

Procurement Summary and Assessment of Proposals for the Regional Implementation Team for the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

Fiftieth Meeting of the CEPF Working Group
18 March 2016

1. Background

The Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot (hereafter, the Guinean Forests Hotspot) stretches from Guinea in the west, through Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and, marginally into Benin, for what is called the "Upper Guinean Forests sub-region" and from much of southern Nigeria through southwestern Cameroon as well as São Tomé and Príncipe and the offshore islands of Equatorial Guinea for the "Lower Guinean Forests sub-region". The hotspot supports impressive levels of biodiversity, having high levels of species richness and endemism, and being among the world's top priorities for primate conservation. It also contains many other ecological features that render it globally unique (swamp forests, large mangroves, volcanic islands, large rivers and deltas, as well as crater lakes). Besides its biodiversity values, the hotspot's forests also provide a range of ecosystem services for a population of around 200 million, generally poor, people. At global level, the hotspot's forests contain high amounts of biomass carbon, which contributes to mediating climate change processes and maintaining biodiversity at the global scale.

The ecosystem profile for the Guinean Forests Hotspot was developed during FY14 and FY15, following the Donor Council's approval of reinvestment in the hotspot on 12 September 2012 (CEPF/DC/electronic/24). In 21 January 2016, the Donor Council approved a spending authority of \$9 million over a five-year period, from 2016 to 2021. In order to coordinate and support the development, implementation and monitoring of a coherent portfolio of grants to realize the investment strategy set out in the ecosystem profile, the CEPF Secretariat has initiated a process to select a Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Guinean Forests Hotspot.

2. Summary of the Solicitation Process

The solicitation process for the RIT for the Guinean Forests Hotspot has followed the timeline below:

11 November 2015: CEPF Secretariat releases a call for Expression of Interests (EOI) for the RIT in both English and French. The announcement is placed on the CEPF website and sent to organizations that participated in the ecosystem profiling process. At the same time as the release of this call, the Secretariat posts the draft ecosystem profile in English and draft terms of reference for the RIT in both English and French on the CEPF website.

4 December 2015: Closing date for EOI. Sixteen organizations submit EOI (see Table 1).

Table 1. Organizations Submitting EOIs for the Guinean Forests RIT

#	Applicant Organization	Lead Contact	Country
1	International Union for Conservation of Nature - Central and West Africa Program (IUCN-PACO)	Kenneth Angu Angu	Cameroon
2	Havilah Natural Resources Ltd (HNR)	Abimbola Ojekanmi	Canada
3	Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire (CSRS)	Prof. Inza Kone	Côte d'Ivoire
4	SOS-Forêts	Ode Kouame	Côte d'Ivoire
5	United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA)	Elias T. Ayuk	Ghana
6	BirdLife International (BirdLife)	Julius Arinaitwe	Kenya
7	Conservation International - Africa and Madagascar Field Division (CI-AMFD)	Jaco Venter	Kenya
8	Biodiversity Preservation Center (BPC)	Dr. Edem Eniang	Nigeria
9	National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB)	Timothy Oluwafemi Ajiboye	Nigeria
10	Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF)	Joseph Onoja	Nigeria
11	Foundation for Sustainability Wildlife and Climate (FOSEC)	Rachel Ashegbofe	Nigeria
12	Association Guinéenne d'Éveil au Développement Durable (AGEDD)	Abdoul K. Diallo	Guinea
13	Association of Biologist of Sao Tomenses (ABS)	Alzira Rodrigues	São Tomé
14	Grain d'Espoir Senegal	Mr. NIANG	Senegal
15	United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)	Neil Burgess	U.-K.
16	Rural Integrated Center for Community Empowerment (RICCE)	Salome Gofan	U.S.A. & Liberia

Instead of an EOI, the organization Grain d'Espoir Senegal submitted a request for funds for a project falling outside of the hotspot boundaries (Northern Senegal). The Secretariat deemed that this organization was non-responsive to the request for EOI and thus did not include it in the following steps.

16 December 2015: CEPF Secretariat formally submits the ecosystem profile to the Donor Council for approval, in advance of its 28th meeting.

CEPF Secretariat sends Request for Proposals (RfP) in both English and French to all fifteen qualified organizations that submitted an EOI and posts the same on the CEPF website. The RfP states that CEPF will only accept proposals led by organizations that have submitted an EOI but that these organizations are free to form bidding consortia with other groups

not listed. The maximum value of proposals is \$1.5 million of the \$9.0 million spending authority for the Guinean Forests Hotspot, as specified in the ecosystem profile.

- 4 January 2016: Grant Director, Peggy Poncelet, with support from Grant Director, Daniel Rothberg and Managing Director, Jack Tordoff, holds a conference call to explain to interested parties the roles, functions and responsibilities of the RIT and elaborate on what CEPF seeks from a successful RIT. The conference call is well attended by prospective applicants. A recording of the call is posted on the CEPF website.
- 20 January 2016: The ecosystem profile is approved by the Donor Council at its 28th meeting.
- 26 January 2016: The period during which applicants can ask questions of the CEPF Secretariat ends. A total of two questions related to preparation of the RIT proposal are received and responses are posted on the CEPF website.
- 29 January 2016: Deadline for submission of full proposals passes. Seven organizations submit proposals (see Table 2). Proposals are entered into CEPF's grants management system.

