investments, the CEPF Donor Council approved the selection of the Indo-Burma Hotspot for reinvestment in October 2019. This third phase will run from 2020 to 2025, with a total investment of US\$12 million.

To guide the third phase of investment, the CEPF Secretariat updated the ecosystem profile¹ between May 2019 and August 2020, through a consultative process that engaged more than 170 people. The ecosystem profile contains a five-year investment strategy, informed by a situational analysis that considers the social, economic, political and climate change context. The updated ecosystem profile was approved by the CEPF Donor Council in November 2020. The updated investment strategy for the Indo-Burma Hotspot has 11 strategic directions, six of which are the focus of CEPF investment:

1. Safeguard priority globally threatened species by mitigating major threats.
2. Mitigate zoonotic disease risks by reducing illegal trade and consumption of and threats to wildlife.
4. Empower local communities to engage in conservation and management of priority sites.
6. Demonstrate scalable approaches for integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into development planning in the priority corridors.
8. Strengthen the capacity of civil society to work on biodiversity, communities and livelihoods at regional, national, local and grassroots levels.
11. Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of conservation investment through a regional implementation team.

The geographic focus for CEPF investment is on five priority corridors (the Chindwin River, the Mekong River and Major Tributaries, the Northern Plains Seasonally Inundated Forests, the Sino-Vietnamese Limestone, and the Tonle Sap Lake and Inundation Zone) plus a network of limestone karst sites in Myanmar. Together, these cover 5 percent of the total area of the hotspot. Moreover, CEPF investment focuses on 136 priority species that require species-focused action in addition to site-based and landscape-scale conservation.

In parallel to updating the ecosystem profile, the CEPF Secretariat secured funding from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies for an initial round of grant making, with the purpose of maintaining momentum for conservation built during the second phase into the third phase of investment. This funding was restricted to Cambodia and Lao PDR and to specific thematic priorities. Fourteen grants were awarded from May 2020 onward, following a call for proposals in November 2019.

¹ https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/ep_indoburma_2020_update_final-sm_0.pdf

2.2 Coordinating CEPF Grant Making

CEPF grant making in the Indo-Burma Hotspot is coordinated by a Regional Implementation Team (RIT). The RIT for the second phase of investment in the hotspot (2013-2020) was the IUCN Asia Regional Office (ARO). An independent evaluation of lessons learned by the RIT, undertaken between August 2019 and April 2020, resulted in a recommendation to continue working with the incumbent organization. Consequently, IUCN ARO was invited to apply to act as the RIT for the third phase, and a new RIT grant agreement was entered into in January 2021. IUCN ARO will serve as the RIT until the end of the investment phase, in September 2025. The RIT has a core team based in Bangkok supported by national coordinators and finance staff, to oversee the grants in the six hotspot countries. There are 16 members of the RIT in total, all of whom work in a part-time capacity (Table 1).

Table 1. Members of the Indo-Burma Regional Implementation Team

No.	RIT Designation	Position at IUCN-ARO	Based in
1	RIT Manager	Senior Programme Officer, Species/Programme Coordinator, Science and Strategy Group	Thailand
2	RIT Administration Officer	Secretary, Science and Strategy Group	Thailand
3	RIT Communications Officer	Communications Officer, Science and Strategy Group	Thailand
4	RIT Gender Focal Point	Senior Programme Officer, Coastal and Marine	Thailand
5	RIT National Coordinator (Cambodia)	Water and Wetlands Coordinator	Cambodia
6	RIT Finance Officer (Cambodia)	Operations Officer	Cambodia
7	RIT National Coordinator (China)	Senior Programme Officer	China
8	RIT Finance Officer (China)	Finance, Human Resources, and Administration Officer	China
9	RIT National Coordinator (Lao PDR)	Technical Officer	Lao PDR
10	RIT Finance Officer (Lao PDR)	Finance Officer	Lao PDR
11	RIT National Coordinator (Myanmar)	Technical Officer	Myanmar
12	RIT Finance Officer (Myanmar)	Finance Officer	Myanmar
13	RIT National Coordinator (Thailand)	Project Officer	Thailand
14	RIT Finance Officer (Thailand)	Regional Finance Officer	Thailand
15	RIT National Coordinator (Vietnam)	Programme Officer	Vietnam
16	RIT Finance Officer (Vietnam)	Senior Finance Officer	Vietnam

3. Implementing the Strategy

3.1 Collaboration with CEPF's Donors and Other Funders

CEPF ensures that its investments are well coordinated with those of other funders through various mechanisms. In each country, a National Advisory Committee (NAC) has been established, comprising representatives of government, civil society and the donor community. NAC members review shortlisted small grant applications, and participate in the Technical Review Committees that review shortlisted large grant applications. Where donors are supporting work at the same sites or involving the same organizations, their involvement in the review process ensures that potential synergies are realized and duplication of effort is avoided.

Since 2011, CEPF has been a member of the Lower Mekong Funders Collaborative, which promotes collaboration among donors supporting conservation activities led by civil society in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. This informal group currently has 11 members, who meet two or three times a year to share information about their portfolios and issues encountered by their grantees. The CEPF ecosystem profile serves as an informal guide to the funders, to ensure well aligned grant making that addresses the priorities of civil society in the region.

CEPF is also a participant in the Lower Mekong Network, which brings together local and international CSOs, their funders and intermediary organizations working on ecosystem conservation, land rights, sustainable livelihoods and related issues in the Lower Mekong region. The purpose of the network is to provide a platform on which to: build common understanding; learn, share, and discuss strategies; and pursue common purposes and address lessons learned and common challenges. The aim is to ensure that each individual organization's position is strengthened, aiding members to achieve their goals in the Lower Mekong region. More than 50 organizations currently participate in the network.

Several of CEPF's donors are developing or implementing major initiatives directly related to biodiversity conservation in the Indo-Burma Hotspot. These include the GEF Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program, which is led by IUCN and FAO, and implemented in collaboration with other partners, including CEPF. With its focus on area-based conservation approaches, for both protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), as well as productive forest landscapes outside of protected areas, there are opportunities to scale up effective approaches demonstrated by CSOs under the CEPF program, and to integrate good practice into public policy. The involvement of IUCN and CEPF in this initiative will ensure that such synergies happen.

Another major initiative is the Green Climate Fund program Freshwater Wetlands-based Adaptation in the Indo-Burma Region, which is being developed by IUCN, CEPF and other partners, through AFD as the Accredited Entity. The proposed program will improve the capacity of people to adapt to climate change by reversing degradation of the most climate-vulnerable freshwater wetland landscapes in the region. It includes a component on improved management, restoration and conservation of priority freshwater wetlands, through mobilization of CSOs. The mechanism for this component will be a grant-making mechanism, modeled on the one in place for the current CEPF investment phase.

The approach, processes and tools used by CEPF in Indo-Burma are being adapted and adopted by several other initiatives in the hotspot that follow a grant-making model. An example is the Lao Ecology Small Grants Program, which is being implemented by IUCN, with support from the McConnell Foundation.

3.2 Portfolio Status

The Indo-Burma grant portfolio comprises two types of grant: large grants (above US\$40,000 in value; awarded directly by CEPF); and small grants (up to US\$40,000 in value; awarded by the RIT). The first call for proposals, in November 2019, was restricted to three priority corridors in Cambodia and Lao PDR. It generated 36 Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) for large grants, of which 14 were awarded. The second call for proposals, issued in January 2021, covered all six countries in the hotspot, although it was restricted to Strategic Directions 1 and 2 and Investment Priority

8.3, to keep the volume of applications manageable. The call generated 210 LOIs, comprising 77 for large grants and 133 for small grants. From these applications, 18 large grants and 17 small grants were awarded.

In August 2021, two of the large grants awarded under first call were closed, because the grantee (an international NGO) closed its office in Cambodia as part of a phased transition to local partners. The remaining funds were awarded to a local organization via the grant-by-invitation modality, resulting in two more large grants being awarded in September 2021. Similarly, in January 2022, one of the small grants awarded under the second call was terminated, with no money spent, because the grantee (an international NGO) could not get permission to work at the project sites. The grant was reissued to a local organization in February 2022, via the grant-by-invitation modality.

The third call for proposals was issued in November 2021. This call was restricted to Strategic Directions 4 and 8, with a view to filling gaps in the grant portfolio. The call covered all hotspot countries except Myanmar, where grant making had been temporarily suspended (see below). The call generated 114 LOIs by the closing date: 40 for large grants; and 74 for small grants. The applications led to the award of 10 large and nine small grants.

The fourth (and final) call for proposals was issued in August 2022. It covered all six countries, and focused on filling the remaining gaps in the portfolio. The call generated 48 LOIs for large grants and 35 for small grants. As of 30 June 2023, 12 large and two small grants had been awarded under this call, with a further five small grants selected for award and at the final stages of financial due diligence and contracting.

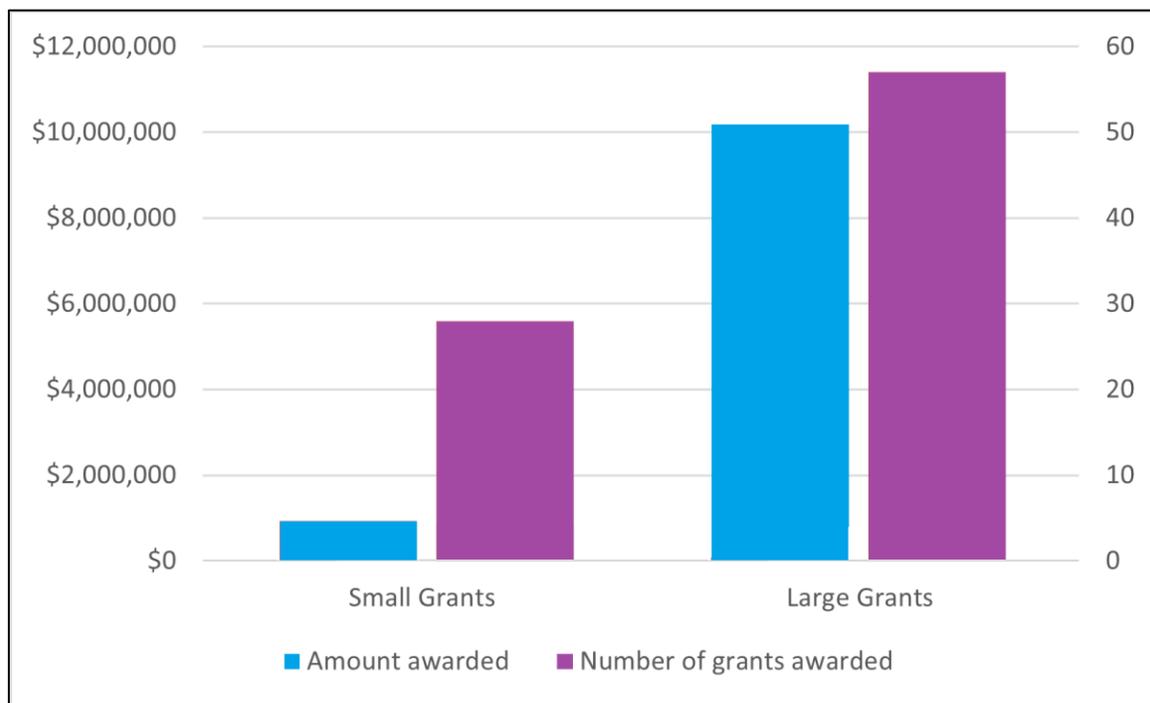
Table 2: Grant-making Status by Strategic Direction, June 2023

