

Draft **Terms of Reference**

Selection of an 'Evaluation Agency'

I. Background:

French Development Agency – Agence Française de Développement (AFD) has partnered with the State of Assam and the Assam Forest Department for Sustainable Forest Management and Biodiversity Conservation in Assam. The Phase I of the project (2012-2019) has been completed with 30.2 million euros financial assistance and has demonstrated some notable achievements. Phase II of the project would be implemented in the next 5 years duration from June 2019 – June 2024 with AFD.

Forest Department in Assam is composed of three primary wings which manage the forest divisions – Territorial (33), Social Forestry (14), and Wildlife (8). The Forest department also has a Research, Education, and Working Plan (REWP) wing, and is responsible for working plan preparation & forest resources inventory and assessment.

The Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) Society, is a special purpose vehicle created by the Government of Assam and registered under the Society Registration Act is mandated with overall execution, management, and coordination of the project activities through a Project Management Unit (PMU) established to implement the project. Implementation of the Project at the Forest Division level would be facilitated by the Field Implementation Units (FIUs).

II. Project Description:

The overall vision of the project is that it contributes through the Forest Department to the conservation of nature for a “*healthier ecosystem and happier communities*”. This overarching vision/goal shall be reached through the following three main specific objectives:

- Developing participatory Sustainable Forest and Biodiversity management under changing climatic conditions
- Improving the livelihoods for Forest neighbouring communities through inclusive (collective and individual) supports
- Strengthening the Forest department to better fulfil its missions.

The project is divided into four major components. Brief description of each component is presented below:

1. *Component 1: Conservation of Ecosystems:* the key focus of Phase II is conservation of forests and wildlife. The component is divided into two sub-components to ensure each receives due attention:
 - a. *Sustainable Forest Management:* activities will include
 - State-wide forest resource mapping will be conducted to form a database of the state's natural resources and conservation needs.
 - 12,500 ha of plantations,
 - Setting up Climate Change and REDD+ processes and
 - Improvement of infrastructure needed by frontline staff
 - b. *Biodiversity Conservation:* addresses the critical conservation needs of the rich biodiversity of the state through activities as
 - Improvement of Protected Area management,
 - Conservation efforts for a few key species (especially those that have not received enough attention so far),

- Outreach efforts to spread public awareness and
- Supporting the Assam State Biodiversity Board in making its Biodiversity
- Management Committees stronger.

This component will also contain a number of technological interventions aimed at enhancing the department's conservation efforts and effectiveness.

2. *Component 2: Community Engagement* aims to
 - a. Further strengthen the 136 existing communities from Phase I as well as support 125 new communities through training and supporting JFMC/EDCs for joint forest management and linking them with alternate livelihood options.
 - b. Build market linkages to ensure that the livelihood interventions are successful and sustainable.
 - c. Converge with existing government schemes to ensure forest fringe communities reduce their dependence on forest resources
 - d. Form Self Help Groups and Joint Liability Groups to allow beneficiaries to function independently and reap benefits from the activities initiated under the project even after the project is over.
3. *Component 3: Institutional Strengthening* addresses: Forest Department's most urgent institutional gaps, ensuring that it is equipped to deal with the complex challenges it faces.

Activities are as under:

- a. Conduct of a comprehensive HR study including strengthening of the legal cell, procurement cell and research and education cell
 - b. Digitizing the department's work by strengthening the Forest Management Information System (FMIS),
 - c. Improving the human resource module of the FMIS,
 - d. Supporting the Forest Schools by addressing their infrastructural requirements.
 - e. Project management of Phase II.
4. *Component 4: Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion:*

Throughout the project activities, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion will be recurring and cross-cutting themes for all activities. This is reflected in the Project's Environmental and Social Commitment, which will be fulfilled through the Environmental and Social Management System and the Gender Action Plan. The project is committed to ensuring fair gender representation as well as inclusion of vulnerable sections of all stakeholders, especially in case of its beneficiary communities. This translates to a participative approach wherever applicable, such as for microplanning with the community; and an inclusive approach inviting a broad representation of community members, such as in case of livelihood trainings. Considering the wide ambit of project activities which would interact with forests, biodiversity and other large infrastructural undertakings (equipment, vehicles, buildings, etc.), the Project shall closely monitor its activities to ensure alignment with its climate, gender and social inclusion commitments.

III. Expected Outcomes of the Project:

The expected outcomes of APFBC Phase-II are as under:

- Enhanced sustainable and participatory forest management under changing climatic conditions.
- Sustainable and participatory management of biodiversity/ecosystems.

- Improved livelihood of forest-dependent communities.
- Strengthened institutional capacities for inclusive management of natural resources.

