Proposal to the African Elephant Fund

1.1 Country: Mali, West Africa

1.2 Project Title:
Strengthening law enforcement capacity in close collaboration with local communities to protect the Gourma elephants

1.3 Project Location: the Gourma region of Mali , West Africa

1.4 Overall Project Cost: USD 776,950
      AMOUNT Requested from African Elephant Fund: USD 110,950

1.5 Project Duration: 6-12 months (starting as soon as funds are received, with the vast majority of activities and expenditure in the first 6 months)

1.6 Project Proponents:
      Direction Nationale des Eaux et Forets and
      The Mali Elephant Project of the WILD Foundation and the International Conservation Fund of Canada)

1.7 Name of Project Supervisors:
      Soumana Timbo, Directeur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forets
      Dr. Susan M. Canney, Director of the Mali Elephant Project

1.8 Address of Project Supervisors:

      Direction National des Eaux et Forets, BP 275, Bamako, Mali
      Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PS, UK

1.9 Telephone Numbers:
      +223 66726100 (Soumana Timbo)
      +44 1865 271269 or +44 779 664 6604 (Susan Canney)

1.10 Email: timbosat@yahoo.fr
              susan.canney@zoo.ox.ac.uk

1.11 Fax: none
1.12 Date proposal submitted: 3 January 2016

2.0 Project Summary: (not more than 250 words)

The migratory elephants of Mali and Burkina Faso (12% of the West African population) have experienced a severe escalation in poaching in recent months due to their targeting by external international trafficking networks (see Figure 1). The border region between the two countries is particularly vulnerable and is in urgent need of law enforcement support.


MAP 1 Brown - positions of 12 elephants over a period of 18 months. Blue line - River Niger

This project will provide law enforcement capacity in the Gourma region (see maps), by enabling the deployment of a new anti-poaching force of 50 government rangers to patrol this vast sub-desert region (40,000km^2), pursue poachers and conduct anti-poaching investigations. These new armed rangers have just completed their military training but require equipment and the means of displacement to enable them to function in this insecure zone.

This project will also facilitate the close liaison of rangers with local communities. More than 600 men from local communities in both Burkina Faso and Mali have already been trained as "vigilance brigades". These patrol the elephant range to detect poaching incidents, suspicious activity, and gather the vital intelligence on perpetrators required by law enforcement, but the lack of armed enforcement means this information cannot be acted upon. Prior to the escalation of elephant poaching in 2014 these measures were largely sufficient, but the recent escalation in poaching urgently necessitates stronger, regular armed enforcement capacity.

Past experience suggests that increased government presence improves local security and greatly reduces poaching.
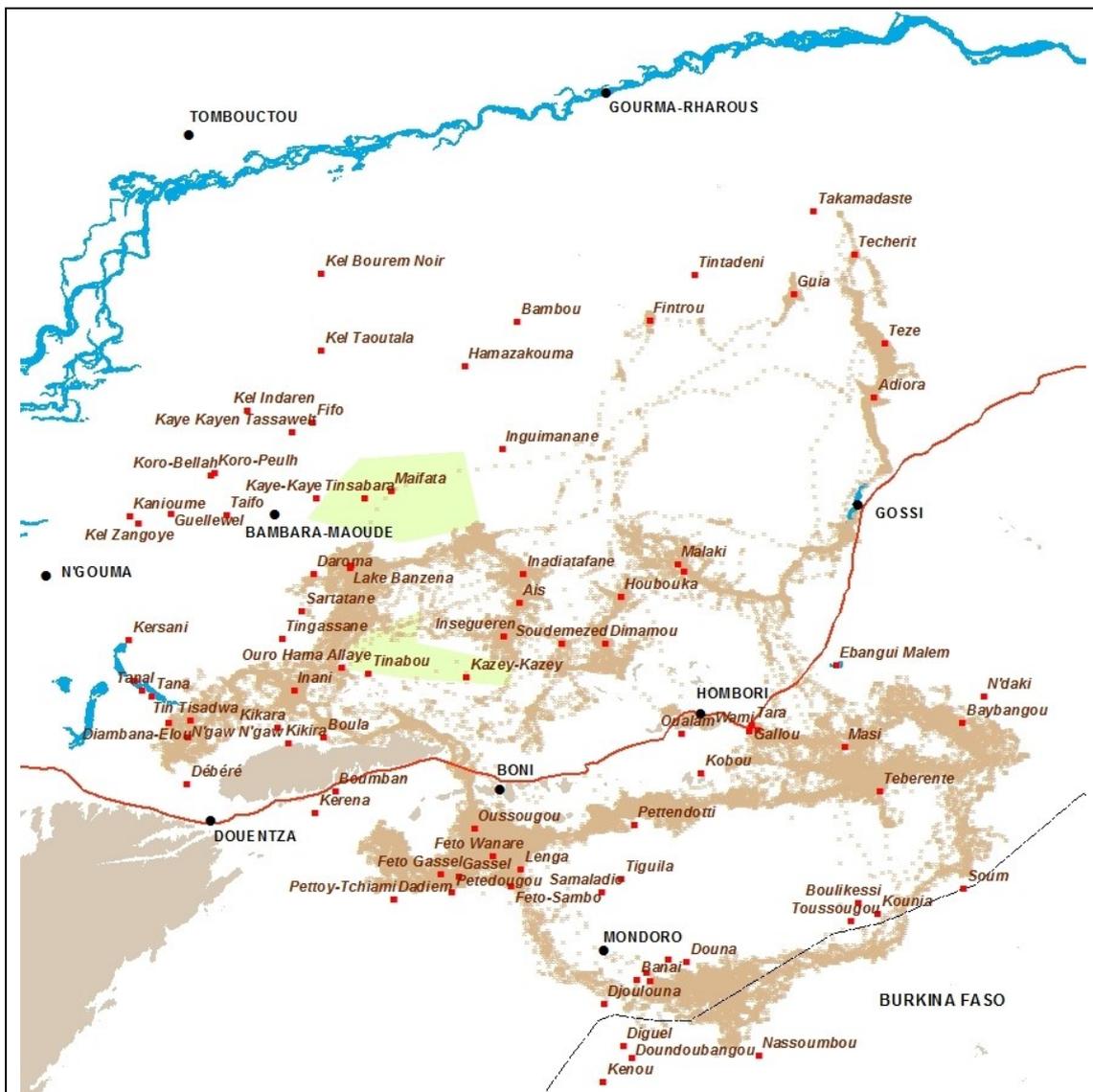
MAP 2 showing the elephant range (in brown) in relation to the Mali-Burkina Faso border and the communities which are currently actively involved in the vigilance brigade network.

