

CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND

Reviewing Progress on Investments across Island Groups



Kayangel Atoll, Palau. Credit: Kevin Davidson

Prepared for the World Bank Group

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Overview & Introduction

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- Understand the ex-post value of CEPF investments in Polynesia-Micronesia;
- Understand the sustainability of CEPF investments in the Caribbean;
- Report on the value of the regional implementation team (RIT) mechanism; and
- Propose lessons that should be built into the new investment in Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) exists to strengthen the involvement and effectiveness of civil society in contributing to the conservation and management of globally important biodiversity. This, in turn, achieves sustainable conservation and integrated ecosystem management in areas of globally important biodiversity, through consolidating conservation outcomes in existing CEPF regions and expanding funding to new critical hotspots. Achievements in hotspot regions to date include more effective management of 20 million hectares of protected areas, including creation of more than nine million hectares of new protected areas; promotion of biodiversity-friendly management of forests and agricultural crops; strengthened community management of natural resources and key habitats; successful piloting of new financing mechanisms, including payments for ecosystem services and successful interventions by civil society to influence development decisions.

While various independent reviews of CEPF progress have been made to date, none have been done on the experience of CEPF on island conservation. Island conservation is materially different to conservation on the mainland, given the types of species, their ability to move, the importance of looking from ridge to reef, and the severity of threats to biodiversity (e.g. invasive species threaten extinction on islands but merely extirpation at worst on the mainland). Moreover, civil society on islands tends to be smaller, often expatriate led, and transaction costs are much higher.

CEPF applies the same approach on islands as it does on the mainland; this consultancy will explore if this practice the best way to build civil society capacity to protect nature on islands. It will also explore the value of working across islands within regions, and the lessons that can be learned from experience working across islands to inform future investments.

Approach & Explanation of Methodology

The information provided in this report is the result of interviews and discussions with a broad and diverse set of stakeholders across three hotspot regions: **Polynesia-Micronesia**, the **Caribbean**, and **East Melanesia**. CEPF Leadership, including the Managing Director, grant directors and the monitoring & evaluation team participated. Consulted for this study, were grantees, current and former, as well as outside

stakeholders from each of the regions (members of the technical advisory group, regional implementation team or outside observers involved with projects.)¹

Detailed information on CEPF project status and grantees was gathered from relevant websites and from the CEPF grant monitoring grids. Ecosystem profiles were consulted in each of the three regions, as were all available assessments and reports done on hotspot regions, CEPF as a whole, and sustainable financing projects specific to island nations.

Collected data was validated and substantiated through interviews with grantees and key stakeholders on the ground, particularly in the case of the Caribbean. In Polynesia Micronesia, it was difficult to arrange an itinerary that would yield a level of participation worthy of time and travel costs, and therefore found it more effective to conduct virtual meetings. Given our shared first-hand experience in this region, we have been successful in generating feedback and conducting interviews. Efforts to communicate in East Melanesia was done through in-person discussion when possible or through virtual communication in Eastern Melanesia (emails, conference calls and Skype).²

¹ Since beginning the consultancy in earnest in Fall 2015, we have contacted over 250 stakeholders. Our findings incorporate responses from approximately 25% of them.

² The challenges and high cost of travel in both these areas are indicative of some of the challenges regional implementation teams and other coordinating bodies have in maintaining a clear structure and tracking mechanism for use by donors and other interested parties.

Glossary of Terms

Below are definitions of terms used throughout the report³.

Sustainability (of intervention): a measure of the degree to which an action or a project is able to exist or continue (to the extent possible) beyond a direct funding intervention.

Island sustainability: is the interplay of economic, social and environmental factors, and ability to be resilient in the face of change in an island setting. It is not defined as it has been left to island people to determine the integrity of the term in their own context as it varies island by island.

Regional Implementation Team (RIT): Nongovernmental organizations selected provide strategic leadership for the program in each of the biodiversity hotspots approved for investment. Each RIT will consist of one or more civil society organizations active in conservation in the region.

Capacity Building: refers to three types of capacity building: individual, organizational and systemic and is undertaken in a variety of ways including through mentoring and peer networks, often through Civil Society Organizations in CEPF context.

Supporting/Facilitating organizations: organizations or groups that have an important role in supporting island civil society and who have played a role in CEPF implementation. This role is not often formally recognized in projects or by CEPF itself.

Key Actors

Birdlife International: Lead organization charged with developing the Caribbean's ecosystem profile.

Birdlife International Pacific Programme: Pacific office of Birdlife International.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF): Founded in 2000, CEPF is a global leader in enabling civil society to participate in and benefit from conserving some of the world's most critical ecosystems.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN): Global environmental organization, with almost 1,300 government and NGO Members and more than 15,000 volunteer experts in 185 countries. The Oceania office in Suva, Fiji acted as the RIT in the East Melanesia hotspot.

Conservation International (CI): NGO and partner to CEPF; Pacific office acted as RIT in the Polynesia Micronesia hotspot.

³ Note that different regions use different terminology, so phraseology may vary in some instances.

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI): Regional technical institute focused on research, policy influence and capacity building for participatory natural resource governance in the Caribbean.

RIO+20: The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) (also known as RIO+20) took place in Brazil in 2012. The official discussions focused on two main themes: 1) how to build a green economy to achieve sustainable development and lift people out of poverty; and 2) how to improve international coordination for sustainable development.

Findings in the Context of Island Sustainability

Background

Globally, the *Convention on Biodiversity* recognized island biodiversity as needing particular attention and a particular means of being addressed by all parties that have islands, in particular Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The COP Decision on the Programme of Work (CBD VIII/1) also identified the critical implementation capacity issues faced by many islands (in particular SIDS), and encouraged parties to establish national, sub-regional, regional and international island partnerships that bring governments and civil society organizations together. This would increase political, financial and technical support in a way that accelerates implementation of projects needed to ensure environmental concerns are addressed in a timely fashion.

RIO+20 recognized that SIDS are a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities, including their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, including climate change and natural disasters. In 2014, vis-a-vis the Samoa Pathway, SIDS identified their development aspirations and continued to make the case that they need special attention precisely because of the risks they face given their unique circumstances.

The reality is that for many SIDS, governments do not have the capacity to implement conservation related priorities. At the same time, they are hampered by institutionally weak, fragmented and uncoordinated civil society and government implementation efforts. Success stories are often characterized by an individual, or small group of people, committed to and effective in getting things done. In those cases, said people tend to be overstretched because of high demands on their time.

Investments in island nations have a different dynamic than those in continental mainland areas. In addition to cultural nuances and norms, there are socio-economic and environmental factors that must be taken into consideration in order for programs and initiatives to be effective.

Islands tend to have very different biological characteristics, which not only present challenges for implementation, but also contribute to political and economic strains within local communities. From a social perspective, stakeholders tend to have a certain methodology in which work gets done and decisions are made. Economically, they are very often more expensive to operate in due to infrastructure challenges and higher cost of services.

These characteristics, however, make islands ideal for experimentation. They are laboratories that can be used to test new approaches and methodologies to see what is possible and how best to address a wide range of issues and challenges facing our global society, particularly where biodiversity, resource conservation and ecological sustainability are concerned. Islands can show us what is coming, and help us be proactive in finding solutions to problems that plague the world both now and in the future.

CEPF & Islands

Across each of the SIDS regions that CEPF has been or is currently operating in, it is clear that with few exceptions, conservation must be part of the focus for local communities and their livelihoods. Nature-based industries such as tourism and fisheries account for more than half of the GDP and provide income opportunities for vulnerable groups such as women and youth.

For economic development to continue in a way that is ecologically viable, islands need a more robust network of expertise to draw upon. Most are currently lacking the human capital and resource base needed for implementation. The islands surveyed have little capacity within government or in civil society to adequately address many of the issues they are currently facing. Within these regions, they rely on NGOs and members of civil society to serve as critical agents of implementation.

CEPF has been a source of reinforcement for this knowledge gap, and while their work has been effective in both minimizing risk and preventing environmental catastrophes from occurring or worsening, changes must be made in order for the positive benefits to live on beyond the life of the funding window.

CEPF Approach

In the three island hotspot regions examined, a shift was observed in how the aforementioned issues have been addressed.

In Polynesia-Micronesia, for example, fewer nationally based non-governmental organizations exist than in the Caribbean, and thus a greater percentage of CEPF funding was targeted at regional organizations. Regional intergovernmental organizations, which typically focus on issues facing governments, have been known to play a role as intermediaries in this region; which is not the norm in other parts of the world.

Since CEPF began its focus on islands with its investment in Polynesia-Micronesia in 2008, there seems to have been a move away from a more myopic project focus, towards a look at how projects fit within the broader policy and programmatic priorities of island countries. There has also been a rethinking of how capacity should be built, specifically that there be greater emphasis on systemic, institutional capacity than on singular projects. Further, a greater need to build the capacity of individuals was observed. In this sense, capacity for island regions must be viewed at quite a broad scale: at the regional, national and local levels, and the interplay between these and the specific types of capacity support that should be considered at the outset of investments made.

Conservation, and the corresponding strengthening of civil society to best prioritize it, is not seen as an issue unto itself unless it is integrated into the broader development framework and strategies of SIDS.⁴ Acknowledgement of this being an issue with respect to implementation was found in the outcomes of the *Mid-term Review of CEPF* in the Caribbean region. This report identified that while the “mainstreaming” of conservation was important, it was a weak link in CEPF’s approach to implementation.

Regional Differences

Another part of the sustainability question is that while islands have many similarities (*i.e.* size, the geographic nature), there are notable differences both within regions and within islands themselves. No “one-size-fits-all” approach will work in terms of building capacity. Flexibility is key, as is that local ownership of intervention be balanced with donor expectations and parameters.

Alignment between national strategies and the actual on the ground implementation is of utmost importance. Countries have developed national biodiversity strategies and action plans and many have or are in the process of reviewing them with support from the Global Environment Facility. The challenge then becomes how best to integrate these priorities with the terms of the ecosystem profiles developed by CEPF. While CEPF has gone to considerable lengths to ensure government buy-in, admittedly a challenging proposition, there needs to be a more robust system of checks and balances in place to ensure alignment and investment sustainability⁵.

Differences by region include:

- **Pacific islands:** Because most of the land is under customary tenure, the role of civil society for implementation of any type of project, but especially an environmental one, is critical.
- **Caribbean:** This region has a different relationship to biodiversity due to historical and economic factors. There is a complex interplay between conservation of biodiversity, and needs to communities that rely on natural resources to make a living. While some efforts have been made to address alternative livelihoods by CEPF projects, this is an area that requires ongoing efforts.
- **Indian Ocean:** This region faces similar challenges to its Caribbean counterparts.

An evolution within CEPF will be required to take account of the importance of these issues as its efforts proceed in the East Melanesia hotspot.

Considerations for successful capacity building in an island context:

- Capacity building needs to be long term and not one off;

⁴ It can also be seen in the new Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs which all governments are implementing and tracking.

⁵ Note, this is a working hypothesis, for which we are still generating data to support / substantiate as of the time of this draft’s release.

- Peer learning is important (peers being other islanders in similar situations);
- Best results are achieved with investment where energy already exists to do something;
- Funding needs to be appropriate to the location and their capacity to use it in a timely way (sometimes there is too much funding);
- Local ownership, local commitment is critical;
- It is important to that coordination exist with governments to ensure actions continue to be taken beyond the project cycle; and
- Coordination at national level is vital and should be expanded whenever possible.

