



Call for Expressions of Interest AFD-GDN Biodiversity and Development Award

The AFD-GDN Biodiversity and Development Award program is a global competitive research program jointly launched by the Global Development Network (GDN) and the French Development Agency (AFD). This award program targets researchers based in developing countries. It aims to identify and support productive multidisciplinary engagements on biodiversity mainstreaming, including across different countries, and to boost the use and quality of evidence in public policies debates and corporate practices.

The unique feature of the Program is its two-stage award process: in the first place, the program recognizes and encourages quality individual (or small-team) scientific endeavors within given disciplines, with competitive research grants accompanied by mentoring and tailored support; in addition, it promotes and incentivizes multidisciplinary collaborations among awardees working in different fields. Applicants are asked to explore options for mutual collaboration from the earliest stages of the selection process, and an additional grant is awarded to pairs of researchers who can identify multidisciplinary activities, including but not limited to evidence synthesis, that cut across their individual research projects.

Expressions of interest must be submitted by March 7th 2021. Shortlisted researchers will be invited to join an online collaborative space in March and April 2021 and a Research Lab from April 19th to 24th 2021 and will have a chance to submit both revised individual research proposals and joint (in pairs) multi-disciplinary proposals by May 15th 2021.

Key Facts

- Through this call, GDN targets researchers from developing countries (see eligible countries in appendices)
- GDN intends to assign competitively 4 individual research grants, each up to a maximum of USD 40,000 for a 24-months project starting in July 2021, and 2 additional multidisciplinary research grants of up to USD 15,000, to be implemented in parallel. Only researchers who have been awarded an individual grant can access to the additional multidisciplinary grants, in a pair with other awardees; applicants are therefore required to explore options for collaboration with other applicants throughout the selection process, between March and May 2021

- One of the four individual research grants of up to USD 40,000 is reserved for a researcher (or small research team) with a PI from a francophone African country (nationality and institutional affiliation); (see eligible countries in appendices)
- Beyond funding, GDN will support the projects with tailored opportunities for mentoring, peer-review and networking, including through interactions with a Scientific Committee that will oversee the program and support quality control
- Applicants need to be able to read, speak and write in English, since the program is run in English. Applications in English are hence requested on priority for this all. However, applications in French will be accepted as an exception, and with justification.
- Deadline to apply: March 7th 2021

1. Focus of the biodiversity and development award program

The argument that biodiversity – its products and services – is central to human flourishing has been proven beyond doubt: the principle is enshrined in a number of international conventions that uphold sustainability as being inextricably tied to development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG15 reproduces the 2010 Aichi Biodiversity Targets¹). The latest Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), released in May 2019, argues for “urgent and concerted efforts in fostering transformative change” in the face of overwhelming evidence about the accelerating decline of nature globally.²

This decline is particularly an issue for the poorest populations who depend disproportionately on access to natural resources and ecosystem services for their livelihoods. The need for transformative change³ calls for the exploration of alternative scenarios where biodiversity and development evolve in the same upward direction.

The effect of current consumption and production patterns on biodiversity and the environment reflect a limited awareness of the potential win-win scenarios possible, and suggest the need to identify biodiversity positive and biodiversity protective modes of development. Critical activities for development pathways, such as agrifood (through agricultural land expansion but also through the input intensity and standardization it effectuates on cropped ecosystems) or infrastructures development, industrialization and

¹ The Aichi Biodiversity Targets, a set of 20 targets grouped under 5 strategic goals, were adopted in the COP10 in Nagoya in October 2010 as part of an updated Strategic Biodiversity Plan for the 2011-2020 period (<https://www.cbd.int/sp/>)

² IPBES. 2019. *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany.

³ By ‘transformative change, we mean change in consumption and production patterns

urbanization (when they lead to increased pollution for instance), need to transform for their own viability.

Research has a critical role to play to address these challenges. It must inform on the one hand debates about systemic interactions at play, and the implications these have at the local level. On the other, it will better inform global deliberations and strategy-setting on a post 2020 biodiversity framework, scheduled to be discussed at the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Kunming, China⁴. Social sciences globally have a particular contribution to make in this regard, in light of current definitions of “biodiversity mainstreaming” (see below).

