

Government of Nepal
Ministry of Forests and Environment
REDD Implementation Centre

**Terms of Reference (ToR) for Consultancy Services for
Revision of Buffer Zone Community Forest Operational Plans
(Budget Head 2.12.1.84)**

1. Background

Nepal is one of the leading countries in Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, sustainable management of forests and conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+), under the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). Nepal's Emission Reduction Program Document (ER-PD) has been included into the Carbon Fund portfolio of the FCPF in June 2018. Nepal is about to complete the implementation of the first phase of the REDD+ readiness supported by 2 FCPF grants. The final grant will be completed in June 2020. Among other readiness activities, improvement of the national forest inventory and monitoring system for a strong and functional Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system is one of the focused areas of the ongoing 2nd phase of REDD+ readiness. It is expected that Nepal will enter into implementation phase of the REDD+ at the latest January 2020 after negotiation and signing of the Emission Reduction Payment Agreement (ERPA) between the Government of Nepal and the World Bank in December 2019.

Nepal's Emission Reduction Program Document (ER-PD) proposes to "improve the management of existing Protected Areas (PA)" as one of the seven REDD+ interventions for the proposed Emission Reduction (ER) program in the 13 districts of the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL). Each PA consists buffer zone area around the core protected areas. This intervention will contribute to biodiversity conservation along with other non-carbon benefits in the Buffer zone areas of Protected Areas in ER program districts.

The concept of Buffer Zone management (BZ) in Protected Areas (PA) in Nepal was initiated in 1993 through the fourth amendment of the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973 and following the successful implementation of the Community Forestry Program intended to manage forest resources outside the PAs. This progressively changed the PA management policies towards more participatory and inclusive management approaches so that local people can be involved in biodiversity conservation as well as community development through sustainably managing forest resources in the periphery of the core PAs. Subsequently, the BZ Management Regulations were approved with a view to implement the BZ program and facilitate the participation of local population in the conservation, management and governance of BZ. These are chief legislations that govern the co-management of BZ between the PA administration and BZ community forests.

One of the major objectives to bring the concept of buffer zone management to Nepal was to develop a partnership between the park and the local people to integrate biodiversity conservation with the sustainable use of forest resources. In Nepal, forest resource use and the conservation of National Parks are well defined by National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1973; and



Buffer Zone Management Regulation, 1996 which state that the ownership of the land declared as Buffer Community Forests (BCF) belongs to the Government of Nepal but handing over the use and management rights to the buffer community forest user groups. Moreover, these regulations enjoined participation and empowerment of local people for the conservation, management, and use of natural resources; and intended to address the challenges of people whose livelihoods were adversely affected by the parks/ reserves. Currently, BCF are considered an additional habitat for wild animals that is viewed from the point of wildlife conservation aspect in which the programs are directed towards the conservation of wildlife while gradually supporting the local people to meet their daily basic needs of fuel wood, fodder, grasses and other forest resources.

Currently, there are about 500 Buffer Zone Community Forests (BZCF) handed over and managed under the BZ Management Regulations 1996 and now, there is a backlog of more than hundred Buffer Zone Community Forest Operational Plans that need to be revised and updated. Buffer Community Forest Operational Plans (BZ CFOPs) need to be revised as per the provisions of BZ Management Regulations 1996 and BZ Management Directives, 1999.

Buffer Zone Community Forest Operational Plans need to be revised and updated before their time expires so that there is no interruption of forest management and utilization activities BZ CFUGs would like to implement. However, they can be revised and updated anytime if BZ CFUGs want to change or include new activities. BZ CFUG cannot implement any activities which are not included in the valid operational plans.

The second REDD+ readiness grant is supporting the revision of Buffer Zone Community Forest Operational Plans for 50 BZCFs in the ER program districts. REDD IC seeks for a service provider/s who is interested in this assignment to help the Buffer Community Forest User Groups (BCFUGs) and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) to revise the operational plans of Buffer Zone Community Forest (BZCF) in the protected areas in ER-Program districts.

2. Objectives of the Assignment

The main objective of this assignment is to revise the Buffer Zone Community Forest Operational Plans for 50 BZCFs after wider consultations and robust discussions with the concerned BZCFUGs for submission to the concerned Office of the Warden for approval.

Specific objectives of the assignment include:

- Conduct a robust discussion with the concerned BZ CFUGs about various issues related to the management of BZCF; and;
- Revise the Operational Plans of different BZ CFUGs specified in the scope of the work (section 3 below) for submission to the concerned Office of Warden for approval after wider consultations with BZ CFUGs as well as the concerned Offices of the Warden following the provisions of BZ Management Regulations, 1996 and BZ Management Guidelines, 1996.

