

IPSI Collaborative Activity Proposal Form

The following form is for use when submitting proposed IPSI Collaborative Activities for consideration by the IPSI Steering Committee. See the Collaborative Activity Guidelines on p. 3 for more information.

Please return the completed form to the IPSI Secretariat (isi@unu.edu).

IPSI Collaborative Activities are the activities that shall be undertaken by more than one IPSI member and constitute an important part of IPSI activities with the purpose of fostering collaboration within the IPSI membership and implementing the IPSI Strategy and Plan of Action. The IPSI Collaborative Activities shall be developed and implemented with the endorsement of the Steering Committee in accordance with the Collaborative Activity Guidelines. Resource mobilization for IPSI collaborative activities shall be the responsibility of the implementing members in principle. – IPSI Operational Guidelines, Chapter 5.4

Date of Application:	September, 30th, 2016
Project title:	
Community integrated management of migratory species (West African manatee and sea turtles) and their habitat in the coastal region in Benin	
Collaborating organizations (IPSI members): (*Please underline the leading organization)	
NATURE TROPICAL NGO (Benin) A ROCHA GHANA (Ghana)	
Other contributing organization(s) (including IPSI non-members):	
IUCN-NL (The Netherlands); CeBioS (Belgium); AFRICAN BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (ABN – Kenya); Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF - France); Eco-Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement (EAGLE); CENAGREF (Benin); DGFRN (Benin)	
Expected term (e.g. 1 January 2014 – 31 December 2015):	
30 October 2016 – 31 December 2019	
IPSI strategic objective(s) addressed (tick all that apply; see p. 3 for more details):	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1. Increase knowledge and understanding of SEPLS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. Address direct and underlying causes responsible for the decline or loss of SEPLS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3. Enhance benefits from SEPLS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4. Enhance human, institutional and sustainable financial capacities

Continued on next page.

Description of the activity:

Please provide as much information as possible on:

- Background
- Activities (including site locations if applicable)
- Expected outcomes
- Actors and task sharing
- How the activity relates to the *IPSI Strategy* and *IPSI Plan of Action*
- Resources, funding
- Monitoring and reporting

Project overview :**General objective:**

The general objective is to contribute to sustainable resources management in the wetlands and coastal region of Benin by improving the livelihoods of poor communities through integrated and participatory management of the habitat of migratory species such as the West African manatee and sea turtles in Benin.

Specific objectives:

The specific objectives are to:

- Raise awareness among local communities and authorities on the protection of wetlands ecosystems, their resources and environmentally sustainable alternatives,
- Strengthen the capacities of the communities including the young,
- Preserve and restore ecosystems,
- Encourage effective mitigation to climate change,
- Develop alternative activities generating benefits to local communities,
- Improve governance in natural resource management and synergy actions between actors.

Strategy:

The strategy for achieving results is very participatory to lead to the empowerment of stakeholders on the management of their natural resources mainly through various types of media including television broadcasting.

This strategy consists of an integrated approach to coastal zones management based on a continuous and iterative process using knowledge and endogenous practices that promote sustainable development of coastal regions. This approach will be implemented through the following steps:

- Participatory community diagnosis through eco-mapping and participatory videos,
- Development of local regulation for better management of natural resources,
- Local capacity building of stakeholders including youth leaders,
- Production and broadcasting of audiovisual documentaries,
- Advocacy and lobbying for governance and enforcement of wildlife laws,
- Follow-up and evaluation of management plans.

Background

The Republic of Benin, a small coastal country in West Africa, is facing great pressure on its natural resources resulting in a hazardous deterioration compromising nature. The wetlands ecosystem of Ouémé Valley, a favourable habitat for the West African manatee, is endangered.

The protection of biodiversity and the efficient management of natural resources are among other essential conditions for sustainable development. In this context, several endangered migratory species including sea turtles and the West African manatee are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on the Protection of Migratory Species of Wild Animals or Bonn Convention (CMS) to which Benin acceded by Decree No. 83-204 of 31 May 1983. Therefore, they were declared fully protected by law n° 2002-16 of 18 October 2004, concerning the regime of wildlife in the Republic of Benin.

