

Support Programme for biodiversity Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) active in developing countries (ProBioDev)

Call for Proposals 2024 - Competition Rules and Criteria

1. ProBioDev: a Programme dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity and the strengthening of strategic partnerships between French CSOs and CSOs in developing countries

The fight against the erosion of biodiversity is a major global concern. Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a central role in international conservation efforts: they are essential partners in achieving the global objective of halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity, as defined in the new [Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF) adopted in Montreal in 2022. In line with the global mission defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the IUCN French Committee (IUCN FC) is actively committed to contributing to the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable and equitable management of natural resources in developing countries.

To this end, the IUCN FC officially launched the **Support Programme for biodiversity Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) active in developing countries (ProBioDev)** in February 2024, supported by the French Development Agency (AFD), the Audemars Piguet Foundation for Trees, the Fondation de France, the Manthano Foundation, the Egis Foundation, the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB) and the Maisons du Monde Foundation. This programme aims to improve the state of biodiversity in developing countries (DC) through civil society action and capacity building initiatives. To accomplish this goal, the programme is structured around three components: 1) a grant initiative dedicated to « mesoprojects »¹ led by partnerships between French CSOs and local CSOs, 2) coordination of a Working Group composed of French biodiversity actors active in developing countries and 3) capacity building activities for CSOs and their partnerships.

The grant initiative **is committed to improve the state of biodiversity in developing countries** by providing financial support for nature conservation projects led by French and DC civil society organisations. The programme will support **alliance strategies** and the development of equitable and mutually supportive partnerships to meet the challenges of biodiversity in the South. Within this framework, **the CSOs supported through the grant initiative will also benefit from organisational and technical support** as well as the **strengthening of their partnerships**, thereby increasing their added value and the sustainability of their actions. This approach aims to increase the capacity of biodiversity CSOs to act in favour of international cooperation to respond to local and global biodiversity issues, while targeting the objectives defined in the GBF and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, this first call for proposals opens today, **April 9th, 2024**, with the objective of funding and implementing **field projects focusing on biodiversity conservation and/or Nature-based Solutions (NbS)**. These projects will be implemented in developing countries by **partnerships** made up of a **French civil society organisation** and a **local civil society organisation**.

¹ With a total budget ranging from a minimum of €100 000 to a maximum of €250 000.

2. Eligibility criteria

2.1 Who is the target audience for this call of proposals?

This call is intended for CSOs interested in implementing partnership projects involving **two non-profit organisations, one registered in France (French CSO) and the other one in a developing country (local CSO), which must have been established for at least two years**. If the project leader is a local CSO, then the main partner must be a French CSO. Conversely, if the project leader is a French CSO, then the main partner must be a local CSO. While formalising this partnership is not mandatory, it is essential to demonstrate the complementarity and added value it offers, emphasising any prior collaboration, cooperation, or dialogue, along with its alignment with the project's objectives. A CSO may submit a maximum of two grant applications (with two different partners), one as project leader and one as main partner. It should be noted that depending on the total number of proposals received during the call for proposals, and thus depending on the selection pressure, only one of the two proposals may be retained if two requests are submitted. The grants are awarded to CSOs established under the following **legal statuses**:

- i. For French CSOs:
 - a. A French association operating under the law of 1901, or a non-profit association governed by the local law in Alsace Moselle involved in international solidarity actions;
 - b. A trade union under French law (law of 21 March 1884), engaged in international solidarity actions;
 - c. A French foundation recognised as serving the public interest, implementing international solidarity initiatives.
- ii. For local CSOs:
 - a. A non-profit association or non-governmental organisation, established in compliance with the prevailing national legislation of a country eligible for official development assistance (ODA), with **autonomous governance**, independent of national governments, the private sector and any international organisation;
 - b. An office, branch, subsidiary, etc. of a French or international organisation in a developing country **is not** eligible as a local CSO.

IMPORTANT: Associations and foundations engaged in redistributive activities, which fund initiatives without directly implementing international solidarity actions, as well as corporate, hospital, university, partnership or scientific cooperation foundations, endowment funds, cooperatives or local authorities **are not eligible as project leaders or main partners, whether they are French or local CSOs**.

However, it is possible to involve other technical partners in the project, potentially through co-financing or transferring part of the funds to these entities or stakeholders for the implementation of specific project activities.

