



**FUNDING REQUEST FOR THE REHABILITATION/REFURBISHMENT OF TIWAI
ISLAND TOURIST/VISITOR CENTER FACILITIES**

October 2015

A. Background and Overview

In 1989, Tiwai Island was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Paramount Chiefs from both Koya and Barri Chiefdoms vowed to uphold the protected status of the island. However civil war broke out in 1991, and plans that were to be put in place (management plan, development of ecotourism products, extension of the protected area to other islands in the area) were quashed. In 2000, the Environmental Foundation for Africa, visited the island and following a year of discussions with the local authorities, secured funds from the US based Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) to undertake reconstruction of the facilities and re-establish the integrity and conservation value of the Island. At the time poaching and artisanal mining were rampant, and harvesting of timber had just begun.

Over the years, Tiwai has become a pioneering and prime eco-tourism destination in Sierra Leone, combining tourism, biological research, community development and nature conservation. The Island is richly populated with a variety of animal and plant life making it attractive for tourist and researchers alike. It houses the **second highest concentration of primates in the world**, including rare and endangered species such as the West African Chimpanzee and ten other primates. The rare and elusive pigmy Hippopotamus is also resident.

B. Statement of Problem/Justification

On the 2nd October 2015, Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary and surrounding areas were hit by a massive **Tornado/Storm**. The intensity of the storm led to the uprooting of several trees on the island, including on a number of the structures. As a result there was extensive and serious damage to all the facilities at the Tiwai tourist / visitor centre, particularly the main reception and meeting hall, tent platforms, kitchen, electrical wirings, plumbing and other utilities. Please see attached pictures.

This latest incident took place at a time, when EFA and the Tiwai Communities were preparing the site for the resumption of tourism activities on the Island, after nearly 18 months of suspension of tourism activities on the island due to the Ebola crisis. This means that the Tiwai communities have not received any revenues from tourism in more than a year, while EFA has been subsidizing the Island, through financing staff salaries and maintenance of the site.

In view of the above and in consideration of the fact that, the tourist season starts from October to May, there is now an urgent need to cut off the giant trees, clear the debris and embark on rehabilitation and refurbishment of the facilities; so that the island starts hosting tourists/visitors by the Christmas period. Attracting tourists and researchers to Tiwai, at this critical time, will certainly provide a boost to the local economy by generating much needed income and creating employment opportunities for host community members.

Over the past years, annual income from research and tourism related activities, while relatively modest, has helped to pay salaries of local staff and maintain the facilities, as well as contribute to a number of community projects implemented by the local people and overseen by their local authorities. So far, every one of the eight host villages has benefitted from at least one public facility, including a four-classroom primary school, water wells, community latrines, guesthouses and public meeting halls. Community members from both chiefdoms have also played a key role in maintaining the island – annual brushing of trails, cleaning, cooking, hosting of guests, serving as forest guides for visitors and assistants to researchers. All of these have helped to provide some income for community members, in addition to revenue generated from the supply of local materials and labor charges for manual work on the island. By providing development and employment opportunities, there is now an established understanding in the hosting communities that protecting Tiwai Island will continue to directly benefit local communities now and in the future.

C. Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of the funding is to refurbish/rehabilitate facilities at the visitor's center on Tiwai Island, thereby revamping ecotourism activities and promoting forest protection and biodiversity conservation.

Specific Objectives are:

1. Reconstruction/rehabilitation of one (1) meeting hall (baffa)
2. Reconstruction/rehabilitation of five (5) tent platforms
3. Reconstruction/rehabilitation of one (1) Kitchen
4. Maintenance of plumbing of flush toilets and showers
5. Acquisition of water pumping and power generation equipment
6. Acquisition of basic camping furniture and sleeping tents

D. Expected Outcomes:

All destroyed structures rebuilt at the Tourist / Visitor Centre, of the Tiwai island Wildlife Sanctuary, and equipped to host tourists on the island from mid December 2015.

Fully functioning utilities, including electricity supply and piped water available by the time of reopening of the Centre.

For more information about the budget estimates call +232 76 684 832 or +232 77 812 798
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