**Women in Healthy Sustainable Societies – East Africa**  
**Implementation:** 15 May 2014 - 15 February 2015

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## LETTER OF INQUIRY

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<th><strong>Organization Information</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization Legal Name</strong></td>
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<td>Kigezi Initiative for Women and Children Empowerment and Development Uganda</td>
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<th><strong>Project Title and Request</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Project Title:</strong> Capacity building and empowerment for women around Echuya Central Forest reserve for sustainable conservation and livelihood improvement.</td>
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**Project Location** – Define the geographic location (including country, region, site, village(s), etc.) where project activities will take place. The site is called Echuya Forest Reserve located at 1° 17.00 South 29° 49.00 East. This is found in the South western part of Uganda. ECFR is two districts of Kisoro and Kabale districts in eight parishes adjacent to ECFR. In Kabale district, there are two sub-counties of Muko and Bufundi that have five parishes of Karengyere, Ikamiro, Kacerere, Kishanje and Kashasha while Kisoro district, there are two sub-counties of Kanaba and Murora that have three parishes of Chibumba, Kagezi, Muhindura.

With funding from Conservation International through BirdLife International, the project will operate in Kabale district and in two Sub Counties of Muko and Bufundi. In Muko, the project will work in one parish of Ikamiro while in Bufundi; the project will operate in two parishes of Kacerere and Kashasha. KIWOCEDU intends to roll out to more forest adjacent communities around ECFR and the entire Kigezi region in future as its capacity and resource base grows.

According to 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census, Bufundi sub county has a total population of 31,128 with 13992 and 17,136 being males and females respectively while Muko Sub county has a total population of 38,200 with 17,712 and 20,488 being males and females respectively. KIWOCEDU targets only Echuya Central Forest adjacent communities and in only three parishes of Kashasha, Kacerere and Ikamiro and currently, the CBO works with a total of 939 women who are in different women groups. Out of these, a total of 340 are members of Collaborative Forest Management of ECFR and only four are on CFM leadership committee; 58 are handcraft makers, 137 are mushroom growers; and 202 are fruit growers. The current level of recognition and support for women from different stakeholders in sustainable conservation and development programs is still lower compared to that of men and this is due to many reasons like low self esteem and confidence amongst women, negative community attitudes towards women, lack of capacity and exposure and other social and economic barriers among others. This information will be used as baseline data during the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

The time and amount allocated for the project is not much and therefore, out of a total of 939 women working with the CBO, the project targets to support a total of 485 women: -90 women in fruit growing;
30 women in mushroom growing; 25 women in handcraft making; 340 in CFM activities where only 04 who are already representatives on CFM leadership committees will further be facilitated to participate and advocate for women empowerment issues in different decision making and management processes with National Forestry Authority and other partners on forest management and community at different fora. While these are target direct beneficiaries, activities like awareness creation events like meetings and radio talk shows on gender and conservation will target the whole population in the project area and even beyond in order to create a wave of change amongst many people, different stakeholders on issues of women empowerment and conservation.

*If this is a site-based project, please indicate within which Eastern Afromontane Key Biodiversity Area the project is located (see list above).*

Echuya Central Forest Reserve is a Terrestrial Key Biodiversity Area located in two districts of Kabale and Kisoro, South Western Uganda.

**Compatibility with Priority Areas** – which of the priority areas does your project most closely address?
- ✓ Community based capacity building, community education and awareness
- □ Policy-level decision making
- ✓ Information sharing and networking
- □ Research

*(you may tick more than one)*

**Linking to Existing/Ongoing Environmental Activities** – Explain what existing or ongoing environmental activities this project will contribute to: Forest Adjacent Communities now have an opportunity to take advantage of the Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) legislation that allows them to take formal management responsibility for forest resources in Echuya central forest reserve. Such CFM arrangement has potentially provided significant forest-related benefits to communities and is potentially contributing to reducing poverty. With the support of Birdlife International, KIWOCEDU will consolidate the CFM process at ECFR, enabling both the NFA and FACs to fulfil their long-term obligations under the CFM agreements with more gender mainstreaming and women empowerment approaches. Environmental activities will include environmental education, community awareness creation on conservation and gender issues, trainings and support in income generating activities and information dissemination. This would increase the benefits the FACs receive and include more women in the CFM process and associated development activities, ensuring that gender equality is improved while ensuring the ecological integrity of the forest in the long term.

**Proposal**

The proposal is meant to provide us with an overview of the project concept. It is typically 2-3 pages in length, and must include at least the following information:

**Project Rationale** – Describe the problem you aim to address, and why it is important (why has your organization identified gender or women’s empowerment as a priority?) Who identified the problem, and how? Describe previous work you (or others) have already implemented / are already implementing in the context of the proposed project

**Who identified the problem and how?** Zeneb Musiimire, a staff member (community development Officer) of NatureUganda-Echuya forest conservation Project since 2005 to date has spearheaded community development and collaborative forest management activities in the area and shared with project partners about the gender gaps and needs in conservation and livelihood improvement activities.
She catalyzed a series of consultative, participatory meetings with relevant stakeholders from the local community to national level [including regional and national government] which culminated in identifying the objectives for gender equality and women empowerment. A follow up community meeting with leadership of four sub counties around ECFR and of the four CFM groups around Echuya was held in January 2012 to review CFM performance challenges around ECFR. Gender inequality and poor participation and involvement of women emerged as one of the most bottlenecks to effective CFM implementation at ECFR. The output of this meeting was the formation of KIWOCEDU which is promoting gender equality and women empowerment in conservation and livelihood improvement initiatives with the assistance of NatureUganda and other project partners.

