

# Conservation in a Social Context

## How to bring NATURE and PEOPLE truly together in the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot

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*Exercise time © EAM RIT*

The [Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot](#) is not only indisputably rich in biodiversity, it is also very diverse and complex in terms of history, politics, social structures, religion, culture, and gender relations - just to name a few issues! All this context needs to be taken into account if any conservation initiative is to succeed and be sustainable in this region.

[The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) (CEPF)'s niche in the region is to enable civil society to have a more prominent role in driving development towards a more biodiversity-friendly direction. It is in this context that [Fauna & Flora International](#) (FFI) in collaboration with the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot, brought together 30 CEPF grantees from Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania (in Entebbe in May 2017) and from DRC, Burundi, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (in Harare in June 2017) for two training workshops that aimed to develop the knowledge and skills of these CEPF grantees in addressing and integrating rights and other social issues into their conservation projects.

During both four-day workshops, the grantees learned about community and social diversity, gender and conservation, governance, rights-based approaches to conservation, equity participation and power, and conflict management, in order to better understand how these issues affect the use and management of nature.

Most of the Key Biodiversity Areas where CEPF is currently investing in, provide local communities with essential goods and services such as food, water, pollination, etc, and are in some places even home to people. Therefore, local people's lives, needs and rights need to be considered in the design and implementation of any conservation initiatives. As much as the grantees want their conservation initiatives to succeed, they also share a responsibility to understand and address the potential negative impacts of conservation actions on people's values, livelihoods and rights.



Learning session © EAM RIT

The trainings were part of a series of region-wide capacity-building and networking events for civil society organisations engaged in the conservation of Key Biodiversity Areas in the Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot, a project funded by CEPF. It was based on a [manual titled INTRINSIC \(Integrating Rights and Social Issues in Conservation\)](#). The manual was jointly developed few years ago by BirdLife International, Fauna & Flora International (FFI), the Tropical Biology Association (TBA) and the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge.

As an added value to the training in Harare, two CEPF grantees who participated in a previous workshop, the [women empowerment and networking event in Kigali in April 2017](#), now became trainers and facilitated the session on 'gender' during the INTRINSIC training. Julie Mulonga from Wetlands International was one of them: "I was very happy to be part of this training in Harare, and to share what we learned in Kigali with a new group of CEPF grantees."

And this peer-to-peer training will not stop here: "My colleagues are so excited to get the main feedback of the relevant topics covered during the training," wrote Gédéon BANSWE TSHIBANGU from WWF after his return to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**The first five-year cycle of CEPF investment (2012-2017) in the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot may be coming to a close, but new networks, knowledge and skills live on.**

*See the interactive map of all projects implemented under the CEPF Eastern Afromontane Hotspot programme [here](#).*

*The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. More information on CEPF can be found at [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net).*

*[BirdLife International](#), together with the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) and the [Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society](#) (BirdLife in Ethiopia) form the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot (2012-2017). The investment will support civil society in applying innovative approaches to conservation in under-capacitated and underfunded protected areas, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and priority corridors in the region.*