Evaluation of Lessons Learned to Inform Reinvestment in the Eastern Afromontane, Indo-Burma and Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspots

Integrated Sustainability Solutions LLC

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Acknowledgments

I. Executive Summary

Integrated Sustainability Solutions LLC (ISS) is pleased to submit to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) the "Evaluation of Lessons Learned to Inform Reinvestment in the Eastern Afromontane, Indo-Burma and Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspots" (hereafter, Tri-RIT evaluation). This evaluation was conducted by Keith Forbes, Founder and Principal of Integrated Sustainability Solutions (ISS) between August 2019 and April 2020. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess RIT performance, inform future ecosystem profiles, and the selection of future RITs.

The evaluation consisted of the normal phases – Desk Research, Inception Workshop, Country Visits, Analysis, and Report Writing. ISS conducted country visits to Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia in January 2020 to conduct key informant interviews with the RITs, grantees, donors, government and grant-making organizations, for Wallacea and Indo-Burma. The EAM research was conducted through multiple online surveys and a remote interview with the RIT.

The report below provides detailed findings, conclusions, and recommendations for all three hotspots according to the criteria of the evaluation which were relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coverage, accessibility, and adaptive management. These were mapped to the terms of reference in order to maintain consistency with RIT admin grant reporting and provide a structure for the questionnaires.

With the exception of one or two criteria, ISS found that all the RITs (Burung Indonesia – Wallacea, IUCN – Indo-Burma, and BirdLife International – Eastern Afromontane) executed their terms of reference to a high level. Specific recommendations are made for each hotspot as well as at CEPF program level.

II. Introduction

Integrated Sustainability Solutions LLC (ISS) is pleased to submit to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) the "Evaluation of Lessons Learned to Inform Reinvestment in the Eastern Afromontane, Indo-Burma and Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspots" (hereafter, Tri-RIT evaluation).
ISS was selected by CEPF to conduct the Tri-RIT evaluation through a competitive RFP process. CEPF issued the RFP on 8/15/2019 and the contract with ISS was finalized on 11/14/2019.

CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank. In 2000, the GEF, the World Bank (WB) and Conservation International (CI) created the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) as a mechanism to enable civil society organizations (CSOs) to support the conservation of critical ecosystems within biodiversity hotspots. Of the 36 defined hotspots, CEPF has worked in the 24 eligible biodiversity hotspots and has a total project portfolio value of $232M. Including the three hotspots that are the focus of this evaluation, CEPF is currently working in a total of ten hotspots around the world, the others being the Cerrado, East Melanesian islands, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean islands, the Guinean forests of West Africa, the Mountains of Central Asia, the Tropical Andes and the Mediterranean Basin.

The purpose of the Tri-RIT evaluation is to inform investment decisions for the next phase of CEPF
investment as follows:[1]

- Inform the selection of a RIT for the next phase of investment by evaluating the performance of the current RIT
- Benefit future RIT proposals through the lessons learned from this evaluation regarding the programmatic and management approaches of the current RIT
- Inform the preparation of any updates to the ecosystem profiles for the hotspots by documenting the challenges and opportunities encountered by the current RITs while implementing the grants programs to engage and strengthen civil society in conserving globally important biodiversity

The evaluation was implemented by Keith Forbes (hereafter consultant or ISS), Founder and Principal of Integrated Sustainability Solutions LLC (http://www.issolutionsllc.com/) (ISS). Mr. Forbes has conducted six evaluations for the Conservation International Global Environment Fund (GEF) Project Agency (CI GEF), including the 2018 Midterm Review of CEPF, which involved in-country detailed research in Brazil for the Cerrado hotspot, and remote interviews with the Eastern Afromontane (EAM) and Indo-Burma hotspots. Through this evaluation, Mr. Forbes gained deep insights into CEPF, especially enhanced by discussions with CEPF Secretariat members who were in Brazil during the 2018 evaluation (Mr. Jack Tordoff and Ms. Peggy Poncelet). He has also conducted a total of 20 evaluations for USAID, GEF, and the EU. The

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[1]   More information on the consultant scope of work (SoW) is included in the Annex.

initial period of performance of this Tri-RIT evaluation was November 14th, 2019 to March 31st, 2020, with a total level of effort of forty days. The evaluation included desk research; an Inception Workshop; two field missions to the Indo-Burma (two days Bangkok plus three days in Phnom Penh) and Wallacea (two days in Bogor, and three in Jakarta) hotspots; online surveys of EAM and a remote interview of the RIT; analysis and report writing.

III. Methodology and Limitations

A. Methodology

The methodology of this evaluation consisted of a virtual inception workshop, desk research, key informant (KI) interviews, post-research verification of initial conclusions, and triangulation of the various sources of data. This Inception Workshop was held remotely via Gotomeeting on December 17th, 2019 from 11:00 – 13:30 UTC. The attendees were Nina Marshall, Jack Tordoff, and Dan Rothberg of the CEPF Secretariat; Adi Widyanto and Jihad of Burung Indonesia (Wallacea RIT); Alessandro Badalotti, Scott Perkin and Alexander McWilliam of IUCN (Indo-Burma RIT); and Maaike Manten of Bird Life International (EAM RIT). The workshop was organized and conducted by ISS. ISS explained the purpose of the evaluation, described the methodology, and stressed that the evaluation would embody the concept of adaptive management and not be an audit.

The desk research consisted of reviewing the most relevant documents provided by the grant directors from among the following categories:

- Ecosystem Profile
- Annual Portfolio Overview (APO) Assessments
- Midterm Assessments
- Supervision Missions
- RIT Financial Reports
- RIT Progress Reports
- CEPF Progress Reports
- Grant Agreements
- Summary data on the grant portfolios from CEPF's Grant Management

The total number of documents obtained for the three hotspots was approximately 120, necessitating screening, whereby, in the majority of cases, the most recent reports were given more weight in the analysis, except in those cases where the earliest reports were used for baseline data in order to make before-after comparisons.

ISS provided categories of KIs (e.g., small grantees, large grantees, government, donors, etc.) to the RITs, as well as the number of interviews for each category, and requested that the RITs provide a list of KIs, which was then screened by ISS. The RITs supported ISS by scheduling the KI interviews (KIIs) according to the number of days in-country (Jakarta and Bogor, Indonesia – five; Bangkok, Thailand – two; and Phnom Penh, Cambodia – three). This approach was necessary in the interests of efficiency, as well as because ISS was not known to the KIs and, as such, they may not necessarily have responded in a timely manner. The list of KIs is provided in the annex. The original plan was to only visit Thailand in Indo-Burma but Cambodia was added at the suggestion of the RIT and with the agreement of the Secretariat and ISS. For EAM, online surveys, customized to the different categories, were sent to the KIs provided by the RIT. The majority of KI interviews (KIIs) for Wallacea and Indo-Burma were conducted in person, except

for those KIs in the former that were not based in Jakarta or Bogor, and any in both hotspots that could not meet in person. In Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia, ISS was supported by national consultants, who provided invaluable interpreter services and assisted with logistics, which was critical to the success of the in-country KIIs.

The in-country research was done in Indonesia from January 18 to 24, 2020, in Jakarta and Bogor. As this evaluation was focused on the performance of the RITs and was not an impact evaluation, grantees' activities were not the main focus, and, as such, only those in Jakarta and Bogor were interviewed in person. Those located on the other islands were interviewed by remote means. No field sites were visited for this or the other hotspots. ISS visited Thailand (Bangkok only) from January 25 to 28, 2020 and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from January 29 to 31, 2020. The questionnaires used for the different categories of KIs and the online surveys are presented below.

The questions were similar across hotspots except as indicated below because the Wallacea hotspot was subject to the revised CEPF Terms of Reference of 2014, which included new RIT duties.[2] ISS recorded all notes from KIIs directly into a laptop and these were immediately synchronized with a cloud folder using either WiFi when available or by tethering via a cell phone using the cellular networks. This provided an instantaneous backup system of all data and facilitated sharing with the designated responsible party at the Secretariat. ISS, in full compliance with the contract with the CI Foundation (for CEPF), provided the Senior Director for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Outreach "live" access to a cloud-hosted calendar of all KIIs and folders with the KII notes.

Table 1. Key Informant Questionnaires (Wallacea and Indo-Burma) and Online Surveys (Eastern Afromontane)

Evaluation Questions for RIT
I. Coordination and communication, building partnerships and promoting information exchange (all hotspots)
• Describe how you established this RIT as the point of contact for CEPF in this hotspot? Can you give an example?
• How did your organization create lessons learned? Which topics and why? Dissemination?
• How did you facilitate the exchange of information between grantees? Can you provide an example?)
• Can you comment on how your work impacted the community of conservation NGOs in this region? Is there some effort you can point to that demonstrates the functioning of this community.
• Was your organization able to leverage additional funding in this region? If so, can you provide example(s)?
• How often did you visit stakeholders and grantees on average? What criteria did you use to choose who to visit?
• Which kind of events did you attend to broaden awareness of the CEPF program?
II. Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices (all hotspots[3])
• How did you support civil society in engaging with: 1) govt., 2) private sector? Examples.
• Were you able to engage directly with the private sector? How? Examples? Pros and cons.

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2   Note that all questionnaires included an introduction which explained the purpose of the evaluation and a statement on free, prior and informed consent. These are excluded here for the purpose of brevity.

3   While not originally included in their terms of reference, this component was added to Indo-Burma and EAM.

III. Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot. (all hotspots)
- Describe how you communicated with: 1) CEPF Secretariat and 2) Donors
- Can you provide some examples of communication products you have created? Which do you think were more effective?
- How did you choose methods of dissemination?
- What was your experience with the RIT exchanges? What did you learn/teach?

IV. Build the capacity of local civil society. (all hotspots)
- How did you determine capacity needs for CSOs?
- Describe how you contributed to the strategic vision and "graduation?"
- How did you help grantees to design projects?
- How did you help grantees to engage with: 1) govt., 2) private sector

V. Establish and coordinate a process for (*large grant for Wallacea only, otherwise not specified*) proposal solicitation and review
- How did you publicize the availability of grants?
- How did you inform grantees and other stakeholders about the ecosystem profile?
- Describe your evaluation process for large grants including communicating with grantees?
- How did you decide to award or reject?

VI. Manage a program of small grants of US$20,000 (US$50,000 or less in select approved regions). (all hotspots)
- Describe the solicitation process for the small grants
- How did you do due diligence?
- How did you assemble the panel of experts? COIs?
- Describe the management and administration of grants, including reporting

VII. Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants (Wallacea only).
- How did you collect and report on indicators - biological and social?
- How did you ensure data quality from grantees? Deliverable completion? Tracking tools?
- Describe the assessment process

VIII. Lead the process to develop, over a three-month period, a long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment. Describe the long-term strategic vision development process (Wallacea only)

IX. Monitoring and Reporting (all hotspots)
- What was your experience with the RIT training?
- How did you support and learn from the supervision missions?
- Describe financial reporting

Evaluation Questions for Grantees
General (all hotspots)
- Biographical info (name, institution name, email, phone #)
- What is your level of knowledge of the CEPF program in the (hotspot)?

(ask at end of interview) (all hotspots)
- What was most positive about the work of (RIT)? What was most negative?
- What was most positive about the work of the national coordinator? What was most negative?
- Do you have any recommendations for how (RIT) could have improved its work?

I. Coordination and communication, building partnerships and promoting information exchange (all hotspots)

- How did you find out about the CEPF program (e.g., word of mouth, workshop, Internet, etc.)?
- Which institution was your national coordinator? Did you receive information from the national coordinator or (RIT)? Was it clear to you who you should reach out to for specific kinds of questions?
- Do you feel that overall communications with your national coordinator went smoothly?
- Do you feel that overall communications with (RIT) went smoothly?
- Did (RIT) help you exchange information with other grantees? If so, how, and how was this useful to the work of your organization? (Can you provide an example?)

II. Mainstreaming (Wallacea only)

- How did your organization work with others and (RIT) to engage with government and the private sector?
- What is your opinion about (RIT)'s efforts to mainstream biodiversity conservation in Indonesia/E. Timor?

III. Build the capacity of grantees (all hotspots)

- Did the RIT explain the strategic directions in the ecosystem profile? Did you understand how the strategic directions applied to this hotspot?
- Did (RIT) contribute to the design of your organization's project?
- Did (RIT) explain the concept of Safeguards to your organization and how you should address them within the implementation of your project?
- Did you attend any workshops conducted by (RIT)? What topics were covered and were the workshops useful to your organization? In what way?

IV. Establishing and coordinating a process for proposal solicitation and review. (all hotspots)

- Were you able to receive clarifications from (RIT) about any doubts you had about the call for proposals in a timely manner?
- Did your organization design a new project to meet CEPF funding priorities or did you modify an existing project?
- Were you clear about the evaluation process and timeframe? – for a large grantee, this would also provide info on Secretariat.
- What are your thoughts about the number of projects funded in your country relative to the conservation needs and number of capable organizations (multiple choice – too few, correct number, too many)? Please elaborate on your choice.
- How did you obtain the call(s) for proposals? Was (were) the call(s) for proposals clear about the project eligibility and the proposal evaluation criteria?
- Were you clear on what kinds of projects were being funded, and did this influence how you designed the project of your organization?
- How long did it take from when you submitted the proposal to when you received a response? Were you satisfied with the response time? (for a large grantee, this would also provide info on Secretariat.)

V., VI. Managing grants (all hotspots)

- Were there any issues with contracting?
- With technical reporting?
- With financial reporting?

