

a decade of conservation
by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

2001–2010



An Independent Evaluation of CEPF's Global Conservation Impact
Summary of Findings

CEPF 10-year evaluation of global impact

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) unites six global leaders who are committed to enabling nongovernmental and private sector organizations to help protect vital ecosystems: l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD); Conservation International (CI); the Global Environment Facility; the Government of Japan; the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and the World Bank. The year 2010 will mark the 10-year anniversary of CEPF. Launched in August 2000, CEPF has become a global program enabling more than 1,500 nongovernmental and private sector organizations to help protect vital ecosystems.

This evaluation represents an independent assessment of CEPF to identify the program's impact since its first year of grant-making in 2001. The emphasis is on the program as a whole, rather than on the effectiveness of individual field programs or components. A wide range of CEPF Ecosystem Profiles, region assessments and final reports, program evaluations and other relevant documents were consulted for this evaluation. CEPF staff provided information and insightful discussions. Conservation specialists and practitioners experienced with global conservation programs and familiar with CEPF and its impacts and challenges were interviewed. Visits to the Succulent Karoo and Southern Mesoamerica regions offered perspectives from the field. The full evaluation can be found at www.cepf.net.

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The contents of this summary of findings and the full evaluation report are the sole responsibility of the author.

conserving globally significant biodiversity

The diversity of life on this planet is rapidly being lost as humans increasingly require more land and natural resources. This loss will substantially diminish future options, compromise ecosystem services, and degrade the quality of life for all. Arguably, the loss of the Earth's biodiversity is the single greatest threat to mankind's future on this planet. The last decade of work by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) represents the most significant response of our species to date to stop the hemorrhaging of our planet's biodiversity.

Action in Important Places

The single most significant contribution of CEPF has been to provide much needed conservation attention to many of the highest priority biodiversity regions around the world that, for one reason or another, had not received adequate attention from national governments nor galvanized the sustained interest of the international conservation community. Without CEPF's intervention, it is highly unlikely that other conservation programs in existence a decade ago could have, or would have, stepped in to jump-start meaningful conservation in many important regions, due to investment risk and uncertainty. CEPF's global program has targeted substantial resources (\$116 million in grants awarded) for conservation action towards regions with pronounced concentrations of threatened species (18 regions, 51 countries, so far)—Earth's 34 extinction hotspots that harbor 50% of the world's plant species and 42% of its vertebrates in a mere 2.3% of its land area (that is, the percentage of remaining natural habitat within the Hotspots). Focusing conservation attention in these extinction-prone areas constitutes a unique and cost-effective approach for saving global biodiversity.

The global reach of the program is extensive with 5 of the Earth's 8 biogeographic realms represented; 8 of 14 terrestrial biomes; 5 of 12 freshwater biomes; nearly a quarter of the planet's terrestrial ecoregions; and a quarter of the world's freshwater ecoregions. Global-scale conservation priorities are also well-encompassed: 18 of the 34 Hotspots, so far; nearly a quarter of the Global 200 priority ecoregions; a third of the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) priority sites; and 40% of the world's Endemic Bird Areas.



A Focus on Species and Protected Areas

CEPF's unwavering emphasis on species and protected areas as the foundation for protecting biodiversity through a tumultuous decade of shifting conservation focus and intensifying biodiversity loss represents a major contribution to the global conservation agenda. Indeed, CEPF's focus on species conservation, with sizeable and sustained investments in many important regions and direct action for multiple species, made the global program the most significant champion for species over the last decade. Given how rapidly our planet is changing, many species, populations, habitats, and ecological processes can be lost in ten years. Thus, the incremental benefit of CEPF to the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) 2010 goal to achieve a "significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss" has been tremendous for this contribution alone. An improved outlook for a conservatively extrapolated 55,000 threatened species around the world can be attributed directly to CEPF programs, with many more vulnerable and, as yet, stable species benefitting as well¹.