Table 2. Organizations Submitting Full Proposals for the Guinean Forests RIT

#	Applicant Organization	Lead Contact	Date Received	Country
1	Biodiversity Preservation Center (BPC)	Dr. Edem A. Eniang edemeniang@yahoo.com	1/28/2016	Nigeria
2	United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA)	Praise Nutakor nutakor@unu.edu	1/29/2016	Ghana
3	Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire (CSRS)	Inza Kone inza.kone@gmail.com	1/29/2016	Cote d'Ivoire
4	Havilah Natural Resources Ltd (HNR)	Abimbola Ojekanmi operations@havilahresources.com	1/29/2016	Canada
5	BirdLife International (BirdLife)	Marion Klein marion.klein@birdlife.org	1/29/2016	Ghana, Kenya, U.K.
6	Conservation International - Africa and Madagascar Field Division (CI-AMFD)	Jaco Venter jventer@conservation.org	1/29/2016	Kenya
7	International Union for Conservation of Nature - Central and West Africa Program (IUCN-PACO)	Kenneth Angu Angu kenneth.angu@iucn.org	1/29/2016	Cameroon

Four consortiums were formed among the seven proposals that were received:

- UNU-INRA's proposal is a consortium composed of UNU-INRA, as the lead, the Centre International de Recherche-Action pour un Développement Durable (CIRADD), Tropenbos International Ghana and the Tropical Research and Conservation Centre (TRCC).
- CSRS's proposal is presenting a consortium between CSRS, as the lead, the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), the Organisation pour le Développement Durable de la Biodiversité (ODDB) and the Society for Environment Conservation (SEC).
- HNR's proposal constitutes a consortium in which HNR is the lead entity working together with the RICCE, TRCC, the National Center for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology and AGEDD.
- BPC's proposal is a consortium between BPC, as the lead, and the Institute for Development, Ecology, Conservation & Cooperation (IDECC).

3. Evaluation Committee and Process

The proposals were evaluated by four members of the CEPF Secretariat:

- Jack Tordoff, Managing Director, CEPF
- Megan Oliver, Director, Grants Management Unit, CEPF
- Nina Marshall, Senior Director, Monitoring, Evaluation and Outreach Unit, CEPF
- Peggy Poncelet, Grant Director, CEPF

The reviewers evaluated proposals according to the evaluation criteria presented in Section 14 of the RfP (see Table 3). Reviewers worked independently and assigned their own scores, out of the maximum number of points available for each category.

Table 3. Categories and points of the Evaluation Criteria Scorecard

Category		Points
1.	Organizational Experience – Technical	5
2.	Organizational Experience – Management	15
3.	Personnel	30
4.	Understanding of the Ecosystem Profile	5
5.	Proposed Technical Approach	15
6.	Proposed Managerial Approach	25
7.	Proposed Financial Approach	5
Total		100

4. Average Score and Detailed Evaluation by Category

Altogether, application of the evaluation criteria revealed that BirdLife has the best overall proposal reflected in its higher score (83.6). The proposals from UNU-INRA and CSRS are scored closely enough that it is difficult to say one is definitively better than the other: both offer significant strengths and both have significant weaknesses. The proposals from CI-AMFD, HNR and the BPC did not receive the average number of points, while IUCN-PACO failed to present a strong management approach. Table 4 below shows, for each category, the average score awarded to each applicant.

Table 4. Average Score by Category

Category	Total	Birdlife	UNU-INRA	CSRS	IUCN-PACO	CI-AMFD	HNR	BPC
1. Organizational Experience – Technical	5	4.5	4.9	4.8	5.0	4.3	3.3	2.0
2. Organizational Experience – Management	15	14.8	13.5	12.8	14.0	11.3	5.0	2.0
3. Personnel	30	20.5	18.5	19.8	18.0	4.7	15.7	16.0
4. Understanding of the Ecosystem Profile	5	4.9	4.3	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.3	1.8
5. Proposed Technical Approach	15	12.8	12.8	13.0	10.0	11.7	8.7	7.8
6. Proposed Management Approach	25	22.0	18.5	19.3	8.7	11.3	4.3	1.8
7. Budget	5	4.1	3.8	3.1	1.3	1.3	2.0	2.5
Total	100	83.6	76.3	75.6	61.0	47.7	42.3	33.8

The following sections on the detailed evaluation will only focus on the top three ranked applicants. CEPF maintains full electronic copies of the evaluators' score in its grants management system.

Criterion 1. Organizational Experience – Technical

Evaluators found all three applicants to have missions that align well with the objectives outlined in the ecosystem profile. All demonstrated good experiences with program implementation and interaction with potential partners in the region. However, all of them proved to have very limited track records for the Lower Guinean Forests sub-region and none of them demonstrated a clear strategy for their own organization at the entire hotspot level.

- **BirdLife's** mission statement is very congruent with the objectives and priorities of CEPF and those set out in the ecosystem profile with its focus on capacity building and biodiversity conservation. The applicant has significant experience across the globe and in Africa, in particular through the BirdLife partner organizations in half of the hotspot countries. Its experience working with the private sector in the region seems more limited than with other types of potential partners (CSOs, governments, academic institutions, donors). However it is unclear whether this is the reflection of a real lack of concrete experience or simply that less emphasis was provided on this sector in the proposal. BirdLife has had an office in the hotspot (Ghana) for many years, but the status and strategy of the program is not clearly articulated.
- **UNU-INRA's** consortium has a range of objectives that are very relevant to the region and the profile and is particularly strong with regard to capacity building, natural resources management and science-policy interface, all of which will be central to the program in the Guinean Forests. The one area where the experience of the consortium could be more relevant is with regard to biodiversity conservation *sensu stricto*, although it has mobilized a diverse range of partners within the hotspot. All consortium members have an established program in the hotspot. The lead consortium partner has an Africa-wide program, although it is not present in every country, whereas the other three partners have national programs in Ghana, Nigeria and Togo.
- **CSRS's** mission is very relevant to the priorities in the ecosystem profile with a focus on research and training in biodiversity and sustainable development fields. The lead organization does not have a mission with a specific focus on conservation *per se* but its consortium partner, AWF, has extensive experience in this field. The consortium partners have experience working with a range of partners although the demonstration of concrete work with the private sector is not clearly made. The lead organization has a long-established program of research in Côte d'Ivoire and, more recently, has led a small number of large, multi-country projects in Africa. AWF also has a large, long-established program across Sub-Saharan Africa. The two additional consortium members, SEC and ODDDB, based in Liberia and in Benin respectively, have programs that are primarily national.

