

CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND

WESTERN GHATS - GRANTS PROGRAM

Background Note

Guidelines to Grant Application Process

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**Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment
(ATREE)**

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Background

The Western Ghats region of India is part of the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka global biodiversity hotspot that is extraordinarily rich in plant and animal species. It also has a diversity of natural, semi-natural and agro-ecosystems. The total area of the hotspot is less than 6 percent of the land area of India, and yet, the Western Ghats contains more than 30 percent of all plant, fish, herpetofauna, bird, and mammal species found in India, exceeding 5000 species of flowering plants, 139 mammal species, 508 birds, 157 reptiles and 126 amphibians. The Western Ghats has a high proportion of endemic species and a spectacular assemblage of large vertebrates, including large mammals. The Western Ghats contains numerous medicinal plants and important genetic resources such as the wild relatives of grains, fruits, and spices. It directly and indirectly supports the livelihoods of over 200 million people through ecosystem services. In addition to rich biodiversity, the Western Ghats is home to diverse social, religious, and linguistic groups.

The **Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund** ([CEPF](#)) is a global programme that provides grants to non-governmental organizations to protect biodiversity hotspots with the participation and involvement of civil society. It provides strategic assistance to non-governmental organizations, community groups and other civil society partners to help safeguard biodiversity hotspots. This conservation investment is guided by a region-specific investment strategy developed with inputs and in consultation with diverse stakeholders. An [Ecosystem Profile](#) for the Western Ghats was developed by conservation and scientific institutions with inputs from civil society to guide the strategic and catalytic conservation investment in the Western Ghats.

The council of donors that governs CEPF approved a \$ 4.5-million, 5-year investment strategy for the Western Ghats in April 2007, based on this Ecosystem Profile. Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment ([ATREE](#)) was selected as the **Regional Implementation Team** ([RIT](#)) to implement the conservation strategy outlined in the Western Ghats Ecosystem Profile in partnership with CEPF. The RIT will lead implementation of the CEPF investment strategy for achieving the conservation goals. The RIT will work in collaboration with partners in the civil society to achieve the shared conservation goals identified in the Ecosystem Profile. It will assist civil society groups in designing, implementing, and replicating successful conservation activities; review grant applications; and directly award small grants. A full description of the strategic directions and related investment priorities can be found at the [CEPF website](#).

Grants will be provided by CEPF and the RIT to civil society organizations to work towards safeguarding globally threatened species and critical sites of the Western Ghats. These investments will be primarily made for promoting innovative partnerships between NGOs, government, local communities and land-owners to enhance conservation and connectivity in five landscape corridors in the Western Ghats. In addition, one other priority will be the generation of reliable scientific information on lesser-known and endangered floral and faunal species to assess their conservation status. This will help in updating their status in the global conservation context (IUCN Red Data Book). Enhancing biodiversity conservation in production landscapes outside protected areas is another important priority. The Grants Program expects to achieve all of this by primarily enhancing the capacity and participation of a

wider group of civil society organizations by involving them in creative and innovative long-term conservation partnerships. The Ecosystem Profile developed together with stakeholders will guide all applicants in applying for grants as well as the award of all grants by the CEPF Secretariat and Regional Implementation Team.

Objectives

On the basis of the strategic directions of the CEPF Western Ghats Ecosystem Profile the Grants Program will be implemented with two main objectives:

1. To enable action by diverse communities and partnerships to ensure conservation of key biodiversity areas and enhance connectivity in the corridors,
2. To improve the conservation of globally threatened species of the Western Ghats through systematic conservation planning and action.

As outlined in the Ecosystem Profile, applicants should focus on the following investment priorities related to these objectives:

- 1.1 Test pilot models of community and private reserves to achieve conservation outcomes at priority sites and critical links in unprotected areas of the Anamalai and Malnad-Kodagu corridors as well as the Brahmagiri-Nagarhole critical link in the Mysore-Nilgiri corridor
- 1.2 Promote partnerships to identify, evaluate, and advocate for suitable mechanisms that incorporate critical links (biological corridors) into the protected area network in the Periyar-Agasthyamalai, Mysore-Nilgiri, and Malnad-Kodagu corridors
- 3 Support civil society to establish partnerships with state agencies to implement science-based management and conservation of priority sites in the Mysore-Nilgiri corridor
- 2.1 Monitor and assess the conservation status of globally threatened species with an emphasis on lesser-known organisms such as reptiles and fish
- 2.2 Support efforts to conserve Critically Endangered and Endangered species through the creation and implementation of species recovery and management plans
- 2.3 Evaluate the existing protected area network for adequate globally threatened species representation and assess effectiveness of protected area types in biodiversity conservation
- 2.4 Support interdisciplinary efforts to analyze and disseminate biodiversity data

Geographical Extent

Conservation of five large landscapes (the Anamalai, Malnad-Kodagu, Mysore-Nilgiri, Periyar-Agasthyamalai, and Sahyadri-Konkan biodiversity conservation corridors) and 80 key biodiversity areas will be emphasized for the Grants program. A list of priority sites and corridors is provided in the [Western Ghats Ecosystem Profile](#).