Strategic Direction	Funding Allocation	Awarded Grants			Amount Under/(Over) Budget	% of Funding Allocation Remaining
		Total Amount	# of large grants	# of small grants		
SD1	\$3,200,000	\$2,756,545	13	13	\$443,455	14
SD2	\$1,000,000	\$972,178	4	4	\$27,822	3
SD4	\$2,578,581	\$2,391,802	15	4	\$186,779	7
SD6	\$2,000,000	\$1,916,715	13	1	\$83,285	4
SD8	\$1,500,000	\$1,492,598	11	7	\$7,402	0
SD11	\$1,680,000	\$1,400,000	1	0	\$280,000	17
Total	\$11,958,581	\$10,929,838	57	29	\$1,028,743	9

The four competitive calls for proposals generated a total of 201 applications for large grants, out of which 54 (or 1 in 4) were successful. The success rate for small grant applications was significantly lower, at 33 out of 242 applications (or 1 in 7). The main reason was the large proportion of small grant LOIs that were not aligned with the thematic and/or geographic priorities of the call, making them ineligible.

As of 30 June 2023, the CEPF grant portfolio in the Indo-Burma Hotspot comprised 57 large grants (including the RIT grant) and 29 small grants, with a total value of US\$10.9 million (Table 2; Figure 2).

Figure 2. Large and Small Grant Awards, June 2023



During the 1990s and 2000s, conservation efforts by civil society in the Indo-Burma Hotspot were dominated, to a greater or lesser extent, by international organizations. In part, this reflected the greater access to financial resources that many international organizations enjoyed, while, in part, it reflected the challenging operating environment for local civil society organizations. Although the last decade has seen a growth in the number, capacity and credibility of local organizations, the legacy of international leadership of conservation efforts is still felt.

CEPF and IUCN put in place measures to make CEPF grants accessible to local organizations, including welcoming small grant applications in local languages, providing hands-on support to applicants with proposal preparation, and allowing grantees to build costs of institutional strengthening into their grant budgets. Forty-nine out of 86 (57 percent) of grants awarded to date have been to local organizations. This proportion is much higher for small grants (79 percent) than for large grants (48 percent). These are similar proportions as for the previous investment phase, when local organizations received 84 percent of small grants and 50 percent of large grants. Representatives of local organizations who participated in the mid-term assessment workshop reported that they had faced a challenging time

in recent years, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and greater constraints placed on their activities and access to international donor funding.

In terms of funding, local organizations received 87 percent of the small grant funding, and 31 percent of the large grant funding (Figure 3). The RIT grant was awarded to IUCN, an international organization.

Figure 3. Grants to Local and International Organizations, June 2023



The original funding allocation for the investment phase was almost US\$10 million; this was increased to almost US\$12 million in 2023, to include additional funding made available by Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies. The total value of grants awarded to date is equivalent to 91 percent of the funding allocation for the investment phase, leaving a little over US\$1 million available. This will be used to fund the small grants that have been approved for award but not yet contracted, plus additional, targeted grant making to fill remaining gaps in the portfolio. These grants will be made on an invitation basis, and it is not anticipated that there will be any more competitive calls during this phase.

The geographic priorities for CEPF investment comprise five priority corridors and the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) they contain, as well as a network of limestone karst sites in Myanmar. The greatest geographic concentration of grants has been in the Mekong River and Major Tributaries priority corridor (with 23), followed by the Tonle Sap Lake and Inundation Zone (with nine). The Northern Plains Seasonally Inundated Forests and Sino-Vietnamese Limestone priority corridors have each received only five grants, whereas the fewest grants have been awarded in the Chindwin River priority corridor (with one) and the Myanmar Karst network of priority sites (with two).

The small number of grants addressing geographic priorities in Myanmar resulted from a temporary suspension of CEPF grant-making in the country, following the military coup in February 2021. When grant-making resumed, in December 2021, it was subject to certain conditions, including that funding would be restricted to former grantees and for community-level activities that did not involve the Myanmar government. These conditions were necessary, to manage financial risk and comply with US Treasury Department restrictions, but they limited the pool of grantees and activities that CEPF could support. Moreover, the security situation at some sites prevented some proposed projects from being implemented safely.

The remaining 41 grants in the portfolio either have a cross-cutting geographic focus or are located outside the priority geographies (Figure 4). These mainly comprise species-focused conservation actions under Strategic Direction 1, activities to mainstream biodiversity into policy under Strategic Direction 6, and capacity building under Strategic Direction 8. Regarding species-focused actions, the grants in the CEPF portfolio address the conservation of 39 of the 136 priority species identified in the ecosystem profile.

Around US\$1 million remains available to address gaps in the grant portfolio with regard to the investment strategy (Table 2). Around US\$440,000 remains uncommitted under Strategic Direction 1 on species conservation. Some of these funds will be used to make targeted small grants for fish conservation; the remainder will be used to address Investment Priority 1.4 (research and pilot innovative funding sources for species conservation), which remains a persistent gap.

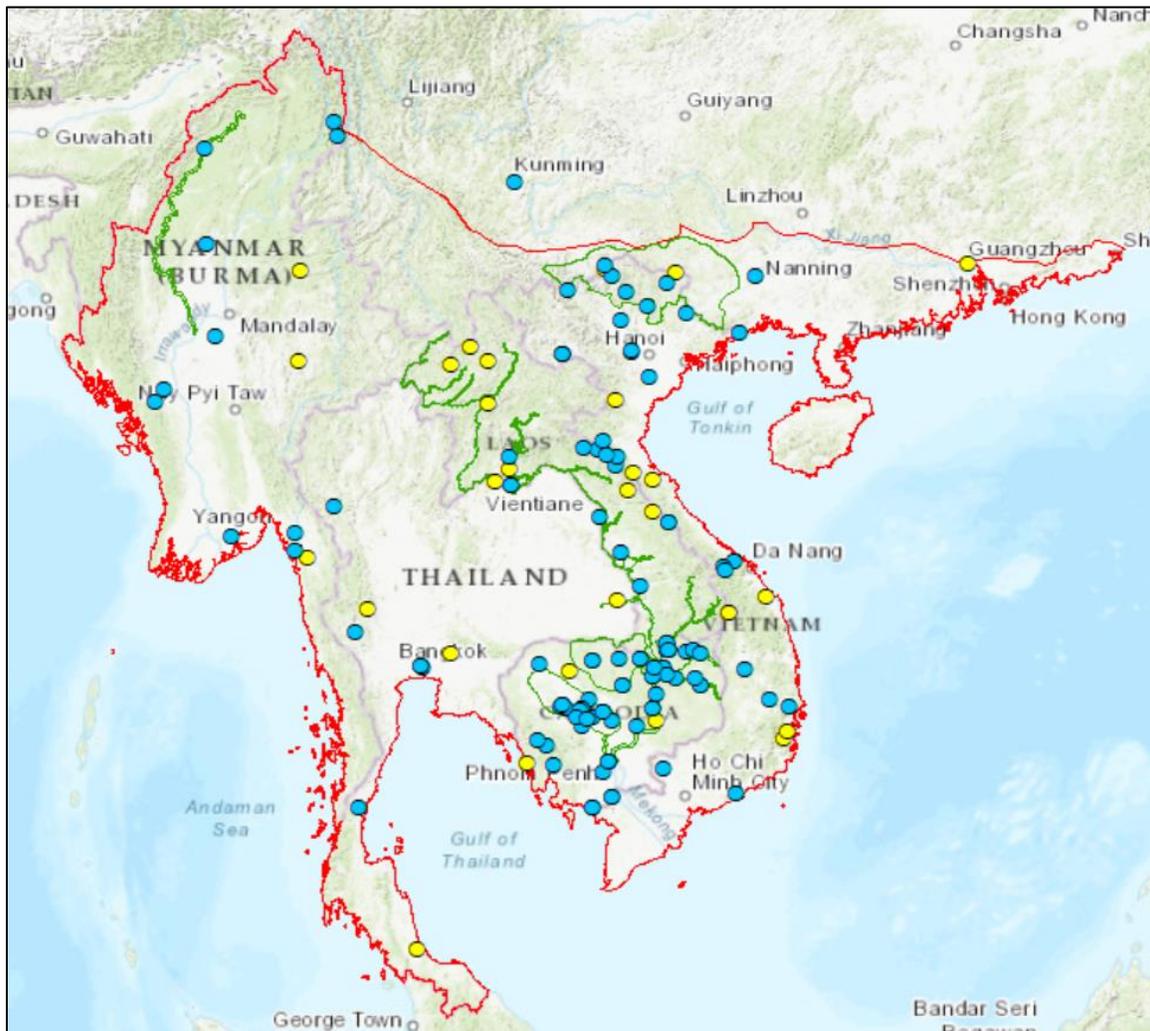
Less than US\$30,000 remains uncommitted under Strategic Direction 2 on wildlife trade. The main gap is with regard to Investment Priority 2.5 (understand and support action to address linkages between biodiversity and human health, including the role of biodiversity loss in the emergence of zoonotic diseases). No suitable grant applications that contribute to this target have yet been received. Because the amount of funding remaining is limited and considering the availability of funding from other sources for work on zoonotic disease emergence, CEPF and the RIT recommend dropping the related target, as no longer realistic.