Criterion 2. Organizational Experience – Management

Evaluators found all three applicants to have satisfactory administrative, financial, and monitoring systems, experience managing programs of similar size, scale, and complexity as the RIT, and experience directly managing small grants programs.

- **BirdLife** is currently successfully managing two RITs (in the Mediterranean Basin and in Eastern Afrotropical) and has implemented RIT functions in Indo-Burma (2008-2013), as well as has contributed to what was then a precursor of a RIT in Eastern Arc (2004-2009). The technical proposal makes extensive references to lessons learned and successful approaches from these experiences. Within the hotspot, it has implemented programs of a similar scale focusing on civil society capacity building in particular. During the initial CEPF investment, it was also a grantee, thus experiencing CEPF from the grantee point of view. By then, it had received scrutiny from CEPF to improve its financial controls. The current financial system is described and emphasizes the controls involving each office worldwide, including the one in Ghana where the RIT would be based. In the next 17 months, BirdLife will be moving its entire program to a single financial system and is thus confident that this region will be of similar standard to the rest of the program. This standard also includes a monitoring system (Quality Assurance System) that it uses to monitor programmatic and financial performance, with a particular emphasis on monitoring changes in civil society capacity within its partnership.
- **UNU-INRA**'s consortium collectively has experience in managing programs of a similar scale to the RIT grant, although only the lead organization demonstrates significant experience with complex, multi-country programs. Together, they have excellent experience in research programs, natural resources management, capacity building and advocacy. The lead organization is part of the United Nations University (UNU), which implies a level of rigor and the proposal explicitly states that the requirements of UNU are met. A project management software (Pelikan) is being used. The consortium members have significant experience with monitoring and evaluation and bring an academic rigor to this aspect of the RIT's role. This appears to be a key strength of the proposal. However it is unclear whether or not TBI Ghana has an institutional system even if they have been involved in monitoring efforts. Furthermore, because the proposal does not discuss any previous collaboration among the consortium's members, it is difficult to assess their capacity to work together and consolidate their various skills and experiences.
- **CSRS**'s consortium collectively and individually demonstrates their capacities and experiences in managing similar size, scale and complex programs, e.g. transboundary institutional capacity building programs and small grant programs. CSRS describes its monitoring and evaluation system, which is used to monitor its own internal performance

and indicates good commitment to documenting and improving projects. Unfortunately, no detailed analytical framework is presented. CSRS has an established finance and administrative system, with division of responsibilities among different units and an operations manual that follows the United Nations system. It performs internal and external audits every year. The monitoring, financial and administrative systems of the other members of the consortium are not mentioned.

Criterion 3. Personnel

Based on the five subordinate criteria listed in Section 14 of the RfP, the three proposals were evaluated on their overall staffing plan, the individual and combined skills of named candidates (as supported by curricula), the plan for recruitment of “to be determined” candidates, and the organization’s ability to engage its other full-time personnel to fill vacant positions, as needed. BirdLife’s personnel plan consists in 5.6 FTE with a studied strategy in terms of the roll out of the future portfolio but with 2.8 FTE yet to be identified (50%). UNU-INRA’s consortium proposed the highest number of staff, thus allowing it to cover each country of the hotspot individually. However, no level of effort was provided, 60-65% of the staff have not been identified, and no local "satellite" partners are yet identified to host them. CSRS’s consortium proposed a staffing plan equivalent to 6.7 FTE, out of which 2.0 FTE are to be identified (30%), but with uneven portfolio distribution and, there again, no local "satellite" partners have been identified to host them. All have proposed qualified people for those identified individuals.

- **BirdLife** proposes a staffing plan with a level of effort of 5.6 FTE in Year 1 based on nine people, diminishing as the investment progresses (3.8 FTE in Year 5). This is less than other proposals but the identified staff demonstrate relevant experience and it should be recognized that additional capacity for the monitoring function will be made available through a consultancy to UNEP-WCMC. The core team will be based in Ghana apart from the three country coordinators and one support staff from BirdLife’s office in the U.K.

The proposed Team Leader, Tommy Garnett, is very accomplished. He speaks both English and French, is a former grantee of CEPF and is highly qualified to coordinate the team. However, he is currently only able to commit to lead for the first 18 months of the program. Although his potential replacement may be disruptive, a strategy is presented and budgeted for.

The three country coordinators are all identified consultants and seem adequately qualified in view of their curricula (including in requested languages). Their participation will diminish over time (from 50% in Years 1 and 2, to 35% in Year 3, 30% in Year 4, and absent in Year 5). This proposal is a reflection of the proposed strategy for the implementation of the portfolio with a stronger emphasis in the first few years in terms of

grant making and capacity building. Yet, the country coordinator for the Gulf of Guinea islands is based in Mozambique, which will inevitably restrict her availability for face-to-face meetings with grantees or potential applicants.

Three positions are not yet filled. Two of them (finance officer and communications officer) demand skills that are likely readily available in Ghana. The small grants manager is an important position, requiring a quite specialized skill set, and it is not ideal that no one has been identified yet. A recruitment plan is presented, roles are defined and detailed job descriptions and qualifications are provided.

- **UNU-INRA** proposes a staffing plan involving more than 25 people out of which 11 are identified. The core team to be based in Ghana comprises the RIT Team Leader, an Assistant RIT Team Leader, a Financial Manager and a Communications Manager. Additionally two people per country, one technical biodiversity and natural resources officer and one finance officer, will complete the team.

The identified team is extremely accomplished and has the relevant skills, although perhaps a bit on the academic side. Job descriptions are provided but, with the exception of the Team Leader, it is unclear who will match which positions. This is because a detailed staffing plan that links the curricula to specific positions is missing. The proportion of the time that these identified people will actually spend on the project is also not specified.