Finally, the project will strengthen transboundary cooperation by closely liaising with law enforcement personnel and local people on the Burkina Faso side of the Gourma. In summary it therefore strongly contributes to implementing the African Elephant Fund, CITES and CMS in synergy.

3.0 Which Priority Objectives and Activities (there may be more than one) in the African Elephant Action Plan does this project fall under? (For ease of reference, Priority Objectives are attached under Appendix 1)

This project proposal forms part of a larger initiative, which addresses all priority objectives of the African Elephant Action Plan in synergy, having begun with a particular emphasis on objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5.

This particular project places strong emphasis on:

1) **Priority Objective 1**: Reduce illegal killing of elephants and illegal trade in elephant products
2) **Priority Objective 7**: Improved local communities cooperation and collaboration on African elephant conservation

This project further makes a smaller contribution to:
3) **Priority objective 6**: strengthening cooperation and understanding among range states

---

4.0 Project Rationale – why is this project necessary and urgent? What threats face this elephant population (give, for example, what information you have regarding population details, trends in population (downward or upward), ivory seizure information, details about levels of poaching, human/elephant conflict, etc.).

The biggest threat to the Mali elephants today in the post-conflict period is the residual insecurity. This occurs against a background of the rising price and escalation in demand for ivory that has caused rebel and international trafficking groups to turn to "blood ivory" to fund their activities. Until mid-2014 the situation was still under control, but since then poaching incidences have increased dramatically (Figure 1).
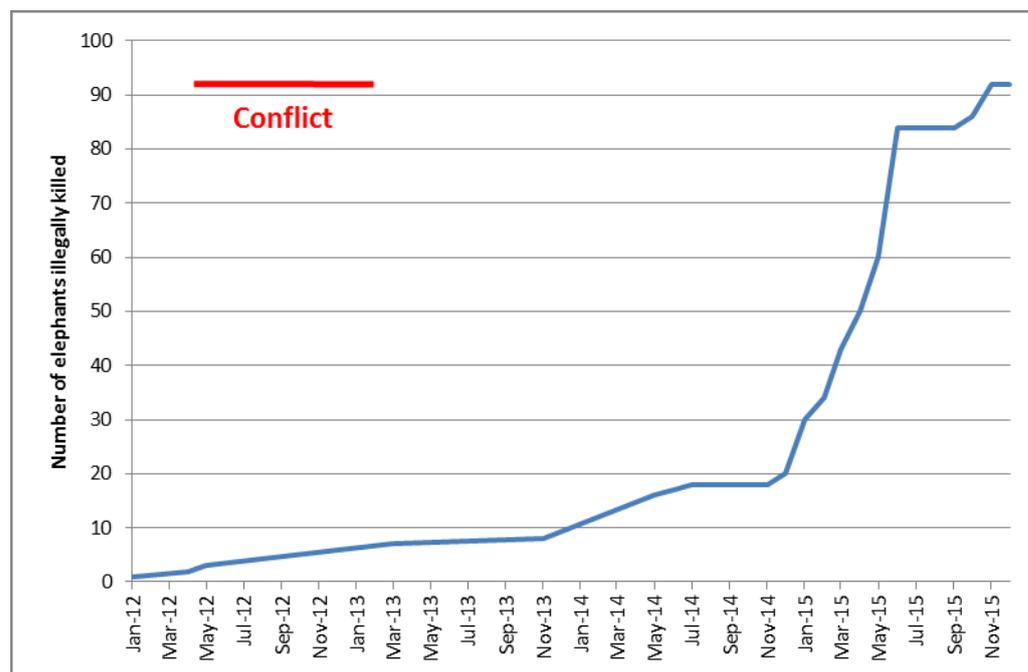
Figure 1: Rise in the number of elephants illegally killed in the Gourma population since the first poaching incident in 2012. Source: Mali Elephant Project. Total population size is estimated at around 400 animals.