Less than US\$190,000 remains under Strategic Direction 4 on empowering communities to engage in site conservation. Most of these funds will be used to support pipeline small grants under the fourth call. The main gap in the portfolio is in regard to Investment Priority 4.4 (revise KBA identification in the hotspot using the new KBA standard). A number of applications to address this investment priority have been received during the investment phase. However, they have either not represented good value for money or have not received the necessary support from the relevant authorities. Consequently, CEPF and the RIT recommend dropping the related target, as no longer attainable.

Around US\$80,000 remains uncommitted under Strategic Direction 6 on mainstreaming biodiversity into development and less than US\$10,000 under Strategic Direction 8 on capacity building. There are no gaps in the grant portfolio with respect to these strategic directions. The remaining funds will be used to support pipeline small grants under the fourth call.

Finally, US\$280,000 remains under Strategic Direction 11. These funds will be made available to IUCN, through a cost extension to the RIT grant, to cover the additional cost involved in managing an expanded grant portfolio, with the additional funding from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropy that was approved in 2022.

Figure 4. Project Sites of CEPF Grantees



Notes: project sites of small grants are shown in yellow; those of large grants are shown in blue; priority corridors are shown in green; the hotspot boundary is shown in red.

4. Performance of CEPF's Investment

4.1 Portfolio-level Performance

At the time of the mid-term assessment workshop in June 2023, the third CEPF investment phase in the Indo-Burma Hotspot was 43 months into its 70-month duration (63 percent). During this period 91 percent of the available funding (US\$10.9 million out of US\$12.0 million) had been committed as grants. Of the 32 targets in the portfolio logframe, 25 (78 percent) were on track to be met, based on the expected results of awarded grants (Annex 1). Only one had already been met

(at least 5,000 women and 5,000 men receive direct socioeconomic benefits through increased income, food security, resource rights or other measures of human wellbeing), however, because only 19 out of the 86 grants had closed.

In terms of geographic distribution of investment, Cambodia has received the greatest amount to date, with US\$5.6 million (51 percent). This reflects the fact that Cambodia has benefited from additional funding from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropy, which is restricted to three priority landscapes in Cambodia and one in Lao PDR. It is also a reflection of the relatively large number of CSOs active in biodiversity conservation in the country. Vietnam has received the next largest share, with US\$1.8 million (17 percent), reflecting the high concentration of CEPF funding priorities, particularly priority species, in this country. The distribution of funding across the other four hotspot countries is fairly even: US\$0.7 million (6 percent) to China; US\$1.1 million (10 percent) to Lao PDR; US\$1.0 million (9 percent) to Myanmar; and US\$0.7 million (7 percent) to Thailand.

In terms of efficiency of grant making, the process for large grants has been very efficient. The average time between LOI submission and grant award is just five-and-a-half months. This is close to the optimal length of process, considering the need for thorough technical review and financial due diligence, and the time needed for applicants to participate in proposal development workshops and then prepare their full proposals.

The small-grant-making process has not been as efficient. Despite the process being shorter (no proposal development workshop, no full proposal) the average time between LOI submission and grant award stands at nine months. In part, this is due to small grantees typically having less experience in applying for grants from international funders, and, therefore, requiring more support. It also reflects decisions taken by CEPF and the RIT to advance the review of large grant applications received under each call before small grants, in order to spread out the workload for the RIT and expert reviewers.

At the close of each grant, its performance is evaluated by comparing the actual results achieved with the expected impacts in the project proposal. At the time of the mid-term assessment, only 19 grants had closed (or been terminated). This sample is not representative of the CEPF portfolio as a whole, as all but two were large grants and all except four were for projects in Cambodia. Nevertheless, these evaluations give an indication of the overall performance of the grant portfolio. Excluding grants that ended without any funds being spent or that were closed to award the grant to another organization, eight grants (53 percent) were assessed as having Met Expectations. A further six grants (40 percent) were assessed as having Failed to Meet Expectations in Some Regards. These were mainly for projects whose implementation had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which there were restrictions on public meetings and travel between provinces in Cambodia, meaning that some activities could not be implemented as originally planned. Overall, however, the impact of the pandemic on performance was lower than anticipated, and grantees proved resourceful and adaptable in finding ways to advance their objectives through alternative means, in particular by moving activities online, where possible. Only one grant (seven percent) was evaluated as having Completely Failed to Meet Expectations. This was for a small grant in Thailand, which was terminated based on poor performance, with most of the funds being returned unspent.

4.2 Preliminary Impacts Summary

The preliminary impacts of the third CEPF investment in the Indo-Burma Hotspot were assessed at the mid-term assessment workshop held in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, in June 2023. Only one-in-four of the grants awarded to date had closed at that point. Because impacts are only verified when grants close, the results presented here are necessarily preliminary, based upon information presented in grantees' final completion and impact reports (closed grants only), presentations made at the mid-term assessment workshop, and information gathered during site visits by CEPF and the RIT.

The preliminary impacts of the CEPF investment phase include the following:

- Long-term conservation programs sustained for core populations of 13 priority species.
- A wild population of Siamese crocodile (*Crocodylus siamensis*) reestablished in Cambodia.
- Awareness of local conservation issues and rights and opportunities related to natural resource management raised among local communities at three priority sites.
- Community fisheries and/or protected areas piloted or made more sustainable at six priority sites.
- Co-management mechanisms to enable community participation in zoning, management and governance developed for four protected areas.
- Strengthened protection and management of 144,645 hectares in five KBAs.
- Biodiversity conservation strengthened within 37,752 hectares of production landscape, including areas managed for agriculture and fishing.
- Impacts of hydropower development plans on the Mekong mainstream in Cambodia on biodiversity and ecosystem services analyzed, and alternative development scenarios proposed.
- An approach for ecological restoration through deepening of seasonal wetlands (trapeangs) demonstrated in the Mekong River and Major Tributaries Corridor.
- Public debate and awareness of the implications of hydropower dam development in Cambodia increased through media coverage.
- Biodiversity-friendly production of organic rice piloted at several sites in Cambodia.
- Eight civil society networks strengthened, enabling collective responses to priority and emerging threats.
- The organizational capacity of nine domestic CSOs strengthened, while five demonstrate improved performance with gender mainstreaming.
- Direct socioeconomic benefits received by 14,293 women and 14,504 men, in terms of increased income, food security, resource rights or other measures of human wellbeing.

4.3 Investment Highlights by Strategic Direction

CEPF investment under Strategic Direction 1 aims to safeguard priority globally threatened species by mitigating major threats. The 13 large and 13 small grants awarded to date are supporting targeted conservation actions for priority species, in particular by addressing the threat of over-exploitation. Several CEPF grantees have rooted species conservation efforts in local communities, including through

coordinating groups of local volunteers. For example, GreenViet has supported a pioneer group of 19 species champions to conserve a population of grey-shanked douc (*Pygathrix cinerea*) at Tay My Tay commune in Vietnam's Quang Nam province; the population has increased by 6 percent since the beginning of the project. As well as protecting existing *in situ* populations of priority species, CEPF grantees have helped reestablish wild populations of species, through reintroductions and habitat restoration. For instance, Turtle Survival Alliance and partners have overcome challenges caused by the ongoing civil unrest in Myanmar to successfully reestablish a wild population of Burmese star tortoise (*Geochelone platynota*) at Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary. Following a pilot release in 2015, 1,000 captive-bred tortoises were released into the wild in 2022, and a further 1,000 individuals are in an acclimation pen, awaiting release in mid-2023.

CEPF investment under Strategic Direction 2 aims to mitigate zoonotic disease risks by reducing illegal trade and consumption of and threats to wildlife. This strategic direction has received the smallest amount of investment so far, with only four large and four small grants being awarded. In Lao PDR, Rural Development Agency recruited and trained 24 community youth champions for combating illegal wildlife trade in and around Hin Nam No National Protected Area. The young people were empowered to design and implement a program of outreach activities, aimed at reducing demand for wildlife products. In China, CEPF grantees are supporting efforts to combat illegal trade in wildlife by targeting online trade, which boomed during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has developed a "wildlife guardian" tool, which uses artificial intelligence to identify photos of wildlife being traded on Baidu, an online marketplace, and produced short videos that play when a user types a search item related to wildlife products.

CEPF investment under Strategic Direction 4 aims to empower local communities to engage in conservation and management of priority sites. The 15 large and four small grants awarded to date are supporting community-based conservation approaches at priority sites in all six hotspot countries. Along the Mekong River in Cambodia, Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA) has facilitated the designation of four brood-stock zones within Stung Treng Ramsar Site. Managed by local communities, these zones are closed to destructive fishing practices (large-scale floating gillnets, electric-shock fishing, etc.) during the fish spawning season. The financial sustainability of this initiative has been secured through the establishment of mini-trust funds and micro-credit schemes for the participating communities. Similar approaches to community-based natural resource management have been adopted in other countries. For example, in Thailand, Mekong Community Institute Association has supported local communities to establish three fish conservation zones for globally threatened fish species: two along the lower Mun River; and one on the Mekong mainstream.

Under Strategic Direction 6, CEPF investment aims to demonstrate scalable approaches for integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into development planning in the priority corridors. The 13 large grants and one small grant awarded to date employ a wide range of strategies to mainstream the goals of biodiversity conservation into development plans and policies. For example, Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT) organized a national public forum on "Strengthening Good Governance and Effectiveness in Fisheries Resources Management", which brought together actors involved in community fisheries management from across Cambodia. A key outcome was an agreement between FACT and the Ministry of the Interior to

allocate 10 percent of the budget of 15 pilot communes (10 around Tonle Sap lake and five in coastal provinces) to support community-led fisheries conservation. Also under Strategic Direction 6, CEPF grantees have promoted biodiversity-friendly production models. For example, Fauna & Flora has facilitated certification of coffee by the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network; 105 coffee farmers around Mann Wildlife Sanctuary in Myanmar have been certified under the Participatory Guarantee System, incentivizing them to protect the habitat of western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*) and other globally threatened species.

CEPF investment under Strategic Direction 8 aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society to work on biodiversity, communities and livelihoods at regional, national, local and grassroots levels. The 11 large and seven small grants awarded to date are strengthening individual CSOs as well as their networks and partnerships. Impacts are being monitored by means of the Civil Society Tracking Tool, which grantees are asked to complete at the start and end of the period of CEPF support. Baseline and final tools have so far been completed by seven organizations, out of which six (86 percent) reported an increase in overall capacity. As well as building capacity of individual CSOs, CEPF grants have also strengthened networks and partnerships among them. For example, under the grant to CEPA, a Mekong Women's Network on Fisheries was established, to provide space for women to share lessons, concerns and challenges, and access support for fishery resources management and livelihood improvement.