The Team Leader, Dr. Elias Ayuk, has the appropriate skills, including in English and French plus good knowledge of Spanish, and the relevant experience needed for this position. However, because of his other responsibilities (Director of UNU-INRA), he may not actually spend a significant proportion of his time on the project. Collectively the identified team speaks English and French with a little bit of Spanish, but none speak Portuguese and this language is not mentioned in the job descriptions of the country coordinators. Although country coordinators will be recruited in the countries where the consortium is not present, thus bringing a potentially strong representation on the ground, partner NGOs to recruit them in those countries have not been identified yet. It is likely that significant delays will ensue as the lead organization starts to identify partners and then they, in turn, recruit coordinators. Some allowance for this is made in the timeline but this seems overly optimistic given the number of countries involved and the lack of existing partnerships in several of them. Also, there is no description of reporting lines.

- **CSRS's** consortium proposes a clear staffing plan, with 6.7 FTE based on 15 people, out of which only three positions have to be filled. Curricula are provided for key positions, as well as work locations and reporting lines for the whole team. Yet, about half of the

proposed staffing does not have a job description (communication, monitoring and evaluation, mainstreaming). The key positions (Team Leader, Small Grants Manager, Accountant) have been allocated full time to the project, and the regional coordinators 50%. However, the division of countries among the regional coordinators is uneven (for instance, one has only Togo and Benin, where few grants will be awarded).

The proposed Team Leader, Julie Champeau, has relevant technical experience in biodiversity, managing programs, communications and engaging with partners and is fluent in English and French with some basic Spanish. However, she has never managed a large program that is of similar size and complexity to the RIT. Also, she has diverse experience around the world but has only spent one year in the hotspot (Côte d'Ivoire).

The Small Grants Coordinator has good administrative experience but does not have adequate training or experience for the position. She speaks French but her English skills are elementary. Two of the Mainstreaming Coordinators are AWF staff members with appropriately high levels of experience. It is not clear though how they would function as they are not located in the region (Switzerland and Nairobi). The other staff, including the Regional Coordinators and the Communications Manager, have relevant experience and language skills. French and English are well covered with the identified staff, as well as Spanish with the Team Leader and Communication Manager. Presumably Portuguese (and Spanish additionally) would be covered by the Regional Coordinator for Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe, when recruited.

No recruitment plan and interim strategy is included in the proposal. The local "satellite" partners that will host the two Regional Coordinators yet to be hired, have not been identified. This may reflect a lack of contacts in the Lower Guinean Forests sub-region, which raises concerns about the timing of start-up in this sub-region. Lastly, there seems to be no dedicated staff member responsible for capacity building.

Criterion 4. Understanding of the Ecosystem Profile

BirdLife demonstrates a good understanding of what CEPF is seeking to accomplish in the hotspot and the technical challenges of running a grants program. It also expresses its ability/interest in promulgating the goals of CEPF beyond the five-year period of investment as part of its own strategy. Both UNU-INRA and CSRS's consortiums appear less acquainted with how best to articulate the investment strategy with regard to the challenges of conservation and engagement with civil society in the countries in the hotspot, and to how it relates to their own mission.

- **BirdLife** has a very clear understanding of the ecosystem profile as could be expected considering its involvement in the consultation process both as a stakeholder and

facilitator. In its proposal, BirdLife provides a list of concrete actions that the RIT would execute in order to support the implementation of each Strategic Direction, thus demonstrating its thoughts as well as integration of lessons learned from its experience as RIT in other hotspots. It recognizes differences in capacity and challenges in working with civil society across the hotspot. Based on its experience in the other hotspots, it made four categories of CSOs with each four having their own needs and approaches. Reference is also made to the need to work on enabling the environment for CSOs in particular countries. In terms of its own organizational strategy, implementing CEPF's niche would be an "exciting opportunity for them to provide CSOs with tools, capacities and resources to achieve priority conservation outcomes, which is BirdLife's mission". Furthermore, being the RIT will help their team maintain connections with key stakeholders at government and private sector levels to push for concrete deliveries regarding the Senchi Statement (result of the PanAfrican Business and Biodiversity Forum that BirdLife organized in 2015 to impulse the mainstreaming of natural capital).

- **UNU-INRA** discusses the hotspot, KBAs and corridors. It shows a good understanding of CEPF's objectives (capacity building, implementation via CSOs, transboundary approach, provision of large and small grants) and of the Strategic Directions (although using an older version of the profile rather than the one submitted to the Donor Council and shared with applicants within the RfP). It also discusses the differing challenges of conservation and engagement with CSOs on several occasions and highlights different strategies per type of CSOs and by countries/corridors. It also builds its strategy on several additional assessments that will be carried out during the implementation. As mentioned above though, these assessments would be carried out by consultants and the role, if any, of the regional coordinators is not clear. Serving as a RIT would advance the objectives of the members of the consortium for the region. UNU-INRA in particular states that this opportunity will help them to expand their role to other parts of Africa. There is also a dedicated section (5.14) on the sustainability of the implementation of CEPF's strategy that it proposes.
- **CSRS** correctly describes the Strategic Directions but rather superficially, which does not reveal whether it understands the CEPF investment strategy or not. It gives a relatively decent discussion on CSOs and mentions the opportunities and challenges in working with them, but fails to tackle their variations in terms of capacities. It does propose to consult locally in order to provide adequate support, yet the discussion lacks specifics about how the approach will need to be adopted to work in individual countries and to do grant making. Regarding CSRS's motivation in becoming the RIT, it is clear that capacity building and training are central to its work, but it is unclear why they would like to take on this large size, multi-country program since CSRS is essentially much focused on Côte d'Ivoire.

Criterion 5. Proposed Technical Approach

Evaluators judged that all three applicants demonstrate a clear approach to running a grants program and respond to all the elements of the RIT Terms of Reference (ToR). However, none of the applicants planned the timing for the first calls according to the anticipated plan outlined in the RfP (July 2016) certainly due to their recruitment needs. The delay varies from one quarter (BirdLife and UNU-INRA) to one year (CSRS).