By biodiversity mainstreaming, the GEF Secretariat defines “the process of embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices of key public and private actors that impact or rely on biodiversity, so that it is conserved and sustainably used both locally and globally”.⁵ Concretely, this can translate into changes in the value ladder (including accounting systems) where biodiversity protection is defined as a priority objective for which companies and public policies are accountable, and as a leverage to address socio-economic challenges. This can further lead to changes in the definitions of financial and trade regulations, or macroeconomic decisions, to address the underlying drivers of development, in ways that are socially and environmentally sustainable.

This program promotes opportunities to produce high quality, relevant, legitimate and credible knowledge and analysis that can foster biodiversity mainstreaming by opening new spaces for collaborations or negotiations within the society. It aims to address, through a social science angle, the issue of mainstreaming biodiversity into public policies, corporate practices and society at large. Based on the analysis of concrete cases and well-identified scenarios in developing countries, the program proposes to understand what mainstreaming biodiversity entails, how it can be implemented, what should be understood as a success. Going beyond pure arbitrary trade-offs between biodiversity and development and embracing systemic perspectives, the program intends to provide lessons on how biodiversity and development interact to create – or not - multiple positive outcomes, what these outcomes might be, how to measure them, what mechanisms ought to be in place for success or failure, and how transformations, innovations and transitions support win-win scenarios and solutions.^{6 7}

⁴ See the [decision 14/34](#) the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

⁵ GEF Secretariat (2016), *Biodiversity Mainstreaming In Practice: A Review of GEF Experience*

⁶ Dilys Roe et al., “Which Components or Attributes of Biodiversity Influence Which Dimensions of Poverty?”, *Environmental Evidence* 3 (February 19, 2014): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1186/2047-2382-3-3>.

⁷ “Interdependence of Biodiversity and Development Under Global Change,” CBD Technical Series (Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2010).

More specifically, this program calls for innovative and original research projects on the following aspects:

- **Understanding the ‘pressure’ development activities exert on biodiversity and how this knowledge can be a basis for socio-ecological restoration.** This includes (but is not limited) to quantifying and measuring biodiversity loss and its drivers, how to avoid them and how to restore ecosystems in socially acceptable ways. Social science research can be instrumental to identifying incentives and motivations (positive and negative), documenting practices and analyzing the socio-economic, legal and cultural context as well as the drivers of biodiversity loss and degradation across a number of sectors.
- **Formulating and documenting the ‘value’ at large of ecosystems and biodiversity for social and economic systems (including non-monetary value and insurance value),** to build clear messages, increase public awareness and open up spaces for evidence-based decision-making. This includes physical natural capital accounting and national ecosystem assessments, particularly non-monetary methods and indicators
- **Analyzing the means put in place by public actors (State, local governments, Biodiversity agency, etc..) to scale up biodiversity mainstreaming,** including institutional mechanisms, financing facilities, legal frameworks but also the governance of biodiversity management and issues of power and equity between actors involved. This includes the review and evaluation of policy instruments and frameworks, how scale up happens successfully in complex systems, the design and use of budgets, the architecture of biodiversity governance across sectors, analysis of successful or failed initiatives aiming at mainstreaming biodiversity into public policies and decisions.
- **Transformation pathways towards biodiversity positive development.** Documenting and analyzing innovative solutions to foster biodiversity positive development pathways in regions, sectors, countries, and assessing their transformative potential, their capacity to be upscaled or outscaled. Assessing also the lock-in and obstacles that these innovations are facing, and what could be triggering or unlocking transformation. These innovative solutions, such as nature-based solutions, might prove very context specific, but unlocking their capacity to be upscaled is a question that leads to more genericity in results.
- **Documenting strategies and modalities for mainstreaming inclusive and participatory decision-making,** involving private and corporate actors, civil society, indigenous communities and other local actors, analysing what works and what does not in specific contexts, and how, as well as conditions for scale-up of inclusive coordination between stakeholders that rely on or impact biodiversity.