Finally, CEPF investment under Strategic Direction 11 aims to provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of conservation investment in the Indo-Burma Hotspot. This strategic direction provides for the RIT role, which is being performed by IUCN. The RIT has operationalized a grant-making process that has already led to the award of CEPF grants to 49 CSOs, including 30 local organizations. The RIT has also begun building a broad constituency of civil society groups working towards the shared goals in the ecosystem profile, including through organizing the mid-term assessment workshop in June 2023.

4.4 Challenges and Lessons Learned

Almost all of the CEPF grantees gave presentations of their projects during the mid-term assessment workshop in June 2023. As part of these presentations, grantees were asked to reflect on the main challenges they had encountered when implementing their projects and to share lessons learned. Many of these challenges and lessons learned were context-specific and unique to individual projects. However, some common themes emerged, which are summarized in this section.

The most common challenges encountered were delays encountered due to restrictions introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and general problems with project management and implementation (each reported by 10 grantees). For example, grantees addressing the cross-border trade in wildlife had to delay implementation of international meetings between agencies from both sides of the border, or substitute them with virtual meetings, which were less effective at building trust and relationships. Regarding project management, common issues cited by grantees included high turnover of project staff, remote project sites with difficult access, and low internet and cellphone connectivity.

The next most common challenges were limited resources and capacity, and illegal exploitation of fishery/forestry resources (seven grantees). For example, grantees

working on community fisheries in Cambodia noted that destructive fishing methods and clearance of flooded forest were prevalent, despite being banned. They also noted that some community fisheries have no sources of funding to support their operations other than donor funding, thus their activities risk stopping when the grant ends.

Other common challenges included slow grant approval process by government (six grantees), limited budget, slow timing, need for surveillance/patrolling, limited cooperation from local community members, and limited technical knowledge (five grantees each).

With regard to lessons learned, the most commonly shared lesson was that regular, transparent communication with stakeholders was a success factor for project implementation (reported by nine grantees). For example, a grantee in Thailand observed that “maintaining open and transparent communication with stakeholders, including private sector counterparts, helps in addressing concerns, clarifying expectations, and ensuring smooth collaboration”.

The next most common lessons learned were the importance of engaging and raising awareness among local communities, the importance of building long-term relationships and partnerships, and the need for good collaboration with government partners, especially agencies responsible for enforcing regulations on natural resource use (seven grantees each). With regard to community engagement, a grantee in Cambodia noted that increasing “community knowledge and acknowledgement can lead to greater participation, community mobilization and ownership”, while a grantee in China shared that “local communities were not truly engaged in the past conservation initiatives by the nature reserve, and there were insufficient financial benefits to mobilize the communities. We are now aware of this problem and are focusing on the needs of both the communities and the nature reserve, and will consult them and incorporate their views during the project design stage”. Regarding long-term relationships, a grantee in China supporting volunteers noted that cooperation with government partners ensured that the volunteers would have organizational affiliation, management support and financial sustainability after the project end. Regarding collaboration with government partners, a grantee in Cambodia observed that “the involvement and participation from commune authority can increase the effectiveness of project implementation and contribute to greater achievements”. Elsewhere, grantees in Myanmar noted that involvement of government enforcement agencies is necessary to address hunting and trade in threatened species but current restrictions on donor funding, including from CEPF, prohibit direct engagement with government.

Other common lessons learned included the need for regular training and refreshers, and the value of promoting gender equality/female empowerment to ensure lasting conservation impact (five grantees each). Grantees also noted the need to adapt project design to account for unanticipated environmental factors, the importance of using technology appropriate to local conditions, the need to extend research and study beyond the end of the CEPF grant period, and the need for flexibility with plans to anticipate and respond to emerging challenges (four grantees each).

5. Priorities for July 2023 to September 2025 for CEPF Investment Strategy

The remaining uncommitted funds (US\$1 million) will be deployed in the remaining 27 months of the investment phase, with the aim of filling gaps in the portfolio with regard to the logframe targets. There are seven main gaps:

- Grants awarded to date aim to strengthen the management of biodiversity within 54,845 hectares of production landscape, against a target of 100,000 hectares. It may still be possible to meet this target, because several grants are working on sustainable production (particularly in the agriculture and fisheries sectors) but have not set clear targets for the number of hectares that will adopt biodiversity-friendly practices.
- There is a target of leveraging at least US\$1 million in funding for species conservation from innovative sources. This has not been a major focus of grants awarded to date, which aim to leverage just US\$2,000. To address this gap, at least one grant will be awarded under Investment Priority 1.4 (research and pilot innovative funding sources for species conservation), making use of some of the remaining funds under Strategic Direction 1.
- No progress has been made towards the target of publishing at least three journal papers on linkages between biodiversity and human health. This is because no suitable applications have been received under Investment Priority 2.5 (understand and support action to address linkages between biodiversity and human health, including the role of biodiversity loss in the emergence of zoonotic diseases). Considering the availability of other sources of funding for this work, it is recommended that this target be dropped.
- No progress has been made towards the target of updating lists of KBAs in at least three countries in line with the new KBA standard. Several applications were received under Investment Priority 4.4 (revise KBA identification in the hotspot using the new KBA standard) but either these were determined to not represent good value for money (in terms of the number of KBAs that would be assessed compared with the budget) or the necessary permissions from the government authorities were not forthcoming. Considering the repeated unsuccessful attempts to find suitable projects to support under this investment priority, it is recommended that this target be dropped.
- Also under Strategic Direction 4, third-party evaluations of project impacts on biodiversity and human wellbeing were undertaken for five priority sites against a target of at least 10.
- Grants awarded to date aim to strengthen the organizational capacity of 104 domestic CSOs. To date, only nine have demonstrated improvements in their capacity, against a target of 50. This is because changes in organizational capacity are monitored at the end of the period of CEPF support, and the great majority of grants yet to close. CEPF and the RIT expect this target to be met or exceeded.
- Grants awarded to date aim to improve the gender mainstreaming performance of 52 domestic CSOs. To date, only five have demonstrated an increase in their performance, using the Gender Tracking Tool, against a target of 20. Because this tool is only used at the start and end of the period of CEPF support, and because most grants are still active, the actual number of CSOs demonstrating improvement to date is likely a significant underestimate of actual progress. CEPF and the RIT expect this target to be met or exceeded.

In addition to the thematic gaps discussed above, there are also some taxonomic gaps. Grants awarded to date aim to sustain long-term conservation programs for core populations of 35 priority species. These are not distributed evenly by major taxonomic group but comprise 15 mammals, eight birds, 11 reptiles and only one fish. The RIT plan to address the under-representation of priority fish species through the award of targeted small grants, using some of the uncommitted funds under Strategic Direction 1.

6. Conclusion

CEPF is mid-way through the third phase of investment in the Indo-Burma Hotspot. A diverse portfolio of grants has been developed, covering all six countries in the hotspot and addressing most of the 23 investment priorities in the ecosystem profile. Only 19 of the 86 grants awarded to date have closed so far, meaning that more than three-quarters are still active. In some cases, implementation is at an early stage, while, in others, impacts are starting to emerge. Based on information collated from the final completion and impact reports of closed grants and presented at the mid-term assessment workshop by grantees, the overall portfolio is on course to meet 25 of the 32 targets in the portfolio logframe. CEPF and the RIT have a clear plan to meet most of the outstanding targets, apart from two that they recommend dropping, because no suitable applications have been forthcoming under any of the calls issued to date. To meet these outstanding targets, a small number of target grants will be awarded, making use of the remaining uncommitted funds. However, the main focus of the second half of the investment phase will be on monitoring and existing grants, supporting grantees to achieve lasting results, facilitating exchange of experience and good practice among grantees working on similar topics, and documenting and disseminating results.

The mid-term assessment workshop provided a forum for CEPF grantees and other partners to come together, share experience and make connections. This is essential given the scale and complexity of the conservation challenges faced in the hotspot, which are too great for any one organization to address alone. The workshop also provided an opportunity to reflect on changes that have been observed since the start of the first CEPF investment in Indo-Burma in 2008. The last 15 years have seen many positive changes. A greater diversity of voices is being heard, at national forums and on the international stage, including women, youth and Indigenous people; it was great to see representation of all three groups at the mid-term assessment workshop. There is greater integration of gender into the projects and programs of CSOs, although there is potential to go further, particularly with achieving gender equity in conservation careers.

A new generation of conservation leaders has emerged, with Southeast Asian nationals occupying leadership roles at many international CSOs and donor agencies, as well as a growth in the capacity and credibility of domestic CSOs. With strengthened capacity and credibility, CSOs and their networks are having increased influence on policy, contributing to policies that provide more space for communities and civil society to engage in conservation, and helping to mainstream biodiversity into development policies. CSOs are also having greater influence on markets, especially through the development of value chains for biodiversity-friendly agricultural products. Although, given the rapid growth in impact investment in sustainable commodity production, the potential for CSOs to influence markets is still largely untapped.

These improvements in the diversity, inclusivity, credibility and impact of civil society are translating into measurable impacts on the conservation of species and ecosystems. Populations of globally threatened species are stabilizing or, in some cases, starting to recover, following decades of decline. Improvements are being made to the management and protection of KBAs, the most important sites for conservation of global biodiversity, albeit not at every site. Site conservation measures include both formal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, which, in the context of Indo-Burma, include community-managed fish conservation zones and community protected areas. On a pilot level, diversified and sustainable funding sources for these approaches are being demonstrated but these need to be scaled up by several orders of magnitude.

In the short-term, many of the conservation initiatives being supported and led by CSOs required external funding support, mostly from international donors. In the medium term, they will need to transition to local sources of funding, including from emerging Asian philanthropy. There have been some promising developments in this area in the last five years, and CEPF is committed to transferring its experience to emerging national and regional funding mechanisms, to accelerate a transition to a locally led and locally financed conservation movement.