Polynesia-Micronesia

The objective was to determine whether investment efforts were sustainable and resonated on the islands following their conclusion, to understand if conservation efforts were improved and whether civil society was markedly stronger following the five-year investment cycle. Findings focused on those who most benefited from CEPF presence, and what the lessons learned for key stakeholders have been in recent years.

CEPF Investment Overview

Starting in 2008, and concluding in 2013, this was the first investment initiative focused solely on islands, with \$7M USD allocated to 113 projects / grantees. Efforts in the region got off to a shaky start, due to a significant time lag between the announcement of CEPF's work and the first call for proposals. This, coupled with miscommunication surrounding launch timing, created a great deal of disappointment at the process and the pace at which plans progressed.⁶ At the same time, \$1M USD was committed by the Australian Ministry of Environment's Regional Natural Heritage Programme (RNHP) dedicated to the eradication of invasive species in the region⁷.

Figure 1: Summary table of funds committed by organization type

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Local and national organizations | \$1,865,771 |
| Regional organizations | \$1,943.126 |
| International organizations | \$3,191,103 |
| Total funding commitment | \$7,000,000 |

⁶ This was unfortunate because expectations were high at the outset, as was community support of the program.

⁷ This funding stream, while complementary to many of the CEPF grant projects, proved to be problematic because of overlap, confusion amongst key stakeholders, and lack of coordination between project teams.

CEPF Polynesia-Micronesia: Funding committed per organisation type



Polynesia-Micronesia was the first CEPF region to use a Regional Implementation Team (RIT). This role was secured by Conservation International's regional office located in Samoa. The RIT needed to be in a position to put in staff from the region that have experience implementing multi-country coordination of project delivery. At the time CEPF was seen as funding conservation projects at community level, and not so much as supporting community level organizations to strengthen their ability to address conservation issues. This focus, on conservation, and the fact that Conservation International was heavily involved in the development profile made their Pacific Island office the obvious choice to undertake this new role.⁸

In terms of the sustainability of the investment, conservation results vary, as do resonance of impact and demonstrated strengthening of civil society. Overall, it is perceived that CEPF was moderately successful in terms of its impact in the Polynesia-Micronesia hotspot; however invasive species projects implemented during that time had greater impact (see the below Invasive Species section for examples).

CEPF was seen to support some of the projects that have continued to benefit the region as well as some local organizations.⁹ For example, in Samoa an endangered bird project on the Ma'o and Manume'a continues to progress post-CEPF involvement. The real benefit is that there were funds to undertake projects for conservation but this is not the focus of CEPF. There was real perception in the region that institutional strengthening of civil society did not happen in the region as a result of CEPF and that much of the funding did not go to that level but to national, regional and international organizations with far greater capacity.

⁸ In much the same way as in the Caribbean, it is clear that the RIT role strengthened Conservation International's profile and credibility in the region and in countries and locations in which they had not previously undertaken activities. However, they functioned more as a defacto RIT than an actual implementation body. This would prove to handicap efforts for the remainder of the funding period, but would also help shape the success of subsequent hotspot regions.

⁹ In terms of benefits for the region, CEPF helped support numerous local NGOs during the Polynesia/Micronesia funding cycle, however without continued support many of these local NGOs have struggled.

A review of those who received grants points to the root cause of the lack of sustainability.

In this region 39 of the grants were implemented by local or national organizations, 25 by regional organizations and 43 by organizations outside of Polynesia-Micronesia. More than 50% (21 out of 43) of the implementers were from New Zealand, which reflects that most technical capacity in invasive species management was seen as coming from outside the region at that time. In terms of the grants implemented by regional organizations, 18 were regional intergovernmental organizations and 5 were NGOs with a regional office but whose headquarters were outside the region.

Further analysis of the objectives of the grants indicate why results were so mixed. Many of the grants were focused on report drafting, development of management plans or research. The best examples of resonant and impactful projects are where institutions undertook activities based in the region, or where there was a strong partnership developed between a national or regional institution and a strong international institution. This suggests that though local stakeholders may be keen -- or most in need of -- funding, their organizations are too immature to support implementation requirements.

Figure 2: CEPF Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot Grant Focus

| Grant objectives | Included as an objective |
|---|--------------------------|
| Reports, plans or research | 75 |
| Communications or community engagement | 36 |
| Invasives/biosecurity | 47 |
| Capacity building and technical support | 33 |
| CEPF-centric (e.g. administration) | 2 |

One local organization, Nature Fiji, was new to the region and credits the CEPF process for helping them to think critically about their focus. CEPF funding enabled them to not only better define their niche, but also to fund the initial baseline research and advocacy efforts required for them to proceed. They were able to identify and build the processes to undertake their work and to develop strong partnerships with international organizations (*i.e.* Bat Conservation International) that continue in the present day. Unfortunately, they continue to be constrained by lack of resources and fundraising ability and will have to reduce some of the activities started under CEPF.

Interestingly, they credit their main learning from regional cooperation from engagement in the Birdlife Partnership and not from CEPF. They reported that they learned extensively from other Birdlife partners in other island countries. Nature Fiji had the advantage of taking part in CEPF while at the same time working with Birdlife, which helped them access resources for organizational development they might not have

otherwise. Because of this they were able to: 1) undertake actions through the CEPF project and through the Birdlife grant simultaneously, and 2) better understand the results of those actions; thereby bolstering their organizational capacity and stability.

Respondents in this region believe that if there is a focus on capacity building of local civil society, then from the outset mechanisms need to be put into place to ensure the longevity of these organizations if/when CEPF funding is finished, such as:

- Linking to networks/partner international organizations to assist with continued fundraising support
- Mainstreaming local NGOs into national financing mechanisms for biodiversity conservation
- Only developing new local NGOs if there is a real need

Invasive species projects: A special case

Invasive species project implementation through CEPF, including through the complementary funding provided by the Australian government's RNHP, are among the more impactful and resonant investments made by the CEPF. This funding came at a critical time in the region: Many invasive species plans and strategies at both the regional (Pacific Ant Prevention Plan, Regional Invasive Species Guidelines) and the national (National Invasive Species Action Plans) were introduced but unable to secure funding. At the same time the region had a specific regional partnership dedicated to invasive species -- the Pacific Invasives Partnership -- to help coordinate work done across the region¹⁰.

CEPF took the right approach in investing in existing regional support mechanisms linked to the Pacific Invasives Partnership (PIP), specifically the Pacific Invasives Initiative (PII)¹¹ to provide technical support to the grantees undertaking or developing initiatives targeted at invasive species. The funding provided by CEPF, separate from the core funding Pacific Invasives Partnership received from New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID), enabled the organization to undertake activities to strengthen projects and to facilitate learning between projects and other invasive species initiatives.

PII was able to bring grantees together for training on invasives management as well as to offer targeted exchanges in coordination with other initiatives. At the same time, it offered the opportunity to aggregate lessons learned and continues to play this role moving forward in relation to invasive species in other island regions. They continue to play a technical advisory role, even to former grantees, as well as working to consult on project development and planning for invasive species management.

Another mechanism that was supported by CEPF is the Pacific Invasives Learning Network, while based at the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. This was developed by a partnership to support building of invasive species capacity in the region through peer learning. Both of these initiatives have a history in the region and an extensive group of partners, making their work more

¹⁰ Geographic limitations and distance between regions made coordination and facilitation efforts key to project success in this region.

¹¹ This is a technical mechanism based in New Zealand.

impactful from the outset. Their experience with CEPF can be incorporated into other new and ongoing initiatives, and if other island regions plan to invest in invasive species management, a role could be played by the PII team to support and leverage technical assistance.¹²

Lessons learned: Polynesia Micronesia

It is obvious that some of the lessons learned by CEPF in Polynesia Micronesia were applied in the Caribbean and Eastern Melanesian hotspots. It is also clear that weaknesses found in this first CEPF island investment were adequately addressed. They include:

- Building institutional capacity of island civil society rather than implementing CEPF as the sole arbiter of individual conservation projects;
- Appreciating (by the time of the Eastern Melanesian investment) that while island government capacity is weak, in many places that of civil society for biodiversity conservation is even weaker, thus requiring support for a longer period of time. The time extension in Eastern Melanesia from 5 years to 7 years is clearly in response to this issue;¹³
- Identifying a RIT with local expertise and experience in building civil society capacity as well as maintaining conservation implementation;
- Enabling the RIT to play a leadership role in the region, in leveraging the CEPF investment with other donors, enabling projects to work with and learn from each other and taking a strategic, knowledgeable and appropriate approach to building civil society capacity;
- Identifying common areas of collaboration, strengths of partners and key gaps that need to be addressed(a role the RIT could play); and
- Smaller sized projects could have been awarded more strategically to complement each other and national efforts.

Regional cooperation

By the time of the CEPF's Mid-term Evaluation Conference in 2011, a series of improvement opportunities had been developed and a meeting was held between grantees to discuss these lessons learned. Convening stakeholders is a vital, but often overlooked component of successful regional implementation, because of its expense and logistical challenges.¹⁴ The Mid-term Evaluation Conference not only gave grantees the opportunity to identify issues and gaps, but to discuss how best to address them as a group.

A number of grantees suggested that a CEPF network should have been developed at the outset.¹⁵ The network could have included CEPF funded projects, experts and

¹² PII has started to do this in the Indian Ocean region through IUCN's new invasive species network in that region, and their efforts should be formally integrated into hotspot program management moving forward if invasive species continue to be a focus.

¹³ More partnerships should be fostered between governments and civil society - Palau is cited as an example where this happens but not many other locations in this region.

¹⁴ While this is true in hotspot regions around the world, it's particularly problematic in island regions.

¹⁵ Grantees wanted more of this type of activity, especially in the PM region.

partners. It would have functioned to enable the continued sharing of information, and to ensure results were sustained through participation across different levels of stakeholder engagement. Other grantees proposed a more strategic role for CEPF in supporting the establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms for civil society (and sharing best practice) in islands as a means to support the core functions of small civil society organizations.

Unfortunately, the data assessed shows that not much effort was made in Polynesia-Micronesia to facilitate engagement with relevant networks and civil society organizations. This was a missed opportunity because the CEPF could have been an example to illustrate an effort that was already underway in the region at the time in demonstrating how to work with local communities and government through the Roundtable for Nature Conservation.¹⁶ Instead of members and non-grantees viewing CEPF as just another funding mechanism (which was generally the perception), it could have been seen as a key player and example of how best to implement regional action strategies for conservation at local levels. This would have been a particularly powerful illustration with respect to encouraging national and community leadership of conservation programmes.

The role of the RIT: A cautionary tale

Conservation International Pacific was involved since 2003, the start of CEPF's investment in the Pacific, and participated in the development of the ecosystem profile. They worked on securing the GEF focal point endorsements between 2005 and 2007, and in 2006 worked on a \$1M USD program for invasive species management.¹⁷ To many, the difference between CI's work with regards to the Pacific Islands Programme and CI's efforts as CEPF RIT were often unclear. There were many times, including in the workshop reports from the Mid-term Evaluation Conference, where the RIT is referred to as the CI Pacific RIT with no distinction made regarding CEPF. Respondents reported instances where staff of CI presented project results and activities for projects undertaken by other organizations and grantees as part of the CEPF investment, as being the work of CI. This is included as a cautionary tale for selection of RITs in the future as perhaps the roles were not clarified. Transparency of ownership and recognition for activities and programs that are successful are critical for project viability, especially in the island context.