New protected areas covering an area (107,926 km²) roughly the size of Cuba can be attributed to the advocacy of CEPF grantees. Other biodiversity habitats, such as existing protected areas and utilized landscapes, covering an area (221,550 km²) nearly the size of Honshū have benefited from improved management, including agreements with communities and the private sector to ensure sustainability. Each gain represents a respectable achievement for any 10-year program, but CEPF's immediate biological impact on the ground will primarily be in fine-tuning the boundaries of already established protected areas, improving their management, creating of modest new protected areas in pockets of remaining habitat, connecting core habitats (Key Biodiversity Areas) through corridor creation, diminishing direct threats to species and habitats, and improving conditions for the persistence of some subset of biodiversity within utilized landscapes.

Benefits to People and Ecosystem Services

From a global perspective, CEPF's chief impact on ecosystem services is the genetic, medicinal, food source, bio-control, and other potential opportunities conserved through the improved protection of an enormous number of distinct species. The actual habitat area protected is minor in relationship to that required to begin to meaningfully influence global processes like carbon sequestration and climate change, although every bit helps. Locally, however, CEPF projects protect and maintain ecosystem services for thousands of people and communities around the world, through activities such as watershed protection and improved natural resource management. Livelihoods and economies are improved at many scales within the target regions.



¹ Refer to the full evaluation report for details on this estimation.

improving communication & livelihoods



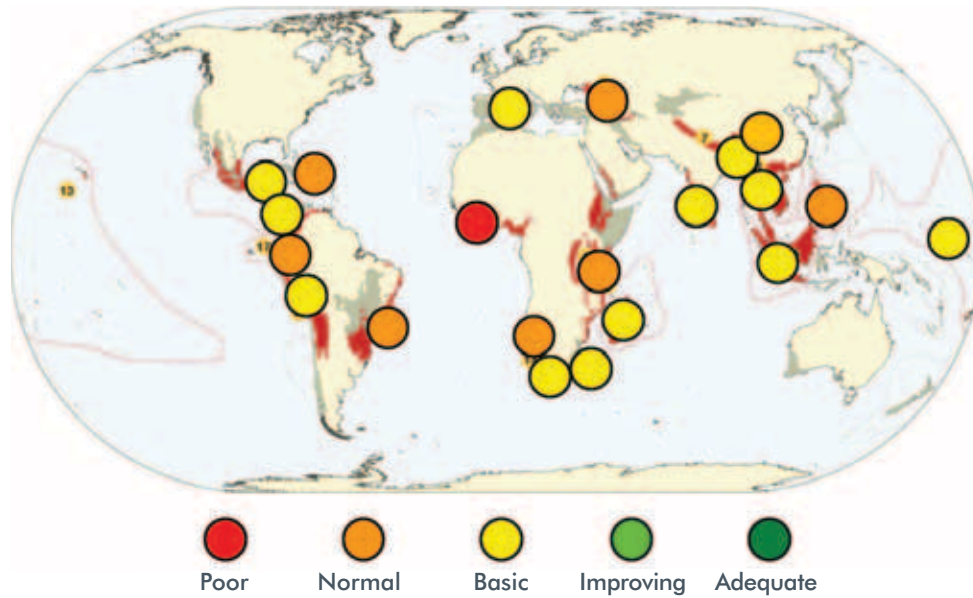
Facilitating Positive Interactions

A strong message from the field is that a major impact of CEPF, perhaps the best according to many, has been the establishment of forums for multiple stakeholders to discuss, strategize, and negotiate conservation and natural resource use issues. Many indigenous groups and local communities have felt they offer an important opportunity to have their voice heard on many issues. New alliances and forums for discussion provide a vehicle for civil society groups to engage government and industry on a regular basis and establish a formal process to share perspectives, achieve consensus, and negotiate solutions. Every CEPF region has established such networks, tailored to the particular features of each society, culture, and conservation community. For example, nine multi-stakeholder collaborative networks were established or strengthened in Northern Mesoamerica, reversing years of fragmented approaches to conservation. In the Atlantic Forest, highly fragmented forests on private land required close coordination among multiple stakeholders. Both the CEPF-initiated Alliance for the Protection of the Atlantic Forest (Conservation International, SOS Pro Mata Atlântica, The Nature Conservancy) and Atlantic Forest Network of Private Protected Area Owners (RPPN) helped to fulfill that function. The Caucasus Biodiversity Council is a regional body, consisting of officially nominated government representatives and NGO delegates from all countries of the hotspot. The Environmental Forum for Action in Sierra Leone (ENFORAC) is now a nationally recognized coordinating body of all environmental/biodiversity conservation actors in the country, and the Namaqualand Biodiversity Forum has become a guiding body for natural resource policy in the Succulent Karoo.