VI. Reporting and Monitoring (all hotspots)

- Did (RIT) explain how reporting was to be done? Did they help you prepare reports or provide comments on your reports?
- What percentage of your organization's staff time was spent on reporting and what percentage on project implementation?
- How often did (RIT) visit your organization? Were these visits helpful to your organization? In what way?

- Were you able to understand the reporting requirements of CEPF?

VIII. Strategic Vision (Wallacea only)
- Did your organization participate in the development of the strategic vision?
- Did you feel that your opinions were listened to and that the process went well?

Evaluation Questions for KIs – Grant-making organizations
1. Biographical info (name, institution name, email, phone #)
2. What is your level of knowledge of the CEPF program in the (hotspot)? (Not at all familiar to Extremely Familiar) (General)
3. What is your experience with supporting local organizations in project design? Other capacity building experience?
4. What is the presence of your organization in the (hotspot)? How many countries and offices?
5. Has your organization worked with civil society to engage with the government and the private sector? In what way?
6. Has your organization engaged directly with private sector partners and government officials to ensure their participation in implementation of key conservation strategies?
7. With which major national or regional conservation policies or programs does your organization have experience? Please be specific.
8. Does your organization have experience establishing partnerships between local or national organizations? If so, at what level (national or regional)?
9. Do you have experience with publicizing a grants program?
10. Has your organization solicited proposals and evaluated them? If so, what was the name of the program and the budget range of these proposals?
11. Have you managed a grants program and ensured compliance with donor requirements?
12. Can you describe your process for monitoring, evaluation and reporting (financial and technical) of grantees?
13. Has your organization been involved in the development of long term conservation or strategies in the region that involved a multi-stakeholder process? Please elaborate.
14. Do you have any observations about the work done by (RIT) in implementing the CEPF program in (hotspot)? Are there areas for improvement?
15. If the opportunity were to arise, would your organization be interested in performing the role of the RIT in the (hotspot)?

Evaluation Questions for Government/Other Donors/Implementers
1. Biographical info (name, institution name, email, phone #)
2. What is your level of knowledge of the CEPF program in the (hotspot)? (Not at all familiar to Extremely Familiar) (General)
3. What is your level of knowledge of the work of (RIT) in the (hotspot)? (Not at all familiar to Extremely Familiar) (General)
4. Did the CEPF program implemented by (RIT) build the community of conservation NGOs nationally or regionally? If so, how? Can you provide an example?
5. Did the CEPF program implemented by (RIT) contribute to the dialogue between environmental organizations, communities, and the government?
6. Did the CEPF program implemented by (RIT) enable governments in the region to better understand the benefits of conservation to rural development?
7. Do you consider (RIT) and CEPF to be an important partner in conservation in the region?

8. Do you think (RIT) was able to leverage additional funding in this region? If so, can you provide example(s)?

9. Did (RIT) support national conservation policies or specific government programs in any way? If so, how?

10. Was (RIT) an important actor in conservation in the region? How visible were they? Would you consider them influential?

Online Survey for EAM – Grantees[4]

1.a Name of Survey Respondent
1.b Name of your Institution
1.c Email address
1.d Phone number (with country code)
1.e Chat application (Skype, WhatsApp, etc. - please specify which)
2. What is your level of knowledge of the CEPF program in the EAM hotspot?
3. How did you find out about the CEPF program (e.g., word of mouth, workshop, Internet, etc.)?
4. Were you a small or a large grantee?
5. Which institution was your national coordinator? Did you receive information from the national coordinator or BirdLife International? Was it clear to you who you should reach out to for specific kinds of questions?
6. Do you feel that overall communications with your national coordinator went smoothly?
7. Do you feel that overall communications with BirdLife International went smoothly?
8. How did you obtain the call(s) for proposals? Was (were) the call(s) for proposals clear about the project eligibility and the proposal evaluation criteria?
9. Were you clear on what kinds of projects were being funded, and did this influence how you designed the project of your organization?
10. Did BirdLife International explain the strategic directions in the ecosystem profile? Did you understand how the strategic directions applied to EAM?
11. Were you able to receive clarifications from BirdLife International about any doubts you had about the call for proposals in a timely manner?
12. Did BirdLife International contribute to the design of your organization's project?
13. Did BirdLife International explain the concept of Safeguards to your organization and how you should address them within the implementation of your project?
14. Did you attend any workshops conducted by BirdLife International? What topics were covered and were the workshops useful to your organization? In what way?
15. Did your organization design a new project to meet CEPF funding priorities or did you modify an existing project?
16. Were you clear about the evaluation process and time-frame? Who provided this information?
17.a What are your thoughts about the number of projects funded in your country relative to the conservation needs and number of capable organizations?
17.b Please elaborate on your choice above.
18. How long did it take from when you submitted the proposal to when you received a response? Were you satisfied with the response time? If there was a delay, was it from the RIT, Secretariat, or both?
19. Did BirdLife International help you exchange information with other grantees? If so, how, and how was this useful to the work of your organization? (Can you provide an example?)
20. Were you able to understand the reporting requirements of CEPF?
21. Did BirdLife International explain how reporting was to be done? Did they help you prepare reports or provide comments on your reports?
22. What percentage of your organization's staff time was spent on reporting and what percentage on project implementation?
23. How often did BirdLife International visit your organization? Were these visits helpful to your organization? In what way?
24. What was most positive about the work of BirdLife International? What was most negative?

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[4] Other versions of the online survey were prepared and sent to the different categories of KIs in EAM. However, responses were only obtained for the grantee version. For this reason, the other versions are not included here, but have been shared via cloud drives with the CEPF Secretariat.

25. What was most positive about the work of the national coordinator? What was most negative?
26. Do you have any recommendations for how BirdLife International or the national coordinator could have improved its work?

Following the data collection stage, ISS analyzed the KII data in combination with the data from the CEPF and RIT documents, and developed an initial set of findings and conclusions. These were then "field tested" in an in-person discussion with Ms. Nina Marshall, Senior Director of Monitoring, Evaluation and Outreach, held on March 9th, 2020, as well as a separate discussion with Ms. Marshall and Ms. Peggy Poncelet, which was focused on RIT Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and reporting efforts. Following this round of validation, ISS developed the findings, conclusions and recommendations. As context for the findings, conclusions and recommendations, the next chapter of this report presents the terms of reference of the RITs.

B. Limitations

The level of effort of this evaluation was forty days. Given the large number of documents, three hotspots, and three country visits, this required that ISS develop a methodology that was sufficiently streamlined but simultaneously comprehensive, a complex undertaking. Of the three hotspots, Indo-Burma provided ISS with a detailed KI list and schedule for both Bangkok and Phnom Penh. Due to other RIT time constraints and Indonesian holidays, the evaluator received the most updated list and schedule for Wallacea a day before travel to the region and scheduling for all the KIs was not completed until after the consultant arrived in the country. This may explain why some of the KIs had a low level of knowledge of the program or were not able to meet with the consultant.

However, using experience gained from conducting several GEF evaluations, which are similarly short in duration, ISS was able to strike a balance by strategically approaching the desk research and striving to conduct the maximum number of in-person KIIs in the time in each country. ISS achieved a good balance of KIs across Wallacea and Indo-Burma, especially the latter, but the online survey approach used for EAM proved to be less successful, with only grantees responding (there were no responses from government, donors, and other stakeholders).[5] Of a total of 52 KIIs, including the CEPF Secretariat and KIs from all three hotspots, there were 14 KIIs from Wallacea, nineteen KIIs from Indo-Burma, 14 (eleven survey responses, the RIT, and two grant-making organizations) from EAM, and four from the CEPF Secretariat.

Indo-Burma was able to provide the KII schedule for Thailand and Cambodia in advance of the in-country mission, which explains the higher number of KIIs from this hotspot. In addition to the quantity of respondents, the quality of the data obtained from the EAM online surveys was considerably less detailed than would have been possible with in-person interviews. In Wallacea, numerous government KIIs did not occur as planned. ISS has made every attempt to fill these data gaps through the post-fieldwork discussions with the Secretariat.

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[5]   The response period was extended to a total of 5 weeks but this did not significantly increase the number of responses. ISS also conducted remote interviews of two grant-making organizations.

IV. Duties of Regional Implementation Teams

The Terms of Reference of the RITs are provided below. They provide the background for the subsequent chapters. The Wallacea hotspot, where the RIT was Burung Indonesia, had a more recent and extensive set of duties, as specified in their terms of reference. The Indo-Burma and EAM hotspots had a prior set of terms of reference. The terms of reference were as follows:

A. Wallacea Terms of Reference

1. Coordinate CEPF investment in the hotspot.
    1.1. Serve as the field-based technical representative for CEPF in relation to civil society groups, grantees, international donors, host country governments and agencies, and other potential partners within the hotspot.
    1.2. Ensure coordination and collaboration with CEPF's donors, in coordination with the CEPF Secretariat and as appropriate in the hotspot.
    1.3. Promote collaboration and coordination, and opportunities to leverage CEPF funds with local and international donors and governments investing in the region, via donor roundtables, experiential opportunities or other activities.
    1.4. Engage conservation and development stakeholders to ensure collaboration and coordination.
    1.5. Attend relevant conferences/events in the hotspot to promote synergy and coordination with other initiatives. • Build partnerships/networks among grantees in order to achieve the objectives of the ecosystem profile.

2. Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices.
    2.1. Support civil society to engage with government and the private sector and share their results, recommendations, and best practice models. Build institutional capacity of grantees to ensure efficient and effective project implementation.
    2.2. Engage directly with private sector partners and government officials and ensure their participation in implementation of key strategies.

3. Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot.
    3.1. Communicate regularly with CEPF and partners about the portfolio through face-to-face meetings, phone calls, the internet (website and electronic newsletter) and reports to forums and structures.
    3.2. Prepare a range of communications products to ensure that ecosystem profiles are accessible to grant applicants and other stakeholders.
    3.3. Disseminate results via multiple and appropriate media.
    3.4. Provide lessons learned and other information to the Secretariat to be communicated via the CEPF website.
    3.5. Conduct exchange visits with other RITs to share lessons learnt and best practices.
    3.6. In coordination with the CEPF Secretariat, ensure communication with local representatives of CEPF's donors. Establish and coordinate a process for solicitation of applications.

4. Build the capacity of local civil society.
    4.1. Undertake a capacity needs assessment for local civil society.
    4.2. Support implementation of a long-term strategic vision for the hotspot geared toward enabling civil society to "graduate" from CEPF support.
    4.3. Assist civil society groups in designing projects that contribute to the achievement of objectives specified in the ecosystem profile and a coherent portfolio of mutually supportive grants.
    4.4. Build institutional capacity of grantees to ensure efficient and effective project implementation.
    4.5. Build capacity of civil society to engage with and influence government agencies.
    4.6. Build capacity of civil society to engage with and influence the private sector.

5. Establish and coordinate a process for large grant proposal solicitation and review.

    5.1. Establish and coordinate a process for solicitation of applications.

    5.2. Announce the availability of CEPF grants.

    5.3. Publicize the contents of the ecosystem profile and information about the application process.

    5.4. With the CEPF Secretariat, establish schedules for the consideration of proposals at pre-determined intervals, including decision dates.

    5.5. Establish and coordinate a process for evaluation of applications.

    5.6. Evaluate all Letters of Inquiry.

    5.7. Facilitate technical review of applications (including, where appropriate, convening a panel of experts).

    5.8. Obtain external reviews of all applications over US$250,000.

    5.9. Decide jointly with the CEPF Secretariat on the award of all grant applications.

    5.10. Communicate with applicants throughout the application process to ensure applicants are informed and fully understand the process.

6. Manage a program of small grants of US$20,000 (US$50,000 or less in select approved regions).

    6.1. Establish and coordinate a process for solicitation of small grant applications. • Announce the availability of CEPF small grants.

    6.2. Conduct due diligence to ensure sub-grantee applicant eligibility and capacity to comply with CEPF funding terms.

    6.3. Convene a panel of experts to evaluate proposals.

    6.4. Decide on the award of all grant applications of US$20,000 or less (US$50,000 or less in select approved regions).

    6.5. Manage the contracting of these awards. • Manage disbursal of funds to grantees. •Ensure small grant compliance with CEPF funding terms. • Monitor, track, and document small grant technical and financial performance. • Assist the Secretariat in maintaining the accuracy of the CEPF grants management database. • Open a dedicated bank account in which the funding allocated by CEPF for small grants will be deposited, and report on the status of the account throughout the project. • Ensure that grantees complete regular (based on length of the project) technical and financial progress reports. • Prepare semi-annual summary report to the CEPF Secretariat with detailed information of the Small Grants Program, including names and contact information for all grantees, grant title or summary of grant, time period of grants, award amounts, disbursed amounts, and disbursement schedules.

7. Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants.

    7.1. Collect and report on data for portfolio-level indicators (from large and small grantees) annually as these relate to the logical framework in the ecosystem profile.

    7.2. Collect and report on relevant data in relation to CEPF graduation criteria for the hotspot.

    7.3. Collect and report on relevant data for CEPF's global monitoring indicators.

    7.4. Ensure quality of performance data submitted by large and small grantees.

    7.5. Verify completion of products, deliverables, and short-term impacts by grantees, as described in their proposals.

    7.6. Support grantees to comply with requirements for completion of tracking tools, including the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool.

    7.7. In coordination with CEPF Secretariat, conduct a mid-term assessment and a final assessment of portfolio progress (covering large and small grants). • Conduct regular site visits to large and small grantees to monitor their progress and ensure outreach, verify compliance and support capacity building.

    7.8. Provide guidance to grantees for the effective design and implementation of safeguard policies to ensure that these activities comply with the guidelines detailed in the CEPF Operations Manual and with the World Bank's environmental and social safeguard policies. Provide additional support and guidance during the implementation and evaluation cycles at regular field visits to projects.