Funding Priorities

CEPF investment is designed to meet specific conservation targets, such as:

- promoting partnerships between local communities, NGOs and/or private landowners for monitoring and conservation of globally threatened species in key biodiversity areas;

- improving landscape connectivity by enhancing the biodiversity values of private lands with commercial plantations neighbouring priority sites in each of the five landscape corridors;
- initiating pilot models of community and private reserves; improving protected area management for conservation of globally threatened species in the Mysore-Nilgiri corridor;
- participative and establishing scientific monitoring programmes for targeted globally threatened species, critical links and key sites in each landscape corridor;
- developing management and species recovery plans for targeted critical links, landscape corridors and globally threatened species that synergizes CEPF investment with existing and proposed conservation initiatives;
- generating new information on threatened species, especially lesser known taxa and habitats for conservation planning, and covering conceptual niches that are generic to entire Western Ghats;
- effective dissemination of latest data, knowledge, tools and techniques amongst Western Ghats stakeholders to enable efficiency in implementation of CEPF Regional Investment Strategy; and
- increasing the involvement civil society in conservation of globally threatened species and key biodiversity areas by the end of the project period.

A list of priority species is provided as an appendix to the [Western Ghats Ecosystem Profile](#).

Implementation

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot is a five-year investment program (2008-2013) that will be managed through a partnership of CEPF with Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE). ATREE will function as the Regional Implementation Team for CEPF in the region. While grants of above \$20,000 will be administered by CEPF, a small grants program for projects approved for \$20,000 and less will be implemented by ATREE.

Eligibility

Non-governmental organizations, community groups, universities, private enterprises, and individuals may apply for funding. Ideally, organizations that promote capacity of civil society and community groups are encouraged to apply. Individuals can apply for grants, but are encouraged to work with civil society organizations, and communities to develop joint applications, rather than apply directly. Projects must be located in one or more of the following states of the Western Ghats region: Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Projects **must** support a strategic direction and investment strategy outlined in the Ecosystem Profile to be eligible.

Grants cannot be used for the purchase of land, involuntary resettlement of people, or activities that negatively affect physical cultural resources, including those important to local communities. Grants will not be used for activities adversely affecting Indigenous Peoples or where these communities have not provided their broad support to the project activities. Grants will not be used to remove or alter any physical cultural property (includes sites having archaeological, palaeontological, historical, religious, or unique natural values). Proposed activities should observe all other relevant safeguard and social policies (www.cepf.net).

Grant applicants must have their own bank account and PAN numbers, and authorization under FCRA (<http://mha.gov.in/fcra.htm>) rules to receive the grant equivalent to US\$ currency. Government-run institutions are eligible only if they can

demonstrate that the institution has: (i) legal personality independent of any government agency; (ii) the authority to apply for and receive private funds; (iii) and, may not assert a claim of sovereign immunity. Applications from formal affiliates of ATREE that have an independent operating board of directors will be accepted, but subject to additional external review.

For further clarifications contact the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) at cepfwghats@atree.org.

Application Procedure

Two types of grants are awarded by CEPF for the Western Ghats. The application procedures for both are given below:

1) Small Grants

Grants of this type will typically range from US \$5000 to US \$10,000 disbursed in the form of Indian Rupees. Applications for Small Grants have to be submitted on prescribed format and number of pages in electronic version (MSWord) to cepfwghats@atree.org (templates available in the **Annexure** or **Resources** section of this document). Completed applications (containing questionnaire, proposal and budget) should be emailed to cepfwghats@atree.org. An email acknowledging receipt of the application will be sent, and the application will be forwarded to the appropriate member of the RIT. As part of the review process, the RIT will communicate with the applicant for discussions or supporting documents from the applicant. Submitted proposals will be reviewed by RIT and subsequently by Technical Review Team of experts. Based on merit and the applicant's comparative advantage in helping to implement the CEPF strategic directions for the region in question, the proposal would be approved. Approval of a proposal will be followed by signing of agreement between the applicant and the RIT. Queries or requests for clarifications during this stage can be addressed to cepfwghats@atree.org. Application Processing Time: 1 to 2 months

2) Large Grants (\$20,000 to \$999,999 USD)

Applicants for large grants are required to fill in and submit a Letter of Inquiry (a template for this included as Annexure 4 of this document or can be downloaded from http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/WGLoi), that includes a series of eligibility questions to ensure that they qualify as potential grantees. Applicants would select a strategic direction from the Profile for which they wish to apply and describe their proposed project. Completed LoIs should be emailed only to cepfgrants@conservation.org, and receipt will be acknowledged via email. Submission of the Letter of Inquiry begins the Grant Decision-Making Process. Based on this submission, the RIT will perform an initial screening. If the LOI meets the preliminary criteria outlined above, the applicant will be invited to submit a full Project Proposal application (CEPF will send you the application template) and to respond to a Financial Questionnaire. The RIT will assist applicants in addressing questions regarding the logical framework approach to developing projects or the overall application form. Questions or concerns during this process can be sent to cepfgrants@conservation.org or cepfwghats@atree.org. Application Processing Time: 2 to 3 months.

Amount of grant award

As specified above, typically small grants projects will be in the range of US \$5000 to US \$10,000, with an upper limit for each small grant not exceeding a maximum of

US\$ 20,000. Grants above US\$ 20,000 up to a maximum of US\$ 999,999, will be considered as large grants.

Contact

Project Co-ordinator

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Annexure:

- 1) Eligibility and Safeguards Questionnaire
- 2) Proposal format and guidelines for CEPF Western Ghats small grants program
- 3) Budget template for CEPF small grant application
- 4) Template for CEPF large grant Letter of Inquiry

Resources

Western Ghats Ecosystem Profile http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/WGhatsEP

Small Grants Eligibility Questionnaire http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/Quest.doc

Small Grants Format http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/SGFormat.doc

Small Grants Budget Template http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/SGBudget.doc

Large Grants Letter of Inquiry Template http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/WGLoi