**Previous work you (or others) have already implemented / are already implementing in the context of the proposed project**

Since 2004, NatureUganda with support from RSPB and BirdLife International and funding from GEF/UNDP and currently from DANIDA through DOF has been implementing a programme that integrates empowerment of local communities to claim the rights to manage natural resources under CFM arrangements. The project has also assisted the FACs in developing non forest-derived income-generating activities. The number of people involved in these activities is steadily increasing, as are the benefits accruing to FACs.

With KIWOCEDU, there has been specific gender mainstreaming and women empowerment programmes aimed at improving CFM implementations process at ECFR while enabling both the NFA and FACs to fulfil gender equality obligations under the new CFM agreements. This has increased the participation and involvement of women in natural resource management processes while increasing benefits both men and women receive in the CFM process and associated development activities, ensuring that the ecological integrity of the forest is improved in the long term. KIWOCEDU believes in providing predictable long-term financial support, exchange of expertise, training and technical support in all areas of women empowerment and as such it has been involved in a number of interventions including community mobilization for conservation and economic development programs, enhancing women’s full and effective participation, representation, and information sharing at all levels; hosting behavioral change events to bring men and women together to discuss gender issues; lobbying and advocacy; awareness creation on gender issues and conservation; capacity building and promotion of conservation and income generating activities for women inside and outside ECFR, promotion of cross cutting issues like health, HIV/AIDs, sanitation and hygiene

**Project Approach** – Describe the proposed strategy and actions of your project. Include the Objectives, Expected results and Activities of the project and any potential risks you may face in implementing this plan. Be sure to clearly explain how the project will address gender or women’s empowerment in an environmental context (no more than 500 words)

**Goal:** Gender equality embraced in its fullest application to both sexes in sustainable conservation and development programs.

**Objective 1:** To increase the capacity of women to manage Natural Resource Management projects and to participate in CFM implementation processes and livelihood approaches at different levels.

**Objective 2:** To increase awareness and knowledge of different practitioners, organizations and Local Governments on gender equality and its contribution to sustainable conservation of Natural Resources.
**Outputs and main activities to achieve each output**

**Output 1:** Increased incomes and benefits of women through sustainable activities inside and outside ECFR for improved livelihoods and long term conservation of natural resources. We will work with existing CFM Associations to increase women’ income from current income generating activities like mushroom growing, handicraft and fruit growing; conduct capacity building in different income generating activities; and also support women participation and involvement in decision making and planning processes on natural resource management.

**Output 2:** Shared knowledge on gender equality and sustainable conservation of ECFR increased. Activities will include capacity building, radio talk shows and community awareness raising meetings on ecological values of natural resources and gender issues at all levels of society targeting existing structures; dissemination of gender desegregated data and project reports. We will encourage local government to mainstream gender issues and the natural resource management processes in their development plans.

The most important risks of the project are that the key stakeholders, target group, CFM Associations, and NFA continue to collaborate well, and that the government of Uganda continues to promote and implement the policy of Collaborative Forest Management and gender mainstreaming policy.

**Project Partners / Stakeholders** – List any partners to be directly involved in implementing this project as well as important stakeholders and how you have involved them in your planning.

Important stakeholders are the Four CFM Associations (Bufundi Echuya Conservation and Livelihood Improvement Association-BELCA, Kanaba Development and Echuya Forest Conservation Association-KADECA, Muko Echuya Conservation and Development Association-MECDCA and Murora Echuya Forest Conservation and Poverty Eradication Association-MEFCPAA) at ECFR; Sub county and Local Councils in four sub counties around ECFR; Kisoro and Kabale District Local Governments-Department of Community Development and Natural Resource Management; NatureUganda and Kigezi Health Care Foundation (KIHEFO)

KIWOCEDU being one of NatureUganda’s site support organizations around ECFR, Nature Uganda will have overall responsibility for project management, monitoring and reporting as part of its approaches to capacity building and institutional development of target beneficiaries to manage long-term natural resource management projects. More specifically, NatureUganda will:

- assist in monitoring and evaluation of project progress
- provide training, support and technical advice to KIWOCEDU beneficiaries

All these key stakeholders have been involved in the development of this project over the two years and are integral to the project’s implementation. These will still be deeply involved at all stages of project cycle-planning implementation, monitoring and information sharing. KIWOCEDU will enter into formal agreements with the key partners regarding the implementation of the project. These agreements will specify the responsibilities of each organization and the ways in which these responsibilities are to be discharged.

**Long-term Sustainability/Replicability** – Describe how the project activities or results will enhance existing or longer-term environmental and development efforts

Sustainability is an integrated part of the project design. The project will apply a combined strategy of capacity building, empowerment and support to concrete activities in sustainable forest resource
utilization and livelihood options working through existing CFM Associations, Local Government structures, NGOs and the National Forest Authority (NFA) and other relevant government institutions will be involved in addressing obstacles to gender equality, women empowerment and sustainable conservation. This will ensure local takeover by KIWOCEDU exit.

Furthermore, the project aims to ensure replication of activities elsewhere through enshrinement into policy and practice and through the advocacy and community development and conservation activities of the lead partner, KIWOCEDU.