

Annual Portfolio Overview

Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot

July 2022 – June 2023

Annual portfolio overviews provide an update on progress of CEPF's investment strategy. This overview covers progress in the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

1. Introduction

The Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot is one of 36 biodiversity hotspots in the world. Biodiversity hotspots hold least 1,500 plant species found nowhere else and have lost at least 70 percent of their original habitat extent (Mittermeier *et al.* 2004). The island geography and complex geology of the Caribbean has created unique habitats and high species diversity, and these islands have among the highest number of globally threatened species of any hotspot in the world.

The Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot comprises more than 7,000 islands, islets, reefs and cays with a land area of 230,000 km² scattered across 4 million km² of sea (Figure 1). The hotspot takes in 30 biologically and culturally diverse nations and territories, of which seven are currently targeted for CEPF support under its Phase II investment in the region: Antigua and Barbuda; The Bahamas; the Dominican Republic; Haiti; Jamaica; Saint Lucia; and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

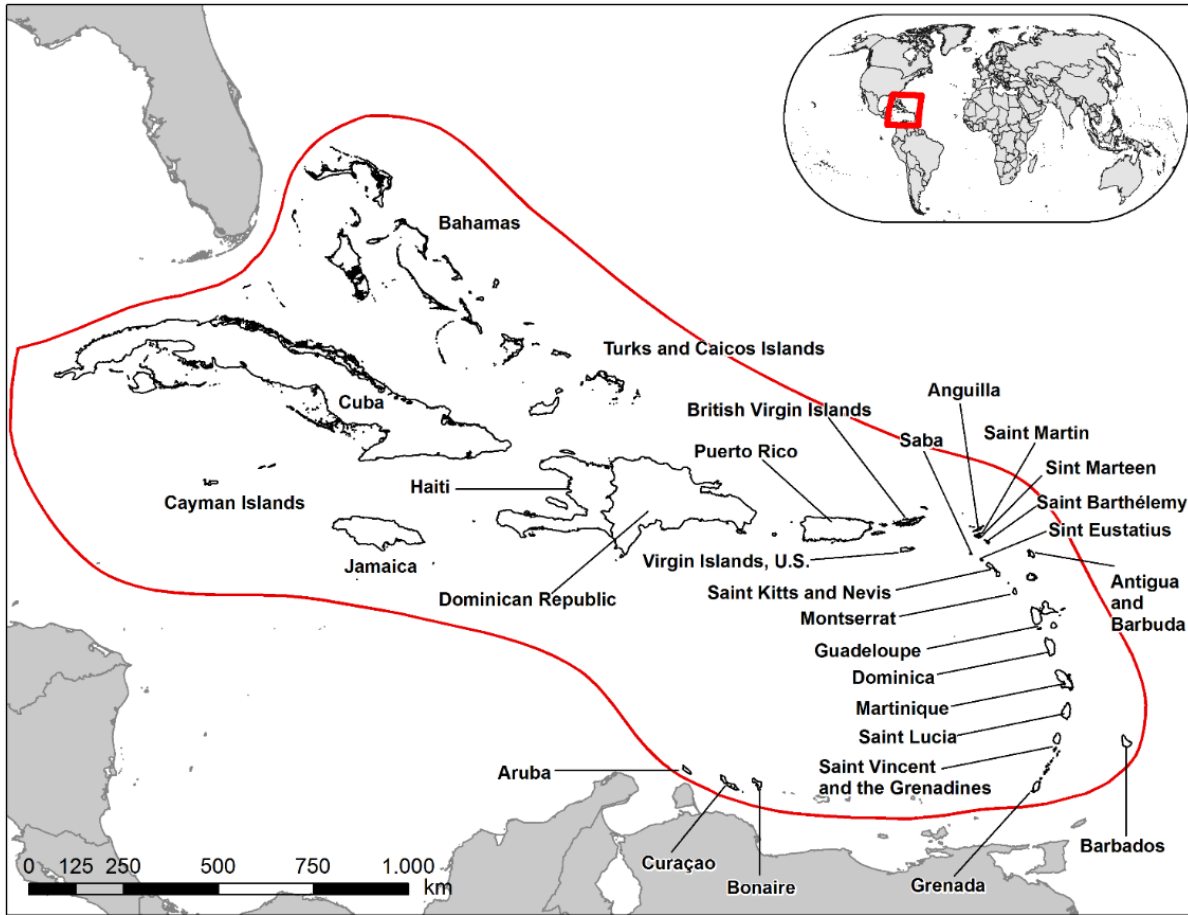
The current CEPF investment in the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot began in August 2021 and will continue until July 2026. It builds on the achievements made during the first CEPF investment phase in the hotspot from 2010 and 2016.

2. Niche for CEPF Investment

2.1 Overview

The CEPF niche for the second investment phase is guided by CEPF's mission and informed by the experience of the first phase of CEPF investment and the findings of the ecosystem profile. The niche was defined during three national workshops (Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica) and an online sub-regional meeting for The Bahamas and the Eastern Caribbean, national Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) working groups and a regional consultation. The process engaged 175 stakeholders from 94 organizations within civil society, government, the private sector and the donor community. Participants in the ecosystem profile consultations emphasized the importance of a multi-pronged approach to conservation that includes addressing the institutional and structural impediments to management and preservation of the natural environment.

Figure 1. The Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot



This second investment phase seeks to identify opportunities to add value through “continuity of action” and to consolidate the results achieved in the first phase of CEPF investment. It also seeks to identify opportunities for replication and scaling-up of good practice models, and to apply the lessons learned from the earlier phase.

The CEPF niche focusses investment at those priority KBAs with the highest biological values, where there is an existing civil society constituency with an interest in conservation. During the first investment phase, there were examples of clustered grant making, where linked grants were made to civil society organizations (CSOs) with complementary capabilities to address the conservation of a single site. CEPF seeks to actively promote such approaches to build synergies across grants and scale up impact in sites and corridors.

The CEPF approach also aims to leverage new and existing financial and human resources as part of a sustainability strategy for the hotspot. In implementing the strategy, CEPF seeks to work in partnership with the public and private sectors to identify and maximize opportunities for value-added synergies. Particular emphasis will be placed on collaborating with CEPF donors and other active conservation financiers.

2.2 Focus

The thematic focus of the investment strategy is set out in Table 1. CEPF investment addresses 19 investment priorities grouped into six strategic directions. Targets and indicative spending allocations for each strategic direction are given in the logical framework, which is presented in Annex 1.

