

Call for Letters of Inquiry Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot

Large Grants

Eligible Countries & Territories: Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia

Opening Date: Thursday, 13 August 2020

Closing Date: Monday, 14 September 2020

Budget: US\$20,000 to US\$250,000

Project Timeframe: Projects are expected to begin on 1 January 2021, at the earliest, and must be completed by 30 June 2022.

CEPF and BirdLife International, as regional implementation team (RIT) for the hotspot, are inviting proposals in the form of letters of inquiry (LOIs) for large grants from non-governmental organizations, community groups, private enterprises, universities and other civil society organizations (CSOs). Applicants are advised to read this call for proposals document in full and submit LOIs under the scope of this call.

BACKGROUND

The [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

The Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot is the second largest hotspot in the world and the largest of the world's five Mediterranean-climate regions. CEPF's niche for investment in the Mediterranean was formulated through a participatory process that engaged civil society, donor and governmental stakeholders throughout the region. The resulting investment strategy (2017-2022) is documented within the [ecosystem profile](#) (PDF – 16 MB). This investment strategy is comprised of a series of strategic directions, broken down into investment priorities outlining the types of activities that are eligible for CEPF funding.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Non-governmental organizations, community groups, universities and private enterprises may apply for funding. Individuals must work with civil society organizations to develop applications rather than apply directly.

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

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

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

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.
- activities adversely affecting Indigenous Peoples or where these communities have not provided their broad support to the project activities.
- removal or alteration of any physical cultural property (includes sites having archaeological, paleontological, historical, religious or unique natural values). Proposed activities should observe all other relevant safeguard and social policies as set out on the [CEPF website](#).

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The scope of this call is limited to the types of activities and locations described below.

LOIs will only be accepted for the following strategic direction and countries:

- Strategic Direction 3: Promote the maintenance of traditional land-use practices necessary for the conservation of Mediterranean biodiversity in priority corridors of high cultural and biodiversity value.
- Countries and Territories: Jordan, Lebanon¹, Palestine, Morocco and Tunisia.
- Corridors: Orontes Valley and Levantine Mountains, the Atlas Mountains, the Rif Mountains, and the Dorsal and Telian Atlas.

Please follow the guidance notes below, which detail what is required from this call.

i) Background

Mediterranean biodiversity has evolved with human land-use practices over several thousand years, to the extent that many of the most threatened terrestrial species in the hotspot are dependent on habitats that are maintained through continuing human interventions for agriculture, seasonal grazing or harvesting of wild products.

The species that depend on these anthropogenic systems can become threatened when an established management system is abandoned and vegetation succession occurs, when traditional sustainable practices change and cause degradation and erosion (e.g., over-grazing), or when modern agricultural and land-use practices, including the use of irrigation and agrochemicals, replace traditional practices and eliminate the opportunity for

¹ Due to the recent disaster in Beirut, we will be opening an additional call for this same topic for Lebanon in a few months' time, after local consultation, to allow CSOs time to rebuild and focus on the emergency situation. CSOs can choose whether to apply during this open call or to wait for the second call, and can contact the RIT to discuss further, if needed.

wild biodiversity to co-exist with agricultural systems. More information can be found in the [ecosystem profile](#) (PDF – 16 MB).

The causes for these changes are multiple, complex and intertwined, with negative consequences on biodiversity, livelihoods and culture. Some key common factors in the eligible CEPF Mediterranean regions which have the greatest impact have been identified as:

- National or sub-national land-use planning policies: In many cases, incentives and regulations hinder the maintenance of traditional systems, and the importance of biodiversity is not taken into account (including a general lack of recognition of ecosystem services).
- Economical sustainability: Traditionally managed systems are generally labor-intensive and can be less productive (at least for short-term production). Although products could have a good organoleptic quality, low level of pesticides residues etc., they are not recognized on the market, are low priced or have limited access to markets—hence, the revenues of farmers are limited.

To bridge the knowledge gap on relationships between traditional agricultural practices and the conservation of biodiversity, CEPF supported four assessments in eligible countries in 2020. The projects involved consultations with local stakeholders and resulted in reports that presented options for potential actions that CEPF could support in the future. These four reports can be found here: [Lebanon](#), [Jordan](#), [Morocco](#) and [Tunisia](#). Key findings have been explained below in the inspiration section.

Under this strategic direction (Table 1), CEPF aims to support CSOs to work with local community land managers and local businesses to pioneer innovative ways to sustain the elements of traditional land-use practices that are important for biodiversity.

