

Atlantic Forest Biodiversity Hotspot Program for Consolidation

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Background

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the Atlantic Forest biodiversity hotspot commenced in December 2001, with an allocation of \$8 million to support a five-year investment cycle focusing on the Atlantic Forest's Central and Serra do Mar biodiversity conservation corridors, two of the highest priority areas in this hotspot. Guided by the CEPF Ecosystem Profile¹ developed for this region, investments focused on landscape management initiatives, management and expansion of protected areas, development of science-based conservation strategies targeting threatened species and capacity building of local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other private sector partners.

Fifty projects were supported, four of which were small grants facilities managed by local partners. These small grants facilities were Institutional Strengthening of NGOs in the Central Corridor, Institutional Strengthening of NGOs in the Serra do Mar Corridor, Program for the Protection of Threatened Species, and Program for Supporting Private Natural Heritage Reserves. A total of 292 projects were supported through both grants and sub-grants.

In order to address the challenges of such a wide initiative, a local team was designated to assist with implementation of the CEPF strategy for the hotspot. The Alliance for the Conservation of the Atlantic Forest, a partnership between Conservação Internacional do Brasil (CI-Brazil) and the NGO Fundação SOS Mata Atlântica, became the coordination team in 2002. This partnership served to supply CEPF with the essential knowledge of local stakeholders and shaped the links between CEPF's strategy and the set of priorities shared among a multitude of partners. CI-Brazil's role in the CEPF Atlantic Forest was exclusively that of integrating the coordination effort. The four organizations that coordinated the special programs are renowned regional leaders and, together with CI-Brazil, share a history of conservation action: Associação Mico-Leão-Dourado, Centro de Pesquisas Ambientais do Nordeste, Fundação Biodiversitas and Instituto de Estudos Socioambientais do Sul da Bahia (IESB).

The Atlantic Forest coordination unit coordinated the process to peer-review all project proposals, sharing this responsibility with at least two independent reviewers (out of a group of more than 100 external reviewers). The coordination unit also played an active role in supporting applicants with the preparation of proposals, monitoring project implementation, promoting the integration of projects and disseminating information about the CEPF portfolio. Annual grantee meetings

¹ Ecosystem Profile, Atlantic Forest Biodiversity Hotspot, Brazil, December 2001. [English](#) (PDF - 1.6 MB) / [Português](#) (PDF - 1.8 MB)

were organized in each corridor, bringing together 282 representatives of 176 organizations (including donor, government and private sector representatives) to share experiences and lessons learned.

Achievements

CEPF completed an assessment of its five years of investment² in 2007. The projects supported by CEPF in the Atlantic Forest covered a wide range of biodiversity conservation strategies and targets, from different scales of planning and implementation, such as a well-defined locality like a water course, up to entire drainage basins and Federation States. Investments in protected areas were directed to implementation, creation or expansion of public and private protected areas. Almost all public protected areas under management modalities of strict protection in the Central and Serra do Mar biodiversity corridors were targeted by projects funded by CEPF, as well as the creation of 200 private reserves – an increase of approximately 131 percent in the number of private reserves and of 47 percent of the land with protected status in both corridors for a total of 100,370 hectares. CEPF investment was also instrumental in supporting actions and improving the knowledge of an estimated 60 percent of the IUCN / IBAMA (national) Red-listed species occurring in the Atlantic Forest biome. These projects focused on 94 threatened species classified either as Critically Endangered or Endangered. CEPF also contributed significantly to improving the scientific knowledge on the biome's flora and fauna – informing experts and governments on the distribution of species, their conservation status, levels of endemism and the identification of priority areas for conservation in the hotspot.

At the institutional level, CEPF investments encouraged civil society groups to increase their participation in conservation actions at the corridor scale by providing capacity-building opportunities to organizations and individuals and by supporting projects and the establishment of partnerships. Combined with coordination unit operation and integration meetings promoted by CEPF, this strategy paved the way for the establishment of networks with a variety of stakeholders including NGOs, researchers, state officials, educators, landowners and private sector representatives. By stimulating institutional integration and complementary conservation efforts, CEPF investment constituted an efficient means for promoting site-based and regional conservation actions and policies.

About 88 percent of the CEPF Atlantic Forest funds were directed to local institutions. Considering the network of partnerships established through project implementation, CEPF grants directly or indirectly supported more than 460 institutions. Altogether, these institutions succeeded in leveraging more than \$7.1 million. This figure is still increasing, as the projects supported continue to secure funds from national and international sources.