Table 1. CEPF strategic directions and investment priorities in the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot (2021-2026)

Strategic Directions	CEPF Investment Priorities
1 Improve the protection and management of 33 priority sites for long-term sustainability	1.1 Strengthen the legal protection of priority sites. 1.2 Prepare and implement participatory management plans that support broad stakeholder collaboration. 1.3 Assess climate change impacts and integrate climate change adaptation into management plans and their implementation responses to protect ecosystem functions and build resilience. 1.4 Eradicate, control or prevent further spread of invasive plants and animals that are affecting globally threatened species populations at priority sites. 1.5 Update the KBA analysis to fill critical conservation planning data gaps in Barbados and Haiti.
2 Increase landscape-level connectivity and ecosystem resilience in seven priority corridors	2.1 Prepare and support implementation of participatory local and corridor-scale land-use and watershed management plans to guide future development and conservation efforts. 2.2 Support sustainable livelihoods in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and nature tourism that enhance ecosystem resilience and landscape-level connectivity and deliver gender-equitable benefits, in order to maintain the functionality of priority sites. 2.3 Promote the adoption and scaling up of conservation best practices in those enterprises compatible with conservation to promote connectivity and ecosystem services in the corridors.
3 Safeguard priority Critically Endangered and Endangered species	3.1 Prepare and implement conservation actions plans for priority Critically Endangered and Endangered species. 3.2 Identify climate impacts and develop and implement management plans in response to climate change impacts on priority Critically Endangered and Endangered species. 3.3 Support assessments of high priority plant families to update national lists and the IUCN Red List and develop conservation action plans.
4 Improve the enabling conditions for biodiversity conservation in countries with priority sites	4.1 Support the role of civil society organizations in policy dialogue and advocacy focused on government policies and practices that impact priority sites. 4.2 Mainstream biodiversity conservation and ecosystem service values into development policies, projects, and plans by government and the private sector, with a focus on addressing major threats, such as unsustainable agriculture, mining, tourism and infrastructure development. 4.3 Establish and strengthen sustainable financing mechanisms. 4.4 Build stakeholder and constituency support for the conservation of priority sites and priority globally threatened species through targeted communication and information dissemination.

Strategic Directions	CEPF Investment Priorities
<p>5 Support Caribbean civil society to conserve biodiversity by building local, national and regional institutional capacity and fostering stakeholder collaboration</p>	<p>5.1 Strengthen CSOs’ technical knowledge and skills to implement practical, applied biodiversity conservation actions through short-term training in topics that will advance implementation of projects that support CEPF priorities, based on a CSO training assessment and strategy.</p> <p>5.2 Strengthen the administrative, financial, fundraising and project management capacity of strategic CEPF civil society partners to implement biodiversity conservation programs and activities.</p> <p>5.3 Support local, national and regional information exchange, networking, mentorship, and coalition building among civil society organizations.</p>
<p>6 Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of CEPF investment through a Regional Implementation Team</p>	<p>6.1 Build a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries to strengthen the communication capacity of local civil society organizations in support of their mission and to build public awareness on the importance of conservation outcomes.</p>

Building resilience to climate change and integrating gender considerations into all investments are two crosscutting themes for all relevant grants. The hotspot is widely recognized as being highly vulnerable to threats associated with climate change, and, as such, CEPF seeks to build climate resilience to ensure sustainability of all investments. Furthermore, gender equity is a critical element of how the investment strategy for the Caribbean will ensure that civil society is empowered, and that there is equitable participation and decision-making by stakeholders at all scales.

The CEPF ecosystem profile includes a detailed logical framework with conservation targets (Annex 1). The logframe presents three portfolio-level targets:

- Thirty-three KBAs covering 1,174,380 hectares have sustainable management plans in place.
- At least 40,000 of 2,345,311 hectares within production landscapes are under improved management for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services.
- At least five local development plans, projects or policies mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services, with a focus on tourism, mining, unsustainable agriculture and infrastructure development.

2.3 Coordinating CEPF Grant Making

The Trinidad and Tobago-headquartered Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) serves as the Caribbean Islands’ Regional Implementation Team (RIT), which supports grant management and achievement of the conservation outcomes of the CEPF Phase II investment. The RIT:

- Provides technical advice to support the large grants process.
- Manages the small grants mechanism.
- Supports capacity building processes of civil society.
- Maintains and updates information on portfolio-level conservation impacts.
- Conducts donor outreach.
- Supports communications about the portfolio.

The RIT comprises 12 people, as listed in Table 2, who dedicate between 3 and 100 percent of their time to the work of the CEPF in the hotspot. The Country Coordinator position for Haiti is expected to be filled in FY24.

Table 2. RIT personnel

Name	Position/Role	Location	% time
Nicole Brown	RIT Manager	Jamaica	100
Lehome Johnson	Small Grants Officer	Jamaica	70
Simone Lee	Country Coordinator for the English-speaking Caribbean	Jamaica	100
Liliana Betancourt	Country Coordinator for the Dominican Republic	Dominican Republic	100
TBD	Country Coordinator for Haiti	Haiti	TBD
Wendy Dyemma-Harper	Communications and Information Management Officer	Trinidad and Tobago	60
Chevanese Philip	Junior Finance Officer	Trinidad and Tobago	20
Venash Ramberan	Finance Officer	Trinidad and Tobago	15
Anna Cadiz-Hadeed	CANARI Programmes Director	Barbados	8
Kathryn Jones-Douglas	CANARI Human Resource Manager	Trinidad and Tobago	7
Anastacia Lee Quay	Administrative Officer	Trinidad and Tobago	5
Nicole Leotaud	CANARI Executive Director	Trinidad and Tobago	3

In addition to the RIT, the CEPF investment program in the Caribbean Islands is also supported by a Collaborative Social Accountability Team (CSAT) based at Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC) in the Dominican Republic, which applies collaborative social accountability mechanisms and tools to address challenges across the biodiversity conservation delivery chain. To date, INTEC, working in partnership with Integrated Health Outreach in Antigua and Barbuda, has implemented a program of capacity building in collaborative social accountability for CSOs in Antigua and Barbuda, the Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, and (to a limited extent) Jamaica. This has included a 60-hour online certificate course titled “Collaborative Social Accountability for Biodiversity Conservation”, which has been delivered in the Dominican Republic and is currently being translated into English for use in other countries.