Also, according to the recommendations of various international treaties for the protection of wildlife, such as the Bonn Convention on the Protection of Migratory Species (CMS), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade of Species (CITES), projects have been undertaken around the world to give a chance to save these species. The initiators of these projects face many problems, among which are: the hunt for turtles on the coast, bycatch by local and international fishing, poaching of turtle eggs, nest disturbance, destruction of habitats and marine pollution.

In the coastal area, all marine turtles species such as the leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the olive ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) are severely threatened in Benin throughout the Atlantic coast of West Africa. They are classified in the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as endangered, and measures need to be taken to protect them. These migratory species use mostly unprotected areas in the sub-region especially in Benin, Togo and Ghana. The protection of these species is fully ensured in the western Atlantic, USA, Caribbean, Brazil, but then they get slaughtered in the eastern Atlantic sea and coast in West Africa.

In general, these ecosystems and their resources are threatened for various reasons such as the population explosion and its direct pressure on natural resources; the overexploitation of wood for energy, deforestation and impacts on sacred forests; the extensive agriculture in the Ouémé river watershed; pollution; overfishing and use of destructive devices; the inadequate enforcement of regulations; the low technical capacity and weak governance and policy on natural resource management, the decline in living standards of local communities and climate change. The lack of basic education and transfer of knowledge from one generation to another coupled with ignorance of the need for sustainable management of resources, seriously threaten them.

In reality, these species that live in unprotected ecosystems are victim of intensive and illegal poaching by fishermen, coastal and wetlands residents on the Atlantic coast of Benin. The main reason for this is the misery of the people, but also the lack of awareness on the consequences of abusive collection, lack of technical and scientific monitoring, and serious shortcomings in regulations enforcement.

To help improve the situation, Nature Tropicale NGO, with the support of local communities, initiated this project: **Community Integrated Management of Migratory Species (West African Manatee and Sea Turtles) and their Habitat in the Coastal Region in Benin.**

Since 1999, Nature Tropical has undertaken actions for community safeguards of threatened migratory species in Benin in collaboration with several local and international institutions. Each year during the nesting season, a contingency plan has been implemented to monitor beaches of Benin in collaboration with eco-guards, volunteers equipped for this activity. The actions have significantly improved the state of conservation of marine turtles in Benin, but much remains to be done. Since 2014, a new dynamic began with great communication campaigns through radio and television media that have associated strenuous actions against wildlife crime in accordance with the replication of the EAGLE (Eco-Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement) Network. Nature Tropical occupies the leading position on these issues in Benin.

Thanks to the support of various partners, including A Rocha Ghana and the IUCN Netherlands Committee, Nature Tropicale is very active in these ecosystems through community management of endangered species (sea turtles, whales, dolphins, West African manatee) in non-protected areas and active in the creation of community-protected areas such as the "Sanctuary of Marine Turtles" of Donatein, an opportunity for coastal communities for the development of ecotourism; and the African manatee sanctuary in the Ouémé Valley.

Nature Tropical is also a leader in organizing ecotourism (whale watching) in West Africa, and is the representative of the EAGLE Network, that fights against environmental crime through the enforcement of wildlife laws in Benin. It also organizes training activities for young ecologist leaders on intergenerational

learning on nature called “Graine Future”, or “Seed for the Future”. Finally, Nature Tropicale is very active in the use of audiovisual techniques for the promotion of nature in Benin producing numerous television programs on national television (BB24, ORTB, EDEN TV, SIKKA TV ...) and local radio stations.

Activities (including site locations if applicable)

The geographical area covered by the project is located in the coastal region of Benin, where there are marine turtles, concerning the municipalities of Sèmè, Cotonou, Abomey, Ouidah and Grand Popo. It extends about 125 km from the Benin-Togo border in the West (at Hillacondji) and the Benin-Nigeria border in the East (at Sèmè - Kraké).

For the migration corridor of the West African manatee, the project concerns communities in the Ouémé Valley, namely the municipalities of Ouinhi, Bonou, Adjohoun, Dangbo, Aguégúés and Porto-Novo as well as Addjara, Sèmè and Cotonou.

Since 2000, the Republic of Benin was included in the List of Ramsar Sites, with two complexes that house the coastal zone and are composed as follows:

** East Complex (Lower Ouémé Valley, Porto-Novo Lagoon, Lake Nokoué, with an area of 91,600 ha and located at 6 ° 21'48"N - 6 ° 57'N, 20 ° 2 E - 2 ° 45'E) is the 1017 RAMSAR site that takes into account the beach and the coastal sea (feeding area) and nesting beach of sea turtles.

