

**News release**

**Vanuatu conservationist honored as biodiversity ‘Hotspot Hero’ by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund**

*Martika Tahī is being recognized for achievements in protecting the country’s species and ecosystems*

**Arlington, Virginia, USA (22 May 2020)** – On this International Day for Biological Diversity, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) announces that Martika Tahī and nine other conservationists from around the world have been named “Hotspot Heroes” for their efforts to protect the world’s biodiversity hotspots. The honorees were chosen from the hundreds of civil society organizations that have received grants from CEPF in the 10 global biodiversity hotspots where the fund is currently active.

CEPF is recognizing these heroes as part of the celebration of its 20th anniversary. The fund empowers nongovernmental organizations, indigenous groups, universities and private enterprises to protect the world’s biodiversity hotspots—the world’s most biologically diverse yet threatened terrestrial regions—and help communities thrive. CEPF does this through grants and technical support for conservation, organizational strengthening and sustainable development.

The Hotspot Heroes and the nongovernmental organizations they work for are making outstanding contributions to the conservation of the hotspots. They exemplify the kinds of dedicated, dynamic people who work to ensure that intact ecosystems can continue to sustain flora and fauna and provide clean air, fresh water, healthy soils, sustainable livelihoods, resilience to climate change and much more.

After graduating in 2016 from the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, biologist Ms. Tahī returned to her home country to join the newly formed [Vanuatu Environmental Science Society](#) (VESS).

Vanuatu, part of the [East Melanesian Islands Biodiversity Hotspot](#), is an archipelago of 83 islands where the majority of people live in rural areas and depend on natural resources. VESS serves a critical conservation role by combining local, indigenous knowledge with scientific study.

With help from several CEPF grants, Ms. Tahī has conducted much-needed scientific surveys of bats, seagrass and dugongs around Vanuatu’s remote islands, and the resulting data are being used to improve management of sites vital to conservation. Her outreach to remote communities on the importance of species conservation has reduced the hunting of bats on several islands while protecting the vital ecosystem services these species provide.

Ms. Tahī is using the knowledge gained from the field to raise awareness in Vanuatu’s capital of Port Vila through seminars and exhibits on the importance of species conservation.

“Ms. Tahī stands out as a highly committed, technically skilled, ni-Vanuatu woman who is leading the way for conservation in her country,” said Michele Zador, CEPF grant director for the East Melanesian Islands Biodiversity Hotspot. “She ventures to remote corners of Vanuatu to work closely with communities—building support for the conservation of threatened species—and she is getting really good results. Martika is at the vanguard of a new generation of conservationists in the East Melanesian Islands Hotspot.”

“The Hotspot Heroes represent the many tenacious, committed conservationists who are taking action every day to ensure the future of the biodiversity hotspots and the people who depend on these vital ecosystems,” said CEPF Executive Director Olivier Langrand. “They endure a multitude of challenges—long hours, grueling travel, difficult working conditions, political hurdles and even threats to their lives—in pursuit of a healthy, sustainable world.”

“Ms. Tahī and VESS are strengthening the ties between Vanuatu communities and their nature, work that will help ensure a healthy future for people and ecosystems,” said Langrand.

Read more about [Martika Tahī](#) and the other [Hotspot Heroes](#).

CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank.

Since 2001, CEPF has catalyzed enduring, locally led biodiversity conservation through US\$250 million in grants to more than 2,400 organizations in 98 developing and transitional countries. Results include more than 15 million hectares of formal protected areas established, at least 890 globally threatened species supported, and more than 3,500 communities benefiting. Learn more at [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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Download a photo of Martika Tahi [here](#). (\*Note: you will need to read through Conservation International's terms of use document before downloading.)