2.3 Overview

FY23 was the second year of implementation, the CEPF Secretariat and RIT shifted their attention from the initial start up of the investment phase (contracting and training of the RIT and CSAT, issuing calls for proposals, etc.), to awarding grants and providing capacity building for CSOs. The following achievements were made during the year:

- Two calls for proposals with closing dates during the year generated 14 Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) for large grants (greater than US\$50,000 in value) and 13 for small grants (up to US\$50,000 in value). A third call for proposals was issued during the year, with a closing date in FY24.
- Two proposal development workshops (or “master classes”) were organized for large grant applicants in July 2022 and February 2023, during which CSOs were provided with mentoring and hands-on support by the CEPF Secretariat and RIT.
- 17 grants were awarded to CSOs (totaling US\$2,326,640), comprising nine large grants (totaling US\$1,934,139) and eight small grants (totaling US\$392,501); most of these were for applications received under calls in FY22.

2.4 Call for Proposals

As shown in Table 3, two calls for proposals closed in FY23, one of which was actually issued at the end of FY22. These two calls, the third and fourth to be issued under the investment phase, generated a total of 27 LOIs. At the end of FY23, the fifth call for proposals was issued; this had a closing date in FY24, so did not generate any LOIs during the year. The third and fourth calls were complementary. The former was open to national and local initiatives from Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, under any of the five strategic directions. The latter was open to national and local initiatives under any strategic direction for the Dominican Republic only. Both calls were open to multi-country and regional initiatives under Strategic Direction 5 on capacity building, with the aim of encouraging international cooperation for biodiversity conservation. The fourth call was open to the inclusion of CSOs from Haiti, on the condition that no activities took place in Haiti, due to the security situation in the country. The fifth call was open to national and local initiatives in all countries except Haiti; Strategic Direction 3 on safeguarding priority species was excluded, because the related targets were already on track to be met by grants awarded under previous calls.

The release of calls was synchronized with the RIT’s outreach efforts to local stakeholders and potential applicants, to encourage the submission of LOIs that were well aligned to CEPF’s strategic directions.

As is standard practice, the CEPF Secretariat and RIT screened all LOIs to ensure their eligibility for CEPF funding and general alignment with the terms of the call for proposals. All eligible LOIs were then reviewed by members of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), comprising national and technical experts. For large grant proposals, RAC recommendations were submitted to the CEPF Secretariat and RIT for a consensus-based decision on whether to invite the applicant to submit a full proposal for funding. For small grants, RAC recommendations were submitted to the RIT, which had sole responsibility for decisions related to the award of small grants.

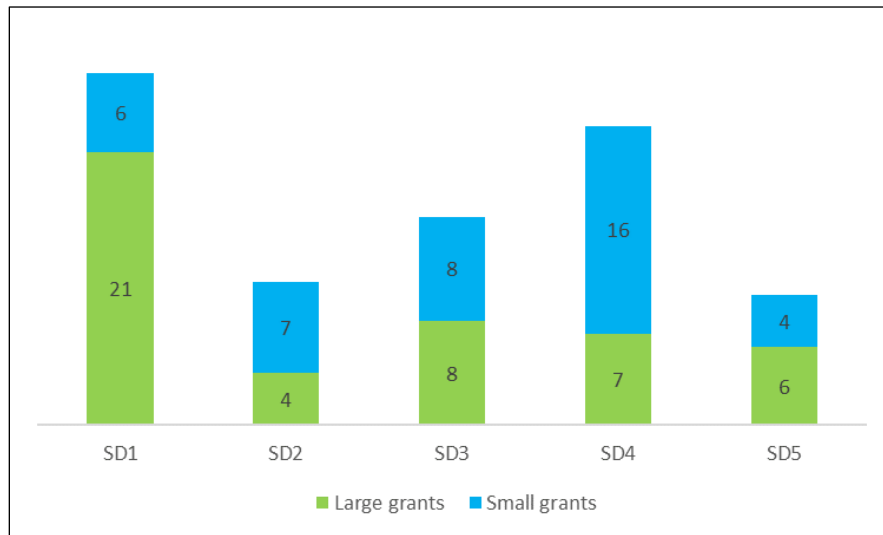
Table 3. Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot calls for proposals to date

Call No.	Release Date	Closing Date	Strategic Directions	Geographic Focus	LOIs Received	
					Large	Small
1	13 October 2021	21 November 2021	1,2,3,4	Dominican Republic and Jamaica	17	6
2	13 December 2022	13 February 2022 extended to 27 February 2022	1,2,3,4	Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines	15	22
3	29 June 2022	23 August 2022	1,2,3,4,5	Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines – all SDs Dominican Republic – SD5 only	8	4
4	10 November 2022	30 December 2022	1,2,3,4,5	Dominican Republic – all SDs Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines – SD5 only	6	9
5	5 June 2023	24 July 2023 extended to 11 August 2023	1,2,4,5	Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines	n/a	n/a
Sub-Total					46	31
Total LOIs received					87	

Note: the deadline for the fifth call was during FY24, so no LOIs were received during FY23.

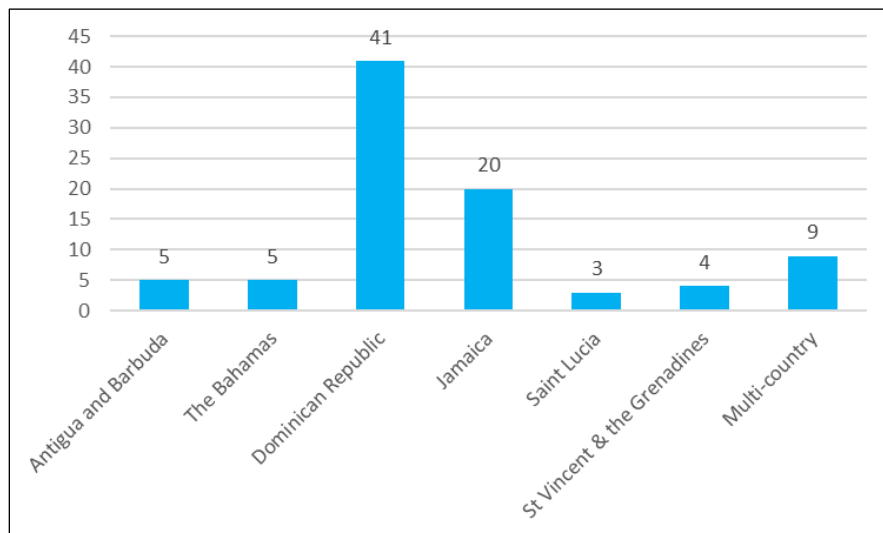
LOIs submissions by Strategic Direction: As shown in Figure 2, under the first four calls for proposals, CEPF received the most LOIs for Strategic Direction 1 (27 LOIs), followed by Strategic Direction 4 (23 LOIs), then Strategic Direction 3 (16 LOIs), Strategic Direction 2 (11 LOIs) and, finally, Strategic Direction 5 (10 LOIs). This indicates a strong demand among civil society for funding to work on the conservation of priority sites, and to improve the enabling conditions for biodiversity conservation.

