

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
37th Meeting of the CEPF Donor Council
Virtual Meeting
19 November 2020
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)**

DC 37 Minutes

1. Welcome by the Chair and Introduction of Participants (CEPF/DC37/1)

2. Adoption of Agenda (CEPF/DC37/2)

3. Presentation and Discussion of the [Executive Director's Report](#) (CEPF/DC37/3)

a) Action Points Review (**CEPF/DC37/3/a**)

- The EU offered to share contacts for corporations engaged with the CBD-COP through their biodiversity and business for nature forum.
 - ✓ Pending the rescheduling of the CBD-COP (expected October 2021).

b) Partnership Highlights (**CEPF/DC37/3/b**)

- [See meeting document.](#)

Questions/Comments:

- The Donor Council appreciates the report on the impressive fundraising made by CEPF.
- Would CEPF have received more funding had it been possible to meet donors in person?
 - Raising funds from new donors was difficult but it proved to be possible with donors with whom CEPF had already established a relationship.
- Securing \$48M + potential \$22M is quite impressive. What were the key elements/factors of CEPF that enabled it to get those amounts?
 - \$38M from GCF: CEPF knows very well the region (Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands), the CSOs and community there, so CEPF's knowledge of the field helped GCF making their decision even though they usually do not donate to funds like CEPF as they understood CEPF mechanism to grant and do work on the ground. The partnership between AFD and CEPF to catalyze funds from GCF was very efficient. The success is also due to the important input from an external consultant (James Mackinnon). As for Walton Family Foundation and Bloomberg philanthropies, they were made aware of CEPF by the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation from our work in Indo-Burma. This is also the reason why the Packard Foundation is interested in funding CEPF.

- It was suggested that as CEPF is unique, it could market itself by checking multilateral and bilateral funds that look at the question of building back better and help communities affected by Covid-19, as there will be more funding coming in to biodiversity.

Action Item: Executive Director to talk to the GEF Secretariat on how to present CEPF in the context of the GEF.

- c) Financial Narrative (**CEPF/DC37/3/c**)
 - [See meeting document.](#)
- d) Financial Report (**CEPF/DC37/3/d**)
 - [See meeting document.](#)

Comments/Questions:

- What will be done with the funds unused for travel?
 - As CEPF is a multi-year fund, any funds not used for travel will be used for other projects after consultation with donors if need be. Also, CEPF reduced its planned travel by 50% assuming restrictions would remain in place through December 2020.
- e) Q1 Approved Grants (**CEPF/DC37/3/e**)
 - [See meeting document.](#)

Comments/Questions:

- CEPF now works in countries like Palestine, Algeria or in Central Asia: What is CEPF protocol in terms of security for the grantees and where they go and for staff when travel opens up again?
 - ✓ For staff, CI has a security director who provides clear guidance and information on safety and security. CEPF staff have a clear indication on what and what not to do. For grantees, the Regional Implementation Teams (RITs) are following this situation very closely. Healthwise, CEPF made sure that nobody was exposed through their activities with CEPF. Grantees were given the opportunity to restructure their project if they wished to delay or cancel some activities or have a no-cost extension. CEPF also changed the process for approving payments. Overall, flexibility has been added to help grantees meet the challenges of this time. In any case, grantees have been urged to not incur any expenditures if those could be risky. For further information see the Memo below that was sent to the Regional Implementation Teams Leaders in May, 2020.
- The EU's external cooperation instruments are evolving with more emphasis on funding and programs at national and multi-country levels (global programs significantly reduced), on promoting investments, on partnerships and on joint programming with EU Member States (Team Europe Initiatives). In order to catalyze future funding from the EU, CEPF will have to be even more in contact with relevant EU delegations (including potentially EUDs dealing with regional funding) and geographic directorates of DG Intpa (as of January 2021, the new name of DG DEVCO), to identify possible funding opportunities.

- It was recognized that the outreach by RITs to the regional and national offices of CEPF donors is especially important for future financial support.

Action Item: Olivier Langrand will talk to the EU about how to engage to obtain funding in the future under the new regional structure.

4. Results of the Survey on the Impact of COVID-19 on the 338 Active CEPF Grants (CEPF/DC37/4)

- [See meeting document.](#)

Comments/Questions:

- The Donor Council found the survey results very enlightening and indicated that we may not want to build back, but rather, build in a new way.
- Two important aspects to consider are the resilience of grassroots conservation work in the COVID-19 context and how grassroots organizations can carry out their work in the time of COVID-19. There seems to be some resilience despite the impact. Another factor is the added pressure on ecosystems and biodiversity with the increased use of natural resources and land grabbing. The results are quite sobering, and in some cases worrying.
- Are the contracts flexible enough to allow grantees to take on safety and security protocols, buy PPE, purchase IT equipment, support communities, etc.? Do the contracts allow grantees to continue working safely and remotely, or cover operations costs to bridge trying times?
 - There is a flexibility at the discretion of the grantee to reallocate 15% of their budget among their budget lines. Otherwise, amendments have been allowed to make changes grantees need: to purchase PPE equipment, invest in IT or communications equipment/material, or humanitarian assistance (for example, purchase food to be delivered safely). Also, CEPF came up with a set of criteria to keep paying salaries even though activities are halted (for example, field personnel having to stay home) so NGOs do not lose staff with expertise. For further information see the Memo below that was sent to the Regional Implementation Teams Leader in May, 2020.
- The Donor Council noted that most of the conservation work is on the ground and asked how long activities can be delayed. When things get better, there will be a sudden need of large amount of work on the ground which might not all be feasible right away. Therefore some conservative approaches might be needed to readjust workplans. Also, we may need to revisit our work on the ground since the situation has worsened. Nature is not better off than at the start of the pandemic: indeed, there is a lack of tourists and CSOs on the ground, which is removing a key deterrent for illegal activities. Indirect impacts like these have been going on for a while, and it will be tough to track, but important to gauge.