3. Scope of the work



REDD IC is seeking a qualified firm/consultant to support 50BZ CFUGs in revising their Operational Plans following the Buffer Zone Management Guidelines for submission to the concerned Offices of Warden for approval.

Under this assignment the Operational Plans of BZCF inside the BZ of Protected Areas (Chitwan, Banke and Bardia) within the ER-Program districts will be revised. The PA for carrying out this program were decided by REDD IC in consultation with Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) on the basis of following criteria:

- 1) Number of backlogged BZCFUG operational plans to be revised
- 2) Demand from the concerned User groups.
- 3) Habitat management requirement on the basis of high frequency wildlife movement.

The following tasks need to be carried out for a successful completion of this assignment:

3.1 Desk Review and analysis

- Review of recent forest and protected area management policy, strategies, acts, regulations, directives and guidelines.
- Review of Emission Reduction Program Documents (ER-PD) for the TAL;
- Principles of Sustainable Forest Management of Nepal;
- Emerging issues related to the federal structure of the country including the rights and responsibilities of the governments in forest resource management;
- Review of existing Operational Plans; and;
- Review of principles of Decent Works and issues related to the forest labor.

3.2 Consultation and discussion with the BZ CFUGs

Consultation and discussion with the BZ CFUGs about the different aspects of the Operational plans including the outcomes of the desk review and analysis (section 3.1) is very important part of the assignment.

3.3 Forest Survey and Inventory

Detail survey and sampling of the forest area should be carried out following the BZ Management Directives, 1999, National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973, Community Forestry Inventory Guidelines (revised), 2004 and also Community Forest Development Program Guideline, 2014.

3.4 Socio Economic Survey

For selected BZ CFUGs, conduct a household survey, collect gender disaggregated data, identify gender and social inclusion actions, and discuss benefit sharing plans, well-being ranking and the monitoring plan (Community Forest Development Program Guideline, 2014 and the BZ Management Directives, 1999).

3.5 Development of draft Operational Plan

Based on outcomes of the desk review, consultations and survey of the forest area, draft Operational Plans should be developed as per National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, 2029, BZ Management Regulations, 2052, Regulation of Concerned Protected Areas and Buffer zone Management Directives, 2056.

3.6 Sharing the draft Operational Plans with BZ CFUGs and Warden Offices

When drafts of BZ CFOPs are ready, they should be shared with the concerned BZ CFUGs, technical committee, and the respective Protected Area Offices for comments, inputs and feedbacks.

3.7 Finalization and validation of the BZ CFOPs

BZ CFOPs should be finalized incorporating all the comments, inputs and feedbacks from the BZ CFUGs, technical committee and Warden Offices. Thereafter, the concerned BZ CFUG will validate the plan from their general assemblies and submit them to respective protected areas offices for approval.

4. Expected outcomes and deliverables

4.1 Inception report with detail action plan and timeframe

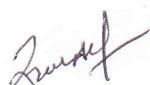
Inception report with detail action plan and timeframe as well as methodology shall be submitted within the one week of signing of the contract for the assignment. This should be presented at the inception workshop. After incorporating all the feedbacks, suggestions and inputs from the participants of the workshop, the inception report must be finalized and submitted to the REDD IC within the one week of the inception workshop. The selected firm and REDD IC will agree on the specific activities and accordingly detailed plan of action and deliverables. The work plan should be developed in close collaboration with REDD IC.

4.2. Revised operational plans

The consulting firm should prepare revised BZ CFOPs in close consultation with concerned protected area office and BZ CFUGs. The technical committee formed for this assignment will oversee the assignment. The committee will make field visits as needed for monitoring progress and quality. The Team Leader will report to the technical committee. The technical committee will report the progress status to the Director General of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and Chief of REDD IC. Four hard copies of revised Work Plans (Operational Plans) in standard format prescribed by the BZ Management Guidelines of all the BZ CFUGs need to be submitted to the BZ CFUGs along with the digital copy as well. The firm will report to the respective protected areas office about the submission of the BZ CFOPs to the BZ CFUGs along with the digital copies. A final digital copy of each BZ CFOP will be submitted to REDD IC.

4.3 Completion Report

The firm will submit to REDD IC a completion report for the assignment along with the digital copies of the BZ CFOPs. The firm will also submit a recommendation letter from the relevant protected areas office confirming the submission of the revised BCFOPs to REDD IC.