Figure 2. LOIs received by Strategic Direction, June 2023



Geographic distribution: As shown in Figure 3, of the 87 LOIs received under the first four calls, the greatest number (41 LOIs, 49 percent) were for projects located in the Dominican Republic. The next greatest number (20 LOIs, 23 percent) were for project in Jamaica. The remaining LOIs requested funding to work in Antigua and Barbuda (five LOIs, 6 percent), Saint Lucia (three LOIs, 3 percent), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (four LOIs, 5 percent), The Bahamas (five LOIs, 6 percent) or multiple countries (nine LOIs, 10 percent). This pattern is not surprising, given that the Dominican Republic and Jamaica are larger countries, with more priority species and sites, and a greater number of CSOs working on biodiversity conservation than other countries in the hotspot. The one exception is Haiti, where there has been no focused call for proposal to date, due to the security situation in the country. Looking forward, CEPF anticipates generating a significant number of applications from Haiti.

Figure 3. LOIs received by country, June 2023



2.5 Grant Awards

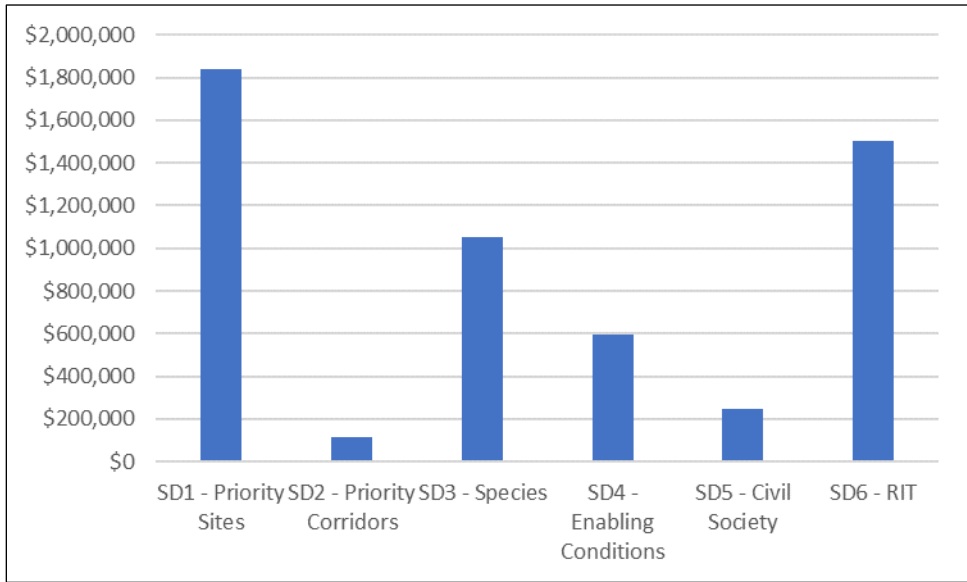
As Table 4 shows, CEPF awarded 17 grants totaling \$2.3 million in FY23, bringing the total investment during the investment phase to date to \$5.4 million, or 54 percent of the available funding. The grant portfolio comprises 14 large grants (including the two strategic grants for the RIT and CSAT) and eight small grants. In addition, one large grant and four small grant applications under the third and fourth calls are currently at various stages of review, and are expected to be awarded in FY24, along with successful applications received under the fifth call. The grant portfolio is, therefore, well advanced at the end of the second year of the investment phase, with more than half of available funds committed and a strong pipeline of grants in development.

Table 4. Grant-making status by strategic direction, June 2023

Strategic Direction	Budget Allocation	Contracted Grants			Budget Balance	% Contracted
		Total Amount	No. of Large Grants	No. of Small Grants		
SD1 – Priority Sites	\$4,500,000	\$1,838,164	5	4	\$2,661,836	41
SD2 – Priority Corridors	\$1,000,000	\$117,717	1	1	\$882,283	12
SD3 – Species	\$1,000,000	\$1,054,834	5	1	(\$54,834)	105
SD4 – Enabling Conditions	\$1,000,000	\$598,940	1	2	\$401,060	60
SD5 – Civil Society	\$1,000,000	\$249,987	1	0	\$750,013	25
SD6 – RIT	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	1	0	\$0	100
Total	\$10,000,000	\$5,359,642	14	8	\$4,640,358	54

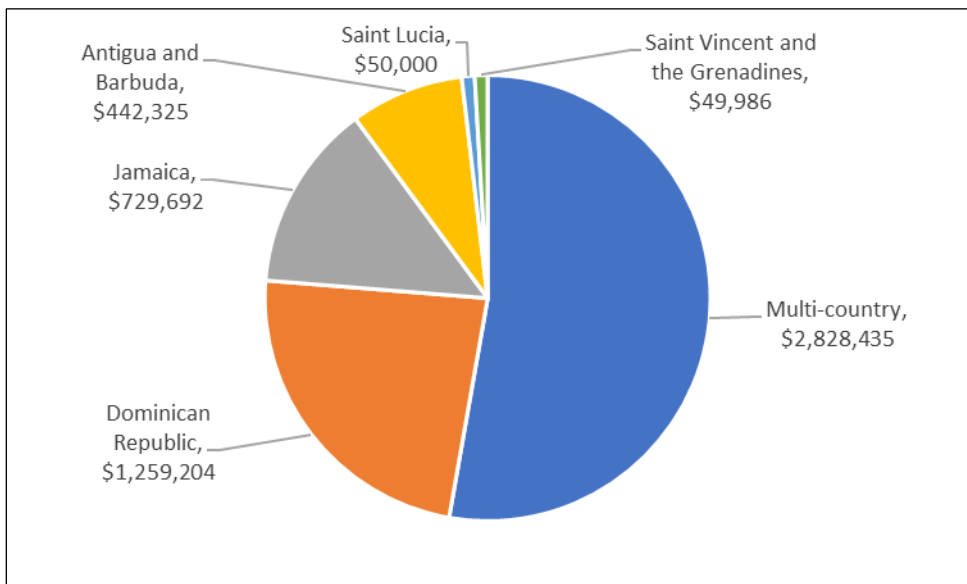
Figure 4 shows the distribution of grant awards by strategic direction. Apart from Strategic Direction 6, which provides for the RIT grant, the grant portfolio is most developed with regard to Strategic Direction 3 on species conservation, for which all of the available funds have been committed. Progress is also well advanced regarding Strategic Directions 1 (41 percent of available funds committed) and 4 (60 percent of available funds). There has been less progress in relation to the other strategic directions. For Strategic Direction 5 on civil society, the quality of applications received under the first four calls was not very high, and only one grant was made, for a hotspot-wide project focused on building sustainable financial capacity for Caribbean CSOs. Of note is that grants awarded under Strategic Directions 1 and 3 to local organizations contain components dedicated to institutional capacity building. For Strategic Direction 2 on priority corridors, the volume of applications received was lower than expected, which suggests that targeted efforts may be needed to engage CSOs with the relevant skills and experience to work in this area, including on sustainable livelihoods.