- **Understanding evidence generation and use** on biodiversity mainstreaming-related action, including learning networks and infrastructures that can boost awareness and education among key stakeholders and their links to society at large, including through media and at the interface of scientific production and public knowledge.

A 'system' or 'nexus' approach is expected irrespective of the specific focus of the proposals submitted.

2. Objectives of the biodiversity and development award program

The Biodiversity and Development Award Program creates a high-quality and high-visibility opportunity for researchers based in developing countries to produce and disseminate research that is independent, of high quality, and policy relevant, on the link between biodiversity and development. The award program aims in particular to identify and support opportunities for productive multidisciplinary engagements on the issues relating to biodiversity mainstreaming.

Promoting diversity of approaches. At the core of the initiative is a competitive 2-year research grant targeted at promising researchers with a growing output of quality academic publications on the topic of biodiversity and development. Eligible local researchers acting as Principal Investigators (PIs) can apply as individuals or as leaders of a small research team and are shortlisted based on the academic quality of their submissions, through a traditional, double and blind, single discipline-based peer review process.

Promoting multidisciplinary collaborations. The selection process is thereafter geared towards achieving the double objective of competitively improving the quality of research proposals on the one hand, particularly through a Research Lab where they interact with global experts in the field (see below), and enabling researchers to explore opportunities for multidisciplinary collaborations inherent to their research agenda, with specific reference to other shortlisted PIs during the selection process. Up to 4 individual grants of USD 40,000 each will be awarded, and they will be completed by 2 grants of 15,000 for pairs of awardees that can develop enticing multidisciplinary collaborations building on their individual work.

Promoting interactions with key local stakeholders. The Biodiversity Awards Program aims to support the growth of a research-based evidence culture through and on the sideline of the project, and supports interactions with stakeholders (policy actors, civil society, media) linked to the subject studied by the researchers faded through the competition.

Promoting global connections. Finally, the winners will also benefit from intellectual and scientific guidance of the members of a dedicated Scientific Committee, whose members have a proven world-class academic track record. Each awardee will also be matched with a world-class scientific advisor, chosen whenever possible from within the Scientific

Committee. The aim is to provide guidance, when needed, on issues such as research design and implementation, as well as peer review of draft outputs of the research.

3. Multi-stage selection process

The Program includes a two-stage award mechanism that, in the first place, recognizes and encourages quality in individual scientific proposals and, as a specific add-on, promote and incentivize multidisciplinary collaborations between researchers included in the program. A unique feature of the Program is the integration in the multi-stage selection process of an early networking mechanism to connect researchers working on similar topics from different disciplinary angles, who can then benefit from additional fund to implement well-defined joint activities. These activities are not expected to be a research project in and of its own, but to leverage the links between individual research project, through synthesis and add-on analytical efforts.

This unique mechanism is embedded in the larger selection process, which follows the timeline below:

- Call launch: Jan 29th 2021
- Deadline for submissions of Expressions of Interest (Step 1 below): March 7th 2021
- Online workshops for shortlisted candidates and pairing mechanisms (Step 2 below): April 19th to 24th 2021
- Submission of final proposals (both proposals for individual research and proposals for multidisciplinary work in pairs of teams) (Step 3 below): May 15th 2021
- Start of grants: July 1st 2021

Step 1: Expression of Interest

Eligible applicants must submit through the dedicated online platform the following documents as part of the application package. The deadline for submission is March 7th, 2021

- A. An expression of interests (up to 8 page) that includes:
 - a. the justification of the research in terms of the existing literature globally, but also a justification in terms of the local policy challenges the research aims to inform;
 - b. a list and a summary of early interactions with demand-side actors (policy community, including civil society and media), and a preliminary mapping of key counterparts the team wishes to engage in the research;
 - c. a draft research question;
 - d. a draft methodology, with an indication of the disciplinary tradition of reference;
 - e. a working hypothesis;