CEPF uses corridors to focus its investment (Figure 1); these were identified for their presence of highly threatened endemic species, provision of key ecosystem services, importance in maintaining ecosystem resilience, and ability to safeguard the health and biological integrity of the hotspot.

Table 1: Strategic Direction 3 and Investment Priorities

Strategic Direction	Investment Priorities
3: Promote the maintenance of traditional land-use practices necessary for the conservation of Mediterranean biodiversity in priority corridors of high cultural and biodiversity value.	3.1: Support local communities to increase the benefit they receive from maintaining and enhancing traditional, biodiversity-friendly land-use and agricultural practices.
	3.2: Promote awareness of the value of traditional, biodiversity-friendly land-use practices among local community and government decision makers, to secure their recognition and support.
	3.3: Encourage business actors in the trade chain to support and promote traditional, biodiversity-friendly land-use practices.

Figure 1. Map of corridors under Strategic Direction 3

The hotspot map is available [here](#), and an interactive map is available [here](#).



ii) Guidance

CEPF expects project proposals which integrate actions from 3 core pillars:

- Economic Pillar: ensuring sustainability through an economical approach, increasing the revenues generated by products of traditional practices through sustainable and biodiversity-friendly practices.
- Practical Pillar: encouraging biodiversity-responsible agricultural practices.
- Policy Pillar: supporting the mainstreaming of activities into biodiversity-responsible development and land use planning.

The benefits to local communities and economic sustainability of the interventions must be carefully considered to ensure the maintenance of the actions beyond the life of the project.

The scale of the proposed projects needs to be feasible in terms of conservation outcomes and realistic in terms of sustainability (e.g., a cluster of several medium to large farms; working with a minimum of three communities; working within larger KBAs). Pilot projects or demonstration sites can be implemented but should still incorporate all approaches from the pillars above.

COVID-19 is having a serious impact on rural communities and the need to revitalize and support them at this time is even greater. CEPF welcomes project interventions to tackle these issues as long as they remain in line with the criteria outlined below.

Successful applicants will submit LOIs that:

- Demonstrate a clear benefit for biodiversity conservation, particularly on rare or threatened species (please include the Latin names of species).
- Address the issues and concerns in the background section above through an integrated approach.
- Consider the suggested interventions in the inspiration section below.
- Are built with, and for the benefit of, an entire community/ies (not individuals.);
- Engage with local governments (municipalities, districts) and generate interest and support from the authorities, where relevant.
- Consider the younger generation and how the project could contribute to making the lifestyle in the countryside more appealing (e.g., through job creation, combining traditional practices, culture and arts, etc.)
- Consider gender to help determine who participates in and benefits from the project (see the reference materials section below).

Projects should be:

- Within one or more of these countries and territories: Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco and Tunisia.
- Within one or more of these corridors: Orontes Valley and Levantine Mountains, the Atlas Mountains, the Rif Mountains, and the Dorsal and Telian Atlas.
- Located within or in the direct proximity of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) of these corridors so as to maximize the impact on endangered biodiversity. The list of KBAs is provided in the [ecosystem profile](#) (Annex 2, page 282) and a detailed map is also available on the [CEPF website](#).

iii) Inspiration

To further help the formulation of project ideas, here are a number of examples from the CEPF region. We strongly advise that you also read the relevant studies, which go into more detail on potential interventions: [Lebanon](#), [Jordan](#), [Morocco](#) and [Tunisia](#).

Such practices as those described below have contributed to the ecological diversity through the development and use of cultural practices, enriching the natural landscape with a greater diversity in terms of habitats and species. They also have a significant impact on local livelihood and economic benefits of the local communities through sustainable and biodiversity-friendly practices.

These ideas would typically require working alongside a number of other interventions in order to be successful.

- Ideas for Policy Pillar:
 - Ensuring integration of biodiversity needs and the maintenance of traditional practices in higher territorial planning policies.
 - Enhance and develop stewardship or conservation agreements with farmers engaging in sustainable practices.