    7.9. In coordination with CEPF Secretariat, conduct a final assessment of portfolio progress and assist with preparation of report documentation.

8. Lead the process to develop, over a three-month period, a long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment.
    8.1. Mobilize expertise and establish an advisory group to ensure that the long-term vision engages with appropriate stakeholders.
    8.2. Undertake a review of relevant literature to ensure alignment of the long-term vision with other initiatives and avoid duplication of effort.
    8.3. Consult with key stakeholders to solicit their input into the development of the long-term vision. • Synthesize the results of the literature review and stakeholder consultations into a long-term strategic vision document.
    8.4. Present the draft long-term vision to key stakeholders and revise the document according to their comments.
    8.5. Prepare a progress report for presentation to the CEPF donors' working group.

9. Reporting
    9.1. Participate in initial week of RIT training.
    9.2. Participate in two "supervision missions" per year; each to include at least two days in the office and a visit to grantees in the field (approximately two weeks).
    9.3. Prepare quarterly financial reports and six-monthly technical reports.
    9.4. Respond to CEPF Secretariat requests for information, travel, hosting of donors and attendance at a range of events to promote CEPF.

B. Indo-Burma and EAM Terms of Reference

1. Coordinate and communicate CEPF investment, build partnerships and promote information exchange in the hotspot.
    1.1. Serve as the lead point of contact for CEPF in relation to international donors, host country governments and agencies, and other potential partners within the hotspot.
    1.2. Facilitate information exchange among stakeholders.
        1.2.1. Provide lessons learned and other information to the Secretariat to be communicated via the CEPF website.
        1.2.2. Disseminate results via multiple and appropriate media.
    1.3. Facilitate partnerships between stakeholders in order to achieve the objectives of the ecosystem profile.
        1.3.1. Build partnerships between and among grantees and other stakeholders.
        1.3.2. Promote collaboration and coordination among local or international donors.
        1.3.3. In coordination with CEPF's Secretariat, ensure communication and collaboration with the six CEPF donors, as appropriate in the hotspot.
    1.4. Promote opportunities to leverage CEPF funds with donors and governments investing in the region.
    1.5. Visit stakeholders, and attend meetings and events to ensure collaboration, coordination and outreach.

2. Build the capacity of grantees.
    2.1. Assist civil society groups in designing projects that contribute to the achievement of objectives specified in the ecosystem profile and a coherent portfolio of mutually supportive grants.
    2.2. Build institutional capacity of grantees to ensure efficient and effective project implementation.
    2.3. Provide guidance to grantees for the effective design and implementation of safeguard policies (https://www.cepf.net/grants/before-you-apply/safeguards).

3. Establish and coordinate a process for proposal solicitation and review.
  3.1. Establish and coordinate a process for solicitation of applications.
    3.1.1. Announce the availability of CEPF grants.
    3.1.2. Publicize the contents of the ecosystem profile and information about the application process.
    3.1.3. With the CEPF Secretariat, establish schedules for the consideration of proposals at pre-determined intervals, including decision dates.
  3.2. Establish and coordinate a process for evaluation of applications.
    3.2.1. Evaluate all letters of inquiry.
    3.2.2. Evaluate all proposals.
      3.2.2.1. Facilitate technical advisory committee review, where appropriate.
      3.2.2.2. Obtain external reviews of all applications over US$250,000.
    3.2.3. Decide jointly with the CEPF Secretariat on the award of all grant applications of US$20,000 and above.

4. Manage a program of small grants; that is, grants of less than US$20,000.
  4.1. Announce the availability of CEPF small grants.
  4.2. Conduct due diligence to ensure sub-grantee applicant eligibility and capacity to comply with CEPF funding terms.
  4.3. Manage the contracting of these awards.
  4.4. Ensure sub-grantee compliance with CEPF funding terms.
  4.5. Monitor, track and document grantee technical and financial performance.
  4.6. Assist the Secretariat in maintaining the accuracy of the CEPF grants management database.

5. Reporting and Monitoring
  5.1. Collect and report on data for portfolio-level indicators.
    5.1.1. Ensure quality of performance data submitted by grantees.
  5.2. Support the CEPF Secretariat to monitor programmatic performance of grantees.
    5.2.1. Verify completion of products, deliverables, and short-term impacts by grantees.
    5.2.2. Review grantee financial reports in relation to programmatic performance.
    5.2.3. Support grantees to comply with requirements for completion of GEF tracking tools, including the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool.
  5.3. Support a mid-term and final assessment of the CEPF portfolio.
  5.4. Visit grantees to monitor their progress and ensure outreach, verify compliance and support capacity building.

V. Findings

The findings of the evaluation are presented below separately for each hotspot in the order in which the data was obtained (Wallacea, Indo-Burma and EAM). The Scope of Work of this evaluation defines distinct evaluation criteria, as follows: 1. Relevance, 2. Efficiency (results relative to budget), 3. Effectiveness, 4. Coverage, 5. Impact, 6. Accessibility, and 7. Adaptive Management.[6] Each hotspot, as detailed in (IV) above, has specific terms of reference. The questionnaires and surveys were designed around the structure provided by the terms of reference for each hotspot. In order to organize the findings, and thereby the conclusions and recommendations, ISS mapped the evaluation criteria to the terms of reference for each hotspot and then organized the findings, conclusions, and recommendations accordingly. As noted in the mapping matrix below, not all the evaluation criteria have unique corresponding component(s) in the terms of reference. Some of the criteria such as Efficiency rely mostly on the project documents and interviews with the RITs and Grant Directors because other KIs would not have had the information (on budgets, completion of logical framework, rate of expenditure, etc.). The project documents used for each hotspot vary because the information contained in the different kinds of project documents is not uniform across the hotspots.

Table 2. Mapping of Components of RIT Terms of Reference to the Evaluation Criteria

Hotspot	Evaluation Criteria	Matching Components of Terms of Reference
Wallacea	1. Relevance	1. Coordinate CEPF investment in the hotspot
		3. Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot
		8. Lead the process to develop, over a three-month period, a long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment (was scheduled to be conducted in March 2020 and was therefore not part of the evaluation)
	2. Efficiency	Stand-alone section
	3. Effectiveness	Stand-alone sections on structure and capacities
	4. Coverage	6. Manage a program of small grants of US$20,000 (US$50,000 or less in select approved regions)
	5. Impact	2. Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices 5. Establish and coordinate a process for large grant proposal solicitation and review 7. Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants
	6. Accessibility	4. Build the capacity of local civil society
	7. Adaptive Management	9. Reporting
Indo-Burma and Eastern Afromontane	1. Relevance	1. Coordinate and communicate CEPF investment, build partnerships and promote information exchange in the hotspot
	2. Efficiency	Stand-alone section
	3. Effectiveness	Stand-alone sections on structure and capacities
	4. Coverage	4. Manage a program of small grants (less than US$20,000)

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6   More details on these can be found in the Annex.

5. Impact	3. Establish and coordinate a process for proposal solicitation and review
	6. Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices
6. Accessibility	2. Build the capacity of grantees
7. Adaptive Management	5. Reporting and Monitoring

ISS analyzed the various sources of data and, through triangulation and cross-checking, identified key findings for each component of the terms of reference for each hotspot. The findings are neither the raw statements of the KIs nor information from CEPF and RIT project documents, but a combination of the two screened to best apply to the specific evaluation criteria. The findings strive to not include the viewpoint of the evaluator.

The conclusions and recommendations based on these findings incorporate the evaluator's expert judgment and can be found in a subsequent chapter of the report. Respecting the free, prior and informed consent statement applicable to the interviews and surveys, the findings are presented as anonymously as possible.

A. Wallacea

1. Relevance

Coordinate CEPF investment in the hotspot (ToR Component 1).

Burung Indonesia (Burung) reported that it held regional workshops in Manado, Ambon, Ende, Maumere, Luwuk, Makassar, Ternate, Palopo, Palu, involving more than 500 individuals/organizations. For example, the RIT Progress Report of January to June 2019 mentions that Flores hawk-eagle consultation workshops were conducted in Jakarta, Mataram and Ende between January and May 2019. The RIT also formed a National Advisory Committee (NAC) composed of representatives of government, donors, civil society and the private sector.

Grantees indicated that they learned of CEPF in this hotspot through their or a colleague's attendance at Burung workshops, information transmitted to them by a colleague (with the KI being unaware of how the colleague knew), and direct contacts with Burung staff (including being invited to submit an Expression of Interest, EOI). An implementer of a large donor funded project mentioned that he was aware of Burung and CEPF through the Indonesia Climate Alliance (ICA), and stated that they are known for doing good work and have a good reputation with the government and donors. A member of the Secretariat noted that the RIT established the importance of the KBA approach and the importance of recognizing these areas within the hotspot.

With respect to facilitating the exchange of information between grantees, KIs reported that Burung achieved this through the workshops and training events. The grantees learned from

their counterparts who had experience with similar activities. In addition to in-person exchanges, grantees exchanged information by remote means, such as discussions regarding illegal hunting and trapping via a WhatsApp group created by the RIT that remains active.[7] Grantees learned how to improve their technical approaches to conservation and engage with stakeholders, which was especially useful for grantees that were working in new geographical areas. With respect to creating a community of conservation NGOs, Burung worked with and networked many CSOs in the hotspot to which conservation work was new, as they were mainly agriculture and local development-focused. The RIT visited grantees an average of once every six months. The RIT was able to leverage additional funding for grantees from APIK, Kehati and Samdhana, and from the Rainforest Trust (directly to Burung). The total leveraged was approximately $500,000.

Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot (ToR Component 3)

Burung reported that its communications strategy included articles (popular and scientific), news bulletins, social media, websites, presentations at events. The strategy was applied through social media, their website and a WhatsApp group. The knowledge products generated included conservation impacts, outcome harvesting, documentary films and a book on best practice. The October 2019 Supervision Mission report stated that Burung excels in communications through websites, Facebook, Twitter, newspapers (e.g., Kompas, Mongabay, and local papers like the Manado Pos and Ambon Express), and mailing lists (associated with Gajah Mada University, the Gibbon Foundation, and AMAN).

On the grantee level, the grantees unanimously reported good communication with the RIT either remotely or in person at Burung's offices or grantee project sites. The communication was characterized as proactive, friendly, professional and flexible (via various means such as email, WhatsApp, in-person, etc.).

Lead the process to develop, over a three-month period, a long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment (ToR Component 8)

The RIT reported that they had not yet done this as was confirmed by the grant director. According to the latter, it is scheduled for March/April 2020, but has now been postponed due to the global covid19 pandemic.

2. Efficiency

This criterion is defined in the Scope of Work as "How efficiently was the budget allocated to the RIT converted into results?" This refers exclusively to the funding of the RIT itself (e.g., rent, travel, bank fees, supplies, communications, etc.) and not the funding of the large (through Secretariat) or small grants. Per the September 2015 Supervision Mission Report, CEPF awarded the core RIT grant to Burung Indonesia in the amount of $1,499,389 for December 2014 to

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[7] An interesting example of such learning is a grantee using green and yellow colors in its dissemination materials in Central Sulawesi based on a recommendation from another grantee about the project beneficiaries' color preferences.

November 2019. ISS reviewed the supervision reports and the budgeting and financial management was consistently recognized as being very competent. In addition to the supervision mission reports, ISS also consulted the logical framework for the RIT in their grant proposal to CEPF.

Per the proposal (from GEM), the long-term impacts (3+ years) are "To support a diversity of civil society organizations with varying levels of capacity to achieve conservation outcomes and environmental sustainability within the increasingly important national agendas of economic growth," and the short-term impacts (1-3 years) are "Manage a successful portfolio of large and small grants per CEPF operational policies and in accord with the goals of the Ecosystem Profile." Numerous deliverables are provided per each of the components of the terms of reference. Those that can be quantified are listed below:

- Articles (at least 20) produced for websites, magazines, e-bulletins
  - Over 200 completed
  - 63 of a total of 391 articles and news stories published on Burung and Wallacea hotspot websites

- Regular site visits for monitoring of progress, compliance verification and capacity building support (no target specified)
  - Numerous site visits are mentioned in the supervision mission reports and progress reports

- Events are organized for dissemination of civil societies' results, recommendations and best practices to government and private sectors (no target specified)
  - In addition to capacity building workshops discussed below in Tor Component 4, the midterm assessment refers to a meeting in Makassar, South Sulawesi in July 2017, a senior advisory meeting in Jakarta in August, and the October 2019 supervision mission report refers to a series of final assessment events in Makassar and Jakarta.

According to the July – September 2019 Quarterly Financial Report, the travel and special events budget line was spent at $461,681 of $520,400, or 89% of the funds. September 2019 is 96% of the duration of the project completed from the start date of December 2014.

Per APO 2019, the RIT team effectively began working in February 2015. In the subsequent four years, the team released eleven calls for proposals, reviewed 360 letters of inquiry, and awarded 99 individual grants, for a success rate of 28%. These 99 grants represent US$5,072,862 of an available US$5,350,000 for SDs 1-6, or 95 percent of available funds. The pace of award of about two grants per month was considered to be impressive. APO 2018 reported that at that stage the team had reviewed 360 letters of inquiry, and awarded 83 individual grants (success rate of 23%), which was $4,572,105 out of an available $5,350,000 for Strategic Directions 1-6, or 85 percent of available funds. The midterm assessment also reported on the efficiency of operations, recording the review of 277 letters of inquiry and 75 individual grants (success rate of 27%), representing $4,074,580 out of an available $5,350,000

for Strategic Directions 1-6, or 76 percent of available funds. This was a pace of roughly 2.3 grants per month since inception.