Figure 4. Awards by strategic direction, June 2023



As Figure 5 shows, the highest allocation from a geographic perspective to date has been for multi-country grants. This reflects the disproportionate influence of the strategic grants for the RIT and CSAT, as there have only been three other multi-country grants: one to Re:wild to develop conservation action plans for globally threatened species; one to Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust to build regional capacity for snake conservation; and one to Fauna & Flora for regional CSO capacity building. Excluding the multi-country grants, the country to have received the largest value of CEPF grants to date is the Dominican Republic, followed by Jamaica, and Antigua and Barbuda.

Figure 4. Awards by country, June 2023



3. Performance of CEPF Investment

3.1 Assessment

Overall, implementation of the CEPF investment in the Caribbean Islands Hotspot remains on track. Excluding the RIT grant, the 21 grants awarded to date support 20 CSOs working in five countries: Antigua and Barbuda; the Dominican Republic; Jamaica; Saint Lucia; and St Vincent and the Grenadines. The majority of the grants and the majority of the funding awarded have gone to local organizations, although international organizations play an important role in the portfolio, particularly with regard to capacity building and regional initiatives. All grants to international organizations have at least one local partner, and often more local groups, which play a significant role in implementing the project. Most of the active grants in the portfolio were awarded within the last 12 months and, hence, have had limited opportunity to deliver results on the ground. Nevertheless, the awarded grants are anticipated to make significant contributions toward the targets in the portfolio logframe (Annex 1).

Several factors have contributed to this good performance:

1. By the end of FY23, the RIT and CSAT had filled a number of vacancies on their teams, thereby improving their capability to implement important strategic activities, including soliciting applications from local CSOs and supporting them to develop coherent projects, well aligned with the goals of the investment strategy, and with good participation from local stakeholders. The hiring of these new staff made a significant difference in accelerating the pace of execution of the RIT and CSAT grants, advancing grant making and roll out of collaborative social accountability approaches.
2. Over the course of FY23, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic abated and restrictions on national and international travel to and within the region were lifted. This improved the level of interaction among the CEPF Secretariat, the CSAT and the RIT, and between them and grantees, applicants and government partners. It was possible to undertake the first in-person supervision missions to the region during the year, and to make site visits to grantees.
3. The previous phase of CEPF investment in the Caribbean Islands Hotspot provided a strong foundation for the current investment, in the following ways:
 - i. Several key stakeholders, including local environmental CSOs and conservation experts, are already familiar with CEPF and its approach and processes. This previous experience created a degree of interest in and credibility for the new phase.
 - ii. Results achieved during the first phase provided a strong, strategically well aligned foundation at several priority KBAs, by, for example, preparing management plans and demonstrating sustainable livelihood activities.
 - iii. CEPF Secretariat and RIT staff are familiar with local conservation issues, priority KBAs and key civil society actors, which has reduced the learning curve and instilled a level of trust among local stakeholders.
4. Strong collaboration between the CSAT and the RIT was mutually beneficial, allowing the CSAT to work with an existing network of environmental and sustainable development CSOs that collaborated with CEPF and CANARI previously. At the same time, the CEPF Secretariat and the RIT appreciated the

dedicated outreach of the CSAT in Antigua and Barbuda, and the Dominican Republic, which helped solicit applications from community-based organizations that had not previously accessed CEPF funding for small grants.

5. Collaboration with the Tropical Andes RIT created synergies and cost savings, with respect to development of the online small grants application and management system, proposal development masterclass, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This was especially true for the Dominican Republic, due to the shared working language of Spanish.

While implementation of the CEPF investment remains on track overall, there have been some delays with development of the grant portfolio. Several factors contributed to these delays:

1. Due to the adverse security situation in parts of Haiti, implementation was suspended there until April 2023, when permission was granted to proceed with grant making subject to the following considerations:
 - i. Submission of proposals is not a guarantee that they will be accepted; proposals must demonstrate appropriate quality and content.
 - ii. The legitimacy of CSOs is really important. Grantees have to be actually on the ground in Haiti and not operating from another country.
 - iii. The logistics and political sensitivities involved in supporting staff of Haitian CSOs to travel to the Dominican Republic for training needs to be given due consideration. Only air travel is possible at this point, due to security concerns.

Due to the unique circumstances of working in Haiti, CEPF Secretariat and RIT staff have developed a launch strategy, which includes the recruitment of a Country Coordinator for Haiti in FY24, to allow for a measured approach to working in the country to promote effective grant making.

2. Staffing difficulties, particularly in the first half of FY23, impacted the RIT's and the CSAT's performance in several ways. For example, recruitment of an RIT Country Coordinator for the Dominican Republic was delayed, due to challenges with finding a suitable candidate. Fortunately, a local expert was recruited in November 2022. In October 2022, the RIT Small Grants Officer resigned, which increased the workload of the remaining RIT staff and the CEPF Secretariat. A well-qualified replacement was hired at the end of February 2023. At the CSAT, the Project Director resigned her post in October 2022 to take a high-level position at the Dominican Republic Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Similarly, the Operations and M&E Coordinator resigned her position in April 2023 to work with a major international NGO. While these positions were filled relatively promptly, this turnover in staff inevitably impacted performance.
3. Like CANARI and INTEC, other Caribbean CSOs experienced challenges with recruitment of new staff and overcommitment of existing staff. Three local civil society groups that had submitted promising LOIs under the third call in FY23 were unable to complete their full proposals, because their organizations lost key staff or were simply too overextended due to their need to attend to damage to their office caused by a hurricane. Fortunately, two organizations that had previously withdrawn their proposals resubmitted new LOIs under the fifth call, indicating that their staffing concerns were being addressed.
4. Staff retention was also a concern for some active grants. Two grantees reported that key staff found new jobs with more promising career opportunities. In cases

such as these, CEPF agreed to increase compensation levels to incentivize the recruitment and retention of staff, particularly in light of the high inflation environment of the year.