- **BirdLife's** proposal addresses all components of the RIT ToR in detail, with feasible and well informed approaches. The only exception is for Component 8 (the long-term vision) that lacks a concrete consultative and integrative approach. This is surprising seeing that BirdLife has coordinated two long-term vision processes for CEPF in other hotspots. Regarding its plans to work with partners or with CSOs that have very different levels of capacity from one corridor or country to the next, BirdLife recognizes that large grants might be more suitable for the Upper Guinean sub-region and smaller grants for the Lower Guinean sub-region due to lower capacities and less networks on which to build at first. Several illustrative examples are provided based on relevant lessons and experiences from the two other hotspots, but regrettably none of the justifications are based on work done in West Africa.

The proposed method to effectively mainstream conservation results and models is discussed in general terms but the proposal falls a bit short on specific mechanisms. The proposed RIT steering committee is a valuable mechanism, informed by experience from other hotspots. However, there is no mention of using this body to channel results of CEPF grants into national or regional policy. The proposed dissemination tools are rather "classic" (website, newsletter, Facebook,...) but might not be most appropriate to reach out the more local or grassroots organizations. Because the proposed strategy is based on BirdLife's approach from the other RITs, it misses the singularities of working in West Africa. On a very good note, most of their communication tools would be translated in the four official languages of the hotspot.

BirdLife proposes a clear system for soliciting proposals based on its pertinent analysis of the differences in capacities versus levels of effort needed per country with regard to CEPF's priorities at site and corridor levels (Management Framework table). This analysis also anticipates the number of proposals that will be received per call and how many calls will be made. The RIT would also benefit from a strong and diversified range of experts easy to mobilize for the reviewing of five proposals each per year.

For the monitoring and evaluation, it proposes a very thorough procedure supported by a consultancy with UNEP-WCMC that would deal with METTs, forest cover and threat

assessments of KBAs, thus addressing three CEPF global indicators. However, when looking at the budget, it looks like UNEP-WCMC would only work on a baseline as no budget is allocated after Year 1. The Team Leader will be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation at RIT, grantee and portfolio levels. There will be a "portfolio monitoring plan" that will be used for adaptive management for the selection of themes and geographic focuses of subsequent calls for proposals. The monitoring of grantees includes report review, field visits which will prioritize high risk grantees and those which trigger safeguards, and "on-the-job" monitoring. However, grantee level monitoring may become neglected without the presence of the regional coordinators in the field towards the end of the portfolio implementation. Gender mainstreaming is being mentioned and would be integrated throughout the implementation (design, implementation and reporting) based on experience gained with the "Women in Healthy Sustainable Societies" small grants program that BirdLife has implemented on behalf of Conservation International in part of the Eastern Afromontane hotspot.

A clear system to directly award and manage all small grants for civil society is proposed, informed by relevant practical experience elsewhere in Africa. Two paragraphs contradict themselves regarding the number of languages in which the Small Grants LOIs and/or full proposals would be invited though (English, French and Portuguese).

- **UNU-INRA** presents a very strong description of how it will implement each of the RIT components. To achieve these tasks, the consortium plans to mobilize quite a lot of consultants from the region and internationally (including for proposals review) despite its already quite large proposed RIT team. In particular, for Component 8 of the RIT ToR (for the long-term vision), the consortium wishes to establish an advisory group composed of experts from various categories (NGOs, private sector, government, policy makers, academia,...) but it does not provide a tentative list of members.

UNU-INRA mentions on numerous occasions CEPF's past investment and refers to how it will engage these groups and make use of these connections to reach other CSOs. The consortium identifies the different types of CSOs and their challenges. It proposes an assessment of active NGOs and CBOs engaged at target sites with environment and conservation interventions as an initial step to then propose country-specific training/advocacy workshops thus recognizing the differences in both capacities and enabling environments among countries. Consideration of gender and underprivileged people is addressed within a dedicated section. This strategy is in line with the proposed staffing plan (two national staff in each country), although budgeted salaries for these positions may be slightly modest, which calls into question the experience level that can be expected of these people.

The consortium recognizes the importance of communication in implementing the strategy and mentions various methods such as forums, web-based methods, and community-based methods such as puppetry. It emphasizes the importance of raising awareness and puts a great focus on sharing lessons learned. However the narrative does not clearly highlight how the consortium will evaluate results critically and feed them into policy. A definitive strategy is not articulated yet but is planned during implementation and there is substantial text dedicated to the types of communications activities that might be performed with one dedicated staff within the personnel plan.

UNU-INRA proposes a detailed approach for both small and large grants mechanisms. It highlights the role of the RIT and integrates CEPF in the process with also a reference made to its procedures (Operation Manual and safeguards). It clearly states how it will solicit proposals. For the small grant management approach, the process is outlined in sufficient detail and will follow a similar method as described for the larger grants. The monitoring is a strong-point of this proposal, and the applicant invests a lot of resources in this aspect of the RIT ToR.

- **CSRS's** proposal addresses, with concrete actions, all components of the RIT as described in the ToR. The consortium acknowledges capacity differences among CSOs between countries and proposes an assessment in each one to then provide targeted efforts to address capacity deficiencies in each country and per sub-region. The assessment will use the analysis captured in the ecosystem profile, local expertise and a questionnaire. It proposes training programs organized in four modules (project design and proposal writing; institutional capacities; dialog with government agencies and advocacy; dialog with private sector), and will have regional coordinators to assist with capacity building. Additional modules would be developed, with individualized follow up and field visits, based on the outcome of the assessment and proposed strategy.

A clear and detailed communication plan is presented, including round table meetings, policy briefs and publications in different media and different languages. The lessons learned section is well addressed but their mainstreaming scheme is somewhat weaker, maybe reflecting an actual lack of experience of the lead applicant in influencing government and private sector, although AWF is explicitly mentioned as supporting this function and has relevant experience. Unfortunately, the job descriptions of the Communication Manager and the Mainstreaming Officers were not provided.

