

Call for Letters of Inquiry Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot Large Grants

Eligible Countries:	Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo
Opening Date:	Friday, 7 February 2020
Closing Deadline:	Friday, 20 March 2020 *EXTENDED TO 31 MARCH 2020.*
Budget:	Minimum budget per project is US\$50,000. Although there is no maximum budget set for this call, each budget will be evaluated based on the project's contributions toward the CEPF targets for Strategic Direction 2.
Theme:	Strategic Direction 2. (Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice in the nine conservation corridors, at local, sub-national and national levels.)

CEPF and BirdLife International, as regional implementation team for the hotspot, are inviting proposals in the form of letters of inquiry.

BACKGROUND

The [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) (CEPF) is designed to safeguard Earth's biologically richest and most threatened regions, known as biodiversity hotspots. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. The CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International (CI), the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank.

The Guinean Forests Biodiversity Hotspot covers 621,705 square kilometers and can be divided into two sub-regions: the Upper Guinean Forests—from Guinea in the west, through Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo

and, marginally, into Benin—and the Lower Guinean Forests—from much of southern Nigeria, into south-west Cameroon, and São Tomé & Príncipe and the offshore islands of Equatorial Guinea.

The Guinean Forests support impressive levels of biodiversity, having high levels of species richness and endemism. It also faces many ongoing threats to biodiversity that have resulted in the loss of more than 85 percent of the native vegetation cover.

CEPF's investment niche in the Guinean Forests is to provide civil society organizations at grassroots, national, and international levels with the tools, capacity, and resources to establish and sustain multi-stakeholder partnerships that demonstrate models for sustainable, pro-poor growth and achieve priority conservation outcomes. CEPF's niche for investment in the hotspot was formulated through a participatory process that engaged civil society, donor and governmental stakeholders throughout the region. The results of this process and the five-year (2016–2021) strategy that CEPF has identified for supporting biodiversity conservation in the region are outlined in the [ecosystem profile](#) (PDF – 5.2 MB).

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Non-government organizations; community groups and associations; private enterprises; universities; research institutes; and other civil society organizations may apply for funding.

Government-owned enterprises or institutions are eligible only if they can demonstrate that the enterprise or institution:

- i. has a legal personality independent of any government agency or actor;
- ii. has the authority to apply for and receive private funds; and
- iii. may not assert a claim of sovereign immunity.

Organizations must have their own bank account and be authorized under relevant national laws to receive charitable contributions.

Individuals are not eligible.

Anyone who is uncertain of their eligibility to apply for CEPF funding should consult [this dedicated page](#).

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The scope of this call is exclusively limited to the **Strategic Direction 2 of**

the ecosystem profile: Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice in the nine conservation corridors, at local, sub-national and national levels.

Projects should be aligned with one or more of the CEPF investment priorities related to Strategic Direction 2, presented in the table below.

Also, for each investment priority, the table below presents examples of eligible projects’ objectives. Please note, however, that these examples are not prescriptive, and applicants should consider their own context and skills to present their own project’s objective in line with Strategic Direction 2 and this call.

CEPF Investment Priority	Examples of eligible projects’ objectives
<p>2.1 Conduct policy-relevant research, analysis and outreach that informs and influences the development of national government conservation policies, including on protected area management, payment for ecosystem services, REDD+ and ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement conservation-relevant actions (like creation of new protected areas) by identifying areas of shared interest and exploring collaborative approaches with government agencies at local and/or national level(s). • Include climate change predictions in ecosystem services valuation and subsequently develop, plan and/or monitor relevant new or existing projects • Influence policymakers by valorizing the results of legislative framework reviews related to ecosystem management. • Promote transparency and accountability in decision-making process related to natural resource management through a national planning process. • Improve the effectiveness of environmental and social impact assessments regulations and operationalization by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocating with the government for actively strengthening, implementing, and validating them. ○ Organizing training programs on all aspects of environmental and social impact assessment development, operation, compliance and advocacy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing platforms for certified environmental and social impact assessment bodies. ○ Establishing independent bodies to certify that environmental and social impact assessments meet legal standards and are available on a centralized website. • Mitigate negative impacts of public actions by identifying specific and contextual priority issues and policies where ecosystem services are under threat as a direct result of these actions (or lack of action), and then raising awareness and advocating for corrective measures. • Mitigate negative impacts of large value chains/commodities on ecosystem services by identifying these impacts and possible best practices and then carrying out targeted awareness raising and advocacy with businesses, consumers and regulators on these. • Develop mechanisms that would include payments for externalities, including extracting fees from business practices that cause negative impacts, and payment for environmental services used.
<p>2.2 Generate locally relevant information on natural ecosystems (e.g., economic valuations of ecosystem services) to influence political and economic decision-making in favor of their conservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile and define standardized methodology to quantify economic values of ecosystem services and then advocate with businesses on the importance of ecosystem services. • Establish a community of practice in national capital assessment (accounting). • Support both communities and local government agencies to generate locally relevant information on non-timber forest products values and markets potential to enhance proper planning and implementation of local initiatives, based on sustainable harvesting and relevant marketing/liaison (fair, organic, sustainable, ...). • Assess the values of prioritized ecosystem services and have a clear "business case" for why governments should mainstream

