

# The Road to Resilience

- By CEPF



*Greetings from the beneficiaries! (Photo: Resilience Now)*

[Kibira National Park](#) — the second largest nature reserve in Burundi — contains more than 644 species of plants, 98 species of mammals and 200 species of birds. It is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area and Eastern Afromontane Key Biodiversity Area.

Despite its status as a National Park, the civil war that started in Burundi in 1993 caused many people to seek refuge in Kibira's forests. Refugees and people living near the park damaged its ecosystems by cutting timber and clearing land for agriculture. Today, deforestation, poaching and some agricultural practices still threaten the area.

## Wood is hot

As the main source of energy in the region, wood is a hot commodity. Poverty, population growth and a lack of alternatives have led to forest degradation and deforestation, as many people revert to the forest for firewood and charcoal. With support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) through its investment in the [Eastern Afromontane Hotspot](#), French NGO [Resilience Now](#) strengthened natural resource management practices in the fragile habitat around Kibira National Park [see also our previous article about this project [here](#)].

Resilience Now worked with Park-adjacent communities to develop sustainable agriculture, energy and income generating activities that preserve the environment while meeting the local communities' livelihood needs. Through this project, they contributed to one of the key objectives of the [CEPF Investment Strategy for the Eastern Afromontane hotspot](#): "Strategic Direction 1: To mainstream biodiversity into wider development policies, plans and projects to deliver the co-benefits of biodiversity conservation, improved local livelihoods and economic development in priority corridors."

One of the key activities identified by the communities in their [Participatory Action Plan](#) was the production of improved cook stoves.

## Improved stoves save trees – and lives

According to the World Health Organization, one in eight people died in 2012 as a result of poor air quality due to pollution, with 4.3 million deaths a result of fumes from cooking or heating. In Burundi, conventional fireplaces not only consume a lot of wood, but they also cause respiratory problems due to the fumes produced.

The improved cook stoves used around Kibira are built from clay and termite mound soil, and use three times less wood than traditional fireplaces. They also limit smoke emissions, making cooking healthier. Therefore, improved cook stoves will reduce pressures on forest resources, help conserve the environment, and improve the quality of community life.



*Participants unanimously acclaim the improved cook stove, one of the many solutions identified during a Resilience Now workshop to improve climate change resilience in Burundi (Photo: Resilience Now – Florence Gibert)*

## Next phase

Resilience Now applied a variety of tools during the implementation of their [CEPF small grants project](#), including problem identification, solutions mapping and experience-exchange visits to see best practices 'live'. "I was very impressed by what they [the community members] learned from other associations during the exchange visits, and they have now started putting into practice some of what they learned," said Jean-Paul Ntungane from BirdLife International, the lead member of the Eastern Afromontane Regional Implementation Team, after a site visit to Kibira. "They are now making energy-conserving stoves and could do more if they get additional funding."

CEPF has taken this advice and has just signed a new contract with Resilience Now to upscale their activities around Kibira National Park. The long road to resilience has just become a little bit shorter!

**This article is based on a story that was first produced by CEPF; read the full story on the CEPF website here:** [English](#), [French](#)

*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, 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 IUCN and the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, form the Regional Implementation Team that supports CEPF with their investment in the [Eastern Afromontane Hotspot](#).

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