5. Team composition and qualification of the firm and experts

5.1 Qualification of the firms

Firms legally registered within the concerned authorities with clear mission, vision and objectives and registered in national VAT system are eligible to apply. The firms should have relevant work experience in forestry, SFM, REDD+ and /or related field in Nepal. The firm must have registered for at least three years with valid registration, Tax/VAT clearance, demonstrated annual transaction, audit and renewal.

5.2 Composition and qualification of the team members

The team of experts leading by a Forestry Expert will provide the consulting services for this assignment. Other members of the team include a GESI expert and crew members. Qualification and roles and responsibilities of each of the team members are as following:

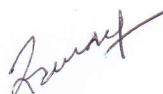
Team Leader cum Forestry Expert: The team Leader cum forestry expert, in close coordination with and under the guidance of the technical committee formed to oversee this assignment at the REDD IC will lead the team for this assignment. Specific roles and responsibilities of the team leader include:

- Review and analyze related policies, measures, working documents, guidelines and forest operational plans/ BufferCommunity Forest Operational Plan and develop a firm foundation for the assignment;
- Develop a plan of actions for successful completion of the assignment;
- Coordinate the team and make sure that all the experts are preparing corresponding reports and harmonizing the efforts;
- Coordinate consultation meetings with the technical committee and other senior officials from both REDD IC and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation;
- Prepare draft Buffer zone Community Forest Operational Plan in coordination of other team members;
- Finalize the plans and validated from concerned Authorities, e.g. BZ CFUG Assembly and respective Warden Offices; and;
- Prepare and submit a work completion report for the assignment to REDD IC.

Required qualification:

The team leader must be a Nepali national and have strong knowledge on community based forest management process in Nepal. He/she should have minimum qualification and experiences as below:

- Hold at least a graduate degree in forestry;
- Have at least 5 years of working experience in forestry – preparing forest management/operational plans/BufferZone Community Forest Operational Plan/Community Forest Operational Plan;
- Demonstrate technical capacity, including analytical skills and proven track record in preparing forest management/operational plans;
- Sound knowledge on current forestry sector policies and institutions; and;
- Command in writing, facilitation and communication skills are essentials.
- Knowledge in GIS mapping.



- Should have prior proven engagement in such operational plan.

Gender and Social Inclusion Expert

The Gender and Social Inclusion Expert will report to the team leader. She/he will work under the guidance of the team leader in close collaboration and consultation with the respective BZ CFUGs. She/he will specifically be responsible to:

- Access, review and analyze gender and social inclusion related policies, programs, activities in national and global context.
- Identify and integrate potential areas of gender and social inclusion issues in the Buffer Zone Community Forests Operational Plans.
- Support and sensitize the team leader and forestry assistant about GESI integration in BZ CFOPs.
- Participate in meeting with Technical Committee and REDD IC as well as consultations in selective BZ CFUGs and guide the team for addressing the issues raised by the GESI interest groups in BZ CFOPs.

Required qualification: The Gender cum Social Inclusion Expert should possess the following qualification and experiences:

- Hold at least a Bachelor's degree in Forestry, Social Sciences, Sociology, Gender, Women Studies, Development Studies, Conflict Management, or relevant disciplines.
- Proven skills and experiences in dealing with gender related issues particularly in forestry sector.
- Should have at least five years of working experience in community development or rural development, familiarize with gender, social and cultural issues and local reality.
- Possess strong knowledge of user rights, customary rights and traditional practices in Forestry.
- **Woman candidate is highly desirable for this position.**

Crew Members:

- Must be a Nepali national and have strong knowledge on community-based forest management process in Nepal;
- Should hold at least certificate level in forestry or equivalent;
- Women and Disadvantaged groups highly encouraged

6. Selection Process and Criteria

Selection process of the qualified firm/s will start from advertising for "Expression of Interest (EoI)". The shortlisted firms based on EoIs submitted will be requested to submit the full proposal following THE WORLD BANK Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, July 2016 Revised November 2017 and August 2018.

7. Work Schedule

The assignment is expected to complete in the last of May 2019.



8. Application Procedure

Eligible firm/consortium of the firms should submit "Expression of Interest (EoI)" with the following documents:

- Letter of EoI
- Profile of the firm
- Copy of firm registration, VAT registration and renewal certificates
- Copy of annual audit report for last three years and tax clearance certificate
- Letter from partnering firm/institution if joint venture is proposed.

The shortlisted firms will be requested to submit the full proposal along with following documents:

- Full technical proposal for the assignment in a sealed envelope. The proposal should include commitment letters from the proposed experts along with duly handwritten signed CVs;
- Detail financial proposal for the assignment in a separately sealed envelope.

Contact Information

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