Annex 1. Results Against Objective and Outcomes in the Portfolio Logframe

Objective	Targets	Results
<p>Demonstrate effective, scalable approaches to major conservation issues that leverage the skills, experience and energy of civil society actors.</p>	<p>At least 50 CSOs, including at least 40 domestic organizations, actively participate in conservation actions guided by the ecosystem profile.</p> <p>At least 12 alliances and networks formed among civil society actors to avoid duplication of effort and maximize impact in support of the CEPF ecosystem profile.</p> <p>At least 25 Key Biodiversity Areas targeted by CEPF grants have new or strengthened protection and management.</p> <p>At least 100,000 hectares of production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity.</p>	<p>173 civil society organizations, including 144 domestic organizations, are actively participating in the implementation of CEPF grants guided by the ecosystem profile.</p> <p>Grants awarded to date aim to form 14 alliances and networks, of which 2 have already been formed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous women’s network for fisheries conservation, Stung Treng province, Cambodia; • Indigenous youth network for fisheries conservation, Stung Treng province, Cambodia. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to strengthen the protection and management of 54 KBAs. 9 of these already benefit from strengthened protection and management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 in Cambodia: Dei Ronneat; Lower Stung Sen; Mekong River from Kratie to Lao PDR; Sekong River; Sesan River; Stung Sen/Santuk/Baray; and Western Siem Pang. • 1 in Lao PDR: Upper Xe Bangfai. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to strengthen the management of biodiversity within 54,845 hectares of production landscape. To date, 37,752 hectares have been strengthened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,660 hectares of agricultural land in Siem Pang district, Cambodia; • 4 community fisheries around Tonle Sap lake totaling 9,633 hectares; • 2 broodstock protection zones on the Mekong River in Cambodia totaling 1,081 hectares; • 14 community fisheries on the Sekong, Sesan and Srepok Rivers in Cambodia totaling 24,378 hectares.

	<p>At least 3 development plans or policies influenced to accommodate biodiversity.</p> <p>At least 5,000 women and 5,000 men receive direct socio-economic benefits through increased income, food security, resource rights or other measures of human wellbeing.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to influence 8 plans or policies to accommodate biodiversity, of which 1 has already been influenced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased recognition of alternatives to large-scale hydropower in the Cambodian government's Power Development Masterplan 2022-2040. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to deliver direct socio-economic benefits to at least 23,321 women and 25,924 men. To date, these benefits have been received by 14,293 women and 14,504 men.</p>
Intermediate Outcomes	Intermediate Indicators	Results
<p>Outcome 1: Priority globally threatened species safeguarded by mitigating major threats.</p>	<p>Long-term conservation programs for core populations of at least 25 priority species sustained until 2025.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to sustain long-term conservation programs for core populations of 35 priority species: 15 mammals; 8 birds; 11 reptiles; and 1 fish. To date, long-term conservation programs have been sustained for 13 species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eld's deer; • Large-antlered muntjac; • Annamite striped rabbit; • Red-shanked douc; • Southern white-cheeked gibbon; • Crested argus; • White-rumped vulture; • Slender-billed vulture; • Red-headed vulture; • Giant ibis; • White-shouldered ibis; • Siamese crocodile; • Bourret's box turtle.

	<p>Viable wild populations of at least 3 priority species reestablished.</p> <p>Knowledge of the status and distribution of at least 3 priority species improved through research.</p> <p>At least US\$1 million in funding for species conservation leveraged from innovative sources.</p> <p>At least 10 community-level species champions implement locally identified actions for priority species.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to reestablish viable wild populations of 5 priority species. To date, a wild population of Siamese crocodile has been reestablished, although further reinforcement is needed to enhance its viability.</p> <p>Grants awarded to date aim to improve knowledge of the status and distribution of 5 priority species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kouprey; • Edwards’s pheasant; • East Asian giant softshell turtle; • Somphong’s rasbora; • Vietnamese loach. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to leverage US\$2,000 in funding for species conservation from innovative sources.</p> <p>Grants awarded to date aim to support 30 community-level species champions to implement locally identified actions for priority species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 for hog deer; • 19 for grey-shanked douc; • 1 for Delacour’s langur; • 3 for Burmese roofed turtle or Burmese star tortoise.
<p>Outcome 2: Zoonotic disease threats mitigated by reducing trade and consumption of and threats to wildlife.</p>	<p>At least 1 high-level wildlife trade network unraveled by enforcement agencies employing global best practice with investigations and informants.</p> <p>At least 2 initiatives to reduce transportation, sale and consumption of wildlife piloted in collaboration with enforcement agencies and/or actors in the public health sector.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to help enforcement agencies unravel at least 2 high-level wildlife trade networks.</p> <p>Grants awarded to date aim to pilot 5 initiatives to reduce transportation, sale and consumption of wildlife.</p>

	<p>At least 5 private and/or state-owned companies introduce effective measures to reduce their involvement in the transportation, sale and consumption of wildlife.</p> <p>At least 3 campaigns implemented to reduce consumer demand for wildlife and mobilize public participation in wildlife crime detection and reporting.</p> <p>At least 3 journal papers published on linkages between biodiversity and human health, including the role of biodiversity loss in the emergence of zoonotic diseases.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to encourage 26 companies to introduce effective measures to reduce their involvement in the transportation, sale and consumption of wildlife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 company in Cambodia; • 13 companies in China; • 2 companies in Thailand; • 10 companies in Vietnam. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to implement 7 campaigns to reduce consumer demand for wildlife and mobilize public participation in wildlife crime detection and reporting.</p> <p>No progress to date.</p>
<p>Outcome 3: Local communities empowered to engage in conservation and management of priority sites.</p>	<p>Awareness of local conservation issues and rights and opportunities related to natural resource management raised among local communities within at least 5 priority sites.</p> <p>Community forests, community fisheries and/or community-managed protected areas piloted, amplified and/or made more sustainable within at least 10 priority sites.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to raise awareness of local conservation issues and rights and opportunities related to natural resource management among local communities at 22 priority sites. This has already been achieved at 3 sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mekong River from Kratie to Lao PDR; • Sekong River; • Sesan River. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to amplify community forests, community fisheries and/or community-managed protected areas and/or make them more sustainable at 28 priority sites. This has already been achieved at the following sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 in Cambodia: Dei Ronneat; Lower Stung Sen; Mekong River from Kratie to Lao PDR; Sekong River; Sesan River; and Stung Sen/Santuk/Baray.

	<p>Co-management mechanisms that enable community participation in zoning, management and governance of formal protected areas developed for at least 5 priority sites.</p> <p>Lists of KBAs in at least 3 hotspot countries updated in line with the new KBA standard.</p> <p>Third-party evaluation of project impacts on biodiversity and human wellbeing undertaken in at least 10 priority sites.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to develop co-management mechanisms for formal protected areas at 13 priority sites. This has already been achieved at 4 of these sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, within Upper Stung Sen Catchment KBA; • Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary, within Western Siem Pang KBA; • Stung Sen Ramsar Site, within Lower Stung Sen KBA; • Stung Treng Ramsar Site, within Mekong River from Kratie to Lao PDR KBA. <p>No progress to date.</p> <p>A third-party evaluation of project impacts has been undertaken for 5 priority sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Stung Sen; • Mekong River from Kratie to Lao PDR; • Sekong River; • Upper Stung Sen Catchment; • Western Siem Pang.
<p>Outcome 4: Demonstration projects developed for integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into development planning in the priority corridors.</p>	<p>At least 4 development policies, plans or programs analyzed, with impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services evaluated and alternative development scenarios, nature-based solutions and mitigating measures proposed.</p> <p>Demonstration projects for ecological restoration developed in at least 2 priority corridors.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to analyze 5 development policies, plans or programs. So far, 1 has been analyzed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydropower development plans on the Mekong mainstream in Cambodia. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to demonstrate approaches to ecological restoration in 3 priority corridors. So far, trapeang (wetland) restoration has been demonstrated in the Mekong River and Major Tributaries corridor.</p>

	<p>Public debate and awareness of at least 3 key environmental issues increased through coverage in domestic media.</p> <p>Models for biodiversity-friendly production piloted for at least 3 commodities.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to increase public debate and awareness of 5 key environmental issues. So far, this has been done for 1 issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydropower dam development in Cambodia. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to pilot biodiversity-friendly production of 6 commodities. So far this has been piloted for organic rice in Cambodia.</p>
<p>Outcome 5: Civil society capacity to work on biodiversity, communities and livelihoods strengthened at regional, national, local and grassroots levels.</p>	<p>At least 15 civil society networks enable collective responses to priority and emerging threats.</p> <p>At least 50 domestic CSOs demonstrate improvements in organizational capacity.</p> <p>At least 20 domestic CSOs demonstrate improved performance with gender mainstreaming.</p>	<p>Grants awarded to date aim to strengthen 35 civil society networks to enable collective responses to priority and emerging threats. 8 networks have already been strengthened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition of Cambodian Fishers; Indigenous women's network for community fisheries in Stung Treng province, Cambodia; Indigenous youth network for community fisheries in Stung Treng province, Cambodia; Indigenous youth network for forest conservation in Preah Vihear province, Cambodia; Mekong Women's Network on Fisheries, Cambodia; Network of conservation practitioners for discussion and collaboration on monitoring, Cambodia; NGO Coalition on Fisheries, Cambodia; Save the Mekong Coalition. <p>Grants awarded to date aim to strengthen the organizational capacity of 104 domestic CSOs, To date, 9 show an increase in their Civil Society Tracking Tool score over the period of CEPF support.</p> <p>Grants awarded to date aim to improve the gender mainstreaming performance of 52 domestic CSOs. To date, 5 show an increase in their Gender Tracking Tool Score over the period of CEPF support.</p>

	At least 1 mechanism established to match volunteers to CSOs' training needs.	Grants awarded to date aim to establish 2 mechanisms to match volunteers to CSOs' with training needs: 1 in Cambodia; and 1 in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, China.
<p>Outcome 6: A Regional Implementation Team provides strategic leadership and effectively coordinates CEPF investment in the Indo-Burma Hotspot.</p>	<p>At least 50 CSOs, including at least 40 domestic organizations actively participate in conservation actions guided by the ecosystem profile.</p> <p>At least 75 percent of domestic CSOs receiving grants demonstrate more effective capacity to design and implement conservation actions.</p> <p>At least 2 participatory assessments are undertaken and documented.</p>	<p>49 civil society organizations have been awarded CEPF grants, including 30 domestic organizations.</p> <p>Baseline Civil Society Tracking Tools have been completed by 30 domestic CSOs receiving grants. Final tracking tools have been completed by 7 organizations, 6 of which (86 percent) showed an increase in their overall score for institutional capacity.</p> <p>1 participatory mid-term assessment workshop was held in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, during 27-29 June 2023, and is documented in this report.</p>

