

**Terms of Reference**  
for the **Feasibility Study** of the

**Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management (CoEB) in Huye, Rwanda**

**as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO**

**1. Background**

In the recent past, UNESCO has established several Category 2 centres (C2C) in the field of Natural Sciences. These centres serve in their fields of specialization as international or regional centres and pools of expertise to provide services and technical assistance to Member States, cooperation partners and internally to the network of UNESCO field offices. In this context, the ecological -related Category 2 centres (WC2C) are expected to contribute directly to attaining the strategic objectives and programmatic priorities of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme.

There are currently four category 2 centers (C2C) which have been established under the MAB programme:

- Ecole régionale post-universitaire d'aménagement et de gestion intégrés des forêts et territoires tropicaux (ERAIFT), Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- International Centre on Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves, Castellet I la Gornal, Spain
- Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas (GCIDA), Jeju Island, Republic of Korea
- International Centre for Capacity Development: Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, Reykjavik, Iceland (with the Land Restoration Training Programme)

The initiative of creating a "Centre of Excellence for Biodiversity in Rwanda" followed H.E. Pres. Paul Kagame's statement at the 1st Int'l Research Conference on Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources held in Kigali, 23 July 2007 requesting "...effective and efficient institutions, with the appropriate human and physical infrastructure....Another key imperative is the scientific and research capacities to continuously monitor, create new knowledge, as well as generate innovative solutions."

In 2008, UNESCO supported the feasibility study. It was followed by a joint intervention funded by One UN Fund implemented by UNESCO (lead agency), UNECA and UNDP under the leadership of MINEDUC and MINELA to conceptualize and to build national institutional capacity to establish the Center of Excellence in Biodiversity.

The Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management (CoEB) was officially established in February 2017 as a Research Centre housed within the University of Rwanda in Huye.

On 30 June 2020, the Secretary General of Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO forwarded to UNESCO the proposal, endorsed by the Minister of Education, to establish the "

Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management “ as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre (C2C).

The proposal was reviewed at the first meeting of the Intersectoral Review Committee for Category 2 Institutes and Centres (IRC) on 27 November 2020. The IRC stated that the proposal meets all the eligibility criteria except that of having its own legal personality. Therefore, it invited Rwanda to consider alternative means for the proposed C2C to have its own legal personality and submit an updated proposal with this new element by 15 January 2021. The Ministry of Education provided follow-up to the IRC’s request for additional information through letter from the Secretary General of CNRU on 30 January 2021. Based on this additional information examined at its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting on 19 February 2021, the IRC accepted the proposal submitted by the Government of Rwanda and recommended that a feasibility study be conducted.

The feasibility study report is expected to be presented to the 212<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board to give recommendations to the 40th GC.

## 2. Status and purpose of the proposed Cat2Center

As stated above, the proposed Category 2 Center is the Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management (called as CoEB here after) is a Research Institute housed within the University of Rwanda.

The CoEB is organized as a consortium with a **hub office** located at University of Rwanda (UR), and institutions which are **nodes** of the Center. It functions as a consortium of governmental and non-governmental institutions, bringing together expertise and skills to drive research and produce first-hand knowledge, and play a catalytic and coordinating role to ensure sharing of scientific knowledge, skills and expertise for evidence-based decisions for biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and climate resiliency. The CoEB provides leadership, best practices, research, support and training in the domain of biodiversity, natural resource management, and impacts of climate change on ecosystems and livelihoods. The goal is to encourage, enable and support stakeholders to generate and apply knowledge on biodiversity and natural resources for sustainable development.

In this document, the Centre of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resources Management (CoEB) refers to **the consortium composed by the hub and the nodes**.

The proposed Cat2 Centre will contribute to achievement of the 2030 Global development agenda and has the potential and aims to contribute to the entire set of SDGs with a focus on SDG 4 (education), SDG 5 (gender equality), for SDGs 6 (water), SDG 9 (innovation) SDG 11 (cities), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 15 (biodiversity) and SDG 17 (means of implementation).

The specific objectives of the CoEB are to:

- Generate knowledge through research and monitoring in biodiversity and natural resources, both from within the Center (hub) and through the Centre’s nodes.
- Enhance education and awareness raising for biodiversity and natural resource management in the region including advocacy, promotion of science-policy linkages, and improved knowledge management and information sharing mechanisms

- Contribute to the valorization of biodiversity from genes to ecosystems for sustainable development in the region through bioprospecting initiatives

The CoEB was established to focus on reinforcing the capacity for scientific research and linkage of science to policy for the environment, biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable use of natural resources in the Albertine Rift and Great Lakes region, a biodiversity hotspot.