Figure 1 illustrates the rapid increase in the illegal killing of elephants in Mali during recent months. The cause of this increase is thought to be the aggressive targeting of the elephant population by external trafficking networks which are pursuing local people to act as accomplices.

Prior to 2012 poaching of the migratory elephants of Burkina Faso and Mali was virtually unheard of, however the return of heavily armed Tuareg mercenaries from Libya reignited the Tuareg rebellion. The first elephant was killed for ivory in January 2012 and the Mali Elephant Project (MEP) funded an immediate mission undertaken by the Direction National des Eaux et Forets (DNEF) throughout the elephant range to raise awareness among the population, in addition to gathering information to find the perpetrators.

This was followed by a coup in March 2012, the overnight retreat of government to Bamako, lawlessness and the occupation of the elephant range by jihadist and rebel armed groups.

To cope with this new phenomenon the MEP extended its work with local communities in resolving human-elephant conflict through community natural resource management, to include elephant protection. Detecting elephant poaching and gathering intelligence about perpetrators were added to the activities of community "brigades de surveillance" who had originally been created to protect natural resources. Community elders established the social sanction proclaiming to everyone (including the leaders of the armed groups) that anyone who killed elephants was stealing from local community and therefore a thief. It continued its work throughout the conflict, the only project/programme to do so.

Since then (unarmed) community "vigilance brigade" networks have been built up throughout the region. To date more than 600 people from local communities in the elephant range have been trained and patrol the transboundary region. These groups also assist with managing habitats and work in conjunction with government rangers (through building fire-breaks and patrolling to enforce local community resource management laws that prevent over-exploitation thereby supporting local livelihoods, providing additional income and resolving human-elephant conflict). Crucially for elephant protection, they provide a vital information network for the government rangers and agencies. Close cooperation with communities and those agencies responsible for managing elephants in Burkina Faso has been strengthened in recent years. A workshop in spring 2015 brought together the government agencies and local vigilance networks on either side of the border to establish transboundary co-ordination.

However, the community-based measures are not sufficient to keep elephant poaching under control, and armed enforcement is required, particularly as without enforcement, local informants fear retribution assassinations.

Experience suggests that regular, armed presence deters the local collaboration that the international trafficking networks rely on, and also improves general security. Armed presence has already worked successfully in conjunction with the community-based information provided by the "Brigades de Surveillance" in apprehending bandits and poachers. The Malian military has undertaken sporadic anti-poaching missions, including an aerial and ground mission in May 2014, acting on information from the vigilance brigades. This mission arrested four poachers, one ring leader and identified the trafficker, who immediately fled to Libya with his family. After this mission only 2 elephants were poached over

the next 8 months. A dramatic escalation in the first half of 2015 was associated with the re-deployment of the military to deal with unrest elsewhere in the country associated with the signature of the Peace Accord between the Government and Tuareg rebels.

The government and MEP worked together to enable military patrols to contain the poaching while the 50 newly-recruited government rangers were completing their military training. These reduced bandit activity and poaching, but due to lack of local knowledge were limited in their ability to pursue the poachers and conduct investigations.

The new rangers received their diplomas at a ceremony attended by the Heads of Mali's Armed Forces and are now at Douentza, ready to be deployed to the existing forester post plus 5 of the 10 new ranger posts created in the Gourma in 2014. It is urgent that they are operational as soon as possible.