Annex 2. List of Awarded Grants

No.	Grantee	Project Title and Link to CEPF Website	Countries	Amount	Start Date	End Date
Strategic Direction 1: Safeguard priority globally threatened species by mitigating major threats						
1	Asian Arks	Conservation of Annamite Biodiversity through a Social Business Model in Lao PDR	Lao PDR	\$99,974	7/1/2021	12/31/2022
2	Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association	Taking Action to Conserve Three Critically Endangered Vulture Species in Myanmar	Myanmar	\$36,916	6/1/2022	5/31/2024
3	Center for Nature Conservation and Development	Community-based Conservation of Northern White-cheeked Gibbon in Xuan Lien Nature Reserve, Vietnam	Vietnam	\$40,000	9/1/2021	8/31/2023
4	Center for People and Nature Reconciliation	Community-based Actions to Conserve Two Globally Critical Endangered Fish Species in Vietnam	Vietnam	\$25,000	2/1/2022	1/31/2024
5	Centre for Environment and Community Assets Development	Conservation of Critically Endangered and Endemic Bent-toed Geckos in Vietnam	Vietnam	\$59,900	7/1/2021	12/31/2023
6	Community Wildlife Conservation	Community-based Conservation of Wild Water Buffalo in Uthai Thani and Kanchanaburi, Thailand	Thailand	\$3,904	3/1/2022	2/29/2024
7	ComNet Mekhong	Community-based Conservation of Jullien's Golden Carp in the Mekong River, Thailand	Thailand	\$39,694	3/1/2022	7/31/2023
8	Fauna & Flora	Community-based Protected Area Management; Myanmar Primate Conservation, Phase II	Myanmar	\$239,803	7/1/2022	12/31/2024
9	Fauna & Flora	Re-establishing Wild Populations of the Critically Endangered Siamese Crocodile in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$225,000	7/1/2021	6/30/2024
10	Fauna & Flora	Securing the Future of Delacour's Langur in Northern Vietnam	Vietnam	\$149,998	7/1/2021	12/31/2023

11	FISHBIO	Conservation Action, Threat Analysis and Participatory Research for Monkey-eating Fish in Laos	Lao PDR	\$40,000	9/1/2021	8/31/2023
12	Fishing Cat Ecological Enterprise Co. Ltd.	Integrated Conservation of Wetland Ecosystems in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$38,544	8/15/2021	8/15/2023
13	GreenViet Biodiversity Conservation Center	Protecting the Grey-shanked Douc by Supporting Species' Champions in Tam My Tay, Vietnam	Vietnam	\$40,000	9/1/2021	8/31/2023
14	Indo-Myanmar Conservation	Protecting Priority Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Populations in Vietnam	Vietnam	\$200,060	7/1/2021	6/30/2024
15	Re:wild	Establishing an Evidence-based Approach to Search for the Last Kouprey, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$8,900	8/15/2021	2/15/2023
16	Rising Phoenix Co. Ltd.	Conserving Vultures and Ibises in their Last Cambodian Stronghold	Cambodia	\$235,000	7/1/2021	6/30/2024
17	Saola Foundation	Rediscovering Saola: State-of-the-Art Methods to Detect Endangered Annamite Species in Lao PDR	Lao PDR	\$236,999	7/1/2021	6/30/2024
18	Seub Nakhasatien Foundation	Participatory Surveys to Support Conservation of Somphong's Rasbora in Thailand	Thailand	\$39,856	3/1/2022	8/31/2023
19	Shan Shui Conservation Center	Building Capacity and Networks for Myanmar Snub-nosed Monkey in China	China	\$0	4/1/2022	3/31/2024
20	Turtle Survival Alliance	Back from the Brink: Recovering Two Critically Endangered Turtles in Myanmar	Myanmar	\$240,000	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
21	Viet Nature Conservation Centre	In Search of Vietnam Pheasant in Ke Go Nature Reserve, Ha Tinh Province, Vietnam	Vietnam	\$40,000	9/1/2021	8/31/2023
22	Westfälischer Zoologischer Garten	Ex-situ Management of Bengal Florican in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$40,000	8/15/2021	8/15/2023
23	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	Showcasing Best Practice for Restoration of Sarus Crane Feeding Grounds in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$240,000	1/1/2022	12/31/2024

24	Wildlife at Risk	Community-based Actions to Conserve Two Globally Critical Endangered Fish Species in Vietnam	Vietnam	\$0	9/1/2021	10/1/2021
25	World Wide Fund for Nature	AD HOC: ADvancing HOg Deer Conservation in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$199,997	7/1/2021	12/31/2023
26	World Wide Fund for Nature	Rewilding the Annamites in Vietnam	Viet Nam	\$235,000	7/1/2021	6/30/2024
Strategic Direction 2: Mitigate zoonotic disease risks by reducing illegal trade and consumption of and threats to wildlife						
27	Beijing Normal University	Strengthening Cooperation to Reduce Illegal Wildlife Trade at the China-Laos Border	China	\$46,167	11/15/2021	11/15/2023
28	China Exploration & Research Society Limited	Changing Attitudes and Behaviors to Reduce Illegal Wildlife Trade Around Nam Ha National Protected Area, Lao PDR	Lao PDR	\$26,240	8/15/2021	8/15/2023
29	Institute of Biology, Chemistry and Environment	Using Crime Script Analysis to Understand Wildlife Crime in Annamite Mountains, Vietnam	Vietnam	\$39,975	9/1/2021	8/31/2023
30	International Fund for Animal Welfare	Counter Wildlife Crime in China's Southwest Border Region	China	\$224,969	7/1/2021	12/31/2023
31	Rural Development Agency	Empowering Youth to Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade Around Hin Nam No National Park of Laos	Lao PDR	\$40,000	8/15/2021	8/15/2023
32	TRAFFIC International	Reducing Wildlife Trafficking Across Logistics Supply Chains and Online Platforms, Vietnam and China	China; Vietnam	\$225,000	8/1/2021	7/31/2023
33	Wildlife Alliance, Inc.	Preventing Pandemics: Illegal Trade Reduction, Wildlife Care, and Community Mobilization in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$160,000	8/1/2021	7/31/2023
34	Zoological Society of London	Strengthening Capacity and Collaboration for Combating Illegal Trade of Pangolin and Other Wildlife in Thailand	Cambodia; Lao PDR; Myanmar; Thailand	\$209,827	8/1/2021	7/31/2023

Strategic Direction 4: Empower local communities to engage in conservation and management of priority sites						
35	Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association	Supporting Community Conservation of Phayartan Limestone Karst in Tanintharyi, Myanmar	Myanmar	\$34,936	7/1/2023	12/31/2024
36	China Wild Plant Conservation Association	Co-management to Conserve Endangered Magnolia Species in Malipo Key Biodiversity Area, China	China	\$40,000	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
37	Conservation International	Community-based Wild-fire Management on Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake	Cambodia	\$180,000	7/1/2020	6/30/2023
38	Culture and Environment Preservation Association	Enhancing Sustainability of Mekong Stung Treng Ramsar Site Fisheries Management, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$150,000	3/1/2023	2/28/2025
39	Culture and Environment Preservation Association	Sustainable Natural Capital Management through Improving Biodiversity Conservation in Stung Treng Ramsar Site, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$98,881	7/1/2020	6/30/2022
40	Fauna & Flora	Engaging Local Stakeholders to Conserve Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey in Vietnam	Vietnam	\$110,000	9/1/2023	8/31/2025
41	Fauna & Flora	Community-based Conservation of Karst Key Biodiversity Areas in Myanmar	Myanmar	\$200,000	10/1/2023	9/30/2025
42	FISHBIO	Evaluating Cambodian Freshwater Conservation Projects in the Lower Mekong	Cambodia	\$166,603	9/1/2020	12/31/2022
43	Fisheries Action Coalition Team	Empower Local Communities towards Fisheries Resources Sustainability in Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$150,000	4/1/2023	9/30/2025
44	Fisheries Action Coalition Team	Strengthening Capacity of Community Fisheries to Manage Fisheries Resources around Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$118,587	6/1/2020	12/31/2022
45	Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden Corporation	Co-management to Support Cao-vit Gibbon Conservation in Bangliang Key Biodiversity Area, China	China	\$40,000	9/1/2022	11/30/2023

46	Mekong Community Institute Association	Strengthening Community Fisheries Conservation in the Lower Mun River, Thailand	Thailand	\$23,000	12/1/2022	5/30/2024
47	My Village	Inclusive Participation of Indigenous Communities and Rural Communities in Fishery Conservation and Governance in Stung Treng Province, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$149,801	6/1/2020	5/31/2022
48	NatureLife Cambodia	Capacity Building and Community Protected Area Development at Stung Sen Ramsar Site, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$79,999	5/1/2020	12/31/2022
49	NatureLife Cambodia	Empowering Local Communities to Co-manage Conservation of Stung Sen Ramsar Site, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$80,000	6/1/2023	5/31/2025
50	Oxfam America	Strengthened Community-based Conservation for Fishery Management in Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$150,000	4/1/2023	3/31/2025
51	People Resources and Conservation Foundation	Strengthening Co-Management in the François's Langur Conservation Landscape, Vietnam	Vietnam	\$249,995	6/1/2022	5/31/2025
52	Wildlife Conservation Society	Guardian Villages: Empowered Communities to Manage Wetlands in Lao People's Democratic Republic	Lao PDR	\$220,000	7/1/2022	6/30/2025
53	World Wide Fund for Nature	Promoting Participatory Freshwater Species Management along the Phou Xieng Thong-Pha Taem Mekong in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand	Lao PDR; Thailand	\$150,000	4/1/2023	9/30/2025
Strategic Direction 6: Demonstrate scalable approaches for integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into development planning in the priority corridors						
54	BirdLife International	Organic Livelihoods Conserving Cambodia's "Big Five"	Cambodia	\$90,863	5/1/2020	4/30/2022
55	BirdLife International	Inundated Forest Conservation through Wetland Restoration and Disease Reduction in Northeast Cambodia	Cambodia	\$116,127	5/1/2020	4/30/2022

