



**Wildlife Conservation Society
P.O. Box 7487, Kampala, UGANDA**

Postgraduate Students Research Grants Announcement

February_07_2022

Introduction

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) under Conservation Impact Mitigation and Biodiversity Offsets (COMBO) has the pleasure to announce research funding to continuing MSc student who have completed their coursework and are starting the research component in the field of biodiversity conservation. The research will be part of the WCS received funding from *Agence Française de Développement (AFD)* and *Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM)* and one of the activities is to support research. The COMBO project aims to reconcile economic development and conservation by mainstreaming biodiversity into decision-making.

This is by supporting government policies targeting no net loss or a net gain of biodiversity which improve mitigation of industry impacts, this will be achieved by encouraging uptake of business practices applying the mitigation hierarchy, including offset mechanisms.

The landscape of biodiversity importance where the research must be conducted is;

Murchison- Semliki Landscape

The Murchison Semliki landscape is endowed with a rich and diverse biodiversity and ecosystems with large network of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) and species of global importance such as lions, elephants, giraffes, chimpanzees and vultures. It is evident that most of the major infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, industrial parks and bridges, pipeline and energy-related projects (e.g. oil and gas exploration and production, hydropower dams) being developed are expected to negatively impact Key Biodiversity areas (KBAs) and yet the abatement cost is likely to be enormous. In order to develop and implement mitigation measures, comprehensive information about the direct and indirect impacts of these development projects on biodiversity, ecosystems and communities is highly needed to inform strategic planning, risk management and conservation prioritization by the government of

Uganda and its partners. Well as the project developers have conducted environmental and social impact assessment studies, more scientific studies focusing on selected species, sensitive ecosystems, processes and livelihoods is highly needed to work toward achieving the No Net Loss principle. As such, applied research aimed at understanding the contribution of applying the mitigation hierarchy to reconcile economic development and biodiversity and ecosystem conservation is required.

Postgraduate research grant requirements

The overall objective of the research is to improve the theoretical understanding of the mitigation hierarchy and how this standard is applied in a business environment characterized by high biodiversity, ecosystem services and social benefits. With funding from the French Development Agency (AFD) and *Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial* (FFEM), WCS is offering Two (2) research grants to eligible Ugandan nationals pursuing a masters of Science, Masters in public policy and PhD and planning to undertake research in the specified priority areas namely

- a) Assess the methodologies and metrics, costs and benefits of applying the mitigation hierarchy toward achieving the No Net Loss to biodiversity, ecosystems and society benefits
- b) Assess the conditions and systems needed for the government of Uganda to achieve a No Net Policy
- c) Test the methodologies and metrics developing for measuring the effectiveness of the mitigation measures of a selected project in any of these sectors namely roads, energy, agriculture and tourism.

WCS, in conjunction with the University where the postgraduate student is registered, will receive, review and approval research proposals from prospective students. WCS together with the University academic staff will then supervise and mentor the selected candidate to implement the research projects.

Eligibility conditions

The applicant must

- i) Have completed his/her first academic year
- ii) For the PhD students, provide a letter of support from your supervisor
- iii) Ready to do his/her research between **March 2022** and **March 2023**
- iv) Be between the age of 25-45 years
- v) Willing to sign a contract agreement with WCS, outlining detailed obligations and responsibilities
- vi) Ugandan national

Other requirements

- 1) A bachelor's degree in natural resource management, biological sciences, social sciences, or related field from a recognized university;
- 2) Demonstrated strength in biological / or social-economic research skills
- 3) Ability and willingness to work under pressure;
- 4) Willingness to work in remote, rural areas

Selection Criteria

Target group: The research fund targets MSc, MA and PhD students. Applicants must have completed their coursework with satisfactory grades. The grades will be ascertained through a support letter from their heads of Departments.

Subject areas and priority landscape: Priority will be given to research on effectiveness of the mitigation hierarchy, contribution to biodiversity and community livelihoods. Research that includes the use of geo-information will have an added advantage. The preferred research landscapes are Murchison-Semliki, and Greater Virunga Landscapes located in western Uganda.

Significance: The research topics must be of application to biodiversity conservation including, monitoring, planning, and management of key biodiversity landscape.

The grant will cover one year of tuition, stipend and direct research costs, dissertation writing and publication.

Applicants should send a cover letter, CV, research proposal, and names of two professional referees to the Project Manager bkyasiimire@wcs.org copy in the Country Director snampindo@wcs.org not later than March 5th 2022. Only short listed candidates will be contacted.