- Support national, sub-national and sectoral policies to improve traditional agro-ecosystem maintenance and integrated resource use (including for forest-dependent populations.)
- Ideas for the Economic Pillar
 - Analyze value chains and markets, and communicate the findings to communities and farmers so they can initiate changes.
 - Develop business plans with cooperatives, focusing on high value niche markets; build their capacity and encourage entrepreneurship.
 - Promote equitable and sustainable commercialization and value chains for agricultural products based on traditional goods derived from agro-ecosystems.
 - Initiate labeling system and develop certifications for products to improve their access to markets and garner higher prices.
 - Promotion of farmers associations for purchase and commercialization to reduce costs relating to production and sales.
 - Promote the use of responsibly sourced local varieties of crops and local breeds of animals for local restaurants and the tourism market.
 - Support the development of investments in agri-tourism and nature-based tourism, such as agri-tourism trails and seasonal, traditional agriculture festivals.
 - Support innovative approaches for environmentally responsible agricultural practices through the revival or reinvention of traditional practices.
- Ideas for the Practical Pillar
 - Maintain and restore farm infrastructure—such as hedgerows and restoration of stonewall terraces—to create refuges and microhabitats for biodiversity.
 - Identify, revive and conserve wildlife habitats and landscape features within agricultural landscapes through innovative approaches such as the creation of micro-reserves or other conservation systems.
 - Reinstate farm practices such as no-till farming, reducing mechanized technology, and recycling of organic matter and nutrients.
 - Enhance and develop biological pest controls, reducing the use of pesticides and replacing the use of herbicides with traditional and low-intensity grazing.
 - Support the traditional governance systems for management of common (shared) resources such as water (for crops, animals and human uses), pastureland (*agdals* and transhumance systems) and wild plants (aromatic or medicinal).
 - Develop eco-agriculture education and awareness raising within the agricultural sector on the importance of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes.

iv) Further information

For further reference, the [ecosystem profile](#) indicates the following targets for Strategic Direction 3, which aim to be achieved through the combined outcomes of all the Strategic Direction 3 grants:

- At least 1,000 women and 1,000 men in at least 20 communities demonstrate improved economic wellbeing through maintenance of traditional, biodiversity-friendly land-use practices.
- At least six traditional products that demonstrate positive impacts on biodiversity see upward market trends (in terms increased production, price, access to new markets) through certification, etc.
- Status of at least eight globally threatened species dependent on traditional land-use practices improved at site level in at least three priority corridors.
- Local authorities in at least three priority corridors recognize the importance of traditional, biodiversity-friendly land-use practices and engage in supporting their maintenance.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications (LOIs) can be submitted in English or French.

All applications must be submitted through the ConservationGrants website via [this link](#).

CEPF will not accept LOIs via email or any other mechanism. You will receive an acknowledgement from CEPF confirming that your submission through ConservationGrants has been received.

This is a new online system, so for CEPF applicants or grantees who applied in Phase I (2012-2017), please note that the Grant Writer/GEM system is no longer in use, and you will need to set up a new account at ConservationGrants to apply. Register a new account by clicking on the blue "New User?" link underneath the "Sign in" box. Existing ConservationGrants users can use the same login information and create a new LOI.

Questions regarding account creation or issues using ConservationGrants should be emailed to conservationgrants@conservation.org.

The LOI review process will take approximately eight weeks from the deadline date. The review committee will select the strongest LOIs which meet the eligibility criteria in sections 5 and 6. All applicants will receive a response from CEPF following the review of their project.

Applications which are invited to the second stage will be developed into a full proposal 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.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

All applicants are advised to review the CEPF Investment Strategy for the Mediterranean Basin within the ecosystem profile. This provides more detail on the types of activities CEPF will fund under each investment priority:

- Ecosystem Profile:
 - [English](#) (PDF – 16 MB)

- Ecosystem Profile Technical Summary:
 - [English](#) (PDF – 2.2 MB)
 - [Arabic](#) (PDF – 2.6 MB)
 - [French](#) (PDF – 2.9 MB)

An interactive map of the Mediterranean Hotspot can be accessed [here](#); use the top right-hand “layer list” icon to select the layer you would like to view.

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](#), PDF – 359 KB) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#), PDF – 352 KB). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports. The integration of gender in your project will be a factor in evaluation.

Helpful resources:

- [Eligibility and How to Apply](#)
- [Conservation Grants Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Safeguard Policies](#)
- [CEPF and Gender](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)

CONTACT

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to discuss project ideas and eligibility with the program officer for your region:

- Middle East Program Officer, Sharif Jbour: sharif.jbour@birdlife.org
- North Africa Program Officer, Awatef Abiadh: awatef.abiadh@lpo.fr

For general queries about the CEPF Mediterranean Basin Hotspot program, please contact the RIT manager, Liz Smith, at liz.smith@birdlife.org, or visit the [RIT website](#).