Other observations

There was a significant focus on investment in regional organizations, which in an island region like the Pacific makes some sense as long as there is a clear logic as to why. However, some of the projects that were awarded to regional organizations were seen as conservation projects, and were not at all focused on building civil society. By in large, other than where actors from civil society organizations were engaged for feedback as stakeholders, they were not involved.

¹⁶ "Action Strategy for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific islands region 2008-2012: Empowering local people, communities and Pacific institutions / SPREP, Apia, Samoa." SPREP, 2009.

¹⁷ The full investment and associated efforts launched in 2008.

At the outset of the funding period, a need to build the capacity of local ecologists and local organizations was stressed. The importance of developing a monitoring method for both the project efforts and the long-term organizational strength of grantees to continue efforts after the funding period ended was identified, but evidence does not exist that this objective was achieved. For example, many civil society organizations continued to struggle to coordinate activities with local or national government agencies after the funding period, clearly a missed opportunity to shore up partnerships and see real results from the investments made.

Moving forward, it is key that a good network of CEPF funded projects, experts and partners be created at the outset, and that it is maintained throughout the project and beyond. This will enable the continued sharing of information and lessons learned, but will also help to ensure results are sustained and carried out across different levels of governance. Because of the isolation issues and limited capacity, getting this buy-in is even more crucial in an island setting. This is an important role that can be played by a locally knowledgeable RIT.

In the case of Polynesia Micronesia, having an opportunity for the sites (people from the communities) to share lessons and issues from another community in the region might have helped with some of the sustainability issues. Peer learning is critical and a more deliberate approach that looks at practitioners and project managers having an opportunity to exchange information with each other would have been useful. They can share their findings, and develop their own strategies accordingly. Of course, travel constraints made this difficult at the time and still poses a problem in many island regions. It is recognized, as well, that advancements with technology make remote coordination more effective for some, but connectivity challenges still exist. A more tactical approach to keeping grantees in touch with one another should be prioritized -- and deemed non-negotiable -- in future hotspot regions, especially islands.

Weaknesses

It is clear that compared to subsequent island regions, Polynesia-Micronesia focused more on biodiversity projects than it did on building viability and strengthening civil society beyond the life of the CEPF investment. This region also saw a larger percentage of investment in assessments, strategies and plans than it did in actual implementation efforts. It has been challenging to assess the status of many of these programs and planning efforts. There are some good examples where the grantee viewed the CEPF investment as being complementary to other resources and used it to their advantage.

The University of the South Pacific's (USP) project on rapid biodiversity assessment built the confidence and capability of USP to continue to undertake Rapid Assessment Programmes (RAPs), including recently in the current investment in Guadalcanal, located in the Eastern Melanesia hotspot region. A clear message coming out of this region is that while in some cases it is necessary to invest in research, plans or reports, there has to be a component built into the project to require taking some type of action as a result of the findings.

Lessons for other regions

Government engagement in conservation is critical and needs to be built-in to the program from the start. If the goal is to create true sustainability, not only is effective

investment in the local civil society needed, but mechanisms for learning must be created at the national level. The Roundtable for Nature Conservation is an existing mechanism for ongoing regional activity in a way that aligns with other external programs, but also supports national implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. The CEPF must have a good understanding of any efforts already underway, and ensure correlation and coordination with any work their grantees undertake.

Partnerships and organizations that can support strengthening poor local capacity, either nationally or regionally, must be part of the solution. A framework for engaging with and investing in their buy-in to play this role in conjunction with CEPF is vitally important.

Caribbean Investment

Caribbean investment by CEPF took place from 2010 - 2015 (with a total investment of \$6.9 million). The Ecosystem Profile that defined investment in the region was developed from February to November 2009 under the leadership of BirdLife International, with support from CI. An RIT was selected in 2010 after a call for proposals with the successful bidding organization being the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)¹⁸.

Bearing in mind that the CEPF funding envelope only just concluded, overall CEPF support in this region is perceived to have had positive outcomes for the civil society organizations in the region whose primary focus is on biodiversity conservation. CEPF has produced a cadre within local civil society who in many places are better equipped to both find and manage resources to strengthen institutional interactions and coordination efforts. Stakeholders across the region have had the opportunity to network with other islands, thereby increasing the scope of their own resources and identify new ways to compete for funding and training efforts.

Strengths

CEPF is seen as having a certain amount of flexibility that many donors in the region do not. For example, while it is widely held that bolstering civil society in a way that promotes conservation should be a priority, the first step is to strengthen the capacity of the organizations themselves. In the case of the Caribbean, grantees were given the freedom to ascertain which areas they most needed to focus on, having time to develop other resources or for key staff members to learn new administrative / operational tools (*i.e.* accounting or invoicing programs.)

Another strength was the facilitation of networking efforts between organizations at the regional level. This was led by CANARI in its role as the RIT, and was successful because this is the type of work CANARI does at its core. This intra-regional communication was also supported by CEPF at the national scale; notably in that they helped grantees doing similar work to coordinate efforts and share best practices. This led to partnerships and local level relationships that will last beyond the investment. A number of success stories were found throughout the region.¹⁹

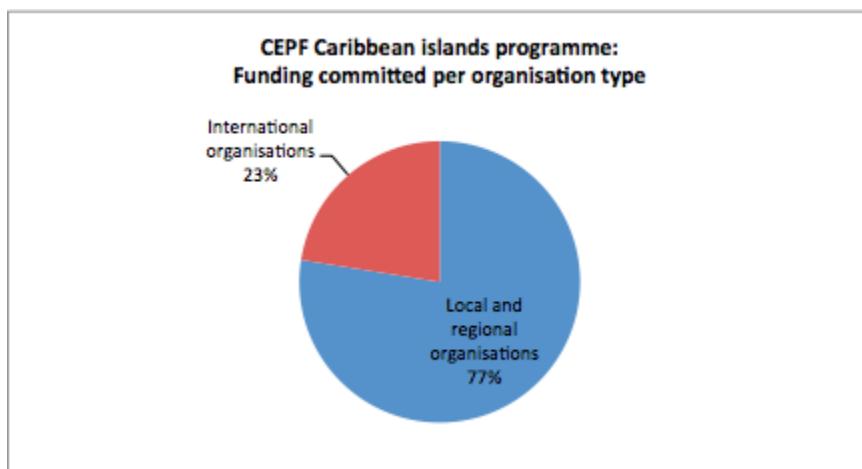
¹⁸ CANARI is a local regional organization in the Caribbean with its office in Trinidad and Tobago and twenty seven years of regional technical support, research, policy influence and capacity building for participatory natural resources governance in the region.

¹⁹ Specifically, Haiti, Dominican Republic, St Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda.

CEPF Caribbean Investment Profile

Figure 3: Summary table of funds committed per organization type

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Local and regional organizations | \$5,340,423.26 |
| International organizations | \$1,550,571.15 |
| Total Funding Commitment | \$6,890,994.41 |



Regional Implementation Team (RIT), CANARI's Influence

CEPF was one of many projects and activities CANARI was involved in implementing in the region. In most countries, they are perceived and widely held to be a trusted local institution with the relationships and partnerships both in government and civil society to help accelerate action. CANARI supported and encouraged grantees to look for synergies, and to discover where they could work together with the public sector and other stakeholders to get the best results. In their official capacity as RIT, they supported grantees with learning by doing, how to present a project, and the complete process of project development and implementation.

Building civil society to protect nature in the Caribbean region

The challenge within civil society in the region is as follows:

1. Weak institutional capacity;
2. Lack of coordination with other entities;
3. Developing partnerships that improve local, national and regional capacity;
4. Fragmentation on issues of shared concern;

5. Limited knowledge or uptake of lessons and experiences from other islands and entities; and
6. Sustainability, economically and at an institutional level.

At a national level, civil society organizations have very limited institutional capacity. Regionally, CEPF has spent a considerable amount of effort and resources to help build the capacity of those organizations with domain over key biodiversity areas (KBAs). In particular, efforts were made to help grantees strengthen their core operational functionality in a way that would allow for progress to be made across the numerous KBAs identified in the ecosystem profiles.

Examples of these efforts include:

- Proposal development support;
- Development of strategic plans to improve governance structures within organizations;
- Development of business plans and financial management manuals;
- Development of organizational websites and training in website management; and
- General operational maintenance and sustainability plans.

One issue that CEPF was unable to address comprehensively was the inevitable activity gap faced by organizations in between projects and funding periods. Nearly all grantees noted that they were well staffed and organized during a project period, but once that particular grant ended, capacity vanished.²⁰

In the case of the Caribbean, it is clear the need to identify an external entity with extensive regional experience and knowledge to supplement limited national level capacity is critical for future investments in all hotspot regions, not just island nations. This role includes the standard administrative support, for example, helping to interpret processes required by donors specific to soliciting funding, communicating with CEPF, project management and other related requirements. However, it involves much more than sharing local knowledge or facilitating grants management.

CANARI served to supplement the capacity of the grantees in order for their projects to have maximum impact. From helping members of the local civil society to better advocate for their needs and helping them move effectively through the grant process to establishing connections for them with relevant government, private and civil society partners, they went above and beyond expectations. Staff members and country coordinators did what was required, but also took an active part in identifying ways to leverage the support from CEPF into ongoing funding from other sources. As well, their efforts to ensure grantees had visibility in certain circles (e.g. government working groups or international training events) helped cement the credibility of many of the grantees in the region to ensure they have a seat at the decision-making table in years to come.

²⁰ While this is not an issue CEPF can address solely on its own, it is one that might be taken into close consideration during funding allocations in subsequent hotspot regions.

General observations of note

All respondents recognized the need for organizations working in the region to be flexible and sensitive to local conditions, which vary across the region. It is critical to have local ownership and buy-in of institutions involved in national and regional activities in order to improve the likelihood of success. In addition, a view of sustainability with an emphasis made on the importance of tone, relationships, local knowledge and lessons learned. Respondents felt that many activities (not only those related to CEPF) are being implemented by international organizations with little perceived ability -- or desire -- to strengthen the capacity of local civil society.

Another important consideration is the link between national government strategy and policy with local implementation. The CEPF in some islands, Dominican Republic being one example, played an important role in helping to make a connection for local NGOs with the Ministry of Environment where one had not existed before. And while government agencies also face resource constraints, it was suggested that there might exist untapped potential specific to human resource capacity and funding from within local government to bolster efforts being made by grantees. For example, the provision of park guards in one project region was being managed by an outside organization when that role might be better suited to the public sector.

In Antigua and Barbuda, engagement of the government's forestry staff in an exchange with neighboring St Lucia was seen as evidence of the importance of government for building relationships. In turn, the Antiguan NGO served as a vital source of information for the development of a new environmental bill for the government.

Networks & Partnerships

CEPF Caribbean investment saw all types of partnerships form, between local and national civil societies, and at regional levels with government and donors. International partnerships improved the potential for those international organizations with a desire to strengthen local capacity to do the most good.