Benefits for People

Many people around the world are directly dependent on local ecosystem services and little buffered from the consequences of ecological change or disturbance. CEPF projects promote a range of activities that strengthen the resilience of local communities and their natural support systems, including watershed management, promoting traditional stewardship practices, improved management of natural resources, discouraging destructive and unsustainable practices, gathering baseline data for improved management, establishing zoning for sustainability, and creating jobs and alternative livelihoods. The remaining 2% of the forests of East Africa's Taita Hills are home to numerous rare and threatened species. CEPF grantees have worked with local communities on sustainable Income Generating Activities (IGAs), such as butterfly farming, bee-keeping, and the cultivation of medicinal plants that provide profits and opportunities, but leave the forests intact.

STATE OF BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION AT INITIATION OF CEPF PROGRAM



STATE OF BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION AT 2010

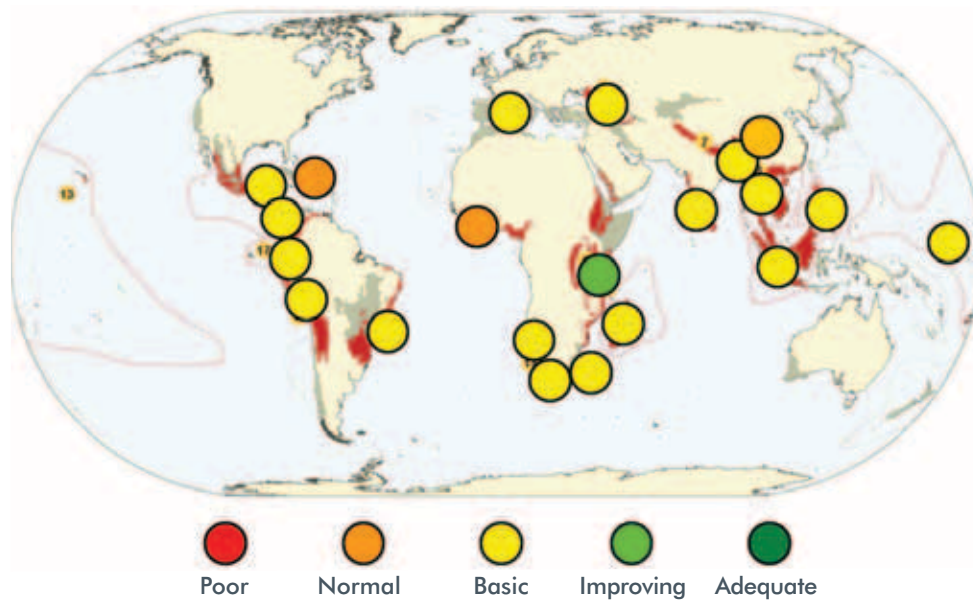


Figure 1. State of biodiversity protection at initiation of CEPF program and in 2010 for all CEPF target Hotspots. A poor state refers to little or no effective protection for remaining blocks of habitat or key species, while an adequate state has effective protection for most of the high priority areas and species identified in Ecosystem Profiles or other conservation strategies. The full report defines all states.



increasing the effectiveness of conservation communities

CEPF activities have improved biodiversity protection on the ground, but the real value in the global program has been to improve the potential for conservation effectiveness of civil society, and increase the probability that their activities will translate into future gains of protection and improved management over coming decades. The assumption that strengthening civil society's role in conservation is critical for actuating sustainable protection for species and habitats has proven to be a sound basis for CEPF investments. Over 1,500 civil society groups have been supported and are becoming an active constituency for conservation, with an expanding seat at the table in natural resource deliberations and a growing influence on mainstreaming biodiversity within governments and the private sector. The \$261 million these groups have leveraged so far indicates they will have a sustained role and impact.



