

To: Monique Vieille  
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Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund  
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Date: 31 May 2022

**Concerns: Response to CEPF letter of 20 May 2022, concerning IUCN NL's Proposal for the selection of the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) in Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Hotspot. "CFP: MADIO RIT."**

Dear Mrs Vieille, dear Monique,

Thank you for your letter dated 20 May 2022.

Firstly, let me express our happiness to have been informed that our application is ranked first among the applications for the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) in Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Hotspot.

We are pleased to send you our response to the three conditions posed in your letter of 20 May 2022, and which were further elaborated during our call on Tuesday 24 May 2022. We appreciate this opportunity to propose alterations to our proposal to be able to meet the criteria of the Call and meet the necessary conditions before proceeding to contracting.

We will address the three issues you raised one by one.

### **1) Suitability of FORENA**

We are aware of the concerns of CEPF regarding consortium partner FORENA and propose to proceed as follows:

- i) On May 26<sup>th</sup> we initiated additional, discrete, due diligence research concerning FORENA senior staff. For now, we have approached trusted partners within the Durrell network, the IUCN network, the British and Australian High Commissions and a Dutch impact investor banking in Mauritius. This, in order to triangulate the information that the CEPF team has

received. It is needless to say that we are taking the CEPF concerns to heart and will therefore look into any potential red flags very seriously.

At the same time we value transparency in our decision-making processes and feel that any (potential) partner should get an opportunity to defend its reputation, when accused of misconduct. In this particular case, we realise that it is quite difficult for FORENA to defend itself, when there hasn't been a 'formal' complaint to substantiate the claim against it. Therefore, because we want to be sure that we are making the right decision, we expect to need 3-4 weeks to be able to conduct a thorough due diligence. After that, we propose to first discuss the findings of our due diligence with CEPF and do a double check with you on the proper course of action to take (e.g. appoint a new candidate, or explore mitigating measures for FORENA).

- ii) In parallel to this trajectory, we have reopened our search for an alternative and appropriate RIT Focal Point candidate in Mauritius. We fully agree with CEPF that for this an organisation is to be preferred over a consultant, as we aim at strengthening capacity and leadership of institutions. We expect to need 3-4 weeks to be able to find potential new candidates and conduct the necessary due diligence. We are also searching outside the conservation community.

We are looking for an organisation with a high, intrinsic motivation to fulfil this role for the next 5 years, and that is willing to invest its passion in the CEPF conservation mission. Our initial search also included candidates outside the conservation movement. We also explored potentially suitable CSO candidates from the development sector and looked at the private sector (in particular from the impact investment world) and among tourism / lodge operators. FORENA itself seemed at the time to provide an interesting mix between the NGO world and the business community.

We have now restarted a discrete candidate search via our network. We expect to be able to propose a suitable alternative candidate for the RIT Focal Point to CEPF before July 1<sup>st</sup>. Based on the outcome of the FORENA due diligence and the discussions with CEPF on this point, we will propose our best candidate for CEPF to approve.

- iii) Should the RIT start functioning on July 1<sup>st</sup> and talks on specific agreements with a new candidate, or on the development of mitigating measures are still underway, IUCN NL will, together SAF/FJKM cover necessary activities for Mauritius until a Focal Point organisation is installed there.

## **2) Full-time RIT leader, based in one of the hotspot countries**

We understand (and support) the requirement that the RIT Team Leader works full-time on the project, and is based in one of the four hotspot countries. To this end, we suggest to adjust our staffing plan and budget as indicated below. Over the coming 2 weeks we will fine-tune the task division below with SAF/FJKM and the other RIT team:

- i) We will make a change to the proposed staffing structure, by deploying an appropriately qualified, full-time RIT Team Leader through our Consortium Member and Madagascar Focal Point SAF/FJKM. We have agreed with SAF/FJKM on how to formulate this position, which selection procedure we will conduct, and which qualifications are important. We intend to present a suitable candidate to CEPF by 1<sup>st</sup> July.

- ii) We will transfer budget from IUCN NL to SAF/FJKM for the salary for the above-mentioned position and associated costs [estimated circa 50.000 dollar in total];
- iii) The role of the RIT Team Leader we had initially proposed– Mark van der Wal – will be changed into Senior Technical Advisor to the new RIT Team Leader and the Focal Point coordinators, and will encompass the following tasks and expertise:
  - Support and backstopping for the new RIT Team Leader
  - EbA senior expert
  - Capacity building coherence and quality advisor
  - Co-convener of the consortium
  - Co-liaison with CEPF (together with new RIT Team Leader), especially with regard to strategic advice, learning, evaluation and innovation in small & large grants as a tool for impact
  - Quality and coherence control in the small grants’ proposal selection procedure.
- iv) We expect the new RIT Team Leader, who will be based full-time at SAF/FJKM, to encompass the following tasks and expertise:
  - a. Responsible for day to day management of the RIT,
    - i. Correct and transparent proposal selection process.
    - ii. Project portfolio management
    - iii. Coordinating coherent capacity building & joined learning of grantees
    - iv. Regional and National synergy enhancement,
  - b. Facilitation and inspiration of the Regional Focal Points,
  - c. Identifying areas of joined EbA related interest from a the hot-spot countries,
  - d. Enhance good relationships with the national / regional authorities and business networks.
  - e. Assuring transparency, accountability and good communications with IUCN NL as contract holder to CEPF.
  - f. Co-convener of the consortium
  - g. Co-liaison with CEPF
- v) The function of the Technical Advisor – Mark van der Wal, will be reduced to from 30-40% FTE to 27% FTE on average over the 5 years. Mark will spend 50% of this time in the region.
- vi) IUCN NL remains lead organisation (even though the RIT Team Leader is based at and employed by SAF/FJKM in Madagascar). Therefore, IUCN NL remains the organizational contact point for CEPF for both contracts, and the final responsible for financial and technical reporting and quality in general.
- vii) The actual granting of the small grants will be managed from IUCN NL and be based on the selection procedure and mechanism set out in the proposal. This implies that granting takes place through the IUCN NL bank account in NL, and is based on the decision procedure of the entire RIT team.
- viii) All other staff members from IUCN NL that were incorporated into our proposal remain unchanged. The positions of the MEAL coordinators Paul Villaespesa (M) and Frederique Holle (F), however, will be reduced by 0,10 FTE pp, as part of the needed budgetary shift of 22.000 dollars in total (as proposed under paragraph 3-viii in this letter) and be focused towards the coherence of the capacity strengthening.