Exceptionally, partnerships may involve up to three CSOs, provided that the relevance of this collaboration, the complementarity of expertise and support, and the alignment with the project's objectives are clearly demonstrated. It is important to note that the total amount allocated to the project and the budget designated for partnership and capacity building will remain unchanged compared to projects involving partnerships with only two CSOs.

2.2 Eligible countries

Projects are eligible if the field activities are carried out in a **country eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA)**, according to the [list](#) established by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Priority will be given to projects located in Africa, representing 50% of the overall budget allocation. The call is also open to ongoing initiatives: clear articulation of the various funding sources will be required in this case.

It is important to note that the use of French public funds at the time of project award and during the implementation of activities will be subject to the absence of restrictions from the French government, which may vary depending on geopolitical events.

2.3 Eligible themes

Eligible themes for project financing will include actions of²:

- **Biodiversity conservation** and/or
- **Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** that specifically target the challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Projects must also contribute to **improve living conditions for local populations**.

2.3.1. Biodiversity conservation

Below are a few examples of themes related to biodiversity conservation. Activities must be carried out in relation with and for the benefit of local populations:

- Educational or awareness campaigns on nature conservation;
- Establishment, management, or governance of protected and "conserved" areas (OECMs);
- Conservation of threatened species (according to the IUCN Red List);
- Preservation or restoration of ecosystems and natural habitats;
- Sustainable utilisation of natural resources and equitable sharing of conservation benefits;
- Tackling issues related to poaching and illegal wildlife trade and resolving human-wildlife conflicts.

2.3.2. Nature-based solutions (NbS) to tackle climate change

Nature-based solutions are defined by the IUCN as "actions to protect, sustainably use, manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems, which address societal challenges, effectively and adaptively, providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits".

In the context of climate change, NbS act as carbon capture and storage mechanisms, thereby making a significant contribution to the reduction of CO₂ emissions. They also play a crucial role in climate change adaptation by mitigating natural risks and strengthening ecosystem resilience. These approaches are effective in addressing today's challenges, such as the biodiversity conservation and the attainment of SDGs, while simultaneously offering multiple benefits to local communities.

For more information on NbS, please consult the [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#).

² Addressing at least one target of the Kunming-Montreal GBF.

2.4 Non-eligibility criteria

Funding will only be granted to projects where **biodiversity conservation and/or NbS for climate change mitigation and adaptation are the primary objectives**, in line with the targets of the Kunming-Montreal GBF. Therefore, only projects demonstrating documented and significant outcomes in biodiversity preservation are eligible for funding.

Additionally, the following activities are not eligible for funding:

- Capacity-building and/or scientific research programs unrelated to conservation projects or primarily focused on workshops and training sessions;
- Sustainable development projects where nature conservation is not the primary objective;
- Micro-credit activities;
- Advocacy campaigns not associated with conservation efforts in the field.

2.5 Financial eligibility criteria

This call for proposals aims to select around ten projects that will be eligible for grants ranging from a **minimum of €100 000** to a **maximum of €250 000**. The funding provided by the program through these grants will represent a **maximum of 90% of the total project budget**.

The remaining **10%** of the declared contributions for project co-financing must come from actual monetary contributions, originating from either one or both CSOs themselves or from their additional financial partners. These co-financings cannot originate from French public funds (French Development Agency, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, including French embassies). These contributions must be justified upon submission of the grant application. The IUCN FC and the financial audit will be responsible for verifying and monitoring the mobilization of actual monetary contributions throughout the duration of project implementation.

Eligible expenses encompass all expenditures related to project activities that can be recorded and justified using supporting documents, invoices, etc., **from the date of notification of the grant award**, which will be communicated via email. These expenses may include indirect costs³, covering operating expenses, material expenses (not directly related to the project), structural costs of CSOs, as well as human resources (not directly assigned to the project) **up to 14% of the project direct costs**.

2.6 Duration

The maximum duration of the grant for projects is **24 months**, with a deadline for eligible expenses set no later than **July 31st, 2026**.