Improving Conservation Stewardship in Hotspots

Thirteen of 18 CEPF investment regions show improvements in conservation community effectiveness using a simple index. Four of the 13 regions improved over two categories of effectiveness—Atlantic Forests, Caucasus, Coastal Forests of East Africa, and the Succulent Karoo. Only 2 of the 16 Hotspots that have not yet had CEPF investments improved significantly over the last decade, although 3 of these already had ‘highly effective’ conservation communities. If these estimations are even close to the real situation, then one can conclude that the application of a CEPF program, or a program modeled on CEPF, does improve the effectiveness of the conservation community, particularly the civil society component, and sometimes markedly.

For some conservation scenarios where CEPF has invested, even incremental change may represent a marked contribution as many conservation programs would hesitate to invest in regions of perceived risk and uncertainty. No single factor appears to be responsible for allowing rapid progress in any given region. The last ten years have shown that CEPF has had multiple impacts under many different regional scenarios, and there is sufficient progress and impact in each to warrant retaining a broad mandate towards all Hotspots.

An Effective Approach

Achieving the desired zoning and management proposed in conservation strategies, such as CEPF's Ecosystem Profiles, may take a generation. Basic actions like bringing people together to discuss a common conservation vision and establishing opportunities for dialogue and new partnerships among diverse stakeholders are standard CEPF practices and have helped secure conservation gains. Eighty-four conservation forums or alliances were initiated by CEPF. CEPF's flexibility in approach and relationship requirements allows it to tailor regional programs effectively to local conditions and balance grant portfolios among catalytic support, long-term priorities, crises, and innovation. Fifty indigenous groups have been engaged, 22 industries, and hundreds of local communities over the past decade to help find the balance between conservation, livelihoods, quality of life, and development.

CEPF's model of developing conservation strategies through a highly participatory process, providing immediate implementation grants together with consistent organizational guidance and interaction, maintaining a focus on sustainable financing (14 sustainable financing mechanisms were put in place, globally), and encouraging marked innovation and calculated risk-taking in investments has proven to be measurably successful over the past ten years. Indeed, strategy development for a large number of important biodiversity regions followed by implementation grants and the emergence of new relationships and alliances among stakeholders together contend as the most catalytic and profound contribution of CEPF in any given region, with much of the impact occurring within the first few years of investment.