### 3) Coherence and consistency in technical approach of the capacity strengthening

The various members of the Consortium have different levels of experience and different approaches, especially with regard to capacity building. There are also differences in context and needs of civil society groups in the four countries. This is reflected in the technical approach set out in our proposal. We understand the need to ensure greater coherence and consistency in our technical approach towards capacity strengthening and have reviewed and elaborated our approach as we will try to explain hereunder. To this end, we suggest to adjust our capacity strengthening strategy and budget as follows:

- i) As a RIT, we aim to ensure greater coherence and consistency in the capacity building provided by the RIT as a whole: by establishing standard capacity building trajectories, which each of the different RIT members are able to provide to the grantees.
- ii) Each grantee will receive an individual 'capacity building needs assessment' after grant approval, in which suitable capacity building trajectories and their level are considered for that specific CSO and which combination of approaches would be most suitable: training, coaching, (peer to peer) exchanges.
- iii) At the start of the RIT, we aim to jointly determine and design 3 to 5 standard capacity building trajectories with the RIT team. Based on our track-record of CSO capacity building in the Indian Ocean, we currently expect that these trajectories will be of the following type:
  - o Basic financial management as the foundation for local and international fundraising – this increases skills to obtain local funds and increase chances for international and local fund raising, to directly ensure and strengthen the financial sustainability of the organization and intervention, and create a local support basis for its interventions;
  - o Mobilizing support and public affairs – this is to increase the capacity of CSO and CBOs to conduct effective lobby and advocacy for conservation and sustainable development towards government, communities and the private sector;
  - o Gender and inclusivity – a trajectory aimed at improving both the CSO organizational structure and their project plans regarding gender equality and inclusivity. Specially aiming at the local communities for conservation work, with the philosophy that with the right support, local communities are the best advocate for conservation and sustainable development;
  - o Conservation and Ecosystem Based Adaptation – this is to increase skills and knowledge of local CSOs and communities regarding best practices, skills, practical approaches and other examples regarding conservation and Ecosystem Based Adaptation;
  - o Organizational core capacities – supporting partners to increase their financial management, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (PME), Human Resource (HR) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- iv) In our assessment of determining these trajectories, we also aim to build on the modules already developed by CEPF *and* those already developed by the consortium partners.
- v) Each of the RIT members brings in its own unique experience to support the strengthening of CSOs with these trajectories. These experiences and approaches will be merged into the proposed coherent capacity building trajectories. During the first 6 months of the RIT, we will gather all these different experiences and come up with draft capacity standard trajectories. Each of these draft trajectories will be discussed in a separate, online session to improve and agree on a coherent but context specific flexible approach.

- vi) Based on the inputs we receive, the training trajectories will be finalized by one master trainer from within the RIT. This master trainers (per capacity building trajectory) will facilitate the training, coaching and exchange of the other RIT staff members in this standard capacity building trajectory by the end of year 1 of the RIT. In this manner, the RIT effectively uses and exchanges experiences and skills described above, and brings it to a higher level.
- vii) The capacity building trajectories will be made available online for the grantees by the end of year 1 of the RIT, potentially through a joined platform. With direct support from the RIT members, grantees for whom the needs assessment has indicated a need to work on that capacity, will receive tailor-made trainings and coaching sessions.
- viii) To establish these 3 to 5 coherent capacity building trajectories, we will reallocate 22.000 dollar budget from the IUCN NL staff budget and management support costs, towards budget for facilitating, producing and distributing these coherent capacity building trajectories.
- ix) We have made adjustments in edit mode in the attached version of the proposal that reflect the proposed changes.

We hope that this letter provides you with enough information to allow CEPF to proceed with its decision making. After your response we will make all further necessary changes to the proposal text, the staffing table and the budget accordingly and submit new versions to CEPF.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, if you have any questions.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Coenraad Krijger

Director  
IUCN NL

Annexes:

- Edits to proposal text, **only** with regard to point 3) *Coherence and consistency in technical approach of the capacity strengthening*
- Adjusted budget IUCN NL (changes marked in blue)