

Terms of Reference for Recruitment of International Consultant (Individual/Firm)

Assignment: Ecosystem and Socio-economic Resilience Analysis and Mapping Study in High Altitude Wetlands of Bhutan.

Organization: Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN)

Duty Station: RSPN Head Office, Thimphu, Bhutan

Duration: 120 days (November 2024 - February 2025)

Type of Contract: Non-Extendable

1. Background

Bhutan is a small landlocked and net carbon-negative country. It commits to remaining carbon neutral in perpetuity to make our planet safe for both present and future generations. Due to its location in the fragile Eastern Himalayas mountainous ecosystem, Bhutan faces considerable vulnerability to climate-induced disasters such as landslides, windstorms, drought, drying of water sources, frequent forest fires, pests and diseases and Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF), among others. These climate risks pose persistent threats to crucial sectors like agriculture and livestock, energy, water, forest and biodiversity, human settlements and health, low-lying river basin areas, and ecosystems, which play significant roles in providing livelihoods and ecosystem services. In each of these critical sectors, the country also strives to maintain low-carbon and carbon-sequestering activities to remain carbon-natural. The GCF Country Work Program (CWP) has identified capacity gaps, including a need for more reliable baseline data and technical expertise on climate change. These gaps hinder Bhutan's ability to pursue sustainable development with low carbon emissions and climate resilience. To achieve these goals, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder efforts are necessary to identify baseline conditions and projected impacts of climate change.

At present, scientific observations and studies on the impacts of climate change on the environment, agriculture, and livelihoods across the eastern Himalayas for Bhutan are extremely limited. The absence of robust and quality data to establish historical baselines, future climate projections, and impact analyses inhibits Bhutan's capacity to identify its vulnerabilities to climate change, based on which to develop and implement climate investment projects to address risks and vulnerabilities accordingly. Therefore, this assignment seeks to conduct in gathering comprehensive data on climate change impact components through the Ecosystem and Socioeconomic Resilience Analysis and Mapping (ESRAM) approach. This ESRAM study encompasses understanding the current status of the mountain ecosystem and the socio-economic condition of the higher altitude communities in the face of Climate change.

2. Objectives

The objectives framed under this consultancy contribute to the improvement of Bhutan's access to climate finance through the availability and access to credible climate information and data. Following are some of the specific objectives for this assignment:

- I. Conduct an Ecosystem and Socio-economic Resilience Analysis and Mapping (ESRAM) study to understand the climate vulnerability and impact of high altitude wetland ecosystems.
- II. Outline interventions together with climate financing scope based on the ESRAM study.

3. Study Area

The ESRAM study should cover the wetland areas and the human settlements in higher altitude areas of Bhutan (Phobjikha in Wangduephodrang, Gaytsa in Bumthang, Bumdeling in Trashiyangtse, Merak and Sakteng in Trashigang, Dungkar in Lhuentse, Haala and Jula in Haa)

4. Scopes of Services

The international consultant is expected to provide high-quality service in the following areas:

- I. Based on ESRAM area mapping done by Local Consultant, design the study method, including preparation of survey questionnaires for the ESRAM study.
- II. Review the available secondary data on climate, biodiversity, socioeconomic conditions, and ecosystem valuation of the study area.
- III. Conduct a biodiversity assessment of the wetland ecosystem and identify the current state, trends and drivers of change with root causes, scenarios, and governance factors.
- IV. Identify ecosystem services through a socio-economic survey and map key ecosystems and related ecosystem services.
- V. Identify and map critical high altitude wetlands and undertake economic valuation
- VI. Conduct climate vulnerability and impact assessment and interconnectivity among climate resilience, biodiversity and socio-economic situation of the study area.
- VII. Recommend solutions including nature based solutions to strengthen the resilience of key ecosystem services and mitigate the climate vulnerability of the local communities in the study area.
- VIII. Recommend interventions and climate financing scope for the study area with fund requirement breakdown.
- IX. Develop draft concept notes on implementing the interventions in the study area.