For example, Flora and Fauna International was able to help very small NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean to strengthen their proposals but also to work effectively together between countries. In both St Lucia/Antigua and Barbuda, because FFI had been working in the region for a long time and had strong relationships and local knowledge, they were able to help the two national NGOs to work together in a way that allowed for the two entities to secure funding for a project of mutual benefit and interest.

More broadly, in the region, these types of partnerships between local and international entities enabled accountability, capacity building and information sharing. It also encouraged ongoing follow up and networking efforts to be in place with newly identified support channels, even once a project had ended. In Jamaica, for example, the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) would never have pursued the project they undertook with CEPF had it not been for the participation and involvement of the World Resources Institute (WRI). For JET, the administrative burden of participating was seen as too high for their organization. At first they withdrew, and when WRI came forward to suggest they do it together, they were encouraged. The project was funded and its efforts

resulted in preservation of a KBA under threat of destruction by a public private partnership²¹.

For other civil society organizations that had a stronger existing capacity, CEPF funding was seen as an opportunity to strengthen visibility and recognition by government and other key stakeholder groups. It was also seen as a way to attract other resources particularly given the significance of the broader donor partnership. For example, in the case of Haiti's Foundation for the Protection of Marine Biodiversity (FoProBiM), working with CEPF helped to expand its efforts and grow its capacity. Founded in 1992, it was not until after it began its work with CEPF that the organization began to garner attention throughout the region and on an international scale.²² This visibility has helped the organization quadruple in size and make a greater impact on biodiversity preservation critical for the marine habitats it has been fighting to protect for more than two decades.

Lessons learned

The RIT needs to play a strong role in two key ways:

1. Providing institutional support and capacity building to former grantees, including:
 - a. Leveraging resources for collective implementation;
 - b. Improving regional and international recognition;
 - c. Improved networking access and skills;
 - d. Strategic planning and project management;
 - e. Identification and brokering of external technical support and technical exchanges; and
 - f. Providing expertise in sustainability planning.
2. Helping grantees work together to engage with government stakeholders including engaging political will at a higher level, and in contributing to national government biodiversity and sustainable development strategies. It was suggested that this could be done by building in engagement / coordination mechanism with government as a criteria for getting CEPF funding to support sustainability.

Investment in civil society in the region needs to focus not just on the activity being proposed (in this case conservation), but also on the value of strengthening and improving the sustainability of the organizations involved in order to enhance their ability to work with and learn from each other.

The value of working across islands: Lessons for future investments

The perspective of how much time CEPF spent working across islands varies across the Caribbean. While all respondents identified the value of learning what others were doing, many noted the capacity issue: limited resources make frequent coordination activities a

²¹ Now two years following the initial announcement that a port be built in a protected area, the grantees' efforts continue to carry weight with local government officials and developers.

²² Involvement of the World Bank as a CEPF partner was cited as being pivotal for improved credibility.

nice added benefit, but somewhat superfluous given more pressing needs. Some respondents said that they were unaware of what other grantees were undertaking until they took part in the mid-term review. Language barriers and logistical constraints also made it difficult to participate in the regional activities organized by CEPF.

While some respondents felt that there had not been much interaction at the regional level, others saw these relationships as being the funding itself. They found tremendous value in meeting and working with other grantees, and got great benefit from sharing resources and networking with one another. Unlike with regional governments who meet regularly, it was clear that national level groups focused on conservation do not currently have a means to meet on a regular basis. There may be opportunities to further develop networks in future hotspot regions provided adequate resources are available to facilitate participation.²³

This networking was seen as important -- including engagement with the broader CEPF network -- both regionally and nationally because in many countries members of local civil society had previously been operating in isolation from each other. This was true in one national park, in the Dominican Republic, where multiple organizations applied for the same grant, and were then persuaded to work together by the RIT. This led to relationships being built that improved the sustainability and impact of both the CEPF investment funding, as well as for other projects the groups were working on.

Another example from Haiti occurred at the final CEPF evaluation. After meeting for the first time, three local organizations joined forces to secure funding for a subsequent project. One respondent said “we always seem to come up with new things and new ideas when we sit down and see each other.”²⁴ Another bright spot is the relationship that has developed between EAG in Antigua and Barbuda and St Lucia National Trust on the common issue of invasive species. In this instance, the coordination role was provided by Flora and Fauna International and took place because of its work with CEPF. Now these two organizations (EAG and STLNT) collaborate not only on invasive species work, but also on other projects.

For organizations who primarily work in isolation in an island setting, peer learning and exchanges were seen as an efficient way to learn about issues of concern and to build enthusiasm for taking proactive measures at home in their own country.

Though their levels of support varied, all respondents believed there were important reasons to work across islands, primarily because of the value in networking with other colleagues and to share what they were doing particularly what was working. This was

²³ Grantees and other stakeholders stressed that any networking activities be targeted and add value to the already stretched organizations and their staff who would be participating. Given that the cost to attend such events is high and prohibitive for many groups, alternative convening mechanisms should be identified for use in subsequent hotspot regions.

²⁴ We clarified that these opportunities had not been available prior to CEPF coming to the region.

true for work with other CEPF grantees, but also for those who are doing similar types of projects or dealing with similar issues in other islands.²⁵

Recommendations

While we see value in allocating adequate resources for networking as a key element of CEPF success at the national and regional level (including exchanges between grantees and supported peer learning), these efforts should be emphasized early in the investment period for them to produce the biggest ROI.

Analysis revealed that in-person networking exchanges and learning opportunities were most effective when coordinated by a regional body, with oversight and involvement by CEPF. Exchanges and lessons learned should occur between grantees in the region (and potentially other regions), and also be a tool for learning about approaches and methods new to the region provided they are in alignment with project goals and objectives identified in the ecosystem profile.

In the case of invasives species management, coordination and collaboration has proven to contribute to successful eradication. It is an area that particularly benefits from a regional approach: the sharing of experience and expertise between islands.

Value of CEPF investments on civil society

CEPF investment is perceived as moderately valuable in building civil society across the islands with clear success in countries like the Dominican Republic that already had NGOs in place with strong internal infrastructure. Having said that, even in the DR, the building of civil society capacity was uneven.

In a country of that size, the roles of national level NGOs was much more about building civil society capacity at the next level down (municipal governments, farmers and those who are stakeholders of the protected areas where the KBAs were located). In the bigger countries of the region, some of the national level NGOs and organizations have been in country operating for many years and have a long-term commitment to the places in which they are working. This means that CEPF is supplementary to their overall programme. Investing in them means that some of the activities or the attention and focus will continue.

Purely from a process standpoint, many organizations reported the need for a simpler approach. They expressed frustration with reporting mechanisms, database reliability and improvement on technological burdens of reporting. Further, they cited heavy evaluation and consultations processes being placed organizations with extremely limited existing capacity. A lot of staff time and money was spent on the project management process and there were some significant breakdowns with reliability of data being transmitted back to CEPF.

CEPF in the region has helped to build a foundation for future management, strategic thinking by civil society and in broadening the constituency and advocates for biodiversity conservation which is an important platform to build upon.

²⁵ A challenge to this approach, and one that will certainly be relevant in Eastern Melanesia, is the issue of language. In the Caribbean, the need to navigate three languages (English, Spanish and French) presented a challenge for information sharing across islands.

Lessons learned:

To improve value, CEPF might consider two different approaches:

1. With those organizations that have some capacity - strengthen their ability to make progress, to leverage resources, outreach and network; and
2. In places where there are not strong, or sufficient capacity civil society it should first look for viable alternatives to fill these gaps, and then commit to the project over longer period of time.

In Haiti, it is clear that many of the civil society groups were not ready or of sufficient ability to make progress under CEPF. Exploration of the provision of emergency assistance to Haiti was not conducted in detail, but it seems to be discordant with the focus of CEPF though funds were allocated for relief efforts.

Finally, CANARI has a mentorship program in place funded by Macarthur that helps provide mentorship opportunities for leaders focused on conservation and sustainability issues in the region. These types of opportunities to leverage CEPF investment should be actively sought throughout the investment envelope, but particularly at the outset.

Probability of sustainability of investments going forward

This varies by country and by the capacity of the NGOs to use the funding to supplement other funding, or where it was part of their long-term plan already. For those organizations that have had their institutional capacity strengthened, this will improve their ability to implement broader than the scope of the CEPF grant. For specific projects focused on conservation priorities, the situation is more mixed. Most respondents felt that it is highly probable that civil society capacity has been strengthened across the region and that this will continue over time because of the focus on strategic planning and sustainability. The picture with how that looks for conservation-focused efforts is that they are less sustainable and more in need of ongoing support.

Compared to Polynesia-Micronesia, where there was important investment in specific conservation objectives and less focus on how to build civil society capacity over the long term, in the Caribbean, there was a clear attention to strengthening the national and local level institutions that are critical to ensuring that the initial investment was viable.

One of the results of CEPF involvement is that some of the civil society organizations are now better able to attract, manage and implement larger funds, and at the same time have greater legitimacy in the global landscape because of the credibility of the donor group to CEPF (e.g. World Bank, Japan, France etc.). It also enabled some of the NGOs that were ready to start to reach out to those donors with a stronger value proposition.

Unfortunately, there continues to be a lack of budget at the local level for protected areas so biodiversity continues to be at risk, specifically monitoring, surveillance and follow up efforts. Some of these issues were dealt with by CEPF, but much more needs to be done.

Takeaways on investments moving forward

- It is critical to continue to build local level capacity and leadership in order to amplify and leverage the initial CEPF investment;
- Build in the engagement with the local level (local regional and national) representatives of the CEPF donors. They have long-term investment and

- interest in-country, which helps civil society build important relationships to further fund projects in the region; and
- Build sustainability into the start of CEPF projects. This includes involving government agencies and relevant regional agencies in the design and setup of the project. This would help organizations and activities to have greater synergy with other ongoing activities, help with fragmentation and improve linkages overall. CEPF could build into the process a formal dialogue between grantees and relevant regional agencies to check alignment with existing plans and strategies, allowing for the potential to leverage additional resources from existing projects and activities.

Strengthening of civil society

There was evidence that strengthening civil society was successful, but it varies across the Caribbean region and within countries. The ability for some of the grantees to access greater amounts of funding has increased, and confidence has been built. Others have not been as effective, often because they were more immature when they started and needed a longer investment period.

All respondents see local level organizations as being the ones that most benefited from the funds. This happened more effectively better in the islands where there was CEPF investment and better civil society capacity initially (i.e. Dominican Republic), but happened at a fragmented pace because the type of support needed was disparate (i.e. Jamaica), or did not happen in areas with a host of other complex issues to contend with (i.e. Haiti).

Takeaways on civil society being strengthened:

- It is important to continue focusing on local institutions, and to let international NGOs get resources elsewhere if CEPF is serious about growing the capacity of local institutions in the region.
- Investment periods must be longer to ensure progress can continue to be made. CEPF should consider shifting from project funding to programmatic funding in order for those organizations that have successfully engaged in the initial Caribbean investment to invest time in building a strong civil society to address conservation. Otherwise, the short time frame (under 5 years) and the heavy burden of project development and reporting needs must be reconsidered. Other entities (such as UNDP) are also trying to improve this approach.