Project Documents: Further details of the project, implementation arrangements, and the project documents are available on the project website www.apfbc.nic.in.

IV. The APFBC Phase-II recognizes that evaluation is a proven tool to identify the strengths and weaknesses of implementation of a project and help with course correction if needed. The evaluation agency shall conduct a midline and end-line assessment of the project to measure progress and quality of implementation against the log frame indicators. The mid-line assessment shall aim to assess the continued relevance of an intervention and the progress made towards achieving the project's planned objectives. They provide an opportunity to make modifications to ensure the achievement of these objectives within the lifetime of the project. The end-line assessment shall assess the effectiveness of the APFBC Phase II project.

V. The Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) has received financing from Agence Française de Développement ("AFD"), and intends to use part of the funds thereof for payments under the following contract "Selection of an Evaluation Agency".

VI. Scope of the Assignment:

1. Develop study design, sample size, and methodology for evaluating the implementation of the APFBC Phase II as per their existing work plan.
2. Data collection from the relevant stakeholders as per the approved methodology.
3. Carry out comprehensive outcome and impact focused evaluations of the project at two defined milestones- mid-term review and project completion.
4. Use both quantitative and qualitative methods for assessment and prepare a report with interpretation of results and recommendations.
5. Consolidate the information generated by the concurrent monitoring (primarily on inputs & outputs) and periodic monitoring (primarily on outcomes & impacts) by the APFBC to update the key performance indicators for the project. These indicators would be selected from the existing list of indicators in the project log-frame/theory of change. A separate set of indicators drawn from Government of India's Joint Forest Management (JFM) guidelines [Refer to Assam Joint (people's participation) Forestry Management Rules, 1998 and Guidelines for strengthening JFM Programme, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, February 2000] would be used by the Evaluation agency for assessing the efficiency, effectiveness, utility of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) and Eco Development Committees (EDCs) and the benefit of their activities to the community.

The key project indicators (KPI) of the APFBC II are:

Description		Indicators
Vision		
A.	Project contributes to conservation for healthier ecosystems and happier communities	Increased mutual trust between project communities and forest department.
		No reduction of population size of key species (rhinos in PA, elephants around + one bird)
		No decrease of the Forest cover on FD land
Outcomes and Objectives		
1a.	Enhanced sustainable and participatory forest	Number of hectares of forest area afforested or rehabilitated by the Forest department

	management under changing climatic conditions	Number of active JFMCs/EDCs - at least 2 meetings per year
1b.	Sustainable and participatory management of biodiversity/ ecosystems	Decrease or stabilization in number of human-wildlife conflicts for specific species (like elephants) Project communities with improved awareness on biodiversity conservation and climate change
2.	Improved livelihood of forest dependent communities	Number of micro plans implemented with participation from other departments Increased income of individuals from project activities
3.	Strengthened institutional capacities for inclusive management of natural	Increased effectiveness of field force for sustainable and participatory management of forests

6. Facilitate and support APFBC in rapid identification of shortcomings and problem areas and facilitate mid-term course corrections, wherever necessary for achieving project goals.
7. Evaluate the cross-cutting elements of the APFBC Phase II across activities of all components:
 - i) Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI): Assess the GESI quantitative and qualitative indicators of wellbeing across the organizational, capacity development, available resources and operational aspects of the project (Refer the GESI strategy document of APFBC Phase II)
 - ii) Environmental and Social (E&S) Safeguards: Evaluate the E&S performance as per the Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) established for the project.

VII. Tasks to be achieved:

The key tasks to be carried out by the consultant during the assignment period are:

Sl.	Tasks	Details
1	Mid Term Evaluation	The Consultants will carry out a Mid Term Assessment Survey that shall include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) Data collection from the relevant stakeholders as per the approved methodology ii) Conduct quantitative and qualitative assessment of progress against project development objectives iii) Provide objective and subjective perceptions of the results obtained iv) Focus on implementation processes and recommend adjustments in the project design and/or implementation arrangements to overcome identified bottlenecks or challenges v) Present different levels of achievements between results, outcomes, impacts in a structured and comprehensible manner to support the project to take an informed decision i) Provide a clear opinion regarding each set of evaluation criteria based on the project log-frame/theory of change as it was in the initial financing and about the activities taken place till the mid term assessment
2	End Term Evaluation	The Consultants will carry out a comprehensive overall impact assessment including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) Data collection from the relevant stakeholders as per the approved methodology ii) Conduct quantitative and qualitative assessment of progress against project vision, objectives, outputs, outcomes, impacts and sustainability iii) Systematically assess the log frame and categorise activities as -