** West Complex (Lower Valley Couffo, Seaside Lagoon, Chenal Aho, Lake Ahémé, with an area of 47,500 ha and located at 6 ° 16'48"N - 6 ° 57'N, 1 ° 40'E - 2 ° 20'E) is the 1018 RAMSAR site that takes into account the beach and the coastal sea (feeding area) and nesting beach for sea turtles.

The target communities of the project are composed by the local residents on the coast and those of Ouémé Valley Wetland. This project will impact more than fifty villages and urban neighborhoods with about 25,000 people (fishermen), communities along the coast and wetlands in the Ouémé Valley.

Planned activities include:

- Organization of awareness campaigns,
- Capacity building for stakeholders (local authorities, Ecoguards),
- Eco-mapping and participatory videos in different ecosystems or key sites,
- Organization of the training of young leaders “Seed for the Future”,
- Development of alternative livelihood activities generating benefits to local communities (ecotourism, sustainable energy),
- Organization of advocacy and lobbying for enforcement of laws on flora and fauna,
- Monitoring of natural resources (marine turtles, West African manatee),
- Development of useful partnerships,
- Production and distribution of audiovisual documentaries on nature, environment and biodiversity.

Expected outcomes

This project will impact more than fifty villages and urban neighborhoods with about 25,000 people (fishermen), communities along the coast and wetlands in the Ouémé Valley, with further impacts further along the coast including into Togo and Ghana. The main beneficiaries of the project are youth, local leaders, women, and other community members, users of the wetlands and the coast such as small farmers and fishermen.

The main results expected at the end of this project are:

Outcome 1: Strong cooperation of local communities, local and administrative authorities for the preservation of coastal resources in general, sea turtles and West African manatee in particular

Outcome 2: Increased awareness of people about the importance of marine resources in general, sea turtles

and West African manatee in particular

Outcome 3: Eco-mapping and participatory videos realized in different ecosystems or key sites, and community traditional knowledge documented

Outcome 4: Three hundred (300) environmentalist young leaders trained through the program “Seed for the Future” and supported to develop alternative profit generating activities, tracking and monitoring of natural resources (marine turtles, West African manatee)

Outcome 5: Enforcement of wildlife laws and regulations is effective and improved

Outcome 6: Ten (10) audiovisual documentaries created and disseminated on nature, the environment and biodiversity products

Actors and task sharing

The major activities of the project will be implemented in the main wetlands area of Ouémé Valley and the 125 km of Atlantic coast of Benin. Nature Tropicale will coordinate the project overall and undertake the majority of the work, in close communication and collaboration with its partners. Nature Tropicale is already working on different topics with different partners in the project:

1- A Rocha Ghana is the collaborating IPSI partner. This program is for 3 years and will secure the ecosystem services of the wetlands and deltas as indispensable green infrastructure that allow for sustainable business development, food security and climate resilient urban expansion. A Rocha Ghana and Nature Tropical NGO will share many experiences on these issues.

2- In this Collaborative Activity, we have the support of The Netherland Committee of IUCN (IUCN-NL) to implement the regional program “**Shared Resources Joint Solutions - SRJS**”. IUCN-NL is developing and supporting many projects with us in the wetlands in Benin (Integrated management of the West African manatee in Ouémé Valley, Audiovisual Program...). From this year to 2019, IUCN-NL support the regional program “Shared Resources Joint Solutions – SRJS” as well with A Rocha Ghana and others NGO in Benin and in Ghana. We are also partner on Ecosystem Alliance sponsored by IUCN-NL and sharing many experiences on A Rocha approaches. (**Contact: Jan Kamstra**, Senior Conservation Advisor; IUCN National Committee of The Netherlands (IUCN NL); Plantage Middenlaan 2K | 1018 DD Amsterdam, The Netherlands, T [+31206261732](tel:+31206261732); D [+31 203018227](tel:+31203018227); Email: jan.kamstra@iucn.nl, www.iucn.nl)

3- CeBioS (Belgium) from the **Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique (IRSNB)**, the Focal Point of Belgium of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), support the issue of awareness of our program on the conservation of the sea turtle in Benin «Projet de sauvegarde communautaire des tortues marines de l’atlantique et de leurs habitats le long du littoral du Benin» for one year. (**Contact: Han De Koeijer**, Email : hdekoeijer@naturalsciences.be)