To summarize in tabular form:

Table 3. Efficiency of Running the Small Grants Program in Wallacea

Report	Year	Success Rate (%)	Percentage of Funds (%)
APO 2019	2019	28	95
APO 2018	2018	23	85
Midterm Assessment	2017	27	76

3. Effectiveness

a. Structure

Burung Indonesia is headquartered in Bogor, Indonesia, about an hour's drive from the capital, Jakarta (without traffic). Burung maintains field staff in three satellite offices within the hotspot in Labuan Bajo, Flores (NTT), Makassar (South Sulawesi), and Ambon (Maluku). Bogor offers significant cost savings over Jakarta Bogor and it is where several national and international conservation organizations, such as CIFOR, and the major agricultural university, Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) are based.

The majority of the staffing of the RIT are based at headquarters in Bogor and the others are located in the hotspot in greater proximity to the grantees. In addition to these individuals, Burung also allocates time for its senior personnel and assigns other relevant staff to assist with CEPF tasks as appropriate, including for communications and accounting. Per APO 2019, the RIT divided the hotspot into smaller management units (Priority Funding Areas) for grant-making. There were eight of these.

b. Capacities

The capacities of the RIT can be demonstrated by their performance along the different criteria of this evaluation and the components of their Terms of Reference detailed in the Findings section of this report. To capture a range of data from across the four years of implementation, a review of all the Supervision Mission reports revealed the following:
- RIT excels in communications (as detailed in ToR Component 3 above)
- Financial management was appropriate and needed software updates were made (see Efficiency section above)
- "Success rate" of letters of inquiry (LOIs) of 20 to 22 percent seen to be on par with other CEPF hotspots and confirms the value of the RIT's pre-RFP outreach to applicants
- RIT understands CEPF Safeguards and screens grantees for them appropriately
- SD5 or engagement with the private sector has been challenging and it was felt that the ecosystem profile over-budgeted this SD relative to the possibilities within the CEPF framework
- The transition from GEM to ConservationGrants was initially challenging for the RIT (due to technical literacy, lack of a Bahasa platform, and slow Internet connections), requiring

additional training by the System Administrator for the SalesForce-based ConservationGrants system (upon the recommendation of the Grants Director)
- With respect to M&E, described in detail in ToR Component 7 and 9 below, there was good monitoring of scientific indicators but less so for the social indicators
- October 2019 "final assessment" events was extremely well organized and implemented

4. Coverage

Manage a program of small grants of US$20,000 (US$50,000 or less in select approved regions) (ToR Component 6)

Burung reported to ISS that it developed a grant disbursement system based on a review of existing programs and adapted it to the civil society landscape of Wallacea. The RIT carried out seven small grant proposal solicitations resulting in 284 proposals which led to 71 contracts. To manage this process of solicitations and awards, Burung developed a database of proposal solicitations, reviews, grant/projects, payments and monitoring reports. Other data, such as baseline-endline data and the key biodiversity areas (KBA) were subsequently incorporated into the database. Small grantee contracts are maintained in electronic and paper format by both the RIT and the grantees. The RIT also created templates for technical and financial reports.

From the perspective of the grantees, Burung's grant management was positive with none of the grantees reporting any issues regarding contracting, technical reporting or financial reporting. The KIs interviewed included small grantees, large grantees and organizations that had both kinds of grants. One of the latter mentioned that the level of reporting and difficulty for small grants was disproportionate to the financing, and that it was actually easier to report on their large grant. A small grantee mentioned that there was a timing mismatch between reporting and funding because funding was provided every four months but reporting was done every three months.

Per APO 2019, the RIT met or exceeded initial ecosystem profile allocation goals for all the SDs except SD5. SD6 (capacity building) was at 69 percent of the allocated amount but it was noted that capacity building was also done via many of the investments in the other SDs, so the SD6 value did not fully capture the investment. SD4 was at 92 percent of the initially allocated amount. SD5 stipulated engaging the private sector and even mediating with mining and other industries, which was not the RIT's strength. A member of the Secretariat indicated that SD 5 on private sector engagement was the most difficult but that otherwise the portfolio covers the entire SD framework as envisioned. Burung's focus on small organizations was seen to not be a good match with SD5.

5. Impact

Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices (ToR Component 2)

The RIT reported that it signed technical cooperation agreements with nine conservation agencies and national parks, including on marine protected areas, fish bombing, turtles and dugong conservation. This is confirmed by the August 2018 Supervision Mission report, which stated that "Burung Indonesia is coordinating extensively with local, national, and international partners." The report praised the deep technical partnership with the BKSDA (Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam). The report highlighted the "CEPF approach" being used to settle forest border disputes in Sangihe, where the provincial office of forestry has promoted the Sampiri/Burung approach in 27 villages. The 2019 Annual Portfolio Overview (APO) mentions that the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), a grantee, worked with other organizations to get 16 of the CEPF priority species added to the Government of Indonesia's list of protected species. The RIT reported on its success with Kawasan Ekosisten Esensial (KEE), (Essential Ecosystem Areas) in Bangkep, Maros-Pangkep, and Kompleks Danau Malili.

Grantees unanimously confirmed and appreciated the extensive opportunities for engagement with and influencing of government at various levels. Grantees participated in workshops with provincial and national government representatives, and, in some cases, engaged on a daily basis with government officials at the district and provincial level. An example of the benefit of this engagement was getting law enforcement to patrol highways in N. Sulawesi and the seaport in Maluku, which had not occurred previously. This led to rangers arresting illegal wildlife traders. KIs reported that Burung facilitated local CSOs' engagement with the government on issues such as customary law and local (village) regulations.

A government representative stated that Burung had created a space for dialogue through large workshops with significant participation of local organizations. Burung staff had more access to the community members because they are more open to talking with them than with the government staff. Burung was seen to thus have served as a bridge between the government and the communities. This official noted that the communities have more trust in the government now and have a better understanding of government policies. He provided the example of the use of protected species such as manta rays. Another government official mentioned as an example of Burung's mainstreaming efforts the creation of essential ecosystem areas in Buano island, N. Halmahera, Kailolo Maluku and Burungosong Maluku.

With respect to the private sector, a grantee reported that the corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs of the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, Danone, and Pertamina (oil and gas) supported their marine conservation work. Another worked with PT. Huadi Nickel-Alloy in reforestation efforts. One grantee referred to a 2019 meeting with the Indonesian Business Council for Sustainable Development (IBSCD) and its members at a forum in Jakarta, which was described as having started the conversation with the private sector. The 2019 APO states that locating appropriately qualified organizations to undertake private sector engagement had been difficult, except for the IBSCD. A database obtained from the Secretariat indicated other

private sector engagement efforts such as BUMDes involvement in marine tourism and marketing non-timber forest products.

In speaking with a KI within the Secretariat, it was evident that there was a good degree of satisfaction with the impact in this hotspot. The KI observed that the strict counting of results per the logical framework targets risks missing the "real" impact. The RIT's hectares of new protected areas created or hectares of KBAs under improved management were lower than planned. This was reported to have been the result of Burung preferring to have a small protected area that is well-managed and accepted by the community than a large protected area that is poorly managed and not accepted. By counting only the direct results of grantees, the results framework was stated to have missed the RIT achievements in leading civil society and mainstreaming with the government. An example cited was the creation of a one million hectare marine reserve by the government, and it was noted that while it was not the grantees' or RIT's work product *per se*, it was significantly influenced by the advocacy of the RIT.

Establish and coordinate a process for large grant proposal solicitation and review (ToR Component 5)

The RIT reported that it conducted ten solicitations for large grant proposals, which resulted in 154 letters of inquiry. These, in turn, led to 33 grants. The RIT provided technical review for the capacity building grant ($320,000 awarded to Penabulu) and a grant to CI Timor Leste. As is CEPF policy, the large grants are managed directly by the Secretariat. Burung reported 33 large grant contracts – International organizations (five), National organizations (eight), and Local organizations (20).

The KIs reported that they all knew how to obtain the solicitations and found the requirements very clear. The time taken to evaluate the proposals was usually between two to three months that was considered reasonable. ISS asked KIs in all hotspots whether they felt that the breadth of the portfolio, specifically the number of projects in each country relative to the capacity of local organizations, was appropriate. Most KIs indicated their satisfaction with this aspect as well. One KI reported that some other NGOs had complained regarding insufficient funding but was unable to provide details. It should be noted however that the funding was outside the sphere of control of the RIT, and in situations with great challenges relative to available funding, this is a common observation of beneficiaries. Another KI stated that towards the end of the project, Burung launched an additional call for some work areas and there was some confusion about deadlines. This KI was able to get these doubts clarified. A member of the Secretariat stated that a primary criteria for selection for LOIs from local NGOs and CSOs working in remote locations, whose expertise was largely community development, was credibility in the communities.

Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants (ToR Component 7)

Burung reported to ISS on its M&E efforts as follows. Burung contributed to the CEPF Secretariat's Annual Portfolio Overview (APO) report. They created a system for grants monitoring and evaluation was conducted through discussions with grantees. The RIT supported the grantees' compliance with CEPF tracking tools, through training, site/grantee

visits, and remote consultations. The RIT developed a site visit template and used it for monitoring progress, compliance verification and technical assistance to grantees. A member of the Secretariat observed that Burung took monitoring very seriously and collected data with scientific rigor. Their efforts on social indicators were seen to be less robust. The KI explained that CEPF did not define beneficiaries and other terms clearly and that the RIT was less comfortable with what they saw as "fuzzy" answers.

6. Accessibility

Build the capacity of local civil society (ToR Component 4)

Grantees reported that capacity building efforts were very useful, including Burung explaining the strategic directions (SDs) in the ecosystem profile, feedback on the proposed project design, safeguards, and workshops. Burung determined capacity building needs using CEPF tools such as the Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT). KIs indicated that they were provided guidance on the SDs and how they applied to the Wallacea hotspot. Burung provided solid feedback on the proposed projects, helping the grantees improve their project design; enabled grantees to comprehensively integrate CEPF safeguards into their projects; and provided training on multiple aspects of project implementation through workshops (e.g., adaptive management, financial issues, alternative livelihoods, project cycle management, marine protection, outcome harvesting and thematic workshops like permaculture) in Bogor and the project areas. One grantee indicated that he wasn't aware of the workshops but this is likely attributable to the fact that he held a more junior role and wasn't able to respond to other questions as well. The RIT January to June 2019 progress report mentions capacity building activities in the following priority areas: Poso-Malili, Southern Sulawesi, Togean Banggai, Seram-Buru, and Flores-Solor-Alor. In this hotspot, only 6 grants went to international organizations, and, of the rest, the vast majority went to local organizations.

7. Adaptive Management

Reporting (ToR Component 9)

Burung communicated to ISS that their reporting efforts included contributing to ten bi-annual supervision missions, as well as quarterly (finance) and six-monthly (technical) reporting via Conservation Grants. Burung conducted events, meetings, and travel with regards to CEPF promotion in the hotspot. Narrative and financial reports were submitted in accordance with CEPF and Burung's standards. The KIs were not asked about reporting because as grantees, government representatives, donors, and others outside the CEPF Secretariat, they would not have access to this information.

In discussions with the Secretariat's monitoring team, the timeliness of reporting by the Wallacea hotspot was found to be a concern. The validation of grantee reports was delayed leading to the Secretariat not being able to report on the achievements of this hotspot until the last year of the grant. It was stated that this delay could possibly have had implications on fund-raising for subsequent CEPF investments in Wallacea. CEPF's newer global indicators were not

fully adopted by Burung. Some of the reporting from Burung was input into incorrect elements of ConservationGrants.

None of the grantees were able to comment on whether the RIT was able to secure co-funding, which is to be expected. Per the Secretariat, while less work was done with the private sector than planned, disproportionately more work was done with the government at various levels.

B. Indo-Burma

While mainstreaming was not part of the original terms of reference for this hotspot, according to the Secretariat, it was added in February 2017. Therefore, it is being included here as #6.

1. Relevance

Coordinate and communicate CEPF investment, build partnerships and promote information exchange in the hotspot (ToR Component 1)

IUCN reported to ISS that it used Facebook, its website, newsletters, http://www.thaingo.org/ and the IUCN network, with country offices in all six countries, to connect to potential grantees and other stakeholders across the hotspot. The country offices also played a critical role for the grantees in each country. The RIT also worked through partners such as ONEP to help circulate news of the calls for proposals.[8] With regard to the creation and dissemination of lessons learned within a compendium of case studies and best practices, the first time this was done, IUCN asked grantees to self-select but it did not work very well. The next time, IUCN and the Grant Director chose the projects to disseminate.

Grantees generally reported good communication with the RIT, and clarity regarding when they should communicate with the RIT, national coordinators, or the grant director. One grantee felt that there should have been more exchange trips between different project areas. A grantee in Cambodia mostly communicated with the national coordinator there. Another grantee stated that they had a communications issue with IUCN that led to a year delay for the final payment.

IUCN facilitated the exchange of information between grantees through the midterm and final workshops, in which the grantees would present their work in different thematic groups. Donors and government representatives attended these workshops. The national advisory committees created by the RIT also played this information exchange role. The RIT's contribution to creating a community of conservation NGOs in the region was the Lower Mekong Network, created and initially supported through CEPF. It includes all countries in the network except Myanmar and China.