- f. a short description of the empirical data / field work that will be involved, a justification of why the specific field situation is relevant for the research question, and of the main challenges concerning field access or data access. . Researchers are requested to flag if the field work falls in one of the 'red' of 'orange' areas as per the mapping done by the French Ministry of External Affairs, accessible at <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/conseils-par-pays-destination/>. Fieldwork in 'red' areas will be strictly not authorized.
 - g. a justification of why the question proposed would benefit from the contributions of other disciplines and potential academic partners, working in different disciplines, identified by the PI (if any).
- B. CVs and publication lists for the PI and other team members.
 - C. A 2-page description of track record including a narrative explanation of the link between the submitted EoI and past work of each researcher involved.
 - D. A support letter from the Institution of primary affiliation of the eligible local researcher, stating the scope and extent of support available to the project (in kind/matching contribution)

Step 2: Towards the full proposal and multi-disciplinary proposals

Up to 20 proposals will be selected based on the quality of their expression of interest. GDN will first do an eligibility check and then external reviewers will assess eligible expressions of interest.

Online platform. Shortlisted aspiring PIs will be invited to join an online platform, where they will be able to access, contact and interact with the other shortlisted aspiring PIs. Synthetic information about the PIs and their proposed research will be made visible to everyone, and PIs will be able to network bilaterally. The aim of the platform is to actively broker contacts and conversations between shortlisted researchers in order to foster multi-disciplinary engagements. The platform will be active for 3 weeks, and applicants will be given another 2 weeks to develop their proposal and expand points c) to f) of the expression of interest before entering the next phase of the selection with a revised proposal. At this point, GDN will collect information on the potential pairs that have emerged from the online interactions.

Research Lab. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a 2-day workshop (if the workshop is virtual, it may develop over more days). This workshop is designed to offer opportunities to strengthen the proposals in terms of academic content, methodological approach, policy relevance and potential contribution to a multidisciplinary collaboration, through interactions with the Scientific Committee and external resource people.

Step 3 : Submissions of the full proposal and multidisciplinary proposals

After the Research lab, researchers will be given 3 weeks to develop a full independent research proposal and a joint proposal in pairs of teams for the multidisciplinary pairing grant. The deadline for submission of the full proposal is May 15th

Final individual proposal should include the following sections:

- a. literature review
- b. policy review that identifies concrete opportunities to operationalize the research
- c. research question
- d. methodology, including empirical basis / data / field work – relevance, specificity or genericity (monographic deep dive on a specific context vs. comparative analysis across different contexts for instance)
- e. hypothesis
- f. team composition (CVs and narrative description of roles)
- g. details of demand-side actors that will be involved in the project and a narrative description of their expected involvement
- h. timeline
- i. budget
- j. outreach plan
- k. proposed pair

Multi-disciplinary proposals should include:

- a. jointly developed description of the issue addressed, and expected enhanced contribution from multi-disciplinary activities (expected outcomes)
- b. list of activities and outputs planned
- c. a discussion of methodological choices considered
- d. timeline
- e. budget
- f. draft outreach strategy and map of key stakeholders to be engaged, along with proposed modality of engagement

Please note that the multi-disciplinary proposals are expected to draw from individual contributions in order to take stock of the individual studies.

4. Eligibility

The call is open to teams of researchers belonging to a university or any other research-oriented organizations based in developing countries (full list of eligible countries in Appendix). Proposals from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Guinea,

Guyana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Sénégal, Tunisia, Uganda, and Vietnam are particularly welcome, and will be given preference in cases of parity in quality.

A maximum of 3 researchers, including the principal investigator, are allowed in each team. The composition of the team cannot change between the call for Expression of Interest and the submission of the full proposal. Researchers can belong to different institutions, but the grant will be given to the institutions hosting the principal investigator.

- The researchers, including the principal investigator, must be citizens and residents of an eligible country.
- Staff members of multilateral and bilateral development organizations are not eligible to apply.
- Previous and current employees of GDN, previous and current GDN Board Members, and members of evaluation teams hired by GDN for specific projects are not eligible to apply up till 5 years from the completion of their tenure.
- Similar proposals or papers resulting as products from activities funded fully or partially by GDN and AFD cannot be submitted for this competition.