56	Center for People and Nature Reconciliation	Strengthening Capacity for Reporting Biodiversity Impacts and Mainstreaming Conservation Policies in Vietnam	Vietnam	\$179,930	4/1/2023	9/30/2025
57	Conservation International	Restoring the Flooded Forest in Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake	Cambodia	\$157,000	3/1/2023	6/30/2025
58	International Rivers Network	Minimizing Ecosystem and Community Vulnerability in Cambodia to Lower Mekong Hydropower	Cambodia	\$149,996	6/1/2020	3/31/2023
59	International Rivers Network	Strengthening Public Participation and Biodiversity in Mekong Hydropower Planning and Development	Cambodia; Lao PDR; Thailand; Vietnam	\$149,996	4/1/2023	9/30/2025
60	Rising Phoenix Co. Ltd.	Inundated Forest Conservation through Wetland Restoration and Disease Reduction in Northeast Cambodia	Cambodia	\$62,903	9/1/2021	6/30/2022
61	Rising Phoenix Co. Ltd.	Organic Livelihoods Conserving Cambodia's "Big Five"	Cambodia	\$90,231	9/1/2021	12/31/2022
62	Rising Phoenix Co. Ltd.	Securing a Self-sustaining Population of Siamese Crocodile in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$178,000	4/1/2023	3/31/2025
63	Rising Phoenix Co. Ltd.	Siamese Crocodile: Icon for the Restoration of the Sekong River, Cambodia	Cambodia	\$180,000	5/1/2020	6/30/2022
64	Sansom Mlup Prey	Increasing Inclusivity, Diversity and Effectiveness of Ibis Rice Model in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$180,000	4/1/2023	3/31/2025
65	Sansom Mlup Prey	Wildlife-friendly Community Irrigation Ponds for Climate Resilience, Habitat and Collective Management in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$201,843	6/1/2020	10/31/2022
66	Westfälischer Zoologischer Garten	Elongated Tortoise Population Recovery Contributing to Ecosystem Restoration in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$179,950	7/1/2023	6/30/2025
67	Wildlife Conservation Society	Pragmatic Protocols for Restoration of Ecosystem Processes in Cambodia's Wild	Cambodia	\$179,950	7/1/2020	12/31/2022

Strategic Direction 8: Strengthen the capacity of civil society to work on biodiversity, communities and livelihoods at regional, national, local and grassroots levels						
68	Cambodian Indigenous Youth Association	Strengthening Indigenous Youth Participation in Protection of Cambodia's Northern Plains Seasonally	Cambodia	\$60,000	7/1/2020	7/31/2022
69	Cambodian Indigenous Youth Association	Strengthening Indigenous Youth Participation in Sustainable Development and Ecosystem Protection in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$60,090	6/1/2023	11/30/2024
70	Cambodian Rural Development Team	Strengthening the Capacity of Grassroots Community-based Organizations in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$149,613	7/1/2022	12/31/2023
71	Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies	Strengthening the Operational Capacity of the Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, Vietnam	Vietnam	\$19,600	8/1/2022	1/31/2024
72	Conservation International	Citizen Science and Social-Media for Community Fisheries in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$200,000	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
73	CRDT Tours Private Limited Company	Strengthening Institutional Capacity of CRDT Tours, a Social Enterprise Supporting Conservation in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$19,470	1/1/2023	6/30/2024
74	Fisheries Action Coalition Team	Strengthening Capacity of the NGO Coalition on Fisheries and the Coalition of Cambodia Fishers	Cambodia	\$161,413	6/1/2020	3/31/2023
75	Global Environmental Institute	Enhancing the Influence of a Mekong Basin Civil Society Network	Cambodia; China; Lao PDR; Thailand; Vietnam	\$99,992	12/1/2022	11/30/2024
76	Guangzhou Green City	Volunteer Mechanism in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, China	China	\$33,203	5/22/2023	11/15/2024
77	Indo-Myanmar Conservation	Creating Local Capacity for Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Conservation in Laos	Lao PDR	\$19,600	3/1/2023	2/29/2024

78	My Village	Strengthening Cambodian Indigenous Youth and Women's Networks for Fishery Conservation	Cambodia	\$40,000	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
79	NatureLife Cambodia	Conserve Critically Endangered Species in Cambodia through National Coordination and Research	Cambodia	\$233,000	7/1/2021	6/30/2024
80	NatureLife Cambodia	Networking to Address the Decline of Sarus Crane in Cambodia	Cambodia	\$49,999	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
81	Non-Timber Forest Products	Connecting Community Protected Areas Networks in the Northeastern Cambodia	Cambodia	\$108,000	10/1/2022	9/30/2024
82	Pha Tad Ke Botanical Garden	Strengthening Capacity and Building Partnerships for Plant Conservation in Laos	Lao PDR	\$19,910	11/1/2022	10/31/2023
83	Thai Sea Watch Association	Enhancing the Capacity of Community Networks to Conserve Irrawaddy Dolphins in Songkhla Lake, Thailand	Thailand	\$19,577	11/1/2022	4/30/2024
84	Tropical Biology Association Ltd.	Strengthening Civil Society Capacity for Long-term Conservation Impact in Indo-Burma	Cambodia; Lao PDR; Myanmar; Thailand; Vietnam	\$179,171	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
85	Vietnam National Park and Protected Area Association	Capacity Building in Biodiversity Conservation for Vietnam National Park and Protected Area Association	Vietnam	\$19,945	8/1/2022	1/1/2024
Strategic Direction 11 Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of conservation investment through a regional implementation team						
86	International Union for Conservation of Nature	Regional Implementation Team: CEPF Indo-Burma Phase III	Cambodia; China; Lao PDR; Myanmar; Thailand; Vietnam	\$1,400,000	1/1/2021	9/30/2025

Note: * = grant awarded but not implemented; no webpage available.

Annex 3. Progress towards Long-term Goals for CEPF in the Indo-Burma Hotspot

Goal 1: Conservation priorities

Criterion	2019		2023		Notes
i. Globally threatened species. Comprehensive global threat assessments conducted for all terrestrial vertebrates, vascular plants and at least selected freshwater taxa.		Not met		Not met	Comprehensive Red List assessments had been carried out for mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish plus five major freshwater taxa. Assessments have been carried out for some vascular plants but the majority remain unassessed. There remains a need to focus on species of regional conservation concern, not only globally threatened species. There are also national threatened species, which have been assessed in some countries. There is limited capacity to undertake threat assessments in the region, and limited information on most taxa.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
ii. Key Biodiversity Areas. KBAs identified, covering, at minimum, terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems.		Not met		Not met	Nearly all sites qualifying as KBAs have been identified, in terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems. Apart from some freshwater KBAs in the Mekong Basin, the KBAs in the hotspot need to be re-assessed against the 2016 global standard, which has more rigorous thresholds and documentation requirements. KBA identification and conservation efforts need more support and buy-in from government and community stakeholders. Only some KBAs are prioritized for support by CEPF but other sites are also of global importance for conservation and need support.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
iii. Conservation corridors. Conservation corridors identified in all parts of the region where contiguous natural habitats extend over scales greater than individual sites, and refined using recent land cover data.		Not met		Not met	A system of conservation corridors was defined for the entire hotspot as part of the preparation of the CEPF ecosystem profile in 2003, incorporating earlier analyses by WWF and others. Some countries have policies in place for corridors but these are not actively implemented. In a few cases, there is broad-based support for corridors, for example the Western Forest Complex in Thailand. Landscape management is critical for the conservation of corridors, especially transboundary corridors that require collaboration between countries. Currently, most collaborations between countries for conservation are weak.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

iv. Conservation plans. Global conservation priorities incorporated into national or regional conservation plans or strategies developed with the participation of multiple stakeholders.		Not met		Not met	The IUCN Red List and/or KBAs are explicitly recognized in the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) for several hotspot countries. However, there is a need to update these NBSAPs, especially given the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022. In Myanmar, for example, the most recent NBSAP covers the period 2015-2020. In Thailand, global priorities are incorporated into the Mekong Fishery Development Plan. There are a few transboundary conservation plans between countries, such as for sarus crane, between Cambodia and Vietnam, and for saola, between Lao PDR and Vietnam.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
v. Management best practices. Best practices for managing global conservation priorities (e.g., participatory approaches to park management, invasive species control, etc.) are introduced, institutionalized, and sustained at priority KBAs and corridors.		Not met		Not met	Examples of management best practices (e.g. community co-management, use of SMART patrolling, conservation incentives, wildlife-friendly agriculture, etc.) have been piloted at a growing number of sites but they have yet to be replicated at the majority of priority KBAs. More than 50 percent of CEPF priority sites have management plans but these rarely incorporate best practices. Since Myanmar has no up-to-date NBSAP, there is no basis for promoting the adoption of best practices.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

Goal 2: Civil society capacity

Criterion	2019		2023		Notes
i. Human resources. Local and national civil society groups collectively possess technical competencies of critical importance to conservation.		Not met		Not met	Local civil society organizations rate their knowledge and capacity as satisfactory or better for most of the technical competencies considered as priorities in the hotspot. Nevertheless, a number of significant gaps remain for local groups, most notably securing long-term financing, successfully influencing government policies, developing science-led actions for threatened species, and implementing site-based conservation actions.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
ii. Management systems and strategic planning. Local and national civil society groups collectively possess sufficient capacity and structures to raise funds for conservation and to ensure the efficient management of conservation projects and strategies.		Not met		Not met	There has been greater focus by civil society organizations on conservation action for priority species and sites. At the same time, a significant minority of the priority sites and species in the Indo-Burma Hotspot still receive no focused conservation attention from civil society organizations. Over the last decade, there has been an overall improvement in the management systems and strategic planning of local and national civil society organizations. Nevertheless, this remains a constraint on the development and impact of many organizations.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
iii. Partnerships. Effective mechanisms exist for conservation-focused civil society groups to work in partnership with one another and through networks with communities, governments, the private sector, donors, and other important stakeholders, in pursuit of common objectives.		Not met		Not met	Fully institutionalized and sustainable partnerships dedicated to coordinating conservation actions among key stakeholder groups are in place for a significant number of CEPF priority sites, albeit still a minority. Although there are barriers to CSOs working in partnership, not least competition for funding, there has been greater collaboration over the last decade, at site, national and regional levels. National partnerships include the working groups for sarus crane, vultures and ibises, which have been established in Cambodia. Regional partnerships include the Lower Mekong Network, which was established in 2016, to facilitate greater collaboration on transnational conservation issues.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

iv. Financial resources. Local civil society organizations have access to long-term funding sources to maintain the conservation results achieved via CEPF grants or other initiatives, through access to new donor funds, conservation enterprises, membership, endowments, and/or other mechanisms.	X	Not met	X	Not met	No CEPF priority site currently has access to stable and diversified long-term funding sources for conservation. Most CSOs, even international NGOs, remain dependent on short-term grant funding to support their work at priority sites. Local groups face strong competition for funding from international NGOs, who pursue the same funding opportunities if they are allowed. There are promising signs for the emergence of local philanthropy, especially in China and Vietnam, although these sources are not yet supporting conservation efforts by local CSOs at scale.
		Partially met		Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
v. Transboundary cooperation. In multi-country hotspots, mechanisms exist for collaboration across political boundaries at site, corridor and/or national scales.	X	Not met	X	Not met	There are only a few examples of effective mechanisms for transboundary conservation, such as on primate conservation between China and Vietnam. Good examples of wider regional collaboration among civil society are emerging, however, such as the Save the Mekong Coalition, the Lower Mekong Network and the Asian Species Action Partnership (ASAP). Stakeholders consulted in 2019 noted that, while a growing number of cooperation mechanisms exist, their effectiveness remains unproven.
		Partially met		Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