East Melanesia

The East Melanesian Islands is the most recent CEPF island investment. Its focus is on Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, as well as Papua New Guinea (PNG), which includes the provinces of Manus, New Ireland, East New Britain and West New Britain plus the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

The Ecosystem Profile for the region was developed by local experts and local institutions with extensive consultation over a 1.5 year period. The result of this engagement effort is a strong local and regional ownership of the Profile and its objectives. The investment window in this region was extended to 8 years, from 2013 to 2021. The role of RIT is being played by IUCN's Oceania Regional Office, based in Fiji. The longer time period in this region reflects CEPF's response to conditions on the ground in local regions, and suggests that they acted on feedback from other hotspot regions that an extended timeframe would have a much greater probability of success.

Figure 4: East Melanesian Islands: Funding committed per organization type (USD)

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Local and national organizations | \$766,832 |
| Regional organizations ²⁶ | \$2,571,971 |
| International organizations ²⁷ | \$835,938 |
| Total Funding Committed to Date | \$4,174,741 |

²⁶ This includes the funding for IUCN Oceania for the RIT (\$1,500,000) and for small grants (\$350,000)

²⁷ In this table International organizations are classified as those organizations based outside of the East Melanesia region. Regional organizations are those with an office in the region.

**CEPF East Melanesian Islands:
Funding commites per organisation type
(to date)**



The role of the RIT in East Melanesia

The selection of IUCN Oceania as the RIT was a thoughtful one, and reflects recognition of the role of IUCN as both a mature organization, and as a partnership of members.²⁸ Acting as the CEPF RIT allows the organization to strengthen its support to members and potential members in the region over the long-term beyond the CEPF period. This mutually beneficial outcome is an important factor when selecting an RIT partner; the organization will continue to undertake similar activities and play a coordination role well beyond the conclusion of the investment period.

The terminology, “Mentor-apprentice RIT,” previously used in both the Polynesia Micronesia and Caribbean regions did not have any meaning to the staff of the East Melanesia RIT. This suggests a clear shift from a centralized RIT mechanism being administered by an organization across the whole region (as was the case in Polynesia-Micronesia), to a more centralized, cohesive RIT. It was evident in speaking with local staff in involved countries the active involvement of the RIT team in mentoring and supporting facilitation efforts with organizations with local experience even at this early stage of implementation has made a significant impact on stakeholders. Examples of these are strongly visible in the Solomon Islands, in both the Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership, and the American Museum of Natural History where initial efforts are already strong.

In terms of structure, two staff members are based centrally in Fiji, with one part-time staffer working inside government agencies in Honiara, Port Vila and Port Moresby. The other portion of that individual’s time is spent on another IUCN project, the Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Management (MACBIO). This demonstrates a sensible approach to improving alignment and using resources effectively. IUCN is also the RIT for two other

²⁸ Other applicants SPREP and Conservation International. IUCN's members are both governments and NGOs in the Pacific region.

hotspots and has been able to learn from their work in those regions, though this coordinated collaboration seems to have been facilitated by CEPF HQ staff and not internally through IUCN.

Key takeaways & lessons learned

One of the most obvious takeaways from this region is the engagement of government in CEPF's work. This is being done in a number of ways, all of them impactful. First, RIT national level staff are based in government offices and work in close coordination with their government counterparts. Second, government representatives are members of the Technical Advisory Committee in the region and have played a role in both promoting and deciding on projects and grantees. This has ensured selected projects align with existing government efforts, and also allows government actors the chance to provide clear and consistent guidance on the way it can best support communities. Lastly, the structure ensures stakeholders from the RIT, participating organizations and government actors can work together as a cohesive unit to bolster the fabric of civil society in their respective countries. As seen in other regions, this distinction is of the utmost importance for project sustainability and long-term success.

Another notable lesson that was applied in East Melanesia from the other regions is the importance of shoring up and recruiting external organizations to support civil society organizations at the local level. The form of those facilitating organizations can vary: they can be an international organization, a regional organization or a national level NGO. The key is that they work to support organizational strengthening, peer learning efforts and the leadership development.

Unlike the other two island regions, the first phase of the 8-year investment is explicitly being focused on building institutional capacity of local non-government organizations. This is similar in some ways to the role that Birdlife International, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and others played in Polynesia Micronesia. However, this expectation was not clearly outlined, thus accountability and metrics surrounding this role were lacking. It's clear that CEPF recognized the amount of support support and handholding new, smaller civil society organizations need at the start of the grant period and acted accordingly.

During the first 3 years of the investment timeframe, grantees will focus primarily on building organizational capacity. This preparatory phase can include capacity building and strengthening, baseline information collection for priority sites, and survey work. The second phase, years 3 to 8, will focus on conservation actions in priority sites. Although strengthening capacity within organizations' will still be a focus, implementation efforts will be prioritized.

The other lesson that has been addressed, is the need for grantees to learn from each other. Planning is underway for national level meetings of grantees, partners, former grantees, potential donors and supporting organizations. This will focus on assessing progress made with respect to the ecosystem profile, identifying gaps and determining which organizations are strong enough to take action independently, and which will require additional support. Doing these efforts as a region rather than as individual projects ensures grantees learn from one another's experiences and encourages ownership of the ecosystem profile's objectives. The Solomon Islands is an example where in-country exchange visits are already underway. For example, a group of

rangers from one of the islands have been learning from their counterparts in other provinces to ensure their own work is a success.

Benefits of work with CEPF in EM region to date

Thus far, respondents noted an overall strengthening of capacity for those involved in environmental programs associated with conservation and community protected area management.

Other specific examples noted include:

- Enhanced understanding of local laws and policy that affect their efforts, along with the opportunity to contribute to a broader discussion on environment law application;
- Formation of new partnerships with communities, local NGOs like the Kolombangara Island Biodiversity Conservation Association (KIBCA), and the Western Province Government;
- Government endorsement of Ridges to Reef (R2R) concept (both provincial and national);
- R2R community awareness through training, workshops, site visits, Look and Learn trip;
- Introduction of R2R concept (including climate change – sea level rise, natural disasters, temperature shifts, ocean acidification) including an understanding integration of land and marine management;
- Community support/buy-in of concept; preparation for next steps, which is the development and implementation of a management plan;
- Community awareness raising on threatened species; and
- Increased visibility with customary landowners to highlight and help protect the values remaining in the streams and rivers, for example greater protection for the species and habitat in the pristine tropical rainforests of the Solomon Islands²⁹.

In the Solomon Islands, CEPF has helped with an increased emphasis on conservation and is, therefore, extremely important. Data obtained during the surveys helped grantees conclude that the sites prospected have high species richness, and enabled projects to be prioritized. Kolobangara Island is an interesting example with a strong project and duly promising anticipated benefits for key biodiversity indicators. Specific enhancements cited since the beginning of the funding period include:

- Key civil society organizations working in the area of public interest environmental law in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have more effective financial management, project management and organizational governance systems;
- Key civil society organizations working in the area of public interest environmental law in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu retain staff and are

²⁹ As nothing was known of freshwater crustaceans in the Solomon Islands before this work, all the species caught are new occurrences for this country and for the sites visited as a result of CEPF involvement. Since the start of the project, one new species of freshwater crab was collected as many rare species. Two new endemic species of shrimps were collected.

- more effective in achieving their objectives, including empowering the community and protecting the environment;
- The local community is newly empowered to use the law to protect the environment; and
- A network of lawyers across the region now exists who can support each other through the sharing of information, knowledge, and expertise.

Overall observations

It is also obvious that, in this region, the RIT is committed to playing a more strategic role. However, recent changes in how CEPF is being administered in the region has led to some challenges with their capacity to juggle project management and project implementation simultaneously. As well, they are adjusting to being able to undertake the critical thinking and strategic planning required, making this investment sustainable over time. The RIT is well placed to help organizations and governments partner, to help share lessons, to enable strategic thinking and to look at how all these different initiatives link to efforts and funding elsewhere in the region.

There has been a lot of discussion between the RIT and the UNDP Small Grants Programme in this region, and a concerted effort is underway to better link to CEPF programs to complementary community/environment funding programs. The two have even collaborated to develop proposal training workshops, to the benefit of all parties involved. The RIT has prioritized keeping regional donors updated on a regular basis and are consistently looking for ways to strengthen this partnership.

Role of the RIT going forward

The value of the RIT mechanism: Lessons for the future

- The choice of RIT should not be whether it is a regional or international organization, but rather should place emphasis on local knowledge, relationships experience and the likelihood of a continued influence beyond the scope of the RIT role. Whoever plays the role must have a long-term commitment to the region, require local staff with knowledge of the region, and be accountable to their partner organizations;³⁰
- For best alignment, the RIT should be selected at the same time as the Ecosystem Profile is being developed so that the organization be involved in the profile development. In both the Caribbean and East Melanesia, the RIT was not part of or consulted in the Ecosystem Profile process and then spent considerable time in the first year trying to determine why various elements were prioritized and what happened through the process. This is important as the RIT is the face of the CEPF in the region;
- East Melanesia is a complex region, with very few large scale conservation projects having been successful in the way they were planned, in particular in Papua New Guinea. CEPF's approach of building civil society organizations is critical to success, but consideration must be given to the complexity of Papua New Guinea with additional support granted to the RIT so that it may play its role

³⁰ Whether and how they be incentivized in the long-term to play this role is not yet clear.

- effectively there. They will need extra time and extra support, and this should be done as soon as possible;
- Additional sharing and coordination in the island regions should be addressed moving forward. It would be useful to look at how to do that, perhaps by partnering with other organizations that are well placed to undertake this role. Some of this was done at the outset because East Melanesia was the last region consulted and benefited from knowledge and experience of others. It will be an ongoing challenge to address the issues of isolation, and help island practitioners learn from one another;
 - Some type of network of island RITs could be created between the Indian Ocean and East Melanesia. A small contract could be undertaken to add CANARI to that group to serve as a resource. New RITs will learn much more from people who have done the work in similar situations (islands) than they will from reports or paperwork. Ongoing support and consultation about how to do things most effectively and efficiently in the context of islands will streamline efforts by grantees and CEPF writ large;
 - There must be a concerted effort to engage islands that are part of non-island hotspots but who are facing similar circumstances. For example Cape Verde, Sao Tome et Principe and East Timor share biodiversity and sustainability challenges. They would benefit from the experiences of grantees, and be better positioned to address capacity problems in conjunction with lessons learned from other islands.

Role of the RIT: Caribbean

The RIT was widely identified as critical to the success of the CEPF investment in the Caribbean. Many respondents felt that having a regional NGO with deep roots in, and knowledge of, the region was important for the success of their projects. Most comments focused on how to further strengthen the role of the RIT. This is particularly important in the island context and in the Caribbean because of the importance of a regional approach to supplement local capacity.

CANARI also built, or strengthened existing partnerships in this role. Besides its active support to civil society organizations in the region, the RIT role played by CANARI also strengthening its ability of CANARI to play this role independent of CEPF, thereby improve its credibility with donors and through its internal processes and procedures. Much like it is possible to suppose that local level organizations with stronger capacity will improve sustainability over time, this is also true for regional efforts.

Importantly as the RIT, CANARI was not perceived to have promoted itself during the CEPF investment period or to take credit for work done by grantees. This ensured there was no conflict on ownership or roles as was seen in Polynesia Micronesia.