The RIT was able to leverage additional funding in this region through multiple lines of funding, some directly through CEPF and some indirectly. These included the McConnell Foundation for Lao (through the grant director), SOS (Save our Species) funding for gibbon conservation, and

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8   ONEP is the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment in Thailand.

others for a total of $840,000. The grant director was able to leverage additional funding for the portfolio from the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies and others. Large grantees were visited during supervision missions by the grant director accompanied by the national coordinators. During Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation missions, the national coordinators visited grantees, occasionally together with the RIT manager. Remote methods such as communication apps and calls were also employed. Among other events, to broaden awareness of the CEPF program, IUCN attended the RCF (Regional Conservation Forum) associated with the World Conservation program.

2. Efficiency

ISS reviewed the RIT's proposal budget as well as the "Budget and Financial Management" section of all the Supervision Mission Reports. The following are the key takeaways:

- Salary costs were being charged based on IUCN's global time management policy, whereby staff are compensated per their category, and not based on the actual salary in the RIT budget and hours worked. In September 2016, IUCN and CEPF agreed that only actual budgeted salaries would be charged, as per CEPF policy, and shared costs allocated to other budget lines.
- The rate of expenditure under Meetings and Special Events was significantly more than the overall rate, attributable to the mid-term assessment workshop. The subsequent supervision report stated that this cost was credited back to the grant.
- Management Support Costs were found to be charged at a greater rate than overall expenditure, which was attributable to the IUCN Finance Department charging an overhead rate of three percent more than that agreed with CEPF.
- Significant balances remained in the Meetings and Special Events and Professional Services budget lines, but this was resolved by the end of 2017.
- The internal agreement with the Cambodian Country Office budgeted $48,500 for the National Coordinator. In the first 63 months, only $25,000 was spent, leaving $23,500 for the remaining 14 months.
- A KI commented that that national coordinators could have more of a role in the review of LOIs, beyond simply providing their opinions and then being out of the process
- A KI commented that national coordinators should have been involved in the ecosystem profile training
- At the end of September 2019, when the RIT grant was 94 percent of the way through its extended duration, expenditure on the RIT-Admin grant stood at 88 percent, leaving a good cushion for any additional staffing and final payments to other IUCN offices.

The February 2019 supervision mission report noted that the Grant Director had suggested to the RIT and its partners to decentralize more information management tasks and decision making to the National Coordinators, to remove some of the burden from the RIT Team Leader, as well as hiring a Deputy Manager. The Grant Director noted at that time that, as of December 31, 2017 (70 percent of the way through the RIT grants duration), only 62 percent of the funds budgeted for Salaries and Benefits had been spent. Per the October 2019 supervision report, the decentralization of tasks to national coordinators did not occur.

3. Effectiveness

a. Structure

The RIT role is being performed by a partnership of three organizations: IUCN, KFBG, and MERN. IUCN has overall responsibility for ensuring delivery of the CEPF program in the hotspot, and leads
implementation in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. KFBG leads on implementation in the parts of the hotspot that lie within China, while MERN is responsible for implementation in Myanmar.

b. Capacities

The capacities of the RIT can be demonstrated by their performance along the different criteria of this evaluation and the components of their Terms of Reference detailed in this Findings section of the report. To capture a range of data from across the seven (2013 - 2020) years of implementation, a review of the project and supervision mission reports revealed the following highlights not already addressed in greater detail in the Findings section:

- The capacity of local groups to access CEPF funding and the capacity of the local RIT partner, the Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN) were overestimated
- Under the first funding round, international organizations received more than two-thirds of the awarded funds, so the third call was restricted to local civil society organizations
- Over 10 calls, 1,056 LOIs were received, there were 83 large grants ($13.7M) and 105 small grants ($1.9M)
- Provided direct support to 108 CSOs (84 local), of which, 76% showed increased capacity
- National coordinators and National Advisory Committees were established in all hotspot countries
- Several partnerships were created, facilitating international NGOs providing mentoring support to local groups, and the Lower Mekong Network.

4. Coverage

Manage a program of small grants (less than US$20,000) (ToR Component 4)

Per the Secretariat, IUCN implemented this component quite well, including the transition from GEM to ConservationGrants. IUCN managed the small grants using their own system and provided data to ConservationGrants. The day-to-day management was not through ConservationGrants however. When a grant is awarded/closed, there is a standard list of documents that needs to be provided, which IUCN was aware of, and did on a rolling basis. The grants director and manager would check on these items sporadically. Every quarter, the Secretariat would have to approve, and would have to sign off at the level of the small grant mechanism. Overall, the majority of grantees did not express any concern regarding

contracting, technical or financial reporting. One grantee mentioned that they preferred the previous reporting portal (GEM) and another reported a delay with the initial payments but did not know why this occurred.

Per a KI in the Secretariat, IUCN was seen to have achieved a sensible balance between the different strategic priorities. The plan has been followed and spending done accordingly per the strategic directions. Per the October 2019 Supervision Mission report, the disbursements were as planned for all SDs, except SD2 and SD8, which were at 88 and 94 percent, respectively, of the ecosystem profile allocation. Grantees and other stakeholders all felt that CEPF and IUCN were important regional actors in conservation. Most grantees were unable to comment on the overall portfolio, but those who did considered that there was a good diversity of projects. It was noted that Cambodia had approximately twice the average number of grantees in the other countries. One grantee in Cambodia felt that there should be a greater emphasis on national NGOs versus international ones.

5. Impact

Establish and coordinate a process for proposal solicitation and review (ToR Component 3)

The RIT indicated, as mentioned in (1) above that it used Facebook, its website, newsletters, and the IUCN network to disseminate information on the availability of calls for proposals. The calls for all grants are obviously also disseminated via the CEPF website. The process used was as follows. Once letters of inquiry were received in response to the calls for proposals, IUCN would request any needed clarification. There was an additional review for IUCN members to address conflict of interest. IUCN would then select the best LOIs, exclude the worst, and the remainder would be sent to the national advisory committee and outside experts. This would result in a list of applications recommended for funding which the RIT would send to the Secretariat. After award, the grantees would have to complete the CSTT and due diligence. In general, it took three to four months from LOI to selection.

The grantees interviewed indicated that the calls for proposals and the process was clear. When, on smaller unusual one-off calls, they had questions, they received responses immediately. Grantees were satisfied with the proposal evaluation duration which varied from two to four months. With respect to the portfolio, one KI confirmed the importance of the KBA approach, and stated that while small grants were good for single issue projects or a small initiative at a particular site, greater impact requires larger multi-year grants.

The Cambodia portfolio of projects was described as being very interesting and the species focus noted as unique. The two-stage process of LOI and then full proposal was specifically praised by one KI. IUCN generated over 1,000 applications over 5 years. One in four of large grant applicants was successful and one in seven of small grant applicants. Another positive aspect was the good use that was made of local languages for small grantee applications.

Per a KI in the Secretariat, of the 20 targets in the logical framework, IUCN was reported to have met 19 of them. Grantees and other stakeholders reported that CEPF was a leading actor

in conservation in the region and their work was appreciated by the government. Government officials all stressed the importance of continuing CEPF and requested amplification.

Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices (ToR Component 6)

As for mainstreaming through engagement with the government and the private sector, IUCN reported that it did not excel at this, and noted that this lapse often came up in the supervision missions. The outreach to government was through the National Advisory Committees and opportunistically at project level. In the south of Thailand, a local project stopped the aggressive corralling of dugon to plant RFID tags. The RIT stated that it was hard to influence governments in the entire region. At grantee level, there were multiple examples, such as Vietnamese CSOs stopping a tourism development in the Son Tra peninsula in Danang city in Vietnam. With the private sector, IUCN indicated that not much was done. The BioDiversity Network Alliance (BDNA) which is a private sector network (Toyota, Marriott, etc.) was mentioned as a forum where grantees could possibly present in the future.

The 2018 APO noted that the RIT's focus and success in soliciting and awarding grants took time away from their ability to communicate lessons learned from the portfolio to decision makers and conservation practitioners. This was described to have prevented mainstreaming the lessons from the most successful projects into public policy and private sector practice. The database provided by the Secretariat listed eight projects involving cooperation with corporate entities in China around traditional rice varieties, local conservation practices, organic and FairWild products, among others.

At grantee level, one reported that mainstreaming has been a significant part of two of their large grants, per encouragement from the grant director. The focus was on a sustainable rice platform, working with farmers and the Mars corporation. A grantee in Cambodia mentioned that they had 210 government counterparts seconded to them. Another illustration of grantee level engagement involves giant ibis (*Thaumatibis gigantea*) conservation in Tmat Boeuy in the Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, where a grantee and local communities identified nesting sites and informed the Ministry of the Environment, which drew up zoning and policies to protect them. A grantee stated that CEPF had the least influence in Thailand, and more influence in Cambodia and Vietnam.

6. Accessibility

Build the capacity of grantees (ToR Component 2)

IUCN reported to ISS that they determined capacity building needs using the CSTT, which involves self-assessment. They also conducted due diligence using an IUCN template and documents requested by template before disbursing grants. The CSTT is one of the first deliverables of the grantee contracts. The midterm assessment report indicated that of the eleven self-assessments done at that time, financial and human resources were the biggest capacity gaps facing local civil society organizations in the hotspot. APO 2019 provides more details on the capacity building conducted. It includes supporting networking activities that

enable collective civil society responses and core support for the organizational development of domestic civil society organizations. Under Strategic Direction 8 on capacity building, nine large grants and 58 small grants had been awarded at that point in time.

The grants awarded aimed to strengthen the capacity of a hundred civil society organizations across the hotspot, and to establish or strengthen 21 civil society networks. Some key examples included: strengthening a network of civil society organizations and individuals to monitor Thailand's Important Bird Areas network; official establishment of the Zhanjiang Bird Watching Society; and support to the Save Wildlife in Trade Coalition, which involved wildlife crime and enforcement agencies in China.

Grantees reported very positively on the workshop held in Siem Reap, Cambodia. They found it useful to get to know the other grantees and working in the region, learn regarding how the other grantees developed projects, and for the networking opportunities. IUCN and the grant director (for large grants) provided useful feedback after the LOI stage. For small grantees, IUCN explained the Safeguards and the application of the ecosystem profile to the hotspot. One KI indicated that while the RIT did a lot of capacity building in Myanmar where capacity was particularly low and in Thailand (where the RIT was based), less was done in other countries, where it was mainly in the form of mostly reactive implementation support.

Per APO 2019, 83 large grants were awarded, including two grants to IUCN to serve as the RIT. Of these, 42 were to international organizations and 41 to local organizations. As for small grants, 105 were awarded, 17 to international organizations and 88 to local organizations.

7. Adaptive Management

Reporting and Monitoring (ToR Component 5)

The Secretariat noted that the reporting of impacts (as opposed to progress and financial reporting) was done off-line (outside ConservationGrants) via spreadsheets because the necessary module was not ready at the time. With respect to supporting CEPF in monitoring programmatic performance of grantees, it was felt that this was done more reactively than proactively. The Secretariat would identify issues from reports or in-person issues and then ask IUCN to check up on them (in person) if needed. The review of financial spending of the grantees versus their achievements was satisfactory. The M&E leadership in the Secretariat reported no issues with the RIT regarding this component.

IUCN found the RIT training to be useful in understanding what the Secretariat required in terms of the program itself, safeguards, and gender. The RIT found the supervision missions to be very well structured and useful. Regarding financial reporting via ConservationGrants, they found the system to be slow and unresponsive, with the entry of too many variables requiring waiting until the system updated itself. The portal was seen as having too many steps. Besides the software challenges, everything went smoothly. Sometimes, the Secretariat asked for additional clarification outside the report. The procurement rules were in line with IUCN's own policies, so they were easy to implement and there were no issues.

Grantees indicated that they received clear information on how to report from the grant director, grant manager, and the RIT, and that they spent 15 – 20 percent of their time on reporting versus implementation. This was seen to be reasonable. The visits to the grantees by the grant director and/or IUCN were found to be very useful to update them on the progress of grantee work as well as the political trends of the country. The visits also provided many suggestions about connections, resolving issues with partners, etc. One grantee mentioned that the time needed for reporting for small grants was excessive relative to the $20K of funding.

The main security risk was regarding the Rohingya crisis in Rakhine state in Myanmar, where no projects were done. There are also other security issues with armed groups in parts of Myanmar. CEPF did not work in these areas, so they had no impact. The entire country was a priority, not specific areas. With the exception of southern Thailand, the other countries are secure. The McConnell funding for nine years was a good opportunity, as was working with the Lower Mekong Network, which was not planned but proved to be a useful network with which to work.

C. Eastern Afromontane

To reiterate, KIIs were not conducted with grantees or other stakeholders, as the region was not visited during the evaluation. Instead, customized online surveys per category of KI (grantee, donor, grant-making organizations, and government) were sent to the list of suggested KIs provided by the RIT and grant director. There were eleven responses from grantees but no other stakeholders responded over a five week period. While ISS has made every effort to complement the available data, the lack of data from governments, donors, and other stakeholders is reflected in the findings.

1. Relevance

Coordinate and communicate CEPF investment, build partnerships and promote information exchange in the hotspot (ToR Component 1)

BirdLife International (BLI) reported to ISS that, for geographic and linguistic coverage, its staff were spread out, with the hub in Nairobi, and staff in Rwanda, Jordan, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. The RIT held events in Saudi Arabia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, etc. in the first six months of implementation to introduce CEPF. The RIT included its calls for proposals in funding directories, and also did outreach via Facebook and Twitter, and through mailing lists for grantees, donors, and applicants.