Goal 3: Sustainable financing

Criterion	2019		2023		Notes
i. Public sector funding. Public sector agencies responsible for conservation in the region have a continued public fund allocation or revenue-generating ability to operate effectively.		Not met		Not met	Compared with 2019, this criterion remains partially met, because the financial resources available to the three largest public sector agencies responsible for conservation in each country remain a serious impediment to their effective functioning. Biodiversity conservation remains a low spending priority for national governments, and the limited budget allocations that are made are strongly skewed towards infrastructure and staff salaries. Nevertheless, there have been positive developments in some countries. National biodiversity programs are increasing in some countries, and some governments are willing to provide funding to CSOs. Also, the policy environment for public funding for conservation is improving in some places.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
ii. Civil society funding. Civil society organizations engaged in conservation in the region have access to sufficient funding to continue their work at current levels.		Not met	X	Not met	Most CSOs working on biodiversity conservation remain heavily dependent upon grant funding, although a few have secured funding from other sources, such as private companies and donations from high-net-worth individuals. Participants at the workshop noted that, compared to 2019, the funding situation for CSOs had worsened, due to the effects of COVID-19 and increasing restrictions on accessing foreign funds. The donor landscape appears to be changing, with large institutional donors increasingly preferring to work with government, rather than through CSOs. With the partial exception of China, local sources of funding remain scarce, and CSOs still rely on international funding.
	X	Partially met		Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

iii. Donor funding. Donors other than CEPF have committed to providing sufficient funds to address global conservation priorities in the region.	X	Not met		Not met	Funding levels for conservation from the major donors remain vastly below the level needed, given the scale and intensity of threats to biodiversity. Some large institutional donors appear to be working increasingly with government, or to be redirecting their attention to Africa and Ukraine. At the same time, there has been an increase in support from local sources, especially individual donors and philanthropies, especially in China. Several Chinese philanthropies have made major commitments to the region over the next decade. For example, Ant Forest and Society of Entrepreneurs and Ecology (SEE) Foundation have announced the Blue Partnership Fund, to support marine and coastal conservation in Southeast Asia.
		Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
iv. Livelihood alternatives. Local stakeholders affecting the conservation of biodiversity in the region have economic alternatives to unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.		Not met	X	Not met	Local communities at a few CEPF priority sites have access to economic alternatives to unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. These include wildlife-friendly rice production, nature-based tourism and small-scale livestock raising. Workshop participants felt that the replication of successful models remained limited, and noted that some of these had encountered challenges due to changing market conditions and climate change. Participants noted that value chains for sustainable and wildlife-friendly commodities are easier to access, and there is a large amount of interest from impact investors. To date, however, local communities have not benefitted at sufficient scale to reduce pressure on natural ecosystems.
	X	Partially met		Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
v. Long-term mechanisms. Financing mechanisms (e.g., trust funds, revenue from the sale of carbon credits, etc.) exist and are of sufficient size to yield continuous long-term returns for at least the next 10 years.		Not met	X	Not met	Over the last decade, nationwide payments for ecosystem services mechanisms have been developed in China and Vietnam; revenue for these schemes is starting to support work of community conservation teams at some CEPF priority sites but this remains at a very small scale, and most of the resources generated by these schemes are not being used effectively. There has also been some progress with the voluntary carbon market in Cambodia, which is providing a significant source of long-term financing for some KBAs, albeit not CEPF priority sites. Overall, however, considering the scale of funding required to address conservation priorities in the hotspot, participants felt that the availability of funding from long-term financing mechanisms was not nearly sufficient to address needs.
	X	Partially met		Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

Goal 4: Enabling environment

Criterion	2019		2023		Notes
i. Legal environment for conservation. Laws exist that provide incentives for desirable conservation behavior and disincentives against undesirable behavior.		Not met		Not met	In all hotspot countries, international commitments under multilateral environmental agreements are reflected in national laws, which are often elucidated through detailed regulations. However, these laws and regulations do not always provide for sufficient incentives and disincentives to encourage behavior consistent with them. In Cambodia, the new Environment and Natural Resources Code was adopted in June 2023. However, the Fisheries Law and the related Sub-decree on Community Fisheries are out of date and have been undergoing amendment since 2015. Some actors have taken advantage of loopholes in the old regulations to exploit natural resources unsustainably. In China, the 1994 Regulations on Nature Reserves are still relevant but there is a gap with regard wetlands/freshwater ecosystems. Moreover, it is hard for CSOs to find entry points and space to support implementation of the regulations. In Lao PDR, there has recently been progress towards updating environmental legislation, with an updated Decree on Protected Areas, and updated Laws on Wildlife and Aquatic Resources, and on Water Resources. Thailand has a good set of laws and regulations in place but there are shortcomings with implementation. Also, the regulatory framework for transboundary conservation needs attention. In Vietnam, the situation is similar, with suitable legislation in place but implementation gaps.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
ii. Legal environment for civil society. Laws exist that allow for civil society to engage in the public policy-making and implementation process.		Not met		Not met	Local CSOs in all countries are legally allowed to convene, organize, register, receive funds and engage in conservation activities. Over the last decade, there has been some tightening of regulations governing the registration and operations of CSOs, and constraints on their ability to organize events and to receive funding from international sources. In all countries, there is a perception in some quarters that some CSO activities are counter to public interest and can bring disruption. This leads to self-censorship about which issues CSOs work on.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

iii. Education and training. Domestic programs exist that produce trained environmental managers at secondary, undergraduate, and advanced academic levels.		Not met		Not met	National staff occupy senior leadership positions at most of the conservation agencies in the hotspot. Conservation is starting to be seen as a viable career choice, which provides a pathway to professional development opportunities. The number and quality of domestic educational programs on environmental management and conservation continues have greatly improved in several countries in recent years.
		Partially met		Partially met	
	X	Fully met	X	Fully met	
iv. Transparency. Relevant public sector agencies use participatory, accountable, and publicly reviewable process to make decisions regarding use of land and natural resources.	X	Not met		Not met	There is a general lack of accountability in public administration, and the environment sector is no exception. CSOs face restrictions on access to information held by public agencies. Nevertheless, public sector agencies in some countries have improved their openness to having CSO participate in policy dialogue, and also improved availability of information. Workshop participants reported that engagement with public sector agencies remains challenging, and the level of transparency varies, depending on the sector or issue. There tends to be greater transparency when external investors require it.
		Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
v. Enforcement. Designated authorities are clearly mandated to manage the protected area system(s) in the region and conserve biodiversity outside of them, and are empowered to implement the enforcement continuum of education, prevention, interdiction, arrest, and prosecution.	X	Not met		Not met	Protected area management bodies have varying but typically limited jurisdiction over the areas nominally under their management, and very limited influence over activities occurring in their buffer zones. In each country, less than half (and in some cases much less) of protected areas are estimated to have their boundaries demarcated on the ground and to be patrolled at least one week each month.
		Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

Goal 5: Responsiveness to emerging issues

Criterion	2019		2023		Notes
i. Biodiversity monitoring. Nationwide or region-wide systems are in place to monitor status and trends of the components of biodiversity.	X	Not Met		Not met	National governments have established systems to monitor status and trends in forest cover. Other habitat types are generally not monitored at the national or regional scale, although there are some site-specific initiatives. In Cambodia and Lao PDR, there are requirement from central government for all protected areas to report on trends and status of biodiversity but lack of resources is a barrier to effective implementation. A small but growing number of species populations benefit from systematic monitoring efforts, which is enabling a move towards evidence-based conservation. For example, in Cambodia, working groups have been established that are collating standardized monitoring data on sarus crane, vultures and ibises.
		Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
ii. Threats monitoring. Nationwide or region-wide systems are in place to monitor status and trends of threats to biodiversity.	X	Not met		Not met	Systems are in place to monitor certain threats (e.g. forest fire, land conversion) at the national scale in some countries. There is also systematic monitoring of wildlife crime at the regional level, although information sharing still tends to be reactive rather than proactive. SMART monitoring is in place at a growing number of protected areas, although financial sustainability remains a challenge. Moreover, SMART data are not being collated at the national level yet but only at local and provincial levels.
		Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
iii. Ecosystem services monitoring. Nationwide or region-wide systems are in place to monitor status and trends of ecosystem services.	X	Not met			In Cambodia, nationwide and project-level monitoring of carbon sequestration and storage is being supported by REDD++ and REDD++ readiness initiatives. There is also monitoring of ecosystem services in the Cardamom mountains but not yet at the national scale. There are national payment for ecosystem services mechanisms in China and Vietnam, which are being implemented nationwide. In Lao PDR, the government has its own projects and budget to monitor ecosystem services.
		Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

iv. Adaptive management. Conservation organizations and protected area management authorities demonstrate the ability to respond promptly to emerging issues.		Not met		Not met	There are numerous examples of conservation organizations adapting their missions or strategies to respond to emerging issues, such as agro-industrial plantations, mining and climate change. At the same time, there are other emerging issues, such as sand mining and hydrocarbon exploration, that conservation organizations have not yet responded to systematically. Participants at the workshop felt that a high proportion of international CSOs could demonstrate that they had adapted their missions, strategies or workplans to respond to an emerging conservation issue at least once during the past three years, while the proportion of local CSOs could do so was much lower.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	
v. Public sphere. Conservation issues are regularly discussed in the public sphere, and these discussions influence public policy.		Not met		Not met	The situation varies significantly among different countries. For instance, China has been making sure biodiversity conservation is in the government's priority agenda under the ecological civilization advocacy. This can be demonstrated by China's effort in hosting the Convention on Biological Diversity COP-15 and pushing forward Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This topic is also very frequently discussed by different levels of government across China and highlighted in the media. In some other countries, this is not the case, however, and discussion of certain environmental issues may even be considered "off limits". While conservation issues in the hotspot can gain considerable attention in international media, they tend to receive less coverage in local media, in particular those with local-language content. Although there is greater discussion of conservation issues in mainstream and social media, examples of this influencing public policy remain limited.
	X	Partially met	X	Partially met	
		Fully met		Fully met	

Annex 4. CEPF Investment in the Indo-Burma Hotspot as of 30 June 2023