As the security situation improves they will be able to occupy all 10 posts, but initially they will work with the Malian military and the local brigades; and communicate through a state-of-the-art radio-communications system that is currently being installed. It is therefore essential that they have the ability to be able to displace to do their work of undertaking patrols, pursuits and investigations. Foot patrols are not an option in this vast, dangerous area. It is also essential that their military training is supplemented with anti-poaching training.

It is clear that the Malian military can play a role in temporarily reducing poaching, however they cannot be relied upon for continued support. In the long-term the best option is to create a highly capable and motivated team of trained governmental rangers that are well-equipped to patrol the vast range of the iconic desert elephants of Mali and Burkina Faso and their unique migration. Together the DNEF and the MEP have been building an anti-ivory poaching response from scratch over the past two years, and have a basis on which to operate, but still require additional means to operate and training in dealing with ivory poaching.

The large elephant range requires law enforcement personnel to be well-equipped, especially in terms of transport, and trained. The delivery of anti-ivory poaching training to 50 rangers is challenging given (a) the security situation (b) that many of the best rangers in the field are illiterate and/or don't speak French (c) that Mali has little prior experience of ivory poaching. For this reason the proposal requests funds for "learning-by-doing" training visits.

The extreme escalation of that threat in 2015 makes the situation particularly urgent.

Mali's innovative approach to human-elephant co-existence involves elephant conservation bringing local benefits, supporting livelihoods and generating income. It also promotes many types of security, reverses habitat degradation, generates social cohesion, reduces youth unemployment and combats radicalisation, thereby promoting social and environmental resilience. Securing

these elephants not only protects an iconic elephant population but it also protects an important model of elephant conservation over large populated areas.

GEF funding has been secured to support anti-poaching and community resource management in the Gourma, however this will not become available until 2017, and the elephants need to be kept alive until then.

5.0 Detailed Proposal – including activities to be carried out, milestones (at least quarterly milestones), timelines, equipment to be purchased, reporting procedures, etc. (not more than 1000 words). It will be helpful in evaluating this Project Proposal if you to divide it into Phases such as Planning; Procurement; Implementation; Evaluation and Reporting

Should include anticipated benefits (including benefits to the conservation and management of elephant populations and communities) and outputs from the project, and how the project will be monitored and evaluated.

Planning and Procurement
As soon as funds are available, the Mali Elephant Project (MEP) will buy the motorbikes and equipment, and organise the training programme.

Implementation – January 2016 onwards

> The DNEF will conduct two big tours through the elephant range to meet with the local people to introduce the new ranger force, explaining their role, how the rangers will help improve local security as well as protect the elephants, and to request the co-operation of the local community. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the interconnected nature of the problems facing the Gourma and how reconciliation, security, local well-being and elephant conservation are inter-linked. This will counter any mis-information and rumour purposely put out by traffickers, poachers and bandits to discourage local co-operation and encourage recruitment into their ranks.

Each tour will be led by the Chef de Cantonnement des Eaux et Forets for the Cercles of Gourma-Rharous and Douentza, and accompanied by two foresters and 3 brigade members to help cement government-community co-operation.

> The new rangers will be deployed to the 6 posts as soon as the means of displacement are secured. One vehicle will be responsible for patrolling and the other with the Head of Anti-poaching operations, ready for immediate deployment. If the IWT R2 grant is successful an additional vehicle will be deployed to support patrols. The other ranger posts will be equipped with 5 motorbikes each. This application requests motorbikes for two of the posts and the IWT R2 application for the other post.

> The new rangers will undertake regular patrols with a military escort for the first few months until the security situation improves and they become more confident/competent

> The DNEF and MEP will provide preliminary anti-poaching training, introducing the whole process; the elephants, the elephant range, the nature of the problem and terrain assessment; communications and tactics; CSI reporting; conducting investigations, and working together with community brigades, so that the rangers are prepared to get the most out of the learning visits.

> Learning visits will be organized to Niokolokoba National Park in Senegal for 25 of the rangers and to Nazinga Private Game Ranch in Burkina Faso for the other 25 rangers. Both of these fight poaching and the rangers would be able to see anti-poaching operations in action and then report back to the other half as a basis for understanding their own situation and operations. Some of the best new rangers are barely literate and many don't speak French, making direct "learning-through-doing" with anti-poaching units familiar with the situations, procedures and tactics required, the most appropriate form of training in the first instance. It will also build rapport and morale. It would be quick to organise and can be supplemented later.

> The rangers report back to each other and their experience used as a basis for training reinforcement, and its application adapted to the situation in the Gourma.