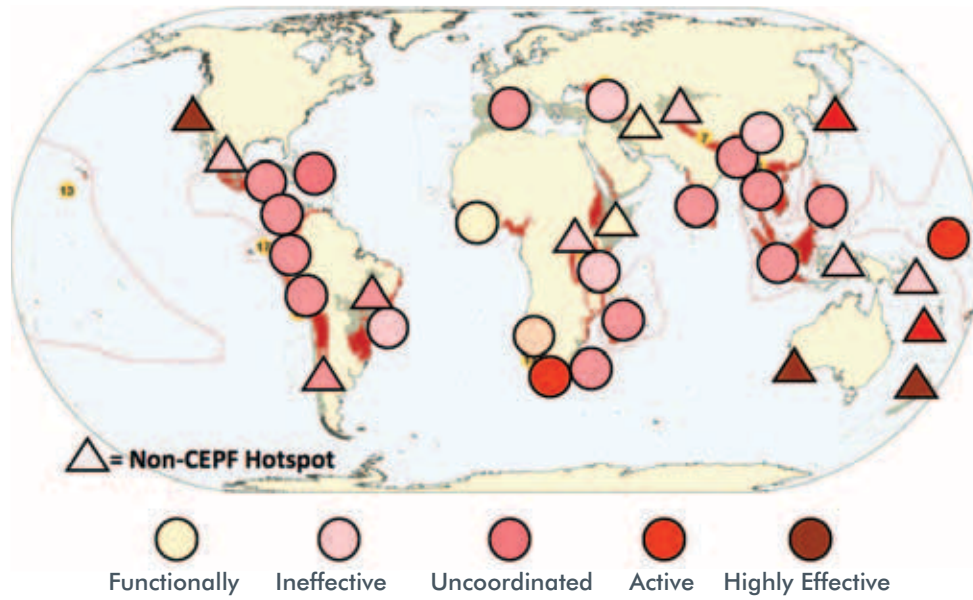
Donor Coordination Works

CEPF's success derives heavily from the weight of the financial, technical, and logistical resources and far-reaching influence six major donors can bring to a single global conservation program. Few, if any, other global programs benefit from such an involved and high profile consortium. CEPF gains are made possible, in part, by the flexibility and room for innovation imparted by sizeable budgets and cadre of prominent donors with long-standing experience in conservation investments. CEPF provides a good example for signatories to the Paris Declaration (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action (2008) that promotes greater donor coordination. For example, the Cape Floristic Region program helped align related programs of UNDP, the GEF, and the World Bank, with local initiatives through interim support for the Cape Action Plan. The Caucasus profile has been picked up by other agencies, such as GTZ and the EU, as an investment strategy, facilitating shared goals and complementary actions. Indeed, CEPF's leadership in conservation plans and investments has helped local partners leverage over \$261 million for additional conservation action within the Hotspots. CEPF demonstrates that coordinated conservation action works well and a goal should be to replicate it at scale.

Conclusion

For the scale of its investments, CEPF has made a profound contribution to global conservation owing to its biodiversity focus and willingness to invest in areas of risk and uncertainty, tailoring its investment profiles to each unique scenario, and its commitment to the lengthy and challenging work of building conservation awareness and constituencies. Early indicators—respectable additions of protected areas and managed landscapes, leaving behind a credible and confident NGO community responsible for leveraging funding well beyond initial investments, science-based strategies guiding conservation actions in multiple sectors, and ongoing fora for dialogue among stakeholders and governments—suggests that CEPF has facilitated civil society in reaching a point of independently sustained growth and activity in many regions.

CONSERVATION COMMUNITY: OVERALL STATE OF EFFECTIVENESS CIRCA 2001



CONSERVATION COMMUNITY: OVERALL STATE OF EFFECTIVENESS CIRCA 2010

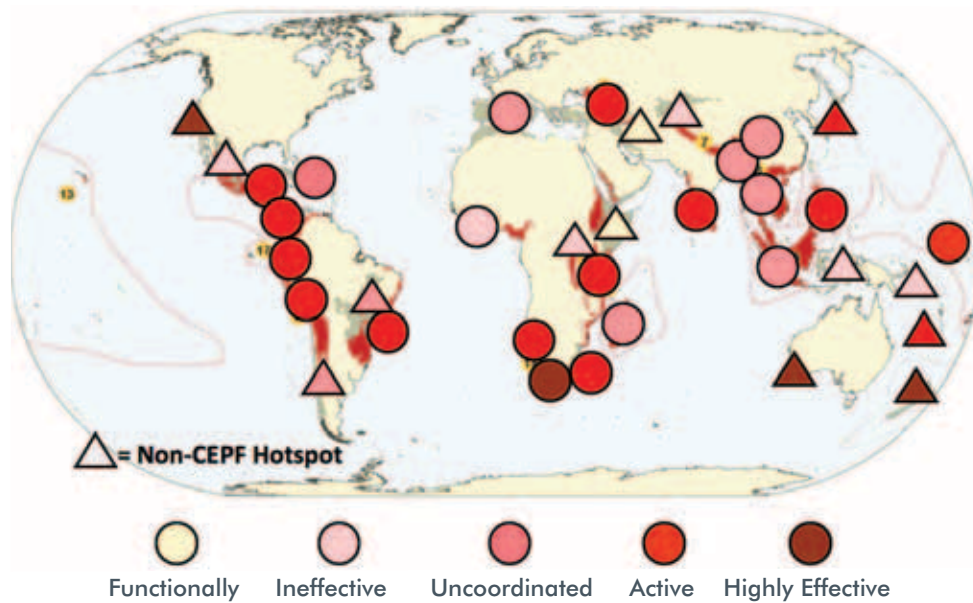


Figure 2. Overall state of effectiveness of the conservation community for each Hotspot 2001 and 2010. Descriptions of states are found in the full report.