5. Caribbean partners raised concerns that CEPF's proposal, financial management, environmental and social risk management, and monitoring and evaluation requirements were more demanding than they had originally anticipated and often exceeded their existing know-how and capacity. For many grantees, preparing, implementing and monitoring CEPF grants is an exercise in capacity building. Throughout the year, the CEPF Secretariat and the RIT provided training, technical assistance and mentoring to enable grantees to comply with CEPF requirements. For example, they delivered a series of webinars and masterclasses in English and Spanish, which were recorded and posted online to serve as a reference for future applicants, with the aim of training local groups on all facets of proposal preparation.

3.2 Portfolio Investment Highlights by Strategic Direction

Strategic Direction 1

Strategic Direction 1 aims to improve the protection and management of 33 priority KBAs for long-term sustainability. To date, five large and four small grants have been awarded under this strategic direction.

The Sociedad Ornitológica de la Hispaniola's project *Threat Mitigation in Sierra de Bahoruco and Bahoruco Oriental Key Biodiversity Areas, Dominican Republic* aims to strengthen the management of these two protected areas and their buffer zones to mitigate threats. To this end, the project is working to build management capacity, develop bird-friendly coffee demonstration plots and promote ecotourism, as well as to prepare and implement species conservation action plans. Local stakeholders are engaged in the project through a stakeholder management committee and community extension activities. During the first year of the project, extensive consultations were held with a wide range of stakeholders, including national and local government agencies, local environmental groups, community leaders, and representatives of the coffee and tourism sectors. Wildlife-friendly organic coffee is being promoted as a sustainable economic activity for buffer zone communities; 100 families have been assisted to apply for a zero-interest loan, to support the transition to organic coffee growing, which takes three years. Nature-based tourism is being promoted at the two protected areas, and the project has already supported the renovation of trails and ticket booths.

Strategic Direction 2

Strategic Direction 2 aims to increase landscape-level connectivity and ecosystem resilience in seven priority corridors. Only two grants (one large and one small) have so far been awarded under this strategic direction.

In the Dominican Republic, Fondazione AVSI is implementing the project *Promoting conservation through Beekeeping in Sierra de Bahoruco National Park*, which will mitigate and reduce threats to the biodiversity of the park, by promoting beekeeping for sustainable livelihoods in the transition and buffer zones. As an income generating activity, beekeeping fulfils a double function: apart from guaranteeing economic income to participating families, it also helps in the conservation of flora species (essential for

honey production) and in maintaining forest cover. The project focuses on five local communities, where unsustainable practices for income generation pose a threat to the national park. Beekeeping training is currently underway, with more than 30 people already trained in the proper management of apiaries and beekeeping activities. Training sessions take into account the particularities of the region, prioritize topics of interest to the group, and intentionally include women.

Strategic Direction 3

Strategic Direction 3 aims to safeguard priority Critically Endangered and Endangered species. Five large and one small grant have been awarded under this strategic direction, focusing on the conservation of conifers, other threatened plants, birds, reptiles and an amphibian.

One of the grants focused on bird conservation is the BirdsCaribbean's project *Developing a Conservation Action Plan for the Endangered Whistling Warbler in the Cumberland Forest Reserve and the Central Mountain Range*. This project supports the development of a conservation action plan to monitor, track and manage whistling warbler (*Catharopeza bishopi*), an endemic endangered species found in the Cumberland Forest Reserve and the Central Mountain Range of Saint Vincent. Field surveys are being conducted to collect data on the species and inform the preparation of the plan. In January 2023, BirdsCaribbean hosted a five-day workshop at the Botanical Gardens in Saint Vincent, during which 24 Caribbean wildlife professionals received training in landbird identification and monitoring techniques. As a follow-up to the workshop, the Saint Vincent Forestry Department is initiating a long-term landbird monitoring program, to better understand the ecology and status of whistling warbler, Saint Vincent parrot (*Amazona guildingii*) and other forest birds. Other organizations that participated in the workshop have begun to develop their own landbird monitoring programs, and are engaging local communities in bird education activities, monitoring and conservation.

Strategic Direction 4

Strategic Direction 4 aims to improve a range of enabling conditions designed to promote biodiversity conservation in countries with priority sites. CEPF has awarded one large grant under this strategic direction, to INTEC, to implement the CSAT, while the RIT has awarded two small grants.

The small grants including one to Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency (STEA) for the project *Using Nature-Based Tourism to Strengthen Biodiversity Conservation in the Cockpit Country, Jamaica*. This project aims to strengthen STEA/Cockpit Country Adventure Tours' (CCAT's) eco- and community-based tourism program: an innovative model that promotes managed exploration of the Cockpit Country landscape, to see, experience and appreciate the unique ecology and biodiversity without leaving negative footprints. In return, local residents benefit from the income generated from developing eco-friendly attractions and hosting guests. The program also aims to create a greater sense of pride among residents and highlights reasons to protect the local natural landscape where the attractions are located. To date, 11 potential nature-based attractions have been identified in the three Cockpit Country communities targeted by the project.

Strategic Direction 5

Strategic Direction 5 aims to support Caribbean civil society conserve biodiversity by building local, national and regional institutional capacity and fostering collaboration. Only a single grant has been awarded to date, to Fauna & Flora, for the project Building Caribbean Civil Society Capacity in Delivering Sustainable Financial Strategies. This project aims to strengthen the financial resilience of CSOs working at priority KBAs, with a focus on four organizations in Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. To this end, the project is supporting the development and implementation of sustainable financing plans, providing training and mentoring on project design and fundraising, and promoting eco-tourism products. Because the project only started in June 2023, there were few results to report by the end of FY23.

Strategic Direction 6

Strategic Direction 6 supports the RIT. As described elsewhere, CEPF has awarded a large grant to CANARI, to provide strategic leadership and local knowledge to advance CEPF's goals in the hotspot. The RIT also plays a central role in building the capacity of civil society groups in designing, implementing and replicating successful conservation activities. In addition, the RIT is responsible for supporting collaborative social accountability in Haiti, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and The Bahamas.

4. Collaboration with CEPF's donors and other funders

In August 2021, the World Bank entered into an agreement to fund all strategic directions and investment priorities in CEPF's investment strategy in the Caribbean Islands, with the exception of priorities in Barbados. This support is provided through a project, implemented by Conservation International on behalf of the CEPF global donor partnership. During FY23, the CEPF Secretariat and RIT worked very closely with the World Bank task team to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of this project, and to troubleshoot any problems encountered. In late February and early March 2023, the World Bank conducted an implementation support mission to Jamaica, which involved meetings with CEPF Secretariat and CANARI staff, and site visits to two grantees: Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation; and STEA.