A clear and detailed grant making plan is presented with dedicated personnel and defined roles and duration for each step. This seems to be informed by the applicant's past experience with grant making. There are, therefore, some departures from the standard CEPF model. Some of these are simply symptomatic of a lack of familiarity with CEPF's

processes (request for co-funds or prescriptive shorter project duration). Others may reflect limited experience with development of a portfolio of conservation (as opposed to research) grants. A concern is the assumption made that no grant making will be made in Year 1, followed by a constant level during Years 2, 3 and 4, whereas, in reality, grant making would likely be concentrated in the first three years, then taper off.

A monitoring plan is proposed at project level - based on the projects' logframe, METT (for which specific training will be provided to grantees) and field visit - and at portfolio level - based on the compilation of grantees' reports by the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (level of effort: 20%) and adaptive management thereof. Regrettably there is no reference made to CEPF's global indicators and the monitoring approach in general is not as detailed as certain other parts of the technical approach. A proposed small grant system, based on the same approach than for large grants, shows some understanding of the principles of good grant making.

Criterion 6. Proposed Management Approach

BirdLife presents a stronger administrative, financial and monitoring functions for overseeing grants awarded directly by CEPF (i.e., grants greater than \$50,000) and managing and disbursing small grants (i.e., grants less than \$50,000) than the other two applicants. None of the applicants successfully demonstrate, with a concrete approach, their understanding of the legal requirements to make grants in the hotspot countries, employ people or engage organizations in these countries, and foreign exchange restrictions, although all have experiences in contracting, establishing local offices/units, recruiting staff and/or consultants and in dealing with foreign exchange restrictions.

- **BirdLife's** proposed structure of the RIT is described in the proposal and an organogram is provided with clear leadership and role separation. An internal handbook and policies document exists and an operational guide for policies and procedures will be developed specifically for the RIT as was done for other RITs that it manages. BirdLife has a robust financial management system to which it refers back to in a dedicated section (3.3.1). In that section it also highlights its experience in disbursing in various countries and in different currencies. It mentions its intention to request an external audit at mid-term and at the end of project implementation.
- **UNU-INRA's** consortium provides a reasonable organizational chart and describes segregation of duties. However it is not clear how TBI, TRCC and CIRADD RIT staff members will relate to the RIT core structure managed by UNU-INRA in terms of administrative and financial systems. UNU-INRA does have clear internal guidelines though that it intends to use for the RIT project. UNU-INRA also has a strong system of internal controls, formally documented in its Finance Policies, Rules & Procedures

Manual. Although the method to track, record, and account for funds received and disbursed is not thoroughly detailed in the proposal, UNU-INRA describes the reconciliation process and notes computer verification of all transactions. It also highlights that its financial management principles fall within UNU-wide centralized financial management systems and controls (including due diligence).

- **CSRS**'s displays a reasonable organizational chart that separates the Task Force from the Support Service, although the narrative could have explicitly referred to Mainstreaming, Communication and Finance inputs in order to be more explicit. The value added of each consortium member is clearly shown with interactions between CSRS and the other partners both at administrative and financial levels. CSRS also provides its Operational Manual which is extremely comprehensive and addresses method to track, record, and account for funds received and disbursed, as well as reconciliation. CSRS has both internal and external audits.

Criterion 7. Budget

All applicants have respected the budget ceiling of \$1,500,000 and present reasonable unit and total costs (see Table 5). None of the applicants presented matching funds and none provided explanations regarding their indirect costs although it was requested in the RfP. Evaluators found that BirdLife had a clearer symmetry between its budget and its proposed technical and managerial proposal.

- **BirdLife** proposes a budget within the RIT funding allocation (\$1,500,000) and all costs are mathematically justified. The budget allocated to salaries is high with regards to the proposed FTE in comparison to the proposal from CSRS (the only other one with a determined FTE). There is significant funding for travel expenditures although the budget diminishes over time while it should remain high in Years 3 and 4, and it is unclear whether the travels of the Regional Coordinator for the Gulf of Guinea islands, based in Mozambique, are covered in the budget. The consultancy of UNEP-WCMC is budgeted only in Year 1 thus providing potentially interesting baselines data but it is not clear how mid-term or final assessments will be generated. Additionally, it is unclear whether the communication strategy, based on the translation of most of the tools in four languages, is captured under the, otherwise significant, budget allocated to communication materials. There also seems to be no specific budget allocated to the long-term vision and no budget allocated to training costs after Year 1 while the technical proposal sounded more comprehensive on this later aspect. An additional column for comments is added in the budget which provides some useful clarifications. Indirect costs are claimed (13%) and BirdLife states that the methodology for calculating these costs is available on request, but does not provide it.

- **UNU-INRA**'s consortium proposes a budget within the RIT funding allocation (\$1,500,000) however the template that was provided has not been respected thus making it difficult to assess the financial details and to compare with other proposals. In many respects, unit costs, total units and total costs are appropriate in relation to the proposed technical activities seeing that each component of the technical proposal is used as budget line titles. However, on the managerial aspects of the proposal, it's still impossible to assess the level of effort of the staff, including when it comes to the partners, and salaries could appear low should they represent full time positions. Additionally, several budget lines (1.2, 1.3, 1.6, ...) have been estimated for 10 countries instead of 11. The proposed equipment (motorbikes/cameras/computers) budget is spread over the years while it would probably make more sense to have that budget allocated almost entirely under Year 1. The proposed indirect costs, set at 10%, are lower than for the two other applicants, but no explanation for this rate is provided either.
- **CSRS**'s consortium also proposes a budget within the RIT funding allocation (\$1,499,510), with significant funding for meetings and special events. However it presents the lowest budget for travel and the proposed amount might be low considering the size of the hotspot and the proposed locations of the RIT staff.. Although there is a dedicated section in the budget within the technical proposal, and unit costs are presented, there remain some questions. For instance, it is not clear whether the budgets for the Team Leader, the Grant Manager and data telecommunication being based on 13 months per year is a mistake or purposeful. It is also not clear whether the significant differences in some of the unit costs of the proposed staff can be justified. CSRS also proposes to rent an office for the RIT staff in Accra but does not explain why they could not be accommodated at the existing CSRS facilities. Some of the budget items are clearly allocated under the wrong budget lines. This is the case for instance for the purchase of equipment being allocated under "Supplies", the rental of a new office not being found under "Rent", and some of the personnel listed under "Salaries" who are not employees of CSRS so should be under "Professional Services" or "Sub-grants". Lastly, CSRS justifies the purchase of a 4x4 by being cheaper than flying to the neighboring countries of Ghana. However the vehicle would cost \$72,000 (between its purchase at 48K\$ and its maintenance at 24K\$). There is no explanation provided for the proposed indirect costs (13%).