Sl.	Tasks	Details
		<p>executed as planned, amended or dropped with specific reasons for deviation (lack of time, lack of financial resources, lack of expertise, lack of political support, other).</p> <p>iv) Provide an overview of the context of Assam during the period concerning key trends regarding the forest cover, wildlife inventories, local development, economic growth, biodiversity evolution but also illegal logging, poaching, man/animal conflict regardless if those are, or not, attributable to the project</p> <p>v) Provide a comparative assessment of a with/without project situation (as opposed to the more standard before/after project situation). The impact assessments and analyses shall collect and use statistically robust comparable data from non-project areas also. Thus, it is proposed to use a control and treatment group approach for the final evaluations.</p>

The other tasks include the following:

- i) Commissioning special thematic studies related to the objectives of the assignment, as needed and as asked by the Client
- ii) Identifying bottlenecks and suggest corrective actions, if needed
- iii) The final impact evaluation shall also have a “perception” component to capture shifts in perception of the staff as well as the beneficiaries
- iv) Documenting success stories
- v) Conducting action research
- vi) Attending meetings of the guidance providing and approving body (the Governing Body), and Executive Committee of APFBC Society, and
- vii) Assisting the PMU in reporting to the AFD on the project status.

VIII. Expected Outputs:

Following are the expected outputs but not limited to:

1. Mid-term Evaluation Report

- a) Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the project
- b) Actual or expected achievement of results at the time of the mid-term evaluation
- c) Factors and processes affecting the achievement of results
- d) Action on progress compared to plans, budget and overall performance
- e) Implementation efficiency
- f) Recommendations against identified bottlenecks

2. End-term Evaluation Report

- a) Overall evaluation of the project
- b) Challenges and lessons learnt
- c) Project risks and assumptions
- d) Future opportunities

IX. Duration of the assignment:

The consultant’s services shall commence with effect from the date of signing of the contract agreement. The assignment will be for a period of twenty-four (24) months. The duration may be extended depending on the need of the project with mutual agreement of the parties.

x. Services/ Inputs to be provided by the client :

The client would provide the consultant with the following reports/documents/services:

1. Evaluation Report of APFBC Phase I, Project Feasibility Report, Inception Report and any other document/report/services mutually felt necessary
2. Quarterly/Yearly progress monitoring reports generated so far
3. Facilitate access to relevant data that is required to fulfill the tasks outlined in the TOR
4. Provide, where appropriate, administrative support to the consulting firm in context of this assignment. The Project Director, PMU will facilitate coordination with the project implementing departments/agencies.

XI. Team composition:

The consultancy firm needs to deploy the following key staffs, whose CVs are to be evaluated during evaluation of the technical proposal. The details of the non-key experts and support staff, if required for the execution of this project are also to be mentioned:

Sl.	Position	Qualification and expertise desired	Person months
1.	Team Leader (1 position): Key Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Post-graduate in Economics/ Statistics/ Forestry or closely related field from any recognized university/ Govt. approved Institutions with specific qualifications in the field of M&E▪ Fifteen (15) years in senior managerial position including at least 5 years of leadership role of executing M&E mandate in government or development projects▪ Extensive experience with M&E systems and Result frameworks for international development programs▪ Experience with methods and techniques of qualitative and quantitative M&E data collection and analysis, including tracking outcome indicators▪ Previous experience of research, evaluation and documentation of public sector reform initiatives▪ Strong interpersonal and communication skills and proficiency in English▪ Team management, leadership and mentoring skills to lead a high-performing team	24 months
2.	Forest Management Specialist (1 position):Key Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Post Graduate/Master degree in Forestry, Natural Resource Management, Environment Management from any recognized university/ Govt. approved Institutions▪ 10 years of demonstrated relevant professional experience in sustainable forest management with experience of working with the government departments and agencies and communities is desirable▪ Knowledge of forest restoration measures, community management, institutions and policy (JFM) and climate change adaptation in the forestry sector	12 months
3.	Bio-diversity Specialist (1 position): Key Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Master's degree in biodiversity conservation or related field (such as forestry or wildlife management or NRM)▪ At least 7 years of work experience in biodiversity conservation in context of developing countries, must have an understanding of the intersection of biodiversity and agriculture or climate change▪ Knowledge of national environmental legislation and policies, and internationally recognized standards regarding biodiversity	12 months
4.	Institution Development Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Master's degree in Management with specialization in Human Resources, Training and Development, or a related field	12 months

Sl.	Position	Qualification and expertise desired	Person months
	(1 position): Key Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least 10 years of professional experience in working in government projects ▪ Preferable experience with capacity development programs 	
5.	Livelihood and Marketing Expert (1 position): Key Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Master's degree in relevant fields ▪ At least 10 years of professional experience ▪ 