The RIT is the local face of CEPF in the region, with local networks, knowledge and understanding. Grantees did identify some weaknesses: namely, that the RIT and CEPF Secretariat roles were not always clear, which led to confusion. In the first year of the CEPF Caribbean investment, the RIT had to do some damage control because the Ecosystem Profile was not sufficiently communicated to the region, which led to a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst stakeholders and island nations (i.e. Dominica which was

not an investment priority), as well as a lack of explanation and communication with stakeholders on what the Ecosystem Profile meant for CEPF investment.

The RIT was also able to play an important role in bringing to the region or sharing between islands in the region knowledge and expertise on new and innovative tools including sustainable financing, climate change adaptation actions and financing, payment for ecosystem services and invasive species management to name a few. These are all recognized as among the issues that need support from outside individual islands either from the regional or international level because local expertise is limited, or because the issue can be complicated and new (such as invasive species concerns) and requires additional expertise. It is important to tap into that experience when possible and the RIT plays an important brokering role for bringing this expertise to bear.

The RIT can also play a role where appropriate to help local civil society to package the projects and use their power to convene and garner attention and meetings with people that the NGOs and the individual projects cannot otherwise do on their own.

More on CANARI

For CANARI, the RIT in the Caribbean region will remain in the region and will continue undertaking activities consistent with its mission, including working with many of the civil society stakeholders that were in CEPF to develop projects together. CANARI recognizes that many of the small organizations will continue to struggle to attract resources and that there is a disconnect between the large funds available internationally and their ability to be applied to local level conservation efforts. The CEPF model of having a pool of money and working through a regional organization to filter it to the local level will continue to be promoted.³¹

Everyone interviewed for this review identified the potential of climate change related funding to be the incoming support that will help the region continue to address important environmental objectives. Too, the link between livelihoods and conservation is critical.

Finally on the issue of invasive species -- critical for conservation in islands -- it is important to not just implement invasive species projects. Some basic needs cannot be covered by CEPF. For example, these funds cannot help with protection or surveillance, nor are they adequate to cover some of the facilitation expenses, for example the costs involved in introducing grantees to other partners or donors. Additional observations from the CANARI example include:

- CANARI has proven ability as a regional organization supporting civil society in the region. They have a resource vault of lessons learned and have documented those that will be useful for the RITs, particularly in the other island regions;
- A good RIT can play a role as a broker to package activities between CEPF and other donors.

³¹ CANARI is producing a guidelines document for how to be an effective RIT and they are working to repackage the RIT model and the support to national level civil society for other donors.

Characteristics of success for an RIT

Future hotspot regions and CEPF investment envelopes should consider the following specific to an RIT:

- A locally knowledgeable RIT is able to avoid making general assumptions on the homogeneity of regions and islands and respond to specific needs;
- The critically important role of the RIT needs to be strengthened to enable sufficient funding for travel and engagement, translation, transport and more administrative support to staff in country. The real costs of the role of the RIT should be clarified based on regional experience. There should be a communications budget for the RIT and for all grantees as well as a budget allocation for monitoring and evaluation;
- Processes should be streamlined and prioritized as the RIT will also struggle with capacity issues to manage multiple demands on its time both from CEPF and also from donors to CEPF;
- Previous RITs (CANARI, in this region) should be engaged as a mentor to new island regions (EM, IOI and Madagascar) to help them move through the processes effectively;
- If developing an Ecosystem Profile in an island region, it is important to take enough time to engage people in order to identify the data gaps and local knowledge, and to be clear and transparent about the process, including a process for communicating the results of the ecosystem profile effectively;
- It is important to recognize the ability of the RIT to help design the investment in the initial phase, particularly with extensive stakeholder and participatory engagements that have proven to be an effective way of making progress and getting results; and
- Leave some money aside for the cost overruns that will inevitably occur. Demands on the RITs time are high and there is always more to be done than can be planned for. Be mindful of this at the beginning.

Improvements to the RIT process

CANARI felt they did not always have the full range of competencies to do the scoring and to set up a sectoral committee with special skills assessments across the island regions. Instead, they relied on a group of 17 volunteers to support them in this function.

They noted the importance of generating synergy and partnership efforts to communicate achievements. A communications strategy at all levels of involvement was vital for success. Significant communication efforts with donors were required, as were similar efforts with local stakeholders in each of the regions. Many citizens feel conservation is a waste of time and that investments do not lead to long-term results, so an increased focus on the CEPF process can help enhance efficacy of projects in hotspot regions.

In future regions, it is key that the RIT:

- Link across projects to develop a cohesive portfolio;
- Leverage innovative financing options, public private partnerships for years following the investment timeframe;

- Systematically communicate best practices and lessons learned from mistakes made, and not just glorified project updates;
- Take an eye to the future, drafting plans for the long-term impact of a project;
- Reduction in the amount of evaluations undertaken in the region and even the number of grantees selected. This could lead to less of a burden for the implementation process and on overhead costs of CEPF internal processes;
- Provide additional support to organizations with weak proposals on an ongoing basis throughout the process, not just during evaluations;
- Adaption through action, doing so with the understanding that that people have a big agenda with many other projects underway at once. This presents challenges for compliance and monitoring, and adds to an already overloaded group of individuals, especially where small NGOs are concerned; and
- Systematically prioritize KBAs in conjunction with relevant government agencies so that coverage is more even and results more comprehensive.

Final Recommendations

The process of embarking on a funding initiative of the magnitude of CEPF is as critical to the end result as the activities that are funded. Said differently, how you do something is often more important to long-term impact than what is done. Too often in an island context, environmental organizations focus on conservation projects in isolation of other critical factors happening elsewhere in the island or the region.

There are examples in each of the hotspot regions where previous conservation efforts - even those with extensive implementation timeframes -- led to little or no sustainable island capacity. While ample evidence exists that CEPF has made solid efforts to implement programs of value, there is room for improvement in the way they approach island regions. As such, it is recommended that the following steps be taken / considerations be made moving forward:

1. CEPF should be envisaged, by all involved, less as a set of projects and more as a strategic initiative building the capacity of civil society (e.g. individual, institutional and systemic) to identify and advance conservation priorities in each region;
2. It is important for any sustainability efforts to involve government actors, both at the national and provincial levels. Governments have a role to play both in terms of how they support civil society within their own country, and also in how they understand the impact of these projects on their national and local priorities. Enabling governments to see civil society as part of the delivery / implementation mechanism of their country can be built into the objectives at the start of the project and must be a strategic priority of CEPF;
3. Civil society organizations should see their engagement with government both in terms of advocacy, and also as a tool to address biodiversity conservation through partnerships important to the country. This point was made repeatedly by multiple respondents;
4. National and regional coordination, regional approaches and partnerships in an island setting help to overcome capacity gaps, specifically lack of available talent, lack of experience and limited access to best practices. Many islands lack people to build capacity, which means different approaches must be used. This is true both in the government context, and within civil society;
5. Peer learning, mentoring and some type of facilitated learning network or partnership is by far the most impactful way of building capacity in islands. This role can be provided by existing organizations already working with members of local civil society, or it can be created through a bottom up consultation approach in existing organizations that have resources to support them over the long-term. Prior to investing, CEPF needs to identify these supporting organizations as strategic partners in island regions. Examples include Birdlife, Flora and Fauna International, SICCP, PILN and PII among others;
6. Local ownership is key to sustainability. Success, on a long-term basis, requires a committed group of individuals and / or organizations who are invested in seeing initiatives carry through beyond the formal project timeframe;
7. Consideration needs to be made to the funding that will be necessary to maintain project activities beyond the scope of the investment envelope. While an over emphasis on looking to future funding initiatives poses risk to near-term program

- implementation, project teams and local organizations should be equipped with the mindset and skills needed to maintain funding to sustain momentum. The RIT can play an important role in helping coordinate or facilitate education about innovative funding mechanisms and advocacy efforts to solicit interest from outside investors as well as in helping small, local organizations engage with more complicated mechanisms;
8. When working with communities and local civil society in an island context, a viable timeframe for impact is a minimum of 10 years. Findings across the three hotspot regions prove a longer timeframe is essential for efforts to reach full maturity.
 9. The RIT role is critical to the success of CEPF. A careful balance needs to be struck between project management roles and a strategic support role.
 10. CEPF should consider reinvesting in the island regions based on lessons learned from this first investment. This investment would build on what has already been in place with more opportunity for deeper impact.

Strengths & Weaknesses

A core strength of CEPF is its focus on approach as being equally important to tactics and outcomes. Thus far, they have been successful in balancing both the how with the what (*i.e.* managing protected areas and species conservation). This focus on process was particularly evident following the Polynesia-Micronesia investment window.

Another area where process was improved over time was the development of the ecosystem profiles. While we observed positive changes from the first effort in Polynesia-Micronesia, we noted inconsistencies and flaws specific to the Caribbean region.³² Improvement is needed both in the process of how they are developed, how findings are communicated to stakeholders in each of the countries, and how both local and national governments become engaged.

Concluding remarks

Ten years ago, there were few islands with strong environmental actors or organizations operating on behalf of the rest of civil society. Today, this picture has changed: many island countries have established national and local NGOs and there is growing capacity for implementation.

CEPF, and its activity in islands, have clearly contributed to supporting these improvements, but the organizations that support this institutional development over the long-term have far greater impact than short-term funding initiatives. Birdlife International, and other regional and international organizations, who work with island civil society to nurture and develop the type of critical thinking, strategic planning, scientific capacity, financing capability and action orientation that leads to ongoing impact are examples of more sustainable programs.

³² Multiple stakeholders noted flaws in the Ecosystem Profile development process, for example the lack of integration key biodiversity areas in the plan. Too, there was a bias demonstrated in the selection of the profile lead, BirdLife International, no recognition of the integrated aspect of island conservation between marine and terrestrial and at times the perception of no consultation. This should be avoided in the future.

As work proceeds in new island regions, or reinvestment is considered, an increased attention should be paid on identifying those organizations with the potential to grow and strengthen its operational integrity.³³ Those candidates deemed eligible would then receive the necessary funding and programmatic support to sustain regional efforts over time. The framework would also include a robust needs assessment for the period of time following the funded timeline, as well as the stakeholders positioned for success with next steps clearly outlined or hypothesized in advance.

Where civil society is very weak or non-existent, partnerships could be formed with organizations that have more experience with those who have poor capacity. This would bolster project return on investment (ROI) and improve the sustainability of the CEOF investment overall.³⁴

³³ This could be undertaken as part of the ecosystem profile process, or done in conjunction with objective actors working in the region.

³⁴ Current examples include Birdlife International, CANARI, Flora and Fauna International, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Pacific Invasives Learning Network, Pacific Invasives Initiative, and the Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership.

APPENDIX A: Findings in the Context of Previous CEPF Evaluations

Olson, D. A decade of conservation by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund 2001-2010: An independent evaluation of CEPF's global impact. Conservation Earth Consulting, April 2010.

The author posits CEPF investments have had a tremendous incremental benefit to preventing biodiversity loss consistent with the CBD's 2010 goal. Findings to date, however, suggest that funding has been more beneficial to short-term capacity building than to the long-term preservation of native species, as one example.