Table 5. Summary Budgets of the Three Proposals

	BirdLife	Notes	UNU-INRA	Notes	CSRS	Notes
RIT staff and consultants	927,179	5.6 FTE in Y1 down to 3.8 in Y5	692,000	Unknown FTE	776,500	6.7 FTE
Other consultants	10,000	UNEP-WCMC	121,000		63,000	
Communication materials	54,500		37,000		6,000	
Audit fees	10,000				9,600	
Sub-total for labor	1,001,679		850,000		855,100	
Rent	59,677	30% of Accra office			18,000	
Telecommunications	15,750				37,500	
Postage	10,000				21,000	
Supplies	7,500				54,000	Computers (12K\$), field materials (18K\$)
Equipment	13,200	Computers, office furniture	25,600	Computers, cameras, motorcycles	72,000	Vehicle (48K\$)
Maintenance	5,000				36,000	Vehicle maintenance (24K\$)
Travel	128,629		184,900		87,000	
Events	80,999		289,500		120,000	
Taxes/ licenses/ bank fees	5,000				26,400	Foreign exchange (12K\$)
Indirect Costs	172,566	13%	150,000	10%	172,510	13%
TOTAL	1,500,000		1,500,000		1,499,510	

5. Evaluation Summary and Recommendation

The proposals from the Biodiversity Preservation Center (BPC), Havilah Natural Resources Ltd (HNR), Conservation International - Africa and Madagascar Field Division (CI-AMFD) and International Union for Conservation of Nature - Central and West Africa Program (IUCN-PACO) do not meet the competitive range of the other three offers. Table 6 below summarizes the principal strengths and weaknesses of the proposals from BirdLife, UNU-INRA and CSRS.

Based on this evaluation, the CEPF Secretariat ranks BirdLife as offering the best overall value and potential for success. The Secretariat suggests that the Working Group recommend BirdLife to the Donor Council as the RIT for the Guinean Forests Hotspot.

If the Working Group recommends BirdLife to the Donor Council, the Secretariat will engage in negotiations with BirdLife. Specifically, the Secretariat will ask BirdLife to make various revisions to its proposal prior to award. In particular, these would include: (i) consolidation of the RIT team with progress to be made toward the identification of “to be determined” candidates, clarification on the field-based presence of the Regional Coordinator for the Gulf of Guinea Islands and reassessment of the level of effort of all Regional Coordinators among the years; (ii) elaboration of a mainstreaming strategy for results of the CEPF grant portfolio into public policy and private sector practices; (iii) clarification on the long-term vision process and on the UNEP-WCMC monitoring consultancy with regards to mid-term and final assessments, and (iv) elaboration of a clear timeframe for the rolling out of the new financial system to the Accra office. The Secretariat will also obtain and review the justifications regarding the proposed 13 per cent of indirect costs.

Table 6. Major Strengths and Weaknesses of the Three Shortlisted Proposals

BirdLife	UNU-INRA Consortium	CSRS Consortium
Organizational Experience – Technical		
<p>Strengths: biodiversity conservation, CSOs capacity building, partnerships and networks, leadership and dialog with government agencies and private sector; a global program with many qualified partners and staff</p> <p>Weaknesses: unclear strategy in West Africa</p>	<p>Strengths: capacity building, research, natural resources management, advocacy and science-policy interface; Africa-wide program of the lead organization</p> <p>Weaknesses: weak on biodiversity conservation <i>sensu stricto</i></p>	<p>Strengths: research and training in biodiversity and sustainable development fields</p> <p>Weaknesses: lead organization weak on biodiversity conservation <i>sensu stricto</i>; more limited geographical focus</p>
Organizational Experience – Management		
<p>Strengths: experience managing projects of similar overall size to CEPF; previous and ongoing relevant experience working with CEPF as a RIT; extensive references to lessons learned and successful approaches from other RIT experiences; ongoing operations can absorb additional financial and administrative burden of being RIT; strong system to monitor programmatic and financial performance</p> <p>Weaknesses: potentially weaker on the financial controls at the regional office level</p>	<p>Strengths: experience managing projects of similar overall size to CEPF; rigorous United Nations University financial and administrative procedures; significant experience and academic rigor with monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>Weaknesses: only the lead organization demonstrates significant experience with complex, multi-country programs; no previous collaboration among consortium members</p>	<p>Strengths: experience managing projects of similar overall size to CEPF; existing monitoring and evaluation system for internal performance; established financial and administrative system</p> <p>Weaknesses: lack of detail on the monitoring framework; no description of other consortium members' M&E systems</p>