5. Conclusion

By the end of FY23, CEPF was two years into a five-year investment phase. Progress with grant making was satisfactory, with a portfolio of 22 active grants, accounting for a little over half of the available funds. However, there remain gaps with regard to certain strategic directions and countries. In the case of Haiti, the World Bank has granted permission for CEPF and the RIT to commence investment, subject to certain conditions, and a strategy for launching grant making in the country has been prepared. In the case of the smaller islands (The Bahamas and the Lesser Antilles), the limited number of potential grantees in each country requires a focused strategy of outreach, to engage with suitable CSOs able to contribute to the goals of the investment strategy, and to reassure them that the application process will not be too long or burdensome. In turn, this will require the CEPF Secretariat to review its processes and ensure that they are fit for purpose in making funding accessible to local organizations.

Annex 1: Results against Targets in the Portfolio Logframe

Global Objective	Goals and Indicators	Results
<p>Support the conservation of biodiversity within the global hotspots by engaging and strengthening the capacity of civil society</p>	<p>Biodiversity <u>Goal:</u> Improve the status of globally significant biodiversity in critical ecosystems within hotspots <u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of globally threatened species benefiting from conservation action. • Number of hectares of Key Biodiversity Areas with improved management. • Number of hectares of protected areas created and/or expanded. • Number of hectares of production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity. • Number of protected areas with improved management. <p>Civil Society <u>Goal:</u> Strengthen the capacity of civil society to be effective as environmental stewards and advocates for the conservation of globally significant biodiversity. <u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of CEPF grantees with improved organizational capacity. • Number of CEPF grantees with improved understanding of and commitment to gender issues. • Number of networks and partnerships that have been created and/or strengthened. <p>Human Well-being <u>Goal:</u> Improve the well-being of people living in and dependent on critical ecosystems within hotspots. <u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people receiving structured training. • Number of people receiving non-cash benefits other than structured training. • Number of people receiving cash benefits. • Number of projects promoting nature-based solutions to combat climate change. • Amount of CO₂e sequestered in CEPF-supported natural habitats. <p>Enabling Conditions for Conservation <u>Goal:</u> Establish the conditions needed for the conservation of globally significant biodiversity. <u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of laws, regulations, and policies with conservation provisions that have been enacted or amended. • Number of sustainable financing mechanisms that are delivering funds for conservation. • Number of companies that adopt biodiversity-friendly practices. 	<p>No results to report.</p>

Portfolio Objective	Targets	Results
Engage civil society in the conservation of globally threatened biodiversity through targeted investments with maximum impact on the highest conservation and ecosystem services priorities.	<p>Thirty-three KBAs covering 1,174,380 hectares have strengthened management, as guided by sustainable management plans.</p> <p>At least 40,000 hectares of the 2,345,311 hectares within production landscapes are under improved management for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services.</p> <p>At least five local development plans, projects or policies mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services, with a focus on tourism, mining, unsustainable agriculture and infrastructure development.</p>	<p>Awarded grants aim to strengthen management of four KBAs covering 1,876,462 hectares.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to improve management of 200 hectares within production landscapes.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to mainstream biodiversity into three development plans, projects or policies.</p>
Intermediate Outcomes	Intermediate Indicators	Results
<p>Outcome 1. Improve the protection and management of 33 priority sites for long-term sustainability.</p> <p>\$4,500,000</p>	<p>At least 75 percent (678,044 hectares) of the 19 existing protected areas in the priority sites, totaling 904,059 hectares experience, on average, a 15 percent improvement on the Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool.</p> <p>At least seven (50 percent) of the 14 under-protected priority KBAs brought under new or strengthened protection status.</p> <p>Climate change resilience integrated into 100 percent of management plans developed or updated with CEPF support.</p> <p>At least 10 participatory or collaborative management arrangements developed or strengthened.</p> <p>Three data-deficient sites assessed as KBAs under the 2016 Global KBA Standard.</p>	<p>Awarded grants aim to improve management of 423,908 hectares within seven existing protected areas.</p> <p>Awarded grants do not aim to protect any under-protected priority KBAs.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to integrate resilience into four management plans.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to develop arrangements for eight priority KBAs.</p> <p>Awarded grants do not aim to assess any data deficient sites.</p>
<p>Outcome 2. Increase landscape-level connectivity and ecosystem resilience in seven priority corridors.</p> <p>\$1,000,000</p>	<p>At least five participatory local land-use or catchment management plans developed or strengthened to improve ecosystem services and connectivity within conservation corridors.</p> <p>Climate change resilience integrated into 100 percent of landscape-level plans developed.</p> <p>At least three conservation-based enterprises (e.g. nature-based tourism, conservation coffee and cacao, sustainable fisheries, etc.) developed in communities within the priority conservation corridors.</p> <p>Three businesses and/or their associations influenced to better incorporate biodiversity conservation into business and production practices, strategies and policies.</p>	<p>Awarded grants aim to strengthen one plan (for Parque Nacional Sierra de Bahoruco).</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to integrate climate change resilience into one plan.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to develop 23 conservation-based enterprises.</p> <p>Awarded grants do not aim to influence any businesses or their associations.</p>

<p>Outcome 3. Safeguard priority Critically Endangered and Endangered species.</p> <p>\$1,000,000</p>	<p>Conservation plans developed and implemented for at least 20 priority Critically Endangered and Endangered species.</p> <p>At least five species or species-group management plans and programs updated to integrate climate change responses.</p> <p>IUCN Red List updated with assessments of at least three priority plant families</p> <p>At least 50 CEPF priority species benefit from conservation actions through CEPF-supported management plans and their implementation.</p>	<p>Awarded grants aim to develop conservation plans for 39 species.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to integrate climate change into plans for 52 species.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to update assessments of nine plant families.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to benefit the conservation of 88 priority species.</p>
<p>Outcome 4. Improve the enabling conditions for biodiversity conservation in countries with priority sites.</p> <p>\$1,000,000</p>	<p>At least 10 local, national and regional policies, projects or plans incorporate biodiversity, climate change and ecosystem services in the agricultural, mining, tourism and infrastructural development sectors.</p> <p>Three small-scale climate change demonstration projects in priority sites and conservation corridors planned and implemented to illustrate the benefits of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services for adaptation and mitigation.</p> <p>At least two sustainable financing mechanisms or programs include CEPF priority sites in their programming.</p> <p>Three private sector demonstration projects planned and implemented in support of biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>Awareness of, and support for, conservation issues increased among stakeholders in least 10 priority sites.</p>	<p>Awarded grants do not aim to influence any policies, projects or plans in these sectors.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to implement six small-scale climate change demonstration projects.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to include CEPF priority sites into four sustainable financing mechanisms.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to implement three private sector demonstration projects.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to increase awareness at 21 priority sites.</p>
<p>Outcome 5. Support Caribbean civil society to conserve biodiversity by building local, national and regional institutional capacity and fostering stakeholder collaboration</p> <p>\$1,000,000</p>	<p>At least 15 local CSOs demonstrate improved performance with gender mainstreaming (at least 10 percent increase).</p> <p>At least 20 local CSOs demonstrate improved organizational capacity (at least 10 percent increase).</p> <p>At least 20 civil society networks and alliances enable collective responses to priority and emerging threats.</p> <p>Two innovative financing mechanisms for civil society sustainable funding developed.</p>	<p>Awarded grants aim to improve the performance of 33 local CSOs with gender mainstreaming.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to improve the capacity of 33 local CSOs.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to strengthened 31 networks and alliances.</p> <p>Awarded grants aim to develop one innovative financing mechanism for civil society.</p>