Evaluation - ongoing
Activities will be overseen by the MEP's field director and anti-poaching operations manager.

Reporting - ongoing
Completed data sheets of vehicle use and ranger activity will be submitted weekly or as close to weekly as possible, and a summary made by the MEP team. In addition the radios in the ranger vehicles and the radio-handsets have a tracking capability allowing the anti-poaching operations control room to monitor their activity.

6.0 Project Timeline – outline the timeline for proposed activities within this project. You may find it helpful to relate the timeline to the Phases identified in Section 5.0 above.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Planning & Procurement												
Purchase of motorbikes & equipment	▓											
Implementation												
DNEF tour throughout the elephant range to introduce the new APU		▓										
Deployment of rangers to posts			▓									
Patrols	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓

Activity													
Introductory anti-poaching training			░	░									
Training visits to Nazinga and Niokolokoba					░	░							
Feed-back and local adaptation of lessons learned						░							
Evaluation													
Activities will be overseen by the MEP's field director and Anti-poaching operations manager.	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░
Reporting													
Completed data sheets will be submitted weekly or as close to weekly as possible, and a summary made by MEP team	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░

BUDGET

7.0 Has this project received or been pledged any other sources of funding (external)? Give all relevant details (for example, amount, source of funds, timetable, any restrictions): Already raised $33,000 for training the 50 newly recruited rangers from the Elephant Crisis Fund $50,000 for military patrols to cover the period until the 50 newly recruited rangers have finished their training and are ready to be deployed from the Elephant Crisis Fund $170,000 for a radio-communications system and a ranger vehicle from the UK Government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund R1 $45,000 for a second ranger vehicle from the Elephant Crisis Fund. $276,000 to fund the establishment and equipment of 10 new forester posts from Warren Buffet funds channelled through the Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux, Gabon. $18,250 for DNEF to make the introductory tour to engage the local population and to train/co-ordinate brigades from the Elephant Crisis Fund. Applications pending result $73,750 from the UK Government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund R2 for a vehicle and 5 motorbikes plus running costs for a year. Wider project resolving human-elephant conflict (supports anti-poaching) $350,000 (approx) per year for community engagement for 2015-6 from a variety of organisations including the International Conservation Fund of Canada, USFWS, Tusk and CMS Approx $3 million GEF funding from 2017 for (a) extending the community resource management systems across the whole of the elephant range; and (b) supporting Mali's capacity to deal with poaching

7.1 Please provide a detailed proposed budget for this project (in US$). You may find it helpful to relate expenditure to the Phases you have set out in Section 5.0

Details included in Table annexed to the document:

See budget file

Any other budget lines:

7.2 Please specify the proponents contribution towards the project

The Malian Government's Ministry of the Environment/Direction Nationale des Eaux et Forets is committed to the conservation of this national and international heritage. Despite the crisis of 2012 and its aftermath, the DNEF has created a new ranger force of 50 rangers dedicated to the protection of the Gourma elephants. It works closely with the Mali Elephant and gives every support possible to assure the conservation of this elephant population.

WILD Foundation launched the MEP in 2003 with three years of scientific studies to understand the elephant migration and guide conservation effort. This was followed by 3 years of local community and other stakeholder engagement and outreach (including a schools education project) to build a shared vision for the elephants. Action on the ground began in 2009 in response to a crisis at Lake Banzena - the only perennial dry season water accessible to elephants – which dried prematurely due to an influx of cattle. A model of community-based resource management was developed whereby wise resource use restored habitats and made more resources available, and included the protection of the elephant migration route from human settlement, degradation and clearance by outsiders. Other communities requested help to do the same and the approach has been spread across the elephant range. This provided the basis for the response to poaching that arose with the onset of conflict as described above. The MEP was the only project/programme that continued its operations throughout the conflict.

In 2014 with support from the CMS the CBNRM/anti-poaching approach was co-ordinated with the communities and local authorities covering the part of the elephant range in Burkina Faso, thereby co-ordinating efforts across the elephant range and increasing the capacity to protect elephants in the sensitive border area. Post-conflict this area is of particular importance as its remoteness means it is a favoured haunt of bandits and fugitives from the law, as well as an easy exit route for ivory from Mali.

The project has secured GEF funding but this will not be available until 2017 at the earliest, resulting in the absence of suitable protection during a period of increasingly intense poaching activity.

Please submit the completed proposal, either by:

Email:

Fax:

You should receive acknowledgement of receipt of your proposal within 14 days. If you do not receive such an acknowledgement, please telephone:

Further details on any of the above details may be requested by the Steering Committee of the African Elephant Fund.