	<p>biodiversity by conducting critical baseline surveys and developing robust databases.</p>
<p>2.3 Facilitate partnerships among local communities, private sector and government to demonstrate models for best practice mining, sustainable forestry and sustainable agriculture by private companies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote dialogue and adherence to best practices through the establishment of local government/businesses/civil society organizations platforms. • Pilot and test sustainable approaches in priority sectors and demonstrate the “cost” of weak regulations/enforcement and hidden costs of unsustainable use of natural resources on these approaches by working with communities, businesses and business associations. • Collaborate in the identification, testing and roll-out of incentive mechanisms that support best practices. • Develop standards and certification as part of voluntary interim mechanisms and their adoption in priority sectors. • Demonstrate models for best practice by analyzing equity based on costs/benefits and building partnerships among local communities, private sector and/or government. • Identify possible avenues and strategies to move toward a sufficiently equitable system that will incentivize sustainable production and disincentivize forest conversion. • Promote conservation agreements between local communities and private sectors. • Incorporate biodiversity-friendly management practices into the business practices of key agents of change in the production of key commodities. • Collaborate with businesses to provide technical environmental and social capacity to improve environmental planning, operation, monitoring and restoration.

Lastly, projects will need to demonstrate and quantify the contribution of their impacts toward the following CEPF targets:

- At least five conservation-related policies of national governments are informed or influenced by research, analysis and outreach supported by CEPF grants.
- Locally relevant information on natural ecosystems is generated for at least 20 Key Biodiversity Areas and used to influence political and economic decision-making in favor of their conservation.
- At least 20 partnerships are formed or strengthened among civil society, government, private sector and communities to promote best practices in mining, sustainable forestry and agriculture by private companies.
- At least five private companies adopt new management practices consistent with biodiversity conservation at operations in the conservation corridors.

ELIGIBLE SITES AND OTHER CRITERIA

The call is open for the nine biodiversity corridors defined in the ecosystem profile and summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Conservation Corridors in the Guinean Forests Hotspot

No.	Corridor Name	Countries	Area (km²)
1	Sierra Leone Coastal Corridor	Sierra Leone	17,096
2	Lofa-Gola-Mano Complex	Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea	47,545
3	Mount Nimba Complex	Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia	6,829
4	Cestos-Sapo-Grebo-Taï-Cavally Corridor	Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire	70,278
5	Bandama River Catchment	Côte d'Ivoire	8,389
6	Forest Reserves of Southeastern Côte d'Ivoire and Southwestern Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana	72,579
7	Togo Highlands	Togo	6,049
8	Lower Niger Delta	Nigeria	65,743
9	Korupmba-Obachap	Cameroon, Nigeria	118,675

Figure 1. Conservation Corridors in the Guinean Forests Hotspot



GENDER INTEGRATION

CEPF is committed to integrating gender into its portfolio. Applicants should design projects and write proposals that consider gender issues in the achievement of their conservation impacts.

CEPF has developed several resources that can help applicants to design, implement and evaluate gender-aware projects ([CEPF Gender Toolkit](#)) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#)). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports.

CEPF will evaluate your project based on its integration of gender.

BUDGET AND TIMEFRAME

The minimum budget per project for this call is US\$50,000.00. The overall budget for this call is about US\$1.3M. Although there is no maximum budget set for this call, each budget will be evaluated based on the project's

contributions toward the CEPF targets mentioned above.

Projects are expected to start on **1 July 2020** at the earliest and must be **completed by 28 February 2022 at the latest**. There is no minimum project duration.

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must respond to the call via the [ConservationGrants](#) electronic portal. CEPF will not accept letters of inquiry via email or any other mechanism.

Applicants who already have a ConservationGrants portal account should use the same one. Applicants who do not yet have a ConservationGrants portal account will be prompted to create a new account.

Questions regarding ConservationGrants account creation or application process should be emailed to conservationgrants@conservation.org.

SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS

All applicants will receive a notification following the review of their project.

Applicants whose LOIs receive a positive review will be invited to submit a full proposal, again through ConservationGrants. Full proposals that receive a positive review will lead to the award of a grant between Conservation International, as the host of the CEPF Secretariat, and the applicant's institution (the "grantee"). Grants will be denominated in United States dollars and grant agreements will be in English.

CONTACT AND ADVISORY SERVICE

All applicants are encouraged to discuss proposal ideas with the project officer in charge of the areas where the project would be implemented:

- **Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire:**
Emmanuelle Mahe, Emmanuelle.Mahe@birdlife.org
- **Ghana, Togo, Benin and Cameroon:**
Paul Rodrigue Ngafack, Paul.Ngafack@birdlife.org
- **Nigeria:**
Ruth Akagu, Ruth.Akagu@birdlife.org

Based on experience from previous calls for proposals, discussing your proposal idea with us before submitting it will significantly increase your

chances of success. The advisory service **will end 5 March 2020**.

Please direct any questions or concerns to cepf-gfwa-rit@birdlife.org.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

- [How to Apply](#)
- [Eligibility Criteria for Applicants](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)
- [CEPF Safeguard Policies](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (must be logged into ConservationGrants)
- [Ecosystem Profile](#) (PDF – 5.2 MB)
- [Ecosystem Profile Investment Strategy](#) (PDF - 305 KB)
- [Ecosystem Profile Logical Framework](#) (PDF – 220 KB)