<p>Outcome 6. Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of CEPF investment through a Regional Implementation Team</p> <p>\$1,500,000</p>	<p>At least 50 CSOs, including at least 40 local organizations, actively participate in conservation actions guided by the ecosystem profile.</p> <p>At least 75 percent of local CSOs receiving CEPF grants are found to have met or exceeded expectations regarding programmatic performance.</p> <p>At least 30 CSOs supported by CEPF secure follow-up funding to promote the sustainability of their CEPF grants.</p> <p>At least 2 participatory assessments are undertaken and lessons learned and best practices from the hotspot are documented.</p>	<p>52 CSOs, including 45 local organizations, are actively participating in conservation actions guided by the ecosystem profile.</p> <p>The RIT aims to ensure that 75 percent of local grantees meet or exceed expectations.</p> <p>The RIT aims to ensure that 30 CSOs secure follow-up funding.</p> <p>The RIT aims to undertake two participatory assessments: mid-term assessment in 2024; and final assessment in 2026.</p>
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Annex 2: Contracted Grants to Date

No.	Organization	Country	Obligated Amount	Project Title	Start Date	End Date
Strategic Direction 1						
1	Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation	Jamaica	\$388,484	Management Planning and Implementation in the Portland Bight Protected Area, Jamaica	7/1/2022	6/30/2025
2	Environmental Awareness Group	Antigua and Barbuda	\$393,385	Accelerating Locally-led Conservation Action at Key Biodiversity Areas in Antigua and Barbuda	5/1/2023	4/30/2026
3	Fundación José Delio Guzmán	Dominican Republic	\$209,892	Reducing Threats in Valle Nuevo National Park, Dominican Republic	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
4	Fundación para el Mejoramiento Humano	Dominican Republic	\$49,473	Update of the Management Plan for the Ebano Verde Scientific Reserve, Dominican Republic	7/1/2023	6/30/2024
5	Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral, Inc.	Dominican Republic	\$215,224	Management Planning and Implementation in Parque Nacional Montaña La Humeadora, Dominican Republic	7/1/2023	12/31/2024
6	International Iguana Foundation	Jamaica	\$49,946	Protecting the Jamaican Rock Iguana from Threats Posed by Invasive Species, Hellshire Hills, Portland Bight Protected Area, Jamaica	7/1/2023	6/30/2025
7	Jamaica Environment Trust	Jamaica	\$47,135	Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation Plan for Cockpit Country, Jamaica	1/1/2023	1/31/2024
8	Saint Lucia National Trust	Saint Lucia	\$50,000	Establishing the Enabling Environment for Sustainable Management of the Point Sable Environmental Protected Area, Saint Lucia	1/1/2023	12/31/2023
9	Sociedad Ornitológica de la Hispaniola	Dominican Republic	\$434,625	Enhancing management to mitigate threats in Sierra de Bahoruco and Bahoruco Oriental KBAs, Dominican Republic	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
Strategic Direction 2						
10	Fondazione AVSI	Dominican Republic	\$70,695	Promoting Conservation through Beekeeping in Sierra de Bahoruco National Park, Dominican Republic	1/1/2023	3/31/2024
11	Northern Cockpit Country Local Forest Management Committee Benevolent Society	Jamaica	\$47,022	Maintaining Biodiversity through Sustainable Livelihoods and Environmental Awareness in Northern Cockpit Country, Jamaica	6/1/2023	5/31/2024

No.	Organization	Country	Obligated Amount	Project Title	Start Date	End Date
Strategic Direction 3						
12	BirdsCaribbean	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	\$49,986	Developing a Conservation Action Plan for the Endangered Whistling Warbler in the Cumberland Forest Reserve and the Central Mountain Range, St. Vincent	12/1/2022	11/30/2024
13	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust	Antigua and Barbuda; Saint Lucia	\$241,834	Conserving the Saint Lucia Racer and Strengthening Regional Capacity for Racer Conservation	4/1/2023	3/31/2026
14	International Union for Conservation of Nature	Dominican Republic	\$112,626	Conservation Action Plans for Threatened Conifers and Palms in the Dominican Republic	7/1/2022	6/30/2024
15	International Union for Conservation of Nature	Jamaica	\$147,106	Preparing Conservation Action Plans for Jamaica's Threatened Plants	6/1/2023	12/31/2024
16	Re:wild	Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas; Jamaica; Saint Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines	\$336,614	Call to Action: Conservation Action Plans for Endangered Caribbean Species	3/1/2023	2/28/2026
17	The Peregrine Fund	Dominican Republic	\$166,668	Conservation Action Planning and Implementation for Ridgway's Hawk, Dominican Republic	8/1/2023	1/31/2025
Strategic Direction 4						
18	Fitches Creek Residents Association	Antigua and Barbuda	\$48,940	Building a Community Constituency for Conservation of Fitches Creek Bay and the Northeast Marine Management Area, Antigua and Barbuda	7/1/2023	6/30/2024
19	INTEC	Antigua and Barbuda; Dominican Republic; Jamaica; Saint Lucia	\$500,000	Promoting Collaborative Social Accountability in the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot	9/1/2021	8/31/2025
20	Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency	Jamaica	\$50,000	Using Nature-Based Tourism to Strengthen Biodiversity Conservation in the Cockpit Country, Jamaica	1/1/2023	12/31/2023
Strategic Direction 5						
21	Fauna & Flora	Hotpot-wide	\$249,987	Building Sustainable Financial Capacity for Caribbean Civil Society Organizations	6/1/2023	5/31/2025
Strategic Direction 6						
22	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute	Hotspot-wide	\$1,500,000	CEPF Regional Implementation Team for the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot	8/1/2021	7/31/2026