Further, his suggestion that CEPF's "flexibility in approach and relationship requirements allows it to tailor regional programs effectively to local conditions and balance grant portfolios among long-term priorities, crises, and innovation." While there are certain subsets where this might be the case (e.g. Portland Byte in Jamaica), by and large respondents expressed frustration with the lack of flexibility in the proposal and grant writing processes specific to both the Polynesia Micronesia and Caribbean hotspot regions.

It is agreed that Olson's recommendation specific to funding parameters and the expanded role of the RITs. It is believed that at a minimum, a quarter of the total funding should be aside to "support highly effective initiatives and emergent priorities" and to "significant crises," (Olson, 5). However, it is disagreed that RIT funding be decreased after 2 years time. On the contrary, findings suggest that continuation of the RIT as an objective facilitator and convening body amongst relevant regional stakeholder groups is critical in order for CEPF projects to be viable beyond the funding period.

Lastly, while it is agreed with Olson that "high priority regions for [future] attention include threatened biomes such as tropical dry forests and temperate grassland, rapidly changing Sahelian ecoregions, and freshwater ecosystems," (Olson, 6) it is disagreed that his suggestion that CEPF expand its model to non-Hotspot regions. Findings in this study indicate there is more work to be done to refine the current model before expanding any further.

CEPF & Conservation Trust Funds. Capitalization of Experience: The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund's Support to Conservation Trust Funds. Nolwenn Briand & Pierre Carre, 2012.

CTFs , of which CEPF is one, "are one of the many funding tools for conservation. They provide an adequate solution for financing biodiversity conservation when the following conditions are met:

- The issue to be addressed requires a commitment of at least 10 to 15 years;
- There is active governmental support for the creation of a mechanism associating the private sector, public sector, and civil society outside governmental control
- A critical mass of actors from various sectors can work together to achieve biodiversity conservation and sustainable development; and

- The main components of a legal, financial, and institutional framework (including banking, auditing, and contracting services) are in place in which people have confidence.”

Note that the first condition, specific to finding periods, presents one with a flaw in the current model of deployment within hotspot regions. In the case of island nations, this was especially problematic in Polynesia Micronesia, a fact that CEPF acknowledged and made moves to remedy for subsequent regions, specifically the Caribbean. That said, the total period of time that any one region has been granted a commitment by CEPF has to exceed the 10 year mark.

Secondly, specific to governmental support, our findings revealed an informal coordination process with government bodies, especially in island nations. We acknowledge that the nature of the political climates and the close-knit, often tribal loyalties of local organizations, make a uniform approach to lobbying for governmental support a difficult endeavor. Further, while it is agreed that this report's assessment call for a mechanism to be in place to coordinate members of the public, private sector actors and others across civil society, this is more of an aspirational notion than a realistic actuality in most cases.

Evidence was found in all 3 cases that a critical mass of actors across a broad range of disciplines were consulted to achieve biodiversity conservation and sustainable development to the extent possible. Weaknesses and drawbacks to the success of both those goals will be addressed in later sections.

Specific to a sound legal, financial, and institutional framework, CEPF mechanisms, in both the Polynesia Micronesia and the Caribbean regions, were lacking in this area. For example, the majority of grantees did not possess the capabilities in-house to operate efficiently. In some cases, there were sheer lack of capacity and naiveté where matters of banking, auditing, accounting and contracting were concerned. It is suggested that in future regions and funding areas, RITs be staffed with these functions to ensure institutional sustainability is a true possibility long-term. If formal training measures, specific to administrative and operational functionality, were adopted these materials would, in most cases, be applicable for grantees regardless of national or regional differences. This type of support mechanism would also ensure funds had a truly long shelf life, so to speak.

APPENDIX B: BRIGHT SPOTS

The following section highlights what worked across a number of successful and impactful CEPF grants. These bright spots exemplify how CEPF can build on what is working for accelerated impact. Some common success factors include:

- Supporting existing partnerships and coordination mechanisms with common goals. In both the Caribbean and Pacific respondents credit the importance of umbrella partnerships and ongoing, deep relationships to the successful implementation of their project;
- Engaging a locally/regionally trusted advisor in the CEPF decision-making process. This helped to strengthen the existing regional partnerships and allowed CEPF grantees to continue to build relationships with regional advisors. CEPF benefited from involving these entities in their decision making process;
- Positioning regional partnerships as a resource to grantees. This helps to build the profile and credibility of the networks;
- Early collaboration between grantees to align with national and regional frameworks. Coordination helps to ensure projects make long-term contributions to the overall goals of the region;
- Using CEPF funding to support organizational development efforts. Long-term conservation impact will be achieved through a dual focus on conservation results alongside the strengthening of organizational development capacity; and
- Facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing between countries and organizations with common goals. Investing in regional and global collaboration helped to foster establishment of strong relationships that were essential to ongoing efforts in the region.

Example 1: Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) & Pacific Invasive Initiative (PII)

Both organizations played an important role in the sustainability of the CEPF investment in the Polynesia Micronesia region and improved impacts made on invasive species management. These organizations provided support mechanisms that supplied grantees with critical peer learning and information exchange (PILN) in conjunction with technical support/advice for their projects (PII).

Pacific Invasives Initiative

The PII is highlighted by the Convention on Biodiversity as contributing to conservation of island biodiversity and the sustainability of livelihoods of the Pacific people by minimizing the spread and impacts of invasive species within the Pacific region.³⁵ It works with government agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations, and teams of

³⁵ <https://www.cbd.int/idb/2009/about/celebration/pii.shtml>

the PILN to strengthen their capacity to select, assess the feasibility, design plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and report on their invasive species management projects. This is achieved through the provision of technical support and advice, peer review, training, and information on invasive species and their management. PII also facilitates access to experts and skill-sharing exchanges.

Engagement with CEPF

PII received project funds, as a grantee through CEPF, in the Polynesia-Micronesia hotspot and also acted as a technical resource to grantees on the issue of invasive species. Set up in 2004, with initial support from NZAID, PII shares learning and technical capacity created in New Zealand, particularly through the NZ Department of Conservation with the Pacific region. It existed before CEPF and continues to thrive today.

PII was a technical partner to the CEPF on Strategic Direction 1, and contributed to the effectiveness of the CEPF investment by strengthening the invasive species management capacity and increasing the confidence of CEPF grantees. PII worked with 17 grantees from 11 countries and territories on a total of 26 projects. These grantees gained knowledge and skills for immediate use on their projects and that provided the foundation for future capacity development within these agencies. In addition, as a member of the Technical Advisory Group, PII contributed to decision-making for the CEPF investment by reviewing proposals, assisting with project selection and providing technical advice to the RIT.

What worked:

- *Engaging a locally/regionally trusted advisor in CEPF decision making:* PII's contribution to the development of invasive species management capacity and confidence in CEPF grantees helped increase conservation action in the Pacific. In addition to providing assistance to 85% of the projects in Strategic Direction 1, PII also helped with seven projects from the other two Strategic Directions that had invasive species components. This assistance contributed to the effectiveness of the CEPF investment in Strategic Direction 1 by: assessing grantee needs, providing best practice advice, reviewing and guiding project documents, developing and delivering training and skill sharing opportunities, sourcing and coordinating subject matter experts, sourcing equipment and mentoring staff. PII also assisted at the decision-making level as a member of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG);
- *CEPF was able to leverage benefits from engaging an established partnership committed to a common goal:* Besides technical advice, further capacity was built through the development and delivery of formal training, as well as "on-the-job" training made possible by the significant in-kind contributions leveraged by PII from its networks. These activities have given grantees new knowledge and skills and exposed them to best practice methods for their projects. PII invited the Coordinator of the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) to the PII Resource Kit training course to familiarize himself with the Resource Kit, encourage country teams to use the Kit and identify potential training participants; and
- *CEPF promoted PII as a resource to grantees:* PII produced a one-page information sheet on its services for the CEPF-RIT to attach to introductory emails to CEPF grantees. Grantees were encouraged to use the PII Project Process (a six-stage systematic approach to planning and implementing invasive

species management projects) in the development of best practice for their projects. Many of the tools and guidelines developed for the PII Resource Kit, considered the world's first best practice process for managers of rodent and cat eradication projects funded by Packard and NZAID, were used by grantees in their projects. These tools and process are generic and can be applied to other invasive species management projects.

Example 2: Pacific Invasives Learning Network

In 2005, right before the launch of CEPF in Polynesia-Micronesia, TNC joined with SPREP, the Cooperative Island Initiative on Invasive Species, the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, National Park of American Samoa, Conservation International, the Palau Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, the University of the South Pacific, the USDA Forest Service, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to establish the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN). Collaborating closely with the initiative are the National Park of American Samoa and the Pacific Invasives Initiative.

PILN supports government agencies and non-governmental organizations actively involved in invasive species work by creating a network for information exchange and skill sharing. As a peer learning networks it established shared, clearly articulated objectives, timely and demand-driven technical assistance and face-to-face meetings.

Engagement with CEPF

CEPF supported the launch of PILN in Palau in 2006 at the same time that funding became available through the Regional Natural Heritage Programme (RHNP) for invasives species activities in the region. CEPF grantees in the hotspot who were running invasive species management demonstration projects were recruited in a separate process managed by the PIle to attend the PILN Launch and were actively involved in the PILN. Three of the 6 initial founding PILN teams include CEPF grantees (Palau, Pohnpei and Samoa) and those from the Cook Islands and French Polynesia were also invited to the first annual meeting.

What worked:

- *Early collaboration between grantees to align to national and regional frameworks:* At the launch, CEPF grantees were able to present their team and projects to the region's invasive species community as well as being able to benefit from lessons learned that were being formulated at the time on four key technical areas: public awareness, strategic planning, weed management and island restoration. The benefits for grantees are obvious: their project is set within a strategic national and regional framework, lessons and challenges can be addressed and impact strengthened, so that the project delivers beyond the project outcomes; and
- *Leveraging benefits of an established coordinator and network focused on collaboration to achieve national and regional goals:* Alignment of initiatives to national and regional frameworks was achieved because the PILN coordinator was focused on working with multi-agency and multi-sector teams and partners to do the following: plan and deliver meetings and exchanges to strengthen

professional networks, set priorities, facilitate learning, build capacity in technical areas and develop and disseminate lessons learned.³⁶ Multi-sector team membership ensures that a combination of agency and sectoral stakeholder interests are addressed at both levels. Participating teams determine the specific invasive species issues that they will address using the network.

Example 3: Birdlife Pacific Partnership

Birdlife Pacific Partnership brings together several national NGOs across the Pacific, four of which received CEPF funding: SOP Manu in French Polynesia, Nature Fiji in Fiji, Palau Conservation Society and Taporoporoanga Ipukerea Society in the Cook Islands. These member NGOs are supported by the Birdlife Pacific Secretariat, based in Fiji, which manages regional projects and assists in conservation planning, capacity development and fundraising. Birdlife supports its members to strengthen their organizational sustainability and strengthen the important role for local level NGOs in conservation action.

What Worked:

- *CEPF funding supporting organizational development efforts:* One of the Birdlife Partners and CEPF grantees, Nature Fiji offers evidence of why this is important. They were either the lead organization or directly involved in implementing four CEPF grants in Fiji during the Polynesia-Micronesia investment, and at the same time were positioned to strengthen their technical capability and project knowledge. They were able to get a grant through Birdlife International for organizational development to work on three areas: sustainability of the organization, stability and conservation impact. This enabled the relatively new local NGO to see the funding from CEPF as complementary to their organizational development efforts. The role played by Birdlife with its members is similar to what CEPF evolved to become in the island context: a support to organizational development but also a facilitator for conservation projects. This element was not a strength in the Polynesia-Micronesia investment example, but ultimately worked because of the work done by other partners.