Applicants should clearly mention if this proposal is receiving or will receive funds from other sources. Co-funding is encouraged, but it should be clearly explained how the additional funds provided by the grant would reinforce and complement the existing funds for successful completion of the project.

Note:

- Applications must be submitted in English
- A researcher CANNOT be involved in more than one application;
- Incomplete applications will NOT be considered;
- Application received after March 7th 2021, midnight Indian Standard Time (IST) will NOT be considered;
- Information and details provided in the application should be correct and verifiable; else the submission will be liable for disqualification;
- GDN will accept submissions as electronic files only through the dedicated online platform. Submissions by any other method will NOT be accepted;

Ethical considerations

GDN-supported projects must be carried out in accordance with common research and professional ethical standards, related to plagiarism, surveys and other forms of data collection that involve human subjects, confidentiality and transparent use of financial and

human resources. **In their proposals, applicants are required to clearly identify all possible ethical issues relating to their proposed project.**

Furthermore, all forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable to GDN, plagiarism being one of them. Plagiarism is unauthorized use of other people's work, ideas and/or writings (in part or in full) and presenting or giving notion of these work(s), ideas and/or writings being one's own work, idea(s) and/or writing(s). GDN takes plagiarism very seriously and will take immediate and appropriate action, including and not limited to withdrawal of funding for documented and verified cases of plagiarism.

5. Selection criteria

The expressions of interests will be assessed qualitatively with exclusive reference to points a-to-g of the expression of interest (see above).

6. Contact

GDN will accept questions related to this call at biodiversity@gdn.int until Feb 20th, 2021

Please note: GDN reserves the right to modify, cancel or not award grants at any stage of the Call and grant-making.

ANNEX1: LIST OF ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

A star (*) signals countries from where proposals are particularly welcome. Note: preference based on country will only be given in case of a tie between proposals with the same quality.

Sub-Saharan Africa

South Africa	Gabon	Nigeria
Angola	Gambia	Uganda*
Benin*	Ghana	Rwanda
Botswana	Guinea*	Sao Tome and Principe
Burkina Faso*	Equatorial Guinea	Senegal*
Burundi	Guinea-Bissau	Seychelles
Cameroon*	Kenya*	Sierra Leone
Cape Verde	Liberia	Sudan
Central African Rep.	Madagascar*	Southern Sudan
Comoros	Malawi	Tanzania
Rep. Congo*	Mali	Chad
Dem. Rep. Congo	Mauritius	Togo
Côte d'Ivoire*	Mauritania	Zambia
Djibouti	Mozambique*	Zimbabwe
Eritrea	Namibia	
Ethiopia*	Niger	

Mediterranean basin and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Algeria	Kosovo	Serbia
Albania	Lebanon	Syria
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Libya	Palestinian areas
Egypt	Macedonia	Tunisia*
Iraq	Morocco	Turkey
Jordan	Montenegro	Yemen

Asia Pacific

Afghanistan	Kiribati	Solomon Islands
Armenia	Laos	Samoa
Azerbaijan	Marshall Islands	Sri Lanka
Bangladesh	Federal states of Micronesia	Tokelau territory
Cambodia	Myanmar (Burma)	Thailand
China	Nauru	East Timor
Cook Islands	Niue	Tonga
Fiji*	Uzbekistan	Tuvalu
Georgia	Pakistan	Vanuatu
India	Papua New Guinea	Vietnam*
Indonesia	Palau	
Kazakhstan	Philippines	

Latin America and Caribbean

Antigua-and-Barbuda	Dominica	Peru
Argentina	Ecuador	Saint Lucia
Bolivia	Grenada	St-Kitts and Nevis
Brazil	Guyana*	St-Vincent and the Grenadines
Colombia	Haiti	Suriname
Cuba	Jamaica	
Dominican Rep.	Mexico	