engaging governments & business



A true benchmark of conservation progress is when governments and industry share the same vision for conservation success—the landscape zoning and best practices for resource use—with the broader conservation community, and work together through partnerships and alliances to implement it on the ground. A consistent and simultaneous engagement of governments while strengthening civil society has been a guiding philosophy in all CEPF investment strategies.

Municipal governments in the Succulent Karoo have been partners in developing widely used best practices for grazing and other land use practices through such forums as the Namaqualand Wildlife Initiative, and have been active participants in regional forums for conservation like the Namaqualand Biodiversity Forum. The Namibian Nature Foundation worked closely with the Namibia Department of Environment and Tourism to establish the Sperrgebiet National Park (26,000 km²), Africa's second largest protected area. The government of Namibia is considering applying the CEPF model for strategy development for the remainder of its coastline ecosystems that lie outside of the Succulent Karoo.

Industry can support conservation efforts and improve its own practices to be more compatible with biodiversity management. In every region, CEPF has engaged industry to help achieve long-term objectives of protection and improved management of habitats and species. CEPF grantees are working with the tea and coffee industries in the Western Ghats to identify sustainable agricultural practices that will help threatened species persist in plantation landscapes that retain mosaics of natural habitat. In Sumatra, four oil palm consortia comprising more than 50 individual companies and two pulp and paper companies in Riau Province, Sumatra adopted High Conservation Value Forest operational guidelines through CEPF-initiated public-private partnerships.

recommendations

Conservation impacts will be more solidly secured if the investment configuration for each Hotspot is expanded from 8 to 10 years with budgets in the range of \$10 to \$20 million USD. A quarter of the funding should be set aside until the last 3 years to support highly effective initiatives and emergent priorities or to respond to significant crises. CEPF regions that have not experienced this level or duration of attention should be revisited to approach this investment configuration.

Targeting the majority of funds to build capacity ‘on-the-ground’ may reduce the ability of a CEPF program within a Hotspot to achieve multiple strategic objectives and benchmarks identified in Ecosystem Profiles—many may require decades rather than 5 years to be realized—yet this may be the best strategy for the CEPF niche, building sustained and widespread effectiveness of the local conservation community over the long term.

CEPF would benefit from well-defined ‘visions’ for the structure, relationships, capacity, and effectiveness of a Hotspot’s conservation community, particularly the civil society component, which would be similar in nature and function as the biological visions that are presently developed in Ecosystem Profiles. This critical tool will guide grant-making and disengagement strategies at many levels.

A more rigorous evaluation of priority areas and corridors (in the biological, not implementation, sense) in regards to landscape ecology and context, in most profiles information on the type, extent, topography, and status of remaining natural vegetation outside of KBAs, or the relationship of KBAs to infrastructure and settlement is lacking.

Representation of distinct biogeographic assemblages in Ecosystem Profiles, facilitated by analyzing habitat types and distinct sub-regions within Hotspots, can improve priorities for threatened plants, fungi, and invertebrates that make up the vast majority of species.

It is critical that CEPF vigilantly retain its niche and strategic focus on reducing biodiversity loss and not become distracted by other priorities.

Despite the considerable challenges, conservation will be best served if CEPF applies its conservation model to as many Hotspots as possible over the next decade. CEPF’s process and catalytic support has the potential to dramatically shift conservation momentum even with modest investment. The entire region for those Hotspots where CEPF targeted only a particular sub-region should be revisited, as well.

CEPF should consider how to expand its program for application to other types of ecosystems around the planet. The kinds of conservation activities promoted by CEPF will be effective in all regions and building upon an existing program is much more cost-effective than assembling any new ones. High priority regions for attention include threatened biomes, such as tropical dry forests, rapidly changing Sahelian ecoregions, and freshwater ecosystems.



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