The RIT indicated that they went beyond extracting lessons learned from grantee final reports, and instead created a taxonomy of lessons learned and analyzed them. concluded that lessons learned should be determined during implementation so that remedial actions needed could be taken. Regarding the exchange of information between grantees, it took different forms in 14

experience exchange visits and 30 training events. The visits were thematically focused. There was also information sharing by email and all the grantees knew each other. Stories were posted on Facebook and YouTube. In November 2019, the RIT held a meeting of former CEPF grantees in Ethiopia to share lessons, discuss future directions, and learn about the new KBA process. It is noteworthy that they participated in this meeting a full two years after their grants had closed. BLI saw evidence of organizations working together in biosphere reserves in Ethiopia and preparing joint funding proposals. Similarly, in Kenya, they came together over wetlands. These kinds of connections were made at site or thematic level.

As for leveraging additional funding, BLI obtained funds from CI's Women in Healthy Sustainable Societies program and convinced CI to work at EAM KBAs. The former amounted to $75,000 in grants and $25,000 for management. Attempts at raising funds from Macarthur, AfDB, USAID, and Scandinavian donors were unsuccessful, but a KI from the RIT surmised that the grant-making structure was too complicated for donors. The RIT reported that it did field and office visits, and events with grantees for a total of 800 times over 164 projects. The aim was to visit each grantee at least once during the lifetime of the project and during due diligence at the start. The visit cycle was twice a year and aligned with reporting. The BLI regional director would attend large events at IUCN World Conservation meetings and the TNC Great Lakes region conference, and hold side events on CEPF.

The RIT produced 95 articles over the years. Using Facebook, they ran campaigns (e.g., "40 days, 40 projects"), which worked very well. They also created numerous YouTube videos. At their events, they provided attendees sustainable communication products such as branded reusable bottles, "Waka Waka" lamps, and branded bags made of recycled pop-up banners.

The Secretariat noted that the RIT did a great job relative to the staffing available and the geographic extent of the hotspot, which spanned Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The work done under this component in the countries where the RIT had a presence was better than in the others. In addition to the countries where they had a presence, the RIT worked in Burundi, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia. South Sudan and Eritrea (closed to civil society) did not end up being a focus. Yemen and DRC were not possible to work in because of armed conflict. The Secretariat also felt that in Ethiopia, EWNHS did not fulfill the obligations of the Terms of Reference as well as BLI did in the other countries of the hotspot.

Grantees reported that they obtained the calls for proposals mostly online, but also from the RIT and through word of mouth. The criteria and eligibility were clear and they were able to seek clarification when needed. They praised the communication (and availability of RIT via various means of communication) and support during proposal development, implementation and reporting. When necessary, through engagement with the RIT, grantees were able to tailor their LOIs and proposals to be more aligned with the strategic directions of the hotspot.

2. Efficiency

Drawing on supervision mission reports, the APOs, and the Admin Grant Agreement between the RIT (BLI) and the CI Foundation (for CEPF), the following highlights emerge regarding efficiency:

- Minimum of 50-100 large grants – 67 awarded
- Disbursement of $7.3M over the five years as large grants – $10.1M disbursed
- A minimum of 50-100 small grants – 96 grants awarded
- Disbursement of $1M over the five years as small grants – $1.9M disbursed
- From September 2012 to September 2019, the RIT released 19 calls for proposals, reviewed 1,097 LOI, and awarded 160 individual grants, obligating 99.7 percent of available funds.

3. Effectiveness

a. Structure

The RIT had different offices during different time periods, as follows:
- 2012-2017: 4 main office locations (Amman, Addis Ababa, Nairobi and Maputo), supported from Cambridge UK (HQ)
- 2017-2020: 2 main office locations (Kigali and Nairobi), supported from Cambridge UK.
- The 6 main languages (Arabic, Amharic, English, French, kiSwahili, and Portuguese) used in the hotspot are reflected in the locations of the offices

Until 2017, there were subgrants to IUCN and the Ethiopian Wildlife Natural History Society (EWNHS), with the latter effectively also being a co-RIT and grant manager due to a very particular requirement in Ethiopian law regarding grant-making organizations in the country.

b. Capacities

A true measure of the capacities of the RIT is its performance along the agreed upon Terms of Reference and logical framework. In addition to the Findings presented in this section for the different components of the Terms of Reference, the logical framework captures performance along specific indicators and targets.

APO 2019 notes that in terms of progress toward higher-level targets in the ecosystem profile, the portfolio exceeded, achieved, or was on track to achieve several goals, as follows:

- Ninety-eight civil society organizations have received grants (63% over the target of 60)
- Grants have strengthened 40 KBAs (60% over the target of 25)
- KBAs cover 3.7 million hectares (208% over target of 1.2 million hectares)
- 1.2 million hectares of protected areas created (140% over target of 500,000 hectares)

For targets that the RIT missed (improved management of production landscapes, and sustainable financing mechanisms), the Grant Director concluded that this was attributable to over-ambitious targets and the awarding of grants based on factors other than the size of contribution to the targets.

4. Coverage

Manage a program of small grants (less than US$20,000) (ToR Component 4)

The statements of the RIT (BLI) regarding this component are included in components (1) and (3) above. The Secretariat spoke positively about BLI's performance of this component, stating that the RIT understood the value of the management tools to do the work and that the financial and compliance managers were good. Large grant due diligence was done by the Secretariat with BLI support. For small grantees, it was the RIT alone, done before the contract award. The grantees reported high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the grant-making process from LOI to terminating projects.

Per a KI from the Secretariat, and as stated above, the civil society capacity building in Eritrea, South Sudan, and Yemen as originally planned was not done because it was not possible. The RIT awarded less grants for SD3 ("Initiate and support sustainable financing and related actions for the
conservation of priority KBAs and corridors") than originally allocated in the ecosystem profile. All the other disbursements on the SDs were met or exceeded (including leveraged funds). This KI felt that the Ecosystem Profile was unrealistic in this regard as the CEPF methodology is really not well adapted to make this happen.

5. Impact

Establish and coordinate a process for proposal solicitation and review (ToR Component 3)

BLI described its process for this component to the consultant. They would issue open calls, and then at least two people would score them using a spreadsheet, with the review being allocated according to the language of the LOI and proposal. The team leader of the RIT would recuse herself from evaluations of BLI partner proposals. If both scorers agreed that an LOI should go forward, it was sent for external review. If the decision was split, the two individuals would discuss it, and if both felt it should not proceed, it would be rejected. There would be one topic expert and one local context expert.

The Secretariat observed that because of the wide geography the strategy was to see what grantees and projects they could get and then build on those to create the portfolio. The RIT used existing professional and personal networks to do so and this was regarded to have worked well. Grantees unanimously reported that they were able to receive clarifications from the RIT about any doubts they had about the calls for proposals in a timely manner. They also confirmed that the RIT contributed to the design of their organizations' projects, with one stating that RIT input was "... *instrumental to improving the design of our project*." All the

grantees reported that they designed projects specifically to meet CEPF specifications. They also were clear about the evaluation process and time-frame, and obtained any needed information from the RIT and the Secretariat. Eighty-two percent of the grantees felt that there were too few projects funded in their country relative to the conservation needs and number of capable organizations, but the level of funding is determined by the CEPF Secretariat and is thus outside the control of the RIT.

Per the KI from the Secretariat, impact has been achieved to an expected degree over the entire logical framework targets. The 2019 APO confirms that all targets in the logical framework were met or exceeded, in some cases significantly so, such as grants to 113 CSOs compared to the target of 60, and work in 40 priority KBAs compared to the target of 25.

Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices (ToR Component 6)

BLI reported to ISS that they interpreted mainstreaming as a means of combining livelihoods and conservation at local, government, and corporate levels. The former was found to be easiest to achieve by helping develop local regulations to protect the environment. They did not do much at the national level. At corporate level, a number of grantees worked with this sector on projects involving honey and ecotourism. One project advised small-scale mining companies in Rwanda on how to mitigate impacts. Another engaged with oil and gas companies in Murchison(Kabalega) Falls, Uganda, and 120 community leaders in the districts of Amuru and Nwoya to actively engage in environmental impact assessment (EIA). It was felt that the type of grantee organizations and timelines were not compatible with mainstreaming.

6. Accessibility

Build the capacity of grantees (ToR Component 2)

Much of the data reported above regarding communication with grantees applies to this component as well. In addition to what has already been mentioned above, BLI developed a "boot camp" program (Master Class) of capacity building to address the especially low level of capacity in the region, certainly compared to Indo-Burma. ISS conducted a CI-GEF midterm review of EAM, Cerrado, and Indo-Burma in 2018, and, while the data collection with EAM and Indo-Burma was restricted to desk research and interviews with the RITs, ISS recommended at that time that the "boot camp" capacity building program, which was implemented by the Tropical Biology Association (TBA), be institutionalized within CEPF. CEPF took on this recommendation and issued a call for proposal for a consultant to do so.[9] TBA is currently developing the "Master Class Knowledge Product" for CEPF.

The Secretariat reported that the RIT took this component seriously and it is part of BLI's way of operating. The Master Class described above was seen as being very impactful, with administrative and financial support constituting the most important needs. Grantees who

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[9]   The closed call for the "Master Class Knowledge Product" can be consulted here, https://www.cepf.net/grants/closed-calls-for-proposals/2019/2019-master-class .

were handling larger amounts ($100,000 and above) for multiple projects within each country found it challenging to do so, and in these cases the RIT intervened. Of the smaller and more national organizations, about half of them could do the work better again.

Grantees reported that BLI provided clear guidance regarding the strategic directions in the ecosystem profile and how they applied to the hotspot. One grantee reported that the strategic directions were confusing at the beginning but the RIT enabled them to understand them. Another stated that continuous engagement during the project implementation allowed them to understand how the strategic directions fit in EAM. With one exception, the grantees all agreed that the RIT explained the Safeguards to them. Grantees also reported that they attended several workshops on a variety of topics such as designing an impact oriented project, gender mainstreaming, environmental impact assessment, advocacy, safeguards, log frame design, CEPF operations, communication skills, and budgeting and financial planning. One grantee even stated that, *"The workshops shaped our projects. Without them, the projects would have been impossible."*

Per a KI from the Secretariat, the balance of grants to international and local grantees was good given the context. While there are relatively more grants to big international NGOs in this hotspot, such as to the Frankfurt Zoological Society, African Wildlife Foundation, and Wildlife Conservation, this was characterized as reflecting the nature of the work and the options available to the RIT. This refers to the dimensions of the challenges and the level of capacity of local and national CSOs relative to the other hotspots, necessitating the proportionally greater involvement of large grantees.

7. Adaptive Management

Reporting and Monitoring (ToR Component 5)

To boost M&E abilities, the RIT team leader enrolled in a third-party, one week training class, recruited an M&E expert for 18 months, and when he left the program for personal reasons, replaced his inputs with that of a consultant. The RIT supported the supervision missions by engaging with the Secretariat relative to their planning well in advance of the missions. Financial reporting was done quarterly using CEPF forms. They did not have to do detailed transaction reports but had to do those internally (per BLI rules) and then used the aggregate numbers in CEPF forms. Sometimes there was a lag between the updating of the ConservationGrants database and therefore the report outputs, which led to the perception of discrepancies. However, this was due to incorrectly comparing different sets of data. With respect to monitoring and reporting, a KI involved with the Secretariat monitoring team reported that the EAM RIT did not close grants in a timely manner and/or did not validate grantee results when they closed the grants.

Grantees commented extensively when asked regarding the number of projects relative to capacity and conservation needs. None of the grantees felt that there had been sufficient projects in their country. One grantee from Zambia stated that only one of the three KBAs, the Mafinga hills KBA was funded between 2015-2019. Another, from Rwanda, stated that there

are capable organizations in the country and important conservation needs. A grantee from Ethiopia pointed out that a great attention to biodiversity conservation is needed across different regions in the country. Similar comments were made for Kenya and Yemen, and, in the latter case, the impact of the war on biodiversity was brought up as an urgent threat. It is important to note however that while the grantees appeared to be disappointed with the allocations for their countries, these allocations were established in the investment strategy approved by the donor council, and were therefore outside the purview of the RIT. Per a KI from the Secretariat, the RIT put the funds available from countries such as Yemen, South Sudan, Eritrea, DRC, and Burundi, where it was not possible to work, to good use in the other countries.

VI. Conclusions

The following section presents the conclusions based on the findings above for each of the hotspots according to the evaluation criteria. The conclusions represent the analysis of the findings based on expert judgment and the consultant's extensive experience with evaluating, advising and managing similar projects globally. The conclusions thus take into account the implementation contexts in terms of funding, government policy, capacity and operational freedom and flexibility. ISS has applied the well established six-point scale recommended by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office which ISS has experience with through multiple CI-GEF evaluations. The rating levels are Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory, Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory, Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) and Unable to Assess (UA).

A. Wallacea

1. Relevance

Burung Indonesia established a significant presence in the hotspot and was widely recognized as being an important player in conservation. Government as well as other implementers of donor funded projects were aware of CEPF's work in the hotspot. The RIT implanted the KBA approach and grew the recognition of the importance of demarcating areas based on it. Grantees unanimously declared their appreciation of the networking and learning approaches created by Burung. Communication was excellent through multiple channels. Therefore, through an analysis of ToR Components 1 and 3, it can be concluded that the criteria relevance can be regarded as HS.

2. Efficiency

It is challenging to perfectly separate the results of the RIT from the results of the grantee projects, since, by definition, most of the activities of the RIT are designed to support the grantees. However, by focusing on the activities which are almost completely within the sphere

of control of the RIT, such as the creation and dissemination of articles and other outreach materials, site visits, the organization of events, the awarding of grants, and the disbursement of funds, ISS has closely approximated a measure of RIT effectiveness. By this measure, the RIT performed very well, with an impressive output of publications, both scientific and lay, regular site visits, multiple successful events, a rapid pace of awards and a consistently proportional disbursement of funds relative to project duration. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria efficiency can be regarded as HS.