4- AFRICAN BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (ABN – Kenya) and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF - France) organize and support our program on the training of young leader on the conservation of biodiversity and culture (“Seed for the Future”). (**Contact: Fassil Gebeyehu Yelemtu (PhD)**, ABN Coordinator, African Biodiversity Network (ABN) Mortgage, House Number 65, Thika; Along the OAU Road, opposite Thika Nursing Home P.O. Box 6271 – 01000, Thika, Kenya, Tel: [+254 \(0\) 202675043](tel:+2540202675043); Mobile +254 (0) 727 442 558 Email: fassil@africanbiodiversity.org, fassilgeb@yahoo.com; abnsecretariat@africanbiodiversity.org;

Mme Catherine BOUCHER ir, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie «OIF», 19-21, avenue Bosquet, 75007 Paris (France), Tel : [+1 506 856 2936](tel:+15068562936))

5- Eco-Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement (EAGLE) Network is very active with Nature Tropical to fight against wildlife crime in Benin and in the sub region. We are already planning to expand this program in Ghana and A Rocha would be the entry point. (**Contact1: Luc Mathot**, Conservation Justice, Director – Founder; Tel: [+241 06123728](tel:+24106123728); Email: lucmathot@yahoo.fr, www.conservation-justice.org Co-founder EAGLE Network

www.eagle-enforcement.org; **Contact 2: Ofir Drori**; Founding Director **EAGLE** network; Eco Activists for Governance & Law Enforcement; Tel: +237 75 22 11 66; Tel: +254 788 223 885; Email: ofir@laga-enforcement.org)

6- The Ministry of Living Environment and Sustainable Development, Republic of Benin is responsible for implementing government policy on the management of endangered species and migratory species, hence their interest in ensuring the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources to reduce the loss of biodiversity and habitats. The Department of Forestry and Natural Resources (DGFRN); the National Center for Wildlife Reserves Management); CENAGREF, The Department of Environment and the Beninese Agency for Environment (ABE) will collaborate in the implementation of the activities.

How the activity relates to the *IPSI Strategy and IPSI Plan of Action*

The activities of this project contribute actively to support the strategic objectives of IPSI and its action plan. This project puts stress on improving knowledge and understanding of marine socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes (SEPLS). It is planned to make relevant information widely available to facilitate decision-making about their values, history, status and trends, including factors affecting positively or negatively, as well as traditional and modern knowledge that has supported and continues to support them, in accordance with national legislation and international obligations, in particular Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity. These activities also help to manage the direct and underlying causes responsible for the reduction or loss of biological and cultural diversity, and ecological and socio-economic services of SEPLS.

Resources, funding

Budget and duration:

The amount needed for the implementation of the three-year project is estimated at US \$ 328,000.

We have already secured more than 80% from different partners for the next three years:

1** IUCN-NL (The Netherlands): \$ 100,000

2** CeBioS (Belgium): \$ 8,000

3** African Biodiversity Network (ABN – Kenya) \$ 40,000

4** Eco-Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement (EAGLE): \$ 130,000

We will continue to work to mobilize more resources from potential funding organizations.

Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring of the project will be provided by an independent committee composed of the representatives of the Ministry of Living Environment and Sustainable Development (CHM Focal Point; Biodiversity Focal Point, Department of Environment, Beninese Agency for Environment, Department of Forestry and Natural Resources; the National Center for Wildlife Reserves Management); Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Fisheries Department, Police of Fisheries); Ministry of Public Security and National Defense (Navy, Coastal Protection Brigade); an NGO active on the coast, two Eco-guards, a representative of each coastal Mayor concerned by the project and a representative of the financial partners). The Department of Forestry and Natural Resources (DGFRN) and CHM team will be involved in awareness sessions on the field as well as for equities in the fight against wildlife crime. The CHM will facilitate the dissemination of information on its website.

The Ministry of Living Environment and Sustainable Development is responsible for implementing government policy on the management of endangered species and migratory species hence their interest in ensuring the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources to reduce the loss of biodiversity and habitats. This monitoring and evaluation will include data on the performance indicators, a mid-term review, a description and analysis of stakeholder involvement in project implementation; an explanation of how the

results of monitoring and evaluation will be used to influence where applicable, project execution and/or to implement the results of the project to other ecosystem in the country or in other countries such as Ghana and Togo.