This CoEB is now poised to contribute significantly to coordinating biodiversity information in the region through a) Research and Monitoring (including biodiversity informatics), b) Education and Awareness-raising, and c) Bioprospecting.

### **3. Rationale for the feasibility study and underlying principles**

Category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO are a global network of institutions of excellence in the Organization's domains of competence. Given their expertise, these institutes and centres contribute in a meaningful way to the implementation of UNESCO's priorities, programmes, and global development agendas during a defined period, through international and regional cooperation, research, knowledge production, policy advice, and capacity enhancement. Though independent of UNESCO, category 2 institutes and centres are a privileged partner of the Organization with access to UNESCO's logo, international and intergovernmental bodies and networks, and may leverage UNESCO's international reach and convening powers. Category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO are an integral part of the Organization's Comprehensive Partnership Strategy.

At its 40th session (November 2019) UNESCO's General Conference adopted 40 C/Resolution 99 by which it approved a new "Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO", also referred to as the "2019 Strategy" (document 40 C/79<sup>1</sup>), which supersedes all relevant prior resolutions by the General Conference on the subject.

According to the 2019 Strategy, the designation of "Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO" comprises seven stages:

- Submission of a proposal to UNESCO
- Preliminary assessment by the Intersectoral Review Committee
- Feasibility study.
- Assessment by the Intersectoral Review Committee
- Examination by the Executive Board
- Approval by the General Conference
- Signature of agreement and entry into force

This TORs refers to the feasibility study step for the proposed Category 2 Centre which follows the positive preliminary assessment of the IRC which concluded that the proposal was complete, fits with the principles of eligibility outlined in B.1 of this Strategy, and falls within the fields of action of the Organization, in particular the programme priorities set by the Natural Science Sector.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371433>

The feasibility study shall be undertaken by a team of gender-balanced independent experts, in line with the provisions of this Strategy, as well as relevant sectoral strategies. UNESCO shall be responsible for the management of the feasibility study and contracting the independent experts in accordance with its rules and regulations. The institution or the Member State(s) concerned shall meet the costs of the feasibility study.

#### **4. Purpose and scope of the feasibility study**

The main purpose of the feasibility study is to inform the decision-making process for the designation of Category 2 status to the proposed Centre, ensure its alignment with the requirements of the 2019 Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres, and its contribution to the Strategic Programme Objectives of UNESCO, notably in the Natural Sciences. The findings of the feasibility study will be included in the Director-General's report to the 212<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board, with her recommendations as to whether the designation as C2C under the auspices of UNESCO should be approved.

The scope of the feasibility study is to assess the conformity of the proposal with the requirements for a Category 2 Centre. The feasibility study, which shall be drafted in English or French in consultation with UNESCO, shall focus on the extent to which:

- (1) the institution's programmes and activities are relevant and aligned with UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget (C/5), including global strategies and action plans, as well as sectoral programme priorities.
- (2) the activities of the institution contribute to the global development agendas;
- (3) the actions of the institution are international or regional in scope;
- (4) the institution enjoys the autonomy for the execution of its activities and legal capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property;
- (5) the institution has a proven track record of excellence of at least two years in UNESCO's fields of competence;
- (6) the institution's organizational structure, the composition of its Governing Board or comparable body and its existing human resources allow for an effective and efficient management of the institution, and implementation of the functions foreseen;
- (7) the institution engages relevant regional and international partners in its actions;
- (8) the institution is financially sustainable; and
- (9) the institution's activities complement UNESCO's programmes and activities and do not overlap with those of other category 2 institutes or centres or with other similar institutions created and operated by other United Nations system organizations.

One requirement of the feasibility study is to produce a draft of the tripartite Agreement between UNESCO, the Government of Rwanda and the Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management as regards to its designation as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO .

The draft agreement, which shall conform to the provisions of the model Agreement included in attachment 2 of document 40 C/79, and take into consideration the recommendations of the feasibility study, shall be prepared by UNESCO in consultation with the Government of Rwanda and the CoEB in the working languages of UNESCO Secretariat (English and or French). Should there be additional language versions of the agreement, in the case of discrepancies, the English or French version of the agreement would prevail.

The feasibility study and the negotiations with the Government of Rwanda and the CoEB on the draft agreement shall be completed and submitted to the Intersectoral Review Committee (IRC) by **30 June 2021**. The Intersectoral Review Committee (IRC) shall screen the proposal along with the feasibility study and draft agreement, by end of **July 2021**.