CEPF investment served to introduce and popularize the concept of conservation corridors throughout the Serra do Mar territory, and to validate it as a conservation strategy along with key stakeholders in the region. In the Atlantic Forest Central Corridor, it also helped to strengthen the corridor concept and consolidate the partnership with the Ecological Corridors Project, led by the Brazilian Ministry for the Environment and PPG-7, allowing PPG-7 to expand its implementation opportunities. Such a leap toward the consolidation of the corridor-based conservation strategy was also made possible by targeting improvement in knowledge of biological and socioeconomic issues, the mobilization and integration of key institutions, and a communication strategy.

² Assessing Five Years of CEPF Investment in the Atlantic Forest Biodiversity Hotspot, Brazil, March 2007. [English](#) (PDF - 607 KB) / [Português](#) (PDF - 891 KB)

Justification for Consolidation

Although the achievements of the first phase of funding have been substantial, the challenge remains to ensure that these accomplishments are sustained. The progress in building capacity and establishing private reserves needs to be taken from solid achievement to long-term conservation gain. In order to move to a higher level in which our conservation impact can be sustained, a two-pronged consolidation program is planned. This program will have two different, yet connected investment priorities, which are: Atlantic Forest conservation network capacity building, and protected areas management improvement. By focusing on these priorities, key results will be consolidated and the stage set for attaining medium- to long-term conservation results for the hotspot. Capacitated stakeholders and a sound protected areas system are pivotal issues that support the conservation corridor approach.

This consolidation plan will build upon successful partnerships and programs established during the first phase of funding, and will extend further to new alliances and conservation results. The projects under these two investment priorities will be strongly linked. The involvement of local stakeholders and the improvement of their capacity for planning and implementation of conservation actions are essential to the sustainability of the biodiversity corridors and their networks of protected areas. The institutional capacity program focuses on the capacity needs for the implementation of protected areas and their buffer zones, which will result in management effectiveness, landscape connectivity and sustainable development options for local communities.

Investment Priorities and Outcomes

Investment Priority 1: *Capacity building for local institutions in the biodiversity corridors*

This investment priority consists of two major projects based on the previous CEPF achievements: capacity building in the Central Corridor and capacity building in the Serra do Mar Corridor. Inspired by CEPF's Institutional Strengthening Program, a group of NGOs coordinated by The Nature Conservancy-Brazil, along with the Ecological Corridors Project of the Ministry for the Environment/PPG-7, has been outlining a broader approach to strengthen/build capacity within local NGOs toward the implementation of the Central Biodiversity Corridor.

This strengthening program aims to boost the capacity of local institutions in aspects such as forest restoration, creation of private reserves and establishment of biodiversity-friendly, land-use types. Therefore, by directing CEPF's consolidation phase investments toward this approach, we will create the opportunity to effectively link institutional capacity building to concrete conservation actions, like the implementation of 18 priority areas along the Central Corridor. The Ecological Corridors Project is investing around \$5 million over the next three years to deliver this conservation output. We believe most of the institutions to be involved in the new projects funded by the Ecological Corridors Project have been supported during the first phase of CEPF investment.

Since the resources for developing the projects for implementation of the micro-corridors come from the Ecological Corridors Project, CEPF will join The Nature Conservancy and IESB to develop a program aiming to structure and implement a model for a participatory institutional development, integrated to regional planning and increasing the capacities to achieve the biodiversity conservation outputs and goals.

CEPF was the first investment initiative that recognized the Serra do Mar as a key region for conservation actions, acting as a strong incentive for inter-institutional collaboration among local conservation groups in the region. An institutional development program will be structured to

keep the same flow of coordination among the institutions engaged previously. However, for this corridor it will also be important to invest funds in biodiversity conservation projects managed by local institutions to keep them involved in on-the-ground work in key biodiversity areas along the corridor.

Outcome 1: Involvement of local stakeholders increased and their capacity for planning/implementation of conservation actions strengthened as means to implement the micro-corridors of the Central Corridor and their networks of protected areas.

Outcome 2: Local capacity in the Serra do Mar Biodiversity Corridor strengthened to increase the forest landscape resilience through the promotion of connectivity among key protected areas.

Investment Priority 2: *Improve the management effectiveness of protected areas*

This component will focus on private reserves and public protected areas in the Central and Serra do Mar corridors. The CEPF consolidation phase will contribute to strengthening the Program for Supporting Private Natural Heritage Reserves and implementing legal and financial sustainability mechanisms to maintain and manage private reserves in the long-term. The effort will also entail working closely with landowners and the national and state associations of private protected areas' owners to discuss and propose alternative models for forest protection within private lands to the federal and state governments.

By influencing the decision-making processes of private landowners, through government tax incentives and by creating new models for private conservation, a significant positive impact is expected on the number and size of private areas created and managed to conserve key sites and landscapes in the biodiversity corridors. To tackle this challenge, capacity will also be built of the six state associations of private protected areas' owners that include associations encompassing the two biodiversity corridors, as well as the Brazilian Confederation of Private Protected Areas. Through the development of their capacities, CEPF will help the associations to disseminate specific actions for private reserves creation and management. There will be an increase in scale since a larger number of reserves will be reached.