3. Effectiveness

Burung's staffing both in Bogor and the hotspot served the project well. While a minority of grantees and some government representatives stated that they would have preferred more of an RIT presence in the hotspot, and the advantages are obvious, there are cost implications that must be taken into consideration. With regard to capacities, as detailed above, the RIT's performance across the majority of the components of the Terms of Reference speaks for itself. Three issues must be raised though – SD5, transition from GEM to ConservationGrants, and M&E. Engagement with the private sector (SD5) was less than planned, and the Grant Director surmised that the ecosystem profile might have been over-ambitious in this regard and, consequently, the ToR had too many components. It was also noted that Burung had limited private sector experience which impeded its ability to deliver on this SD.

The transition to ConservationGrants was a challenge to Burung, and this was attributed to technical literacy, unavailability of a Bahasa language platform, and slow connections. Burung's monitoring of scientific indicators and their own non-CEPF indicators was observed to be superior to that for the social indicators. M&E leadership also expressed concern about their not using the latest CEPF indicators and delays with reporting. The latter had significant impacts on CEPF reporting on the hotspot with implications on fund raising. Overall, the consultant's interview with the RIT and the project supervision mission reports point to no issues with the structure, but, should CEPF be interested in maintaining SD5 in this hotspot, there is room for improvement, and this is also the case for monitoring all indicators comprehensively and reporting on a timely basis to the Secretariat M&E leadership. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria effectiveness can be regarded as S.

4. Coverage

With the exception of issues discussed under Effectiveness above, the coverage of the grants was satisfactory to all grantees and others interviewed. APO 2019 data on granting by SD shows that SD5 was the only SD with a significant difference between the total disbursed ($165,880) versus the ecosystem profile allocation ($1,000,000). The "extra" funding appears to have been allocated to SDs 1 through 4 with SD3 (Community Based Resource Management of Terrestrial Sites) receiving the greatest percentage increase over the ecosystem profile allocation, at 80%. When asked whether they felt that the coverage of the hotspot was appropriate, both geographically and thematically, grantees indicated that they were satisfied with the diversity of projects and the engagement with small CSOs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria coverage can be regarded as HS.

5. Impact

The impact of the RIT in Wallacea can be easily gauged by its high level of success with BKSDA and the delineation of KEE, as well as its signing of nine technical cooperation agreements. It is very encouraging and a sign of the penetration of the *"CEPF way"* that the CEPF approach was used to settle forest border disputes in Sangihe. The addition of CEPF priority species to the government's list of protected species was another laudable achievement. Grantees themselves unanimously appreciated the opportunity to meet with the government, and sometimes engage on a daily basis with provincial and district government officials. The value of this engagement is exemplified by law enforcement starting to patrol highways in N. Sulawesi and the seaport in Maluku. Government, for its part, appreciated how local communities now trusted them more due to Burung's efforts. Private sector impact, as discussed above, was more limited. A member of the Secretariat noted the importance of the catalytic role of Burung in large impact decisions such as the creation of a one million hectare marine reserve. There is no doubt that the RIT was significantly impactful in the hotspot. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria impact can be regarded as HS.

6. Accessibility

Accessibility can be assessed by the intense efforts Burung made to study the hotspot, divide it into priority funding areas, and hold pre-RFP workshops. The vast majority of successfully grantees attended these workshops. This guaranteed broad access of a large number of CSOs around the region, and, it is especially creditable that these were organizations, which, for the most part, were new to conservation work, having experience in agriculture and local development. Grantees were of one voice in noting that they learned a lot from the broad range of topics addressed in capacity building workshops. Only six of the 104 (33 large and 71 small) grants in Wallacea went to international organizations, further confirming accessibility. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria accessibility can be regarded as HS.

7. Adaptive Management

Except as discussed above regarding the timeliness of reporting, Burung participated in the RIT training, 10 supervision missions, and hosted multiple events and workshops. Reporting was otherwise well regarded, especially by the Grant Director, as reflected in the supervision mission reports. Burung hosted ISS during the evaluation visit for this report and made numerous staff directly engaged with CEPF available as well as senior Burung management. The reception was friendly, straightforward and professional. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria adaptive management can be regarded as HS.

8. Summary Table

Table 4. Ratings for the Wallacea RIT

Criteria	Rating
Relevance	HS
Efficiency	HS
Effectiveness	S
Coverage	HS
Impact	HS
Accessibility	HS
Adaptive Management	HS
Overall	HS

B. Indo-Burma

1. Relevance

IUCN used multiple channels, its own network, and its national coordinators to reach potential grantees and otherwise reach stakeholders in the hotspot. Grantees reported good communication with the RIT. An important contribution to the community of conservation NGOs in the region was the Lower Mekong Network. Though mostly through the facilitation of the Grant Director, the RIT leveraged $840,000 of additional funds. IUCN attended numerous high profile events to disseminate CEPF in the region. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria relevance can be regarded as HS.

2. Efficiency

It is challenging to perfectly separate the results of the RIT from the results of the grantee projects, since, by definition, most of the activities of the RIT, whether funded by the Admin grant or the Programs grant, are designed to support the grantees. However, by focusing on issues related to the activities which are almost completely within the sphere of control of the RIT, such as creation and dissemination of article and other outreach materials, site visits, the organization of events, the awarding of grants, and the disbursement of funds, ISS has closely approximated a measure of RIT effectiveness.

There were some inefficiencies in how IUCN managed the RIT budget, mostly with little significant impact on the achievement of results. These inefficiencies stemmed from the intersection of two sets of bureaucracies with different accounting practices – IUCN International and CEPF/CI. They included the attribution of the costs of the mid-term

assessment workshop to the Meetings and Special Events budget line, which was later correctly allocated to co-funding. Management support costs were initially charged at a higher rate than agreed upon due to a misunderstanding by IUCN International's finance staff, but subsequently rectified.

The budget for the National Coordinator in Cambodia (who was at 50% utilization for CEPF) was under-spent and a KI felt that the national coordinators should be more engaged, which was in line with the February 2019 supervision report. It is conceivable that the decentralizing of the RIT, with more duties for the national coordinators, as well as the hiring of a Deputy Manager earlier in the process would have eased the small grant management burden on the RIT Team Leader and sped up the closing of grants. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria efficiency can be regarded as S.

3. Effectiveness

IUCN got up to speed very quickly and ended up with the largest portfolio with 83 large and 105 small grants. They helped strengthen the organizational capacity of CSOs and 76 percent of the 108 CSOs demonstrated increased capacity. They created several partnerships in the region including the Lower Mekong Network. Their international network also proved to be immensely useful. Thus, IUCN brought great capacity to the RIT role and managed a very large portfolio. As mentioned above, a more decentralized structure could have had its advantages but otherwise the Bangkok office provided CEPF with experienced professionals with experience managing similar grant-making programs such as Mangroves for the Future. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria effectiveness can be regarded as HS.

4. Coverage

By all indications, IUCN did a good job managing a large portfolio and there was a good distribution among the different SDs. With large numbers of small and large grants, as well as national, local, and international organizations as grantees throughout the countries of the hotspot, it can be concluded that coverage was well executed. The data on the originally allocated amounts for the SDs and the actual disbursements as of October 2019 (per the supervision mission report of the same month) show that only disbursements on SD2 was a little lower than planned (at 12%). Most of the grantees were unable to provide an opinion on the overall portfolio distribution, hence the conclusion here is based primarily on the project documents and KIIs from the Secretariat. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria coverage can be regarded as HS.

5. Impact

CEPF and IUCN were seen as important players in conservation in the region. The RIT managed a vast portfolio of large and small grants across the hotspot countries. Ninety-five percent of the targets in the logical framework were achieved or exceeded. Per the RIT, influencing government in the entire region was a challenge. However, at grantee level, there were examples of local level impact, and the Lower Mekong Network holds promise for further

dissemination and collaboration among a larger group of CSO and NGOs, and a consequently greater impact upon mainstreaming. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, in October 2019, the donor council selected the Indo-Burma Hotspot for re-profiling, leading to full reinvestment. This was attributed to the RIT developing, supporting and documenting the results of a portfolio of grants with impressive aggregate impacts. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria impact can be regarded as HS.

6. Accessibility

IUCN's efforts at capacity building contributed to building a vast and diverse portfolio of large and small grants. A total of 129 grants between the two categories were awarded to local organizations or 69% of the grantees. IUCN was able to leverage its networks to receive LOIs from numerous small organizations. It is possible that this led to the overly large portfolio of small grantees. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria accessibility can be regarded as HS.

7. Adaptive Management

IUCN performed impressively both with respect to its own reporting to the Secretariat, as well as its guiding grantees through the reporting process. The security risks in the region did not become an issue as CEPF simply avoided working in those areas. The M&E leadership in the Secretariat reported positively about reporting from this region, attributing the superior reporting both to the experienced IUCN team and the screening performed by the Grant Director. With respect to additional funding, the McConnell funding for nine years was a good opportunity, as was working with the Lower Mekong Network, which was not planned but proved to be a useful network with which to work. Most additional funding opportunities were facilitated by the grant director. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria adaptive management can be regarded as S.

8. Summary Table

Table 5. Ratings for the Indo-Burma RIT

Criteria	Rating
Relevance	HS
Efficiency	S
Effectiveness	HS
Coverage	HS
Impact	HS

Accessibility	HS
Adaptive Management	S
Overall	HS

C. Eastern Afromontane

1. Relevance

The RIT did well establishing CEPF in the hotspot, working over a vast geographic area in multiple languages. The coordination of multiple offices dealing with applicants in several languages is impressive. BLI was extremely dedicated to supporting grantees and creating meaningful and actionable lessons learned. Grantees were unanimous in praise of the RIT and its support to them. The RIT leveraged funds from CI and made several efforts to do the same with bilateral donors. Work in some parts of the hotspot was not possible due to circumstances beyond the RIT's control. The only weakness was the performance relative to the terms of reference of the RIT in Ethiopia, which was complicated by the fact that the Ethiopian partner had to simultaneously exist as a parallel RIT due to Ethiopian law. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria relevance can be regarded as S.

2. Efficiency

It is challenging to perfectly separate the results of the RIT from the results of the grantee projects, since, by definition, most of the activities of the RIT, whether funded by the Admin grant or the Programs grant, are designed to support the grantees. However, by focusing on the activities which are almost completely within the sphere of control of the RIT, such as creation and dissemination of articles and other outreach materials, site visits, the organization of events, the awarding of grants, and the disbursement of funds, ISS has closely approximated a measure of RIT effectiveness. The RIT exceeded all metrics regarding the number and total value of small and large grants. It also released 19 calls for proposals, reviewed over a thousand LOIs and obligated 99.7 percent of available funds. It can therefore be concluded that, especially given the low capacity of CSOs in this hotspot, that the criteria efficiency can be regarded as HS.

3. Effectiveness

The RIT was structured according to the geography and diversity of the languages in the hotspot with support from Cambridge in the UK, where BLI is headquartered. This structure worked well to ensure a local presence and language competency, such that grantees had access to RIT staff in their own languages. The office in Rwanda, where the team leader was based, coordinated these multiple offices, and guaranteed uniformity with respect to reporting, procurement, and record-keeping. The RIT exceeded all the high level targets in the ecosystem profile by 60 to 200 percent. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria effectiveness can be regarded as HS.

4. Coverage

The RIT managed a portfolio of projects across all the countries where it was possible to work. Disbursements of grants across the SDs were as planned in the ecosystem profile except for SD3 ("Initiate and support sustainable financing and related actions for the conservation of priority KBAs and corridors"). The ecosystem profile allocation for SD3 was regarded as overly ambitious by the Grant Director. The overwhelming majority of grantees felt that there were insufficient projects funded in their countries relative to the capacity of local CSOs and conservation needs. It is very likely, and this was noted in interviews with the RIT, that the funding of the hotspot relative to its size and the immense conservation needs in the region, was insufficient. Therefore, the number of projects funded is a function of the level of funding and not any shortcoming on the part of the RIT. The RIT created a large and comprehensive portfolio of projects across all the SDs that were possible. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria coverage can be regarded as HS.

5. Impact

The RIT established a thorough process for proposal solicitation and review with mechanisms to avoid organizational conflict of interest. Given the unique characteristic of a huge hotspot, spanning several countries, with multiple languages, and generally low CSO capacity, the RIT and Grant Director favored the organic development of the portfolio, releasing the calls, observing the LOI responses, awarding grants, and building upon the initial rounds of calls to create a portfolio. BLI started with an extensive "tour" of the hotspot, introducing themselves as the RIT and explaining the CEPF model. This was no doubt highly impactful in the sense that it, together with the leveraging of personal and professional networks, contributed greatly to the development of a comprehensive portfolio. Grantees reported that the RIT supported their project design, with one KI even stating that the RIT was "*... instrumental to improving the design of our project*." The RIT met or exceeded all indicators with numerical targets in the logical framework. Therefore, it can be concluded that the RIT had a significant impact in the hotspot, working everywhere it was possible to work, and that the criteria impact can be regarded as HS.

6. Accessibility

Efforts to promote accessibility was definitely one of BLI's greatest strengths. Consistent with one of their principles as an organization, as stated on their website, "... BirdLife will empower people and contribute to the alleviation of poverty ...," BLI embarked on an ambitious and comprehensive program of capacity building, creating the "Master Class" concept that is now being institutionalized across CEPF. Grantees greatly appreciated the constant support provided by the RIT at all stages before and after the LOI submission and during grant implementation. Regarding the capacity building workshops, one grantee stated "*The workshops shaped our projects. Without them, the projects would have been impossible.*" The Secretariat confirmed that the balance of grants between small and large organizations was in conformity to the nature of the hotspot (96 large grants with an average value of $150,602 and 7 small grants

with an average value of $19,592). Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria accessibility can be regarded as HS.