5. Key Deliverables

- I. Report -Inception report within two weeks of signing the contract agreement, detailing study area, approach, clear logical framework, outputs, organizations and individuals to be consulted with timeline.
- II. Conduct Workshops consulting relevant stakeholders of at least 20 participants in validating the study method and scope of work. Submit the report documenting a record of the discussion, findings and list of stakeholders consulted and participants' names (disaggregated by gender).
- III. Technical Report – Under One package include the following:
-Biodiversity assessment and findings,

- Socio-economic assessment and findings,
 - Ecosystem Service Valuation and findings,
 - Climate change vulnerability and impact assessment and findings,
 - Interconnectedness among socio-economic, biodiversity and climate change,
 - Recommend intervention with financing details and funding opportunities.
- IV. Concept Note - One draft concept note with a funding scale within USD 10 million.

6. Institutional Arrangements

The consultant will work under the supervision and support of the Department of Program and Climate Change Coordination(DPCCC) of RSPN. All the administrative and financial work will be governed by Service Rules and Regulation (RSPN) under the Administration and Finance Division of RSPN. Wherever necessary, guidance will be also sought from the RSPN Management. The work progress monitoring will be monitored by the DPCCC. The office of the International Consultant shall be based in RSPN Office, Thimphu.

The International consultant shall work closely with local consultant in terms of coordinating with stakeholders, organizing meetings and workshops, field visits, preparing reports.

7. Required Skills and Competencies

- I. Qualification:
- Minimum Master's degree in Biodiversity, Water Management, Wetland Management, Climate Change, Natural Resource Management, Environment Management, Environmental Economics, or any other relevant specialized area.
- II. Work experience:
- Minimum of 10 years of professional experience of which five years of experience in work related to wetland assessment, climate change, Ecosystem valuation, Environmental Economics, etc.
 - Minimum of three years' experience in consultancy services.
 - A similar kind of work experience undertaken earlier will be given more preference; Expertise in Socio-economic (including culture and tradition expert) assessment and valuation, Natural resources management and ecosystem service, and Climate change; Experience in undertaking natural resources and ecosystem service assessments, economic valuation, vulnerability and adaptation assessments or climate change assessment or related work in the Himalayan region.
- III. Language: Fluency in written and spoken English

8. Approach

The overall approach of this assignment is as follows:

- I. Contract signing and kick-off meeting: The methodology, timeline, staffing, and any special conditions of the contract as required by RSPN (in line with this ToR), will be discussed and a contract will be signed between the RSPN and Consultant.
- II. Inception Phase: The inception report outlining the detailed way forward of the assignment and submitted to the RSPN.
- III. ESRAM study design: Mapping the ESRAM study area, design the approach and enumerator engagement.
- IV. Consultation Workshop: Hold a consultation workshop with relevant stakeholders on the study.
- V. Field Assessment: Undertake ESRAM study including biodiversity and climate change assessment.
- VI. Data Analysis and Report Formulation: Analyze data and prepare technical reports on ESRAM and the biodiversity and climate change survey. The key findings and recommendations as discussed above will be submitted to RSPN.
- VII. Concept Note Development based on the recommended interventions and viability of the project scope in Bhutan.
- VIII. Final submission of the document.

9. Financial scope

The amount required for the conduct of this assignment needs to be clearly stated in the Financial Proposal as a “Lump Sum Amount” with a breakdown of the budget against each of the deliverables. It must be “all-inclusive” of various expenses incurred by the consultant during the contract period (e.g. fees, office costs, travel, logistic and any other relevant expenses related to the performance of services).

10. Expression of Interest/Application Procedure

- I. All qualified International consultants interested in taking this assignment need to submit a formal application to RSPN with a cover letter addressed to The Executive Director, RSPN, Thimphu.
- II. The Subject should be “Ecosystem and Socio-economic Resilience (Climate) Analysis and Mapping Study in High Altitude Wetlands of Bhutan”. The mode of application submission will be accepted only via email, syarpheh@rspnbhutan.org and copy to tsheringd@rspnbhutan.org
- III. Submission Deadline: on/before 5:00 PM, 15th October, 2024.
- IV. The application should contain:
 - Cover letter - Addressed to Executive Director, RSPN, Thimphu, Bhutan.

- Technical Proposal
 - Describing the approaches and key tasks to undertake in achieving the objectives of this assignment and producing the aforementioned deliverables.
- Financial Proposal - Describing each activity with a logical framework and budget breakdown.
- Supporting Documents: A copy CV of the consultant(s)

11. Evaluation of Proposals

The bid proposal will be evaluated based on the following:

Combined Scoring method –

1. Qualifications and relevant work experience shall be assigned a weight of a maximum of 70%
2. Financial quoted price with a weight of 30%.