Based on CI-Brazil, The Nature Conservancy and SOS Mata Atlântica experience with the private support strategies during the first phase of CEPF funding, a new Program has been developed to tackle long-term sustainability issues for key protected areas in the hotspot: the Atlantic Forest Protected Area Initiative (AFP AI). The ultimate goal of AFP AI is to support leveraging of critical public funding to complement existing and future resources, and to ensure that the protected areas are effectively managed and protected.

The program will improve management in existing key protected areas; support the creation of new public protected areas; favor alternative sustainable development plans that maintain the intrinsic value of biodiversity while allowing for its use, contributing to human welfare; build and strengthen capacity for governance; integrate management of clusters of protected areas; and contribute to long-term financial sustainability of these protected areas. The AFP AI will also facilitate coordinating and integrating activities among different stakeholders and will contribute to policy improvements to strengthen the Atlantic Forest's protected areas network.

AFP AI will be supported by the Aliança para Conservação da Mata Atlântica (composed of SOS Mata Atlântica and CI-Brazil) which will serve to facilitate operation of the new entity, and ensure coordination and collaboration with other consolidation grants and sub-grants. The effort will also entail provision of technical support to project development, implementation,

monitoring and outreach, support for planning, monitoring and evaluation of the institutional networks, and synthesis and analysis of project results toward corridor implementation goals.

Outcome 3: New legal benefits and management instruments for private reserves developed and implemented.

Outcome 4: Effective management, protection and long-term sustainability of key public protected areas within the Atlantic Forest biodiversity corridors ensured.

Table 1. Atlantic Forest Region Logical Framework for Consolidation

Objective	Targets	Means of Verification
Reinforce and sustain the conservation gains achieved as a result of previous CEPF investment in the Atlantic Forest Region	At least 60 civil society actors, including NGOs and the private sector, actively participate in conservation programs guided by the Atlantic Forest ecosystem profile and Program for Consolidation	Grantee performance reports and Annual Portfolio Overview Reports
	At least 22 protected areas (1,200,000 hectares) with strengthened protection and management	Grantee performance reports
	The Atlantic Forest Protected Areas Initiative implemented and operative.	Grantee performance reports and Annual Portfolio Overview Reports
	50% of targeted communities involved in sustainable use projects demonstrate tangible socioeconomic benefits	Final project reports

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Means of Verification
Outcome 1. Involvement of local stakeholders increased and their capacity for planning/ implementation of conservation actions strengthened as means to implement the Central Corridor focused on its priority areas and their networks of protected areas \$250,000	Network of about 80 local institutions that aims the sharing of experiences for consolidation of Atlantic Forest Central Corridor.	Grantee performance reports
	Capacity development plan established to assist the leading institutions of each minicorridor (18 to 20 institutions)	Grantee performance reports

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Means of Verification
	Monitoring program implemented to help the development of 10 subprojects for minicorridors supported by the Ecological Corridors Project of the Brazilian Ministry of Environment/PPG-7.	Grantee performance reports
<p>Outcome 2. Local capacity in the Serra do Mar biodiversity Corridor strengthened aiming to support the integrated management and consolidation of four mosaics of protected areas, as well the promotion of connectivity among key protected areas.</p> <p>\$850,000</p>	Four mosaics of protected areas, affecting 69 protected areas, strengthened and in process of implementation.	Grantee performance reports
	Actions promoted for increased institutional capacity involving 200 individuals.	Grantee performance reports
	Councils of the four mosaics operating properly.	Grantee performance reports
	8 small grants provided leading to connectivity among key protected areas.	Grantee performance reports
<p>Outcome 3. Effective management, protection, and long-term sustainability of key public and private protected areas within the Atlantic Forest biodiversity corridors ensured</p> <p>\$964,457</p>	Legal and financial mechanisms developed to improve management and sustainability of public and private reserves.	Grantee performance reports
	Plans developed and implemented to build capacity of state associations of Private Natural Heritage Reserves (RPPNs) and NGOs which work with private reserves, leading to improved management of the reserves	Grantee performance reports

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Means of Verification
	At least 5 subgrants provided to increase the institutional capacity for private reserves management	Grantee performance reports
	Atlantic Forest Protected Areas Initiative (AFPAL) logistical structure implemented	Grantee performance reports
	Based on study of management status of protected areas, investment priorities plan established for the Atlantic Forest Protected Areas Initiative (AFPAL)	Grantee performance reports
<p>Outcome 4. Projects that compose the CEPF Consolidation Program in the Atlantic Forest integrated and monitored.</p> <p>\$335,543</p>	Consolidation grants coordinated; projects developed and implemented; networks promoted; and results disseminated	Grantee performance reports