7. Adaptive Management

BLI had some challenges with M&E due to the hiring of an individual that ended up having less competence in this area than communicated to BirdLife. During the supervision missions, financial reporting, procurement, and related verification documents were found to be high quality.

The RIT was overly meticulous in its efforts to validate final report results, which delayed the Secretariat's efforts to report on portfolio results, leading to results only being reported in years four and five of the investment. This may have impeded the Secretariat's effort to fundraise effectively for this hotspot.

As per opportunities to do more, all the grantee respondents felt that much more needed to be done, but the possibilities to do so are constrained by the available funds, as the RIT (per APO 2019) obligated 99.7 percent of all available funds. Thus, looking at reporting, it appears that greater compliance with the grant agreement could have greatly benefited fundraising. Otherwise, through structuring (discussed above), coordination, administration, management, and strategic location of offices, the RIT executed its role well, and adapted to challenging circumstances which precluded working in some of the countries. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria adaptive management can be regarded as S.

8. Summary Table

Table 6. Ratings for the EAM RIT

Criteria	Rating
Relevance	S
Efficiency	HS
Effectiveness	HS
Coverage	HS
Impact	HS
Accessibility	HS
Adaptive Management	S
Overall	HS

VII. Recommendations and Cross-cutting Lessons Learned

This section provides actionable recommendations for CEPF's programs in these hotspots as well as cross-cutting recommendations at program level. The intent is to help improve the implementation of CEPF in these particular hotspots as well as contribute to the overall improvement of the global program. Since they have been described above, those components of the terms of reference that ISS concluded to have been well executed are excluded here, unless they provide lessons learned of applicability to other hotspots or the program as a whole.

A. Wallacea

1. Burung's initiative to conduct pre-RFP outreach workshops ensured that this hotspot was characterized by a large number of small grant LOIs and awards relative to large grants. While this may also be attributable to a single country hotspot and the consequent lower level of difficulty of outreach to many small CSOs, the concept of the **pre-LOI outreach tour could be of interest to other hotspots.**

2. The transition to ConservationGrants was a challenge to Burung. One of the reasons was the unavailability of a Bahasa language platform. If technically and cost feasible, it is recommended that CEPF **consider local language platforms for ConservationGrants**, but with the important caveat that reporting leadership in the Secretariat be able to extract key reporting data in English.

3. Burung's monitoring of scientific indicators and their own non-CEPF indicators was observed to be superior to that for the social indicators. While RITs can and should be able to continue collecting indicators of importance to their long-term programs and interests as organizations, RITs must be required (potentially through stronger grant agreement language) to **complete all CEPF indicators to a high level of quality, and report consistently and in a timely manner**.

B. Indo-Burma

1. The key takeaway from this hotspot is the importance of decentralizing. Without wishing to take on the role of "armchair quarterback" after the fact, it does appear that a **more decentralized approach** would have enabled greater connections at national level and decreased the burden on the RIT Team Leader.

2. Related to the above recommendation, a **more expanded role for the national coordinators** could involve:
   - Full-time national coordinators under the supervision of the RIT
   - First point of contact for grantees as appropriate
   - Review case studies to help identify the best ones
   - Provide clear timeline to all applicants regarding LOI and grant application evaluation steps
   - Greater role in evaluating LOIs and full applications

3. RIT should **consider fewer small grants** to cut down on management burden, or, at the very least, as described above, shift a good portion of the management burden to the national coordinators.

C. Eastern Afromontane

1. CEPF should **revisit SD3** regarding payments for ecosystem services (PES) and other alternative funding for conservation relative to the reality of the region and the CEPF model.

2. Suggest that the **hotspot be divided into more manageable geographic areas** to facilitate the RIT's work as well as evaluation.

3. **Consider a different partner for Ethiopia** that would be able and willing to take on all the roles of a "mini-RIT" and fully comply with the terms of reference at the level of BLI.

D. Cross-cutting

1. At Secretariat level, consider a less silo-ed approach to the work of grant directors and grant managers, guided by the importance of uniform direction to the RITs as far as is possible. While regional differences in geography, languages, costs, and capacity will necessitate some flexibility, there must be **uniformity in the following areas**:
   - M&E and reporting
   - Timing for validating and closing out grants
   - Purpose of Supervision Missions and degree of depth of supervision across RIT tasks

2. Regarding "Initiate and support sustainable financing and related actions for the conservation of
priority KBAs and corridors," CEPF should reconsider whether this is a task that is possible to do at hotspot level, and perhaps consider a **consistent global policy and approach implemented through a non-RIT partner** that would then work with individual RITs to get "deals done" that would provide an alternative funding stream to CEPF and/or individual hotspots.

3. Mainstreaming is part of the latest Terms of Reference, but there does not seem to be a mechanism by which to conduct consistent outreach to the government and the private sector, and capitalize on these efforts, leading to policy amplification and behavioral change/sponsorship, respectively. While, at grantee level, the generation of policy ideas occurs, there needs to be a **dedicated half-time individual within the RIT** to capture these ideas, and strategically communicate them to the government and the private sector. This individual would need to have the requisite skills, background, and, most importantly, the professional network to perform this role.

4. RIT evaluation is complicated by the multiple dimensions across which RITs can be evaluated – terms of reference, portfolio of projects, and budget. The latter is not divided by SD or components of the terms of reference. The logical frameworks of both the Admin and Program

grants do not always contain the necessary elements – Outputs, SMART Indicators,[10] Baseline and Targets, and Outcomes. It is recommended that the Secretariat **develop a system by which all RITs can be measured against the same, clearly defined criteria**.

5. Project documents do not always contain consistent information. ISS recommends that CEPF work to **develop uniform content in the existing project document templates**, such that the same level of information can be found across hotspots.

6. CEPF should consider ways of **making ConservationGrants run faster** over slower connections or consider systematized workarounds (a defined Plan B, Plan C, etc.) so that ad hoc "policies" aren't needed. RITs should have clear guidance regarding what specific steps are acceptable when the system is unresponsive so that this issue is not addressed on a case-by-case basis with different policies depending on the personnel involved.

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[10] Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Annex

A. List of Key Informants and Survey Respondents

(In alphabetical order by organization and first name)

No.	Organization	Name	Institution	Category of KI
1	CEPF Secretariat - EAM and Wallacea	Dan Rothberg	CEPF	Grant Director
2	CEPF Secretariat - Indo-Burma	Jack Tordoff	CEPF	Managing Director and Grant Director
3	CEPF Secretariat - Monitoring, Evaluation and Outreach	Nina Marshall	CEPF	Senior Director
4	CEPF Secretariat – Monitoring, Evaluation and Outreach	Peggy Poncelet	CEPF	Grant Director
5	EAM	Andrew Plumptre	Key Biodiversity Areas Secretariat	Grant-making organization
6	EAM	Maaike Manten	Bird Life International (in-depth RIT interview)	RIT
7	EAM	Rosie Trevelyan	Tropical Biology Association	Grant-making organization
8	EAM (online survey)	Birhan Ali	Sustainable Natural Resources Management Association (SUNARMA)	Large and small grantee
9	EAM (online survey)	Claire Galvez Wagler	Resilience Now	Large and small grantee
10	EAM (online survey)	Gift Mwandila	Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Society of Zambia	Large and small grantee
11	EAM (online survey)	Jabes Okum	East African Wild Life Society	Large and small grantee
12	EAM (online survey)	Kasozi Nebat Atuhura	Chimpanzee Trust	Large grantee
13	EAM (online survey)	Laban Njoroge	National Museums of Kenya	Small grantee
14	EAM (online survey)	Majdi Salameh	Amjad and Majdi Salameh Company (Enviromatics)	Large and small grantee

15	EAM (online survey)	Minwyelet Mingist	Bahir Dar University	Large and small grantee
16	EAM (online survey)	Paul Gacheru	Nature Kenya	Large and small grantee
17	EAM (online survey)	Thierry Aimable INZIRAYINEZA	Forest of Hope Association	Large and small grantee
18	EAM (online survey)	Turyahabwa Lorna	KIWOCEDU	Unsuccessful applicant
19	Indo-Burma	Aban Marker Kabraji	IUCN	RIT organization
20	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Amy Van Nice	Wildlife Alliance	Large grantee
21	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Bou Vorsak	Bird Life International	Large and small grantee, also in National Advisory Committee
22	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Clemens Becker	European Union	Donor
23	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Lou Vanny	IUCN	RIT, National Coordinator
24	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Ouk Vibol	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	Government
25	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Simon Mahood	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)	Large grantee
26	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Srabani Roy	Conservation International	Large grantee
27	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Yin Dara and Try Hong	Forum Syd	Grant-making organization
28	Indo-Burma, Cambodia	Youk Senglong	Fisheries Action Conservation Team (FACT)	Large grantee
29	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Alessandro, Alex McWilliam, Scott Perkin, Supranee	IUCN (in-depth RIT interview)	RIT
30	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Arnold Sitompul	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	Partner
31	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Chayanis Krittasudthachewa and May	Stockholm Environment Institute	Large grantee
32	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Kong Kim Sreng	Ministry of the Environment, formerly IUCN	National Advisory Committee

33	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Padsakon Chamlongrach	Transborder News	Grantee
34	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Pattarin Thongsima	Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment, Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP)	Government
35	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Sansanee Chuweaw	Former professor (retired), Kasetsart University	National Advisory Committee
36	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Tim Redford	Freeland	Large and small grantee
37	Indo-Burma, Thailand	Warangkana Rattanarat	Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), Kasetsart University	Member of IUCN National Committee
38	Wallacea, Indonesia	Adam Kurniawan	Balang Institut	Small grantee
39	Wallacea, Indonesia	Adi Widyanto, Ratna Palupi, Jihad, Agis Dian Agista, Yanthi, Vivin	Burung Indonesia (in-depth RIT interview)	RIT
40	Wallacea, Indonesia	Agus Sitepu	Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kelimutu National Park	Government
41	Wallacea, Indonesia	Akbar Digdo and Ami	Yapeka	Large and small grantee
42	Wallacea, Indonesia	Amin Ahmadi	Ministry of Environment & Forestry, Maluku Region	Government
43	Wallacea, Indonesia	Basuki and Indra	Yayasan Kehati	Grant-making organization
44	Wallacea, Indonesia	Budi Susilo and Mario Ginting	Yayasan Penabulu	Large grantee
45	Wallacea, Indonesia	Cristi Nozawa	Yayasan Samdhana	Grant-making organization
46	Wallacea, Indonesia	Giyanto	Wildlife Conservation Society	Large grantee

47	Wallacea, Indonesia	Mahendra Primajati	Fauna and Flora International	Large grantee
48	Wallacea, Indonesia	Muhammad Firdaus Agung	Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries	Government
49	Wallacea, Indonesia	Noni Tuharea, Erna, William and Pete	LPPM	Large grantee
50	Wallacea, Indonesia	Paul Jeffrey	DAI / USAID APIK project	Donor
51	Wallacea, Indonesia	Sella Runtulalo	Manengkel Solidaritas	Large and small grantee

B. Summary of Scope of Work of Consultant

The key elements of the Scope of Work are included below.[11]

Objective of the Evaluation

The objective of the evaluation is to inform investment decisions for the next phase of CEPF investment in the three named hotspots in the following ways. First, the evaluation will inform decision-making by the CEPF donors regarding selection of a RIT for the next phase of investment by evaluating the performance of the incumbent RIT and reviewing the institutional landscape for potential competitors. Second, the evaluation will enable the design of RIT proposals that incorporate lessons learned regarding the programmatic and management approaches adopted by the incumbent RIT. Third, should the CEPF donors deem it necessary to update the ecosystem profile for the hotspot, the evaluation will inform the preparation of the new ecosystem profile by documenting challenges and opportunities encountered by the RIT while implementing a grants program to engage and strengthen civil society in conserving globally important biodiversity in the social, political and institutional context of the hotspot.

Criteria for Evaluation

The evaluation will look closely at the components and functions of the Eastern Afromontane, Indo-Burma and Wallacea RITs, as set out in the terms of reference, and evaluate the performance of each RIT against the following criteria:

1. Relevance - Were the activities undertaken relevant to the ecosystem profile, RIT terms of reference, the geography of the hotspot, the capacity of civil society there, and the global monitoring framework of CEPF?
2. Efficiency - How efficiently was the budget allocated to the RIT converted into results
3. Effectiveness - What were the strengths and weakness of the RIT structure and capacities with regard to effective delivery of results?
4. Coverage - To what extent does each portfolio of grants awarded to date cover the strategic directions and investment priorities set out in the investment strategy for the respective hotspot?
5. Impact - To what extent have the targets set in each of the hotspot ecosystem profiles for impacts on biodiversity conservation, human well being, civil society capacity and enabling conditions been met?
6. Accessibility - Do the grant portfolios involve an appropriate balance of international and local grantees, taking into account the relative strengths of different organizations with regard to delivery of the investment strategy and considering the priority given by CEPF to building the capacity of local civil society?
7. Adaptive management - In what ways has the development of each of the grant portfolios been constrained by risks (political/institutional/security) or taken advantage of unanticipated opportunities?

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[11] The complete call for proposal is available here https://www.cepf.net/grants/closed-calls-for-proposals/2019/2019-evaluation-lessons-learned