If the proposal and its feasibility study as well as the draft agreement are endorsed by the Intersectoral Review Committee, the Executive Board shall examine the proposal for designation of the CoEB as a new category 2 centres, along with the Director- General's recommendations and the draft agreement, at its 212<sup>th</sup> session.

## **5. Consultant for the Feasibility study**

A team of two gender balanced independent experts, one international and one local, will be selected to conduct the feasibility study. The expert located in Rwanda shall undertake travel within the country to speak with partners, site visits (hub and nodes) and other logistical matters. Meetings will be organised online to allow the non-resident expert of the team to be fully involved.

The qualifications of the team of two experts should be:

Required:

### **International:**

- At least 10 years of professional experience in research and / or capacity-building in the field of biological/ecological sciences or related matters.
- Academic degree (PhD preferred) in the above-mentioned field.
- At least five years' experience in policy and programme assessment with strong knowledge and skills in applying various feasibility assessment methodologies and methods of data collection.
- Excellent communication and report-writing skills in English.
- Knowledge of the role and mandate of UNESCO and its programmes
- Experience in UNESCO feasibility studies procedures

### **National:**

- At least 7 years of professional experience in research and / or capacity-building in the field of biological/ecological sciences or related matters.

- Academic degree (PhD preferred) in the above-mentioned field.
- Proven experience in institutional audit including financial and legal frameworks in Rwanda
- Excellent communication and report-writing skills in English.
- Excellent knowledge of the national educational and academic environment in Rwanda
- Knowledge of scientific institutions in the country and in the region

Desirable for one of the team:

- Understanding and application of the UN Mandates in Human Rights and Gender Equality.

Verification of these qualifications will be based on the provided curriculum vitae. Moreover, references, web links or electronic copies of one recently completed feasibility study conducted by the consultant should be provided as part of the technical proposals, preferably relevant to the thematic areas of the review.

## **5. Feasibility study methodology**

The feasibility study methods to be employed are to be clarified in the review framework to be proposed by the external expert, showing how each of the feasibility study dimensions mentioned in the scope section above will be addressed with regards to data sources and data collection methods. Among others, the following methods should be considered:

- Document review (desk study)
- Interviews with stakeholders (face to face, phone/skype)
- Direct observations through field visit(s), and
- Questionnaires/surveys with stakeholders, such as Partners institutions and beneficiaries (trainees).

The Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, the MAB Programme Secretariat (SC/EES) and the Center of Excellence for Biodiversity and Natural Resources Management (CoEB) will provide the expert with relevant documentation to be reviewed in the desk study. Interviews are to be conducted with relevant key stakeholders (e.g., academics and professionals, trainees) who have been involved in or benefitted from the work of the CoEB.

CoEB will make all relevant documents and information available to the expert, including:

- Curricula of trainings
- Progress and activity reports;
- Technical reports if applicable
- Financial reports;
- List of staff;
- List of key publications;
- List of donors and project partners;
- Minutes of the Governing Board meetings;
- Available audit and evaluation reports (if available);

- List of beneficiaries, people trained, and countries assisted.

A number not exceeding of 21 working days per consultant are estimated to be required for the realisation of this feasibility study.

## 6. Planning and implementation arrangements

### 6.1 Management arrangements

SC/EES will assist in the preparation and organisation of the feasibility study. The expert will be responsible for being self sufficient as regards logistics (office space, administrative and secretarial support, telecommunications, printing of documentation, travel costs etc.). However, suitable working space, when necessary, will be provided during the visit to Huye, Rwanda. While the expert is/are primarily responsible for the dissemination of all methodological tools (surveys, questionnaires), SC/EES will facilitate this process to the extent possible (providing contact information, email addresses, etc.). Relevant stakeholders are being requested to provide documents relevant to the feasibility study.

### 6.2 Time schedule and deliverables:

The feasibility study will result in three deliverables, as follows:

1. The expert should submit an *inception report* consisting of:
  - i. Background, objectives and refined key questions.
  - ii. Methodology (customized framework of how the exercise intends to cover the entire scope of the feasibility study; and
  - iii. Work plan.
2. *Draft feasibility study*: The process for preparing the feasibility study shall allow adequate time for a discussion of the findings and the recommendations that have been proposed with SC/EES and pertinent stakeholders, including the Government of the Rwanda and CoEB.
3. *Final feasibility study*: The final feasibility study (maximum 30 pages excluding annexes) should be structured as follows:
  - Executive summary (maximum four pages);
  - Purpose of the feasibility study.
  - Scope of the feasibility study;
  - Methodology.
  - Findings.
  - Recommendations
  - Annexes (including interview list, mission reports, key documents consulted, Terms of Reference) + draft tripartite Agreement

The language of all reports will have to be English.