Project evaluation

A self-evaluation will be conducted as participatory techniques in rural areas. Members of the project team and the eco-guards will periodically meet (once every three months) for self-assessment. Nature Tropicale has been working since 1995 with local coastal communities of Benin and has significant experience in the participatory approach and mobilizing communities in Benin as well as in the sub-region.

Internal evaluations will be carried out mid-term (end of the 3rd month, 6th month and 12th month) and at the end of the project. The assessment provided for midterm and the end of the project will be undertaken by the Independent Committee. The evaluation will be a participatory manner with the project team and active Eco guards directly in the project.

All project participants must periodically complete an evaluation form to give their own assessments on the project and propose improvements. Consultation meetings will be conducted for experience sharing and achievement of the project objectives.

Periodically the project progress reports will be shared and a final implementation report will be provided. The final report should indicate in particular the attainment of set objectives and must be received by the partners in 4 to 6 weeks after the official date of the project.

The means of monitoring and verification are:

- * Project documents
- * Mission reports
- * Project report (self-assessment with beneficiaries)
- * Project mid-term evaluation report
- * Progress reports
- * Financial reports
- * Final report

Sustainability and project impact

The project will facilitate the awareness of local people in the protection of endangered species in general and marine turtles and West African manatee in particular. Sustainability and impacts of the project will assist Eco-guards committees for alternative income generating activities such as ecotourism that will allow them to have income and reduce pressure on marine species. Also, decentralized cooperation departments of the Ministry of Living Environment and Sustainable Development will help awareness-raising at the local community level with the help of traditional leaders. The project will facilitate dialogue between local authorities, public administration and civil society and promote the joint implementation of development activities.

Potential project risks

Among the risks of the project include the lack of political will of the authorities and especially local authorities. It is also possible that the primary concerns of local communities are not taken into account by the actions provided by the public administration field. The project will strive for the reconciliation of all parties and ensure close coordination.

Other risk factors include: lack of support of the people because of their rather critical level of life; displacement of Eco-guards from their villages for living reasons; lack of incentives and sustainable alternatives to fishing; the greed of some communities; low involvement of local authorities in the program; lack of means to compensate fishermen for torn and damaged fishing nets; lack of protected marine and coastal areas' security; inadequate regulations at the local level; the lack of enforcement in the application of regulations.

For the moment, no beach, coastal area, or wetland enjoys legal status of protected area in Benin outside sacred forests. Unlike many other coastal countries, Benin's coast is not yet overfished, but is in the process of being so. At Grand-Popo for example, the risk is great. Some tour operators take parts of the beach, and construct buildings such as hotels or restaurants. It seems they did not need permission for their settlements. Officially, the laws regulate everything and land theoretically belongs to administration, but there is no control.

Coastal erosion is a very important factor to consider. To avoid in Benin a fast development of the coastal region that impact negatively marine turtles and other marine resources, it is important to regulate this development. The coastal master plan developed by the Benin Environmental Agency (ABE) should be an adequate instrument of regulation to good management of our coastline. A collaboration with all structures working on the coastal region is necessary to take account for the main concerns for the protection of biodiversity and sustainable development.

Sustainability of the activities

The initiated activities must be sustained with the collaboration of all stakeholders especially the local communities that are at the base of the slaughter of these species. Strong actions to safeguard these species by effective law enforcement at the local level are needed to save these endangered species. Regulation on the use of nets with small mesh that catch offshore marine turtles need to be in place. Awareness at all levels for the proper management of endangered marine species such as sea turtles and West African manatee in particular is an important action. Municipal authorities need to include in their guidelines (PDC) concordance with existing laws to safe marine species. The publication of data from the various activities of the project on different websites such as CHM and GBIF will contribute to the popularization the achievements. Beyond financial support from different partners, activities initiated by the project will be pursued through the support of various other potential partners such as the Embassy of the United States of America through self-assistance programs, the Beninese Agency for Environment (ABE) in the framework of actions for the sustainable management of the coastal zone and wetlands of Benin and the Ramsar Convention. Future actions can also benefit from support from various other organizations and international institutions through the IUCN West Africa Bureau and WWF.