Personnel		
<p>Strengths: clear staffing plan; three proposed key full-time staff; proposed team leader has worked with CEPF and is highly qualified; all other identified staff adequately qualified; quadrilingual team; good plan for level of effort per country</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Team Leader, 100%, Ghana 2. Small Grants Manager, 100%, to be recruited, Ghana 3. Finance Officer, 100%, to be recruited, Ghana 4. RIT supervision, 20%, Ghana 5. Finance/Legal Supervision, 10%, UK 6. Communications Manager 80% in Y1-2, 50% in Y3-4-5, to be recruited, Ghana 7. Regional Coordinator Cameroon/Nigeria, 50% in Y1-2, 35% in Y3, 30% in Y4, 0% in Y5, Nigeria 8. Regional Coordinator Gulf of Guinea Islands, 50% in Y1-2, 35% in Y3, 30% in Y4, 0% in Y5, Mozambique 	<p>Strengths: best proposed geographical distribution of staff; all identified staff adequately qualified</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Team Leader, Ghana 2. Assistant Team Leader or Assistant Communication Officer, Ghana 3. Communication Officer, Ghana 4. Financial Manager 5-7. Three Technical Biodiversity & Natural Resources Officers, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo 8-10. Three Financial Officers, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo 11-18. Eight Technical Biodiversity & Natural Resources Officers, to be recruited, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Cameroon, São Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea 19-26. Eight Financial Officers, to be recruited, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Cameroon, São Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea 	<p>Strengths: clear staffing plan; three proposed key full-time staff; reporting lines provided</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Team Leader, 100%, Côte d'Ivoire 2. Small Grants Manager, 100%, Côte d'Ivoire 3. Finance Officer, 100%, Côte d'Ivoire 4. Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, 20%, Côte d'Ivoire 5. Communications Officer, 50%, Côte d'Ivoire 6-9. Three Regional Coordinators, 50% each, Côte d'Ivoire/Ghana, Guinea/Liberia/Sierra Leone, Togo/Benin 10-11. Two Regional Coordinators, 50% each, to be recruited, Nigeria/Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea/São Tomé and Príncipe 12-13. Two Mainstreaming Officers for the Lower Guinean sub-region, 5% each, Switzerland and Kenya

<p>9. Regional Coordinator Upper Guinean Region, 50% in Y1-2, 35% in Y3, 30% in Y4, 0% in Y5, Liberia</p> <p>Weaknesses: two of the full-time staff to be hired; limited confirmed commitment of the Team Leader (18 months); 1 Regional Coordinator based outside the hotspot; Regional Coordinators LOE in Y5 is zero</p>	<p>27. RIT Support, Nigeria</p> <p>Weaknesses: no level of effort provided; massive recruitment plan with no identified host organizations in those eight countries; unclear job attribution among identified staff; only trilingual team (pending recruitments); no clear reporting lines</p>	<p>14. Mainstreaming Officer for the Upper Guinean sub-region, 10%, Côte d'Ivoire</p> <p>15. Two Steering Committee Support, 10% each, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon</p> <p>Weaknesses: half of the job descriptions missing; weak capacities of the proposed Team Leader and Small Grants Manager; uneven division of countries among the Regional Coordinators; only trilingual team (pending recruitments); no recruitment plan</p>
Understanding of the Ecosystem Profile		
<p>Strengths: clear understanding of the Profile</p> <p>Weaknesses: none</p>	<p>Strengths: clear understanding of the Profile</p> <p>Weaknesses: none</p>	<p>Strengths: understanding of the capacity building needs of the CSOs</p> <p>Weaknesses: superficial description of the Strategic Directions</p>
Proposed Technical Approach		
<p>Strengths: all components of the RIT ToR addressed; different strategies for engaging civil society organizations; communication strategy; quadrilingual translation of key documents; clear and systematic monitoring and evaluation methodology with support from UNEP-WCMC; gender mainstreaming; clear and relevant large and small grants management system</p>	<p>Strengths: all components of the RIT ToR addressed; recognition of different country-specific CSOs capacities; community-based methods integrated in communication strategy; gender and underprivileged people considered; strong and rigorous monitoring methodology; clear and relevant large and small grants management system</p>	<p>Strengths: all components of the RIT ToR addressed; targeted effort for CSOs capacity building at country and sub-region levels and on four relevant pre-identified modules; clear communication strategy with translation in three languages; clear large and small grants management system; general monitoring at project and portfolio levels</p>

<p>Weaknesses: unclear approach for the long-term vision process; weak mainstreaming strategy; "classic" communication tools that might miss the local level targets; decreased monitoring and presence in the region in years time</p>	<p>Weaknesses: long-term vision process to be undertaken by consultants; mobilization of a large number of consultants despite large proposed RIT team; communication strategy not yet articulated; weak mainstreaming strategy; no translation of key documents mentioned</p>	<p>Weaknesses: weak mainstreaming strategy; lack of experience of the lead organization in influencing government and private sector; lack of familiarity with CEPF's processes and the development of a conservation portfolio (versus research); no proposed monitoring of CEPF global indicators</p>
Proposed Management Approach		
<p>Strengths: stronger administrative, financial and monitoring functions; clear leadership and segregation of duties; existing and upcoming operational guides</p> <p>Weaknesses: none</p>	<p>Strengths: robust existing systems and operations; segregation of duties; existing operational guides</p> <p>Weaknesses: unclear whether TBI, TRCC and CIRADD RIT staff members will use UNU-INRA administrative and financial systems or their own</p>	<p>Strengths: comprehensive Operational Manual of the lead organization; each consortium member with defined lines of interaction among them</p> <p>Weaknesses: lack of detail on administrative and monitoring system; somewhat unclear organogram chart</p>
Budget		
<p>Strengths: within the limit of CEPF budget; detailed budget (unit costs and number of units); solid travel and communication budgets</p> <p>Weaknesses: decreasing salary cost over the years; no justification provided on indirect costs (13%) although available on request</p>	<p>Strengths: within the limit of CEPF budget; all components of the proposal covered; lowest indirect costs</p> <p>Weaknesses: template not respected; no level of effort provided for the staff; only 10 countries budgeted instead of 11; inconsistent travel budget (considering staff location); no justification provided on indirect costs</p>	<p>Strengths: within the limit of CEPF budget; detailed budget (unit costs and number of units); solid event budget</p> <p>Weaknesses: low travel budget; high equipment budget; wrong budget line allocations; no justification provided on indirect costs (13%)</p>