³ *Indirect costs are related to headquarters and are not specific to the project. These expenses may also include the indirect costs of the other partner organisation(s). In the context of an audit, as these costs are lump-sum, they will not be subject to expense verification. These indirect costs may include: purchase, rental, and maintenance of offices; maintenance and other security expenses; insurance, etc.; furniture, computers, photocopiers, supplies; water, gas, electricity, internet, fuel; auditing, studies, recruitment costs, fundraising costs, salaries and contributions of indirect support functions not included in the direct costs of the project/program (human resources management, IT service, CFO, communication, fundraising, etc.); salaries of headquarters staff only.*

3. Project selection criteria

Projects will be selected through a project competition approach. Projects will be evaluated based on a scoring grid comprising the following criteria:

Elimination criteria:

- i) Eligibility of beneficiaries (French CSO and local CSO) (refer to section 2.1);
- ii) Country eligibility (refer to section 2.2);
- iii) Eligibility of themes and planned activities (refer to section 2.3 and 2.4);
- iv) Financial eligibility and project co-financing (including monetary contribution provided by the CSO(s)) (refer to section 2.5);
- v) Project duration (refer to section 2.6);
- vi) Submission document not compliant with the provided format.

Selection criteria:

- i) **Pertinence of the intervention area:** assessment of the area's biodiversity richness and the threats it faces;
- ii) **Significance of the contribution to biodiversity issues:** evaluation of the anticipated positive changes and the relevance and effectiveness of actions addressing specific biodiversity challenges in the targeted region;
- iii) **Knowledge of the targeted intervention area and expertise** in the proposed technical domains;
- iv) Assessment of the **quality, reciprocity, and coherence of the partnership** between CSOs, as well as the budget allocation necessary to achieve the stated objectives in alignment with partnership goals;
- v) **Technical and financial feasibility** of the project, demonstrated **budget coherence**, and realism of expected outputs: appropriateness and coherence of the budget and schedule; alignment between the overall objective, specific goals, projected activities, expected outputs and indicators;
- vi) **Contribution to socio-economic development** in response to identified needs with local populations;
- vii) **Integration of the organisation(s) into the intervention area:** evaluation of the involvement of all local actors and stakeholders, including local populations, as well as approval from local authorities;
- viii) **Consistency with national policies** and international conservation goals;
- ix) **Adequate organisational and institutional framework** for effective project implementation;
- x) **Sustainability of activities implemented** after ProBioDev funding;
- xi) **Organisation's capacity to establish a Monitoring and Evaluation framework** defining data collection and analysis modalities through clearly established indicators;
- xii) **Integration of gender, youth/volunteering, and climate issues:** evaluation of the consideration of gender, youth/volunteering, and climate-related aspects in project design and implementation.

4. How to respond to the call for proposals?

4.1 Procedures for submitting the complete grant application

Applications must be submitted using the template grant application form, which you can download [here](#). The form must be completed in Word format (or compatible). Applications can be written in French or English. Only complete applications that strictly comply with the template will be considered:

adherence to the plan, typography, and specified text limits. Projects that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be examined.

To facilitate the project selection process, please adhere to these guidelines:

- **Please name your application documents with the name of the country in which it is located, the name of the lead organisation, and the name of the main partner organisation (e.g.: GHANA - Chouet' nature - AFESKO);**
- Please number the pages of the grant application form and format it properly;
- Please send two separate attachments: **1)** the completed grant application form constituting the body of the application (in Word format, **maximum 25 pages in total**), and **2)** its annexes grouped in a compressed folder (in PDF or Excel format - please refer to section 13 of the form "Annexes");
- For submission, please use a **single email address per project** (address of the lead organisation that will be used for further exchanges if the project is selected - **Note:** please also cc' the email address of the main partner organisation).

During the selection process, additional information may be requested by the IUCN FC.

The deadline for submitting complete applications is May 26th, 2024, at 11:59 PM CEST (Paris time GMT +1) to the following email address: probiodev@uicn.fr Clarification questions regarding this call for projects should be sent by email to the IUCN FC (probiodev@uicn.fr) no later than May 21st, 2024. The IUCN FC will gather all complete applications for presentation to the Selection Committee. The Selection Committee, composed of experts, IUCN members, representatives of CSOs working in biodiversity and related issues such as climate and development, as well as donors, will be tasked with selecting the top 10 projects (approximate number) in June 2024. Incomplete applications or those received after May 26th will not be considered. The **final decision** on grant allocation will be communicated to project leaders no later than **July 2nd, 2024**.

4.2 Indicative timeline

Launch of the call for proposals	April 9 th , 2024	
Deadline for requesting clarifications from the IUCN FC	May 21 th , 2024	6:00 PM CEST
Deadline for submission of complete grant applications	May 26 th , 2024	11:59 PM CEST
Notification of project selection	No later than July 2 nd , 2024	
Signature of grant agreements	Expected between July and August 2024	