Action Item: Prepare a written summary on the COVID-19 survey for donors

5. Recommendations of Wavestone on the Simplification of CEPF Administrative and Financial Procedures (CEPF/DC37/5)

- [See meeting document.](#)

Action Item: Donor Council to send out any comments/questions they may have on the Wavestone report.

Action Item: The Secretariat will determine the next steps and get back to each donor.

Action Item: The Secretariat will think about options for hybrid meetings in the future.

6. Any Other Business

N/A

Memo sent to the Regional Implementation Teams on May 5th, 2020:

CEPF is grateful for the work of our RITs and grantees as we continue our critical work during the COVID-19 crisis. We are committed to achieving our conservation outcomes during this challenging time while also ensuring the safety and security of our staff and implementing partners. We want to share with you the procedures and approaches that CEPF has put in place to manage projects and activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This memo lays out guidance for the CEPF Secretariat, RITs and grantees regarding eligible expenses for large and small grants during this time when COVID-19 may impact implementation and operations.

Unforeseen expenses related to COVID-19

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, CEPF grantees may incur additional implementation costs not originally envisioned, principally related to safety measures, the protection of staff, or setting up remote working arrangements. CEPF (in the case of large grants) or the RIT (in the case of small grants) will evaluate and approve unforeseen costs on a case-by-case basis. Costs that are reasonable, necessary and allowable may be allocated to the CEPF grant with CEPF/RIT approval. Any equipment purchased for this purpose should belong to the grantee and be owned by the grantee organization until further disposition instructions are provided by CEPF or the RIT. Equipment purchased for this purpose should be physically relocated to the grantee's office when it reopens and used for project purposes.

Safety and security costs

At this time, reasonable costs in relation to safety and security measures are generally allowable.

Grantee staff time

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments around the world have introduced travel restrictions, social distancing and other measures that constrain the ability of CEPF grantees to implement certain activities, such as workshops, trainings, community meetings, field surveys, etc. Grantees may have employees who are unable to work due to this situation, whose time would not normally be chargeable to CEPF grants, due to their cost-reimbursable nature. In view of the fact that grantees do not necessarily have access to other sources of funding, inability to

expense the time of employees who are unable to work on project activities due to COVID-19 may make them unable to retain these individuals. In turn, this may make restarting project activities after a future easing of COVID-19 restrictions slower and more costly, and, in extreme cases, may lead to organizations ceasing to operate. To mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the operations of CEPF grantees, the following measures are implemented:

1. Employees working remotely on CEPF projects can continue to charge time spent on these projects.
2. Employees who are unable to work due to COVID-19-related restrictions can charge time to CEPF grants, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. The employee must be budgeted to work on the CEPF grant at least 10% of their time average per month
 - b. Monthly payments to the employee should not exceed the mean actual amount over the six-month period October 2019 to March 2020.
 - c. Payments to employees unable to work on project activities must be approved in writing by CEPF in advance.
 - d. This guidance applies to expenses incurred on or after 1 May 2020. Retroactive decisions on payments to employees before 1 May will be considered on a case-by-case basis, after submission of requests by grantees to the CEPF-Secretariat (in the case of large grants) or the RIT (in the case of small grants).

Travel

All travel funded by the grant that is planned during this time must adhere to all applicable international, national or local regulations and advisories governing travel, including safety, health and security measures in effect throughout the Period of Performance.

Consultants and Sub-grants

Grantees may issue new sub-grants or contracts for work that can take place in a safe and secure manner and is required to fulfill programmatic deliverables of the CEPF grant. The activities in the sub-grant and/or contract must be carried out in compliance with all applicable international, national or local regulations and advisories governing travel, health, safety and security. The grantee's project manager is responsible for making this determination in consultation with CEPF/RIT operational and grants staff.

Occupancy costs

For offices set up to implement specific projects, office rental and utility costs associated with grantee staff hired to implement those projects can continue to be charged to the CEPF grant.

General

The preferred option is for the grantee to cover the above expenses by reallocating funds from other budget lines. This can be approved by the Grant Director (in the case of large grants) or the RIT (in the case of small grants).

In exceptional cases, the grantee may be awarded additional funding via a cost extension. This requires the prior approval of the Managing Director and Executive Director.

All activities funded by CEPF grants, whether implemented by grantees, sub-grantees or consultants, must adhere to all applicable international, national or local regulations and advisories related to COVID-19, including safety, health and security measures in effect throughout the Period of Performance.

This guidance will be valid for the period 1 May to 31 July 2020. It will be reassessed at the end of this period, on the basis of the evolution of the COVID-19 situation prevailing in the different parts of the world