

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
44th Meeting of the CEPF Donor Council
In-Person, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and Virtual Meeting
Tuesday 11 February 2025
8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Santo Domingo Local Time
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Brussels and Paris Time
9:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m. (+1 day) Tokyo Time**

**Facilitating the Development of a Five-Year Strategy
for a New Approach to Organizational Development**

Recommended Action Item:

The Donor Council is asked to review the progress to date and provide comments.

Background:

In early 2024 CEPF received funds from Fondation Hans Wilsdorf for new investments in the Mediterranean Basin and the Guinean Forests of West Africa, and to deliver organizational development (OD) across the program. The allocation for OD totals US\$3.1 million to be implemented over five years, with the first step being the development of a five-year strategy for a new approach to OD.

To this end, on 15 September 2024 CEPF issued a request for proposals for the strategy development. Eight proposals were received by the deadline of 15 October 2024. Following review of the proposals by a committee consisting of Nina Marshall, Dan Rothberg and Céline Desbrosses, and further consultation with Malika Dreyfuss of Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the submission from Gen-H GMBH was selected. After checking references, the team was contracted with a start date of 11 November 2024 and a completion date of 30 April 2025. The team comprises Jany Barraut of Gen-H and Pierre Volant of Ikivox.

The team has conducted numerous interviews and consultations and presented their progress at the 78th Meeting of the CEPF Working Group held on 15 January 2025. Collaborative workshop sessions were held 22–23 January, during which the Secretariat, RITs and selected grantees provided inputs for a first draft of the strategy.

The team will present progress to date, including preliminary aspects of a draft strategy, at the Donor Council meeting.

Annex

Facilitating the Development of a Five-year Strategy for a New Approach to Organizational Development: Progress Report

Introduction

CEPF is recognized for its ability to deliver conservation impact in biodiversity hotspots through its deep engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs)—putting resources directly in the hands of local communities and empowering local actors and communities to achieve autonomy.

While CEPF has a long tradition of capacity building, its work on organizational development (OD) to date has been largely reactive, addressing primarily technical and institutional challenges encountered by grantee organizations.

CEPF recognizes that increased efforts to ensure the sustainability and resilience of its grantees are essential to securing long-term biodiversity conservation results in the hotspots. Therefore, looking ahead, CEPF wants to strengthen its ability to support the organizational development of the grantee organizations in a more proactive and systematic manner.

OD is a continuous process of positive change toward becoming a resilient organization, by ensuring that all the organizational capabilities are aligned with the organization's purpose. It should ensure the healthy and sustainable development of CSOs to enable them to have a long-term impact on biodiversity conservation. In other words, this addresses the long-term viability and development of the partners that CEPF works with.

This can include working on dimensions like strategy alignment, processes, governance, competencies development and talent retention. It goes beyond and encompasses capacity building and typical biodiversity technical skills.

Objectives and Scope of the Project

The objective is the development of a five-year strategy for a new approach to OD, consciously strengthening the CSOs and RITs to deliver long-term impact beyond the funding provided by CEPF. This entails involving in the process representatives from the various stakeholder groups: CEPF's grantees, donors, staff from the Secretariat and RITs, as well as experts in the field of organizational development, to provide coherence and tap into the collective knowledge available within the organization and its partner organizations and networks.

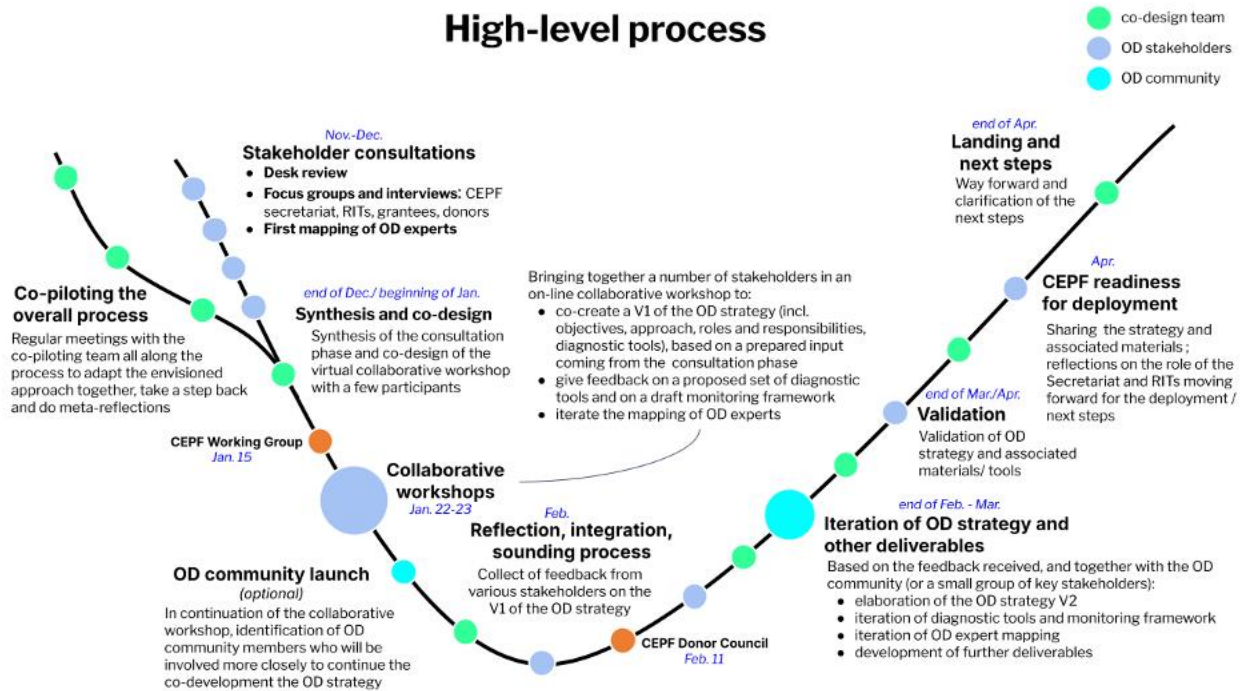
More specifically, the objectives are to create through the co-development process a shared understanding and high degree of ownership around:

