

## Response to Working Group Comments on the Indo-Burma Ecosystem Profile

Working Group meeting, 8 September 2020

Comment from Working Group	Response from CEPF Secretariat
<p>1. In relation to Strategic Direction 2 and COVID-19, we note that the ecosystem profile makes reference to “illegal” wildlife trade but does not use the words “unsafe” or “unhealthy”, which are more relevant to risk management. Should we go beyond legality when seeking to address trade and consumption of wildlife?</p>	<p>The original wording of the Strategic Direction and associated Investment Priorities was developed in consultation with stakeholders from civil society, government and the donor community at the final assessment workshop in May 2019. While there was an appreciation of linkages between consumption and trade of wildlife and human health (due to prior experience with SARS and H1N1), this was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The concept of “illegal” wildlife trade provided a focus for common action among different actors. In mid-2019, there was no consensus among CSOs or between them and government about seeking to control forms for wildlife trade and consumption that were not illegal, either as an objective or as a strategy. This remains the case, even after the emergence of COVID-19. While the concept of “unsafe” or “unhealthy” trade/consumption of wildlife is more directly relevant to mitigating zoonotic disease risk, there is no commonly understood definition of what constitutes safe or healthy consumption of wildlife, with some observers contending that there is no such thing, and other maintaining that there is a spectrum of risk.</p> <p>The wording of Strategic Direction 2 has been revised to drop the word “illegal”, so that it now reads: “Mitigate zoonotic disease risks by reducing trade and consumption of and threats to wildlife”. This opens the door to CEPF support for projects that go beyond legality but does not require all applicants to frame their projects through a human health lens. In addition, a new investment priority has been added: “Understand and support action to address linkages between biodiversity and human health, including the role of biodiversity loss in the emergence of zoonotic diseases”, which provides for projects that approach targeted research and action from an explicit human health angle.</p>

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<p>2. The language of the Strategic Directions and Investment Priorities is very general in some places. How do we position CEPF’s role and niche more precisely? We would like the Investment Priorities to be more specific about what is in it for CEPF.</p> <p>3. There is a lot of process discussion on the Strategic Directions but not enough justification of the CEPF niche. Perhaps it would be helpful to include a high-level summary of threats and how the CEPF investment will address them.</p>	<p>The language of the Strategic Directions is intended to be quite general, because they provide broad directions under which the Investment Priorities are grouped. In turn, the Investment Priorities should provide more precise guidance on which types of activities are eligible for CEPF support, without being so specific that they constrain innovation or predetermine specific project ideas. Having reviewed again the CEPF niche and investment strategy, the CEPF Secretariat agrees that the CEPF niche and certain investment priorities were not defined as precisely as they could have been.</p> <p>The CEPF investment niche (Chapter 12) has been rewritten, to provide a high-level summary of threats and how the CEPF investment will address them. This section now articulates an overall objective for the CEPF investment “to demonstrate effective, scalable approaches to major conservation issues that leverage the skills, experience and energy of civil society actors”.</p> <p>Strategic Direction 6 has been rewritten, to more precisely define the types of investment that CEPF will support and to align more closely with the CEPF niche. The wording has been changed from “Engage key actors in mainstreaming biodiversity, communities and livelihoods into development planning in the priority corridors” to “Demonstrate scalable approaches for integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into development planning in the priority corridors”.</p> <p>The former Investment Priority 6.2 “Promote the use of ecosystem-based approaches to development and safeguards for biodiversity and ecosystem services” has been deleted. This was felt to have been defined too vaguely, and to overlap with other investment priorities.</p>
<p>4. With the COVID-19 pandemic, is CEPF going to rapidly change its focus? We still need to focus on brass tacks, so maybe we don’t need to change too much from what we did in the past.</p>	<p>The CEPF Secretariat agrees with the sentiments expressed here. The origins of zoonotic diseases, including COVID-19, are strongly linked to destruction of biodiversity, including fragmentation of forests, reduction in vertebrate species diversity, trade and consumption of wildlife, etc. The types of conservation actions supported by CEPF in the Indo-Burma Hotspot to date have addressed these causal factors, and it is not anticipated that wholesale changes will need to be made going forwards. Nevertheless, incremental changes to the investment strategy have already been made to ensure that, where possible, CEPF investments contribute in targeted ways to mitigating risks of future zoonotic disease emergence. As new research findings become available on the links between biodiversity loss and human health (including those generated by CEPF investments under Strategic Direction 2), further incremental changes may follow.</p>

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<p>5. It is really important to focus on species work. Perhaps we should increase the financial investment there.</p>	<p>The CEPF Secretariat agrees with this suggestion. As the analysis of conservation investment presented in the ecosystem profile shows, species-focused conservation only receives a small (and dwindling) proportion of overall conservation investment (3% during 2015-2019, down from 8% during 2006-2010). CEPF is one of the most important sources of funding for species-focused conservation in the Indo-Burma Hotspot, which is on the frontlines of the global extinction crisis. CEPF investment has already been instrumental in averting extinction of and reversing declines in globally threatened species.</p> <p>The funding allocation for Strategic Direction 1 (Safeguard priority globally threatened species by mitigating major threats) has been increased from \$2.8 million to \$3.2 million. The corresponding targets in the portfolio logframe have been increased accordingly. The additional funding was reallocated from Strategic Direction 6 (Demonstrate scalable approaches for integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into development planning in the priority corridors); a change made possible by the decision to delete the former Investment Priority 6.2 (see above). The CEPF Secretariat notes that, based on experience from the previous phase, it ought to be possible to leverage additional support for Strategic Direction 6 from regional donors. On the other hand, the prospects of leveraging additional support for species conservation from regional donors are not good.</p>
<p>6. Can we track overall progress against the profile?</p>	<p>Section 14 of the ecosystem profile presents a logical framework for the CEPF investment over the period 2020 to 2025. As discussed above, an overall objective has been set for the next CEPF investment: “Demonstrate effective, scalable approaches to major conservation issues that leverage the skills, experience and energy of civil society actors”. Six targets have been set to allow progress towards the overall objective to be tracked. These targets related to the four pillars of CEPF’s global monitoring framework: two to biodiversity impacts; one to human wellbeing impacts; two to impacts on civil society capacity; and one to impacts on enabling conditions. There are further targets at the outcome level, which relate to the headline results of investments under each investment priority. Each of the targets is quantified, which will allow progress to be measured annually and then reported to the CEPF Donor Council in the annual report on the logframe. Quantitative monitoring of progress towards the targets will be complemented by qualitative monitoring of progress towards the overall objectives, as well as quantitative monitoring of the aggregate impacts of the portfolio, using the indicators of the CEPF global monitoring framework.</p>