Example 4: Flora and Fauna International (FFI)

Flora and Fauna International has been working in the Caribbean region for a long time. They worked with both the St. Lucia National Trust and the Environmental Awareness Group (Antigua and Barbuda) to strengthen eradication and control of invasive species and island restoration. The CEPF project specifically strengthened the capacity of local civil society organizations to eradicate and control rodents, small Asian mongooses, and goats. During their engagement with CEPF, they built on the work and partnerships they had developed over time and were able to demonstrate that “these animals can be successfully eliminated from islands using methods that local groups can readily acquire and safely and effectively apply themselves.”³⁷

³⁶ Teams include members with a long-term commitment to conservation, strong cultural understanding, and the potential to act as innovators to increase invasive species management and prevention in their nations.

³⁷ http://www.cepf.net/SiteCollectionDocuments/caribbean/FinalReport%20_60908_FFI.pdf

What worked:

- *Facilitating collaboration between countries/organizations with common goals:* Until the CEPF project, the relatively new NGO in Antigua and Barbuda, Environmental Awareness Group (EAG), had not yet collaborated with conservationists in St Lucia. FFI linked the two groups together because they were working in both locations and both were doing restoration activities. Within this collaboration, St Lucia government and staff of the St Lucia National Trust (local NGO) came to Antigua and Barbuda to work together on the restoration activities and get training. During the project, government staff in Antigua and Barbuda from the Forestry Department were able to visit and learn from St Lucia which helped forge a relationship between the Forestry Department and the EAG that continues to this day; and
- *Encouraging knowledge sharing by linking national NGOs through existing regional/global partnerships:* FFI also helped with engagement between other countries it works in: Barbados, Anguilla, St Lucia and Antigua. FFI provided regional coordination and learning between projects and activities it was undertaking through CEPF funding efforts. It also provided mentoring to the various entities, and worked to foster collaboration within islands and between islands. The relationship between St Lucia National Trust and the EAG continues with each reaching out to the other on invasives work, as well as to help with other projects.

Example 5: CANARI as Regional Implementation Team (RIT)

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is the regional NGO focused on promoting and facilitating equitable participation and effective collaboration in the management of natural resources critical to development in the Caribbean islands, so that people will have a better quality of life and natural resources will be conserved, through action learning and research, capacity building, communication and fostering partnerships. CANARI was selected by CEPF as the Regional Implementation Team, an enlightened choice by CEPF.

What worked:

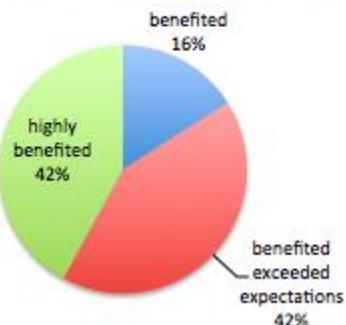
- *Strengthening capacity of the regional implementer for long-term impact:* Besides doing a good job of effectively implementing the CEPF across the region, being in the RIT role has strengthened the ability of CANARI to continue to support local level NGOs both in countries they were working in before CEPF and in countries where they were not working prior to CEPF. It also means that the capacity development CANARI underwent during the CEPF process will help it to support its existing work in the region, including project grantees;
- *Nurturing a valuable strategic partner:* After 27 years in existence, CANARI is now approaching CEPF grantees to collaborate on regional projects and is better aware of the needs and capacity issues of the organizations and countries it works with. They are viewed as a valuable strategic partner, and were recently engaged by the Green Climate Fund to implement similar civil society strengthening in other regional projects; and
- *Sharing success and lessons between RITs:* CANARI is also an active communicator of what it has learned through the RIT process. They have developed a guidelines document for use in other hotspot regions, and can play

a role as a resource for other island regions engaged in CEPF investment. CANARI was also able to work with one of its partners, the MacArthur Foundation, to put in place a mentoring program during the CEPF implementation process to better equip their staff for success.

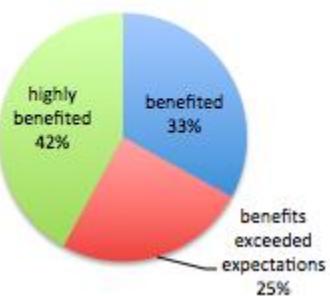
APPENDIX C: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS OF STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

CARIBBEAN

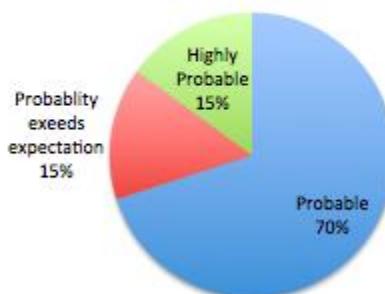
Caribbean: Extent that the project have impacted local orgs and civil society



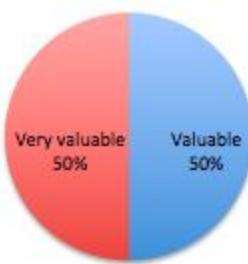
Caribbean: Extent that the project have impacted biodiversity conservation



Caribbean: Probability of investments being sustainable after CEPF concludes

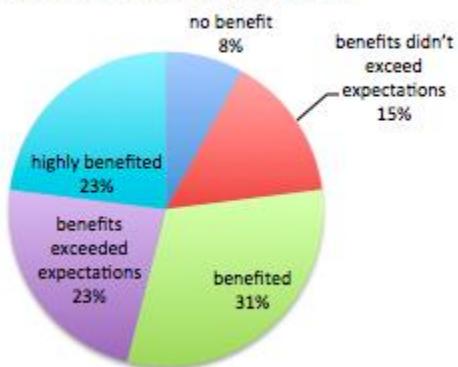


Caribbean: How valuable have CEPF investments been across the region?

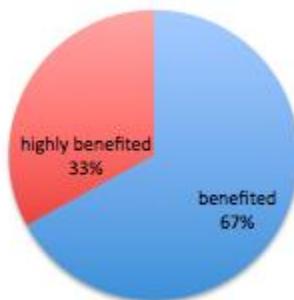


POLYNESIA-MICRONESIA

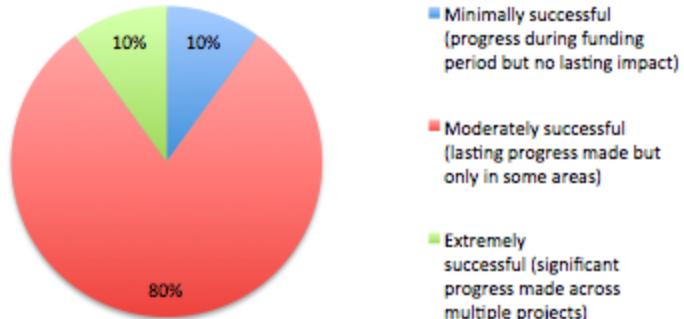
Polynesia-Micronesia: Extent that the projects have impacted local civil society



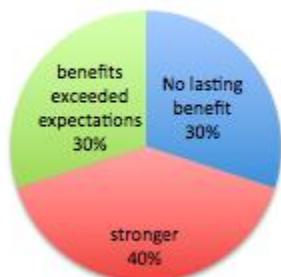
Polynesia-Micronesia: Extent that the project has impacted biodiversity conservation



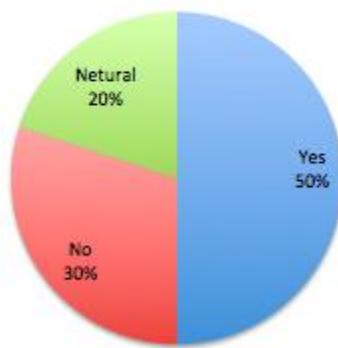
Polynesia-Micronesia: Extent that the results have been sustainable.



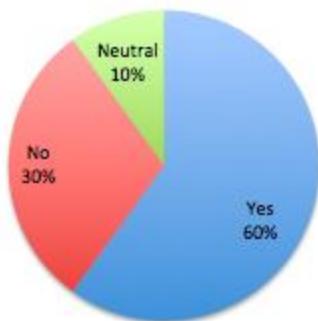
Polynesia-Micronesia: Is civil society stronger two years later?



Polynesia-Micronesia: Has there been progress on invasive species management



Polynesia-Micronesia: Greater awareness and participation of local leaders /community



Polynesia-Micronesia: Which was most successful during CEPF?

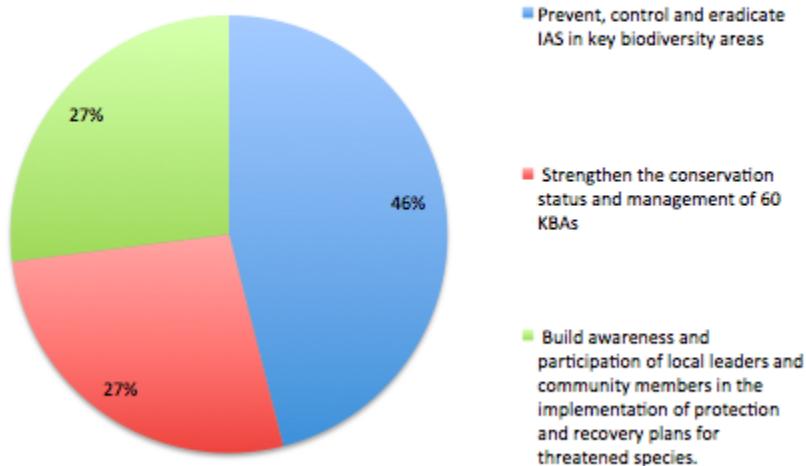


Table 5. Areas of improvement since CEPF funding concluded in which there has been improvement according to respondents.

| | |
|--|---|
| Enable local and regional networking, learning and best-practice sharing approaches to strengthen stakeholder involvement in biodiversity conservation | 7 |
| Improve management of invasive species in the 45 priority key biodiversity areas | 6 |
| Strengthen the partnership between State agencies and NGOs for biodiversity conservation | 6 |
| Prepare and implement management plans in the 17 highest-priority key biodiversity areas | 4 |
| Promote nature-based tourism and sustainable agriculture and fisheries to enhance connectivity and ecosystem resilience and promote sustainable livelihoods | 3 |
| Support efforts to build and strengthen the institutional capacity of civil society organizations to undertake conservation initiatives and actions | 3 |
| Strengthen the legal protection status in the remaining 28 key biodiversity areas | 1 |
| Prepare and support participatory local and corridor-scale land-use plans to guide future development and conservation efforts | 1 |
| Build a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries toward achieving the shared conservation goals described in the ecosystem profile | 1 |
| NOT PRIORITIZED | |
| Support the establishment or strengthening of sustainable financing mechanisms | |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Integrate mainstream biodiversity conservation and ecosystem service values into development policies, projects and plans, with a focus on addressing major threats such as unsustainable tourism development, mining, agriculture and climate change</p> | |
| <p>Strengthen public and private protected areas systems through improving or introducing innovative legal instruments for conservation</p> | |