- What OD means in the context of CEPF and how it contributes to CEPF's mission.
- What the OD strategy should look like.
- Which approaches CEPF could adopt to deliver it in the coming years, including:

- o Considering various delivery options and mechanisms.
- o Reviewing diagnostic tools and developing a tool(s) for CEPF to use to identify grantees interested in OD and determine what their needs are.
- o Defining a roadmap for the roll out of the strategy across the global program, including piloting it in selected hotspots.
- o Identifying potential organizations/entities suitable to support CEPF to deliver OD.
- o Estimating, when feasible, the cost of delivery.

The scope of the project includes CSOs, the RITs and the CEPF Secretariat.

Process



What has been done so far:

- Launched the co-pilot team.
- Reviewed the existing documentation.
- Conducted the consultation phase through individual conversations and focus groups with:
 - o CEPF top management (individual conversations with Olivier Langrand and Jack Tordoff).
 - o CEPF Secretariat (focus group with five members).
 - o Donors (individual conversations with Conservation International, European Commission, the GEF, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, World Bank).
 - o RITs (focus group #1 with Caribbean Islands, Mediterranean Basin, Tropical Andes; focus group #2 with Indo-Burma, Mountains of Central

- Asia, Wallacea).
 - Grantees (focus groups with Biosfera, Conservation Vietnam, CZIP, GreenViet, Mekong Community Institute Association, NatureLife Cambodia).
- Scanned OD best practices and approaches developed by OD providers and by foundations active in the field of OD; individual discussion with PPI.
- Presented progress to date at Working Group 78 on 15 January.
- Held collaborative workshops 22–23 January 2025. The objective of these workshops was to engage the various parts of the CEPF ecosystem in co-developing a first version of the OD strategy and addressing some key questions by:
 - Looking at what came out of the consultation phase.
 - Creating a shared understanding of what OD means for CEPF.
 - Looking at what is already available (internally and externally) and how this can be built on, enriched or adapted.
 - Defining the key principles and elements of the OD strategy for CEPF.

Workshops were three hours in length, with identical formats, but scheduled in different time zones so that all could attend. Overall, all Secretariat staff, at least two staff from each active RIT, and selected grantees participated.

Important Points to Consider

- There is a strong diversity of contexts in the hotspots in terms of ecosystem, external environment, type of organizations involved at RIT and CSO levels, etc. This will require a tailored and contextualized approach for the OD strategy. We cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach.
- There is a need for overall guidelines while keeping flexibility and adaptability to enable the RITs and CSOs to adjust the approach to their specific needs. It will be important to provide some practical tools that can be easily used and tailored.
- Creating a sustainable impact in the field of biodiversity conservation is a long-term undertaking. It takes a long time for engagement to happen and to build trust and openness between CEPF/RITs and grantees. An OD approach is a long-term journey that goes beyond the traditional funding cycle.
- There are some very good examples of OD initiatives existing in various parts of the organization that could be leveraged. Further, there are currently two hotspots that have included OD in their ecosystem profiles and investment strategies (Guinean Forests of West Africa and Mediterranean Basin); these will serve as pilot initiatives that will inform integration of OD in future investments.
- A limited bandwidth is available at the various organizational levels. It will be important to align the resources with the ambition and to address funding needs transparently with donors and with senior management.

- It will be important to locally anchor the OD support and resources and have decision-making happening as close as possible to the ground. RITs will play a key role in this.
- The desire and willingness to enhance their long-term viability or resilience must come from within the organizations themselves. While support can be offered, meaningful change or development cannot be imposed.
- Developing and implementing an OD strategy within CEPF is an iterative and learning process at the organizational level in itself; it requires time and the creation of some spaces to test, experiment and learn together.

Key Questions

- Where in the CEPF architecture will the resources supporting OD be located? (e.g. in the RITs, in the Secretariat?)
- Will the OD support be primarily externally provided through funding to OD specialists and with some light internal expertise, or should there be stronger capabilities and involvement at the RIT/regional level?
- How can we ensure that the time and energy required by the OD work will not reduce or alter the resources dedicated to the core biodiversity conservation work?
- How could we ensure that OD support will go beyond the current funding cycles, and how open would we be to considering longer term funding cycles (potentially only for OD or more generally for the grants)?
- What options might be available to secure long-term funding for this OD work?
- What role do we see CEPF having in supporting the development and strengthening of communities/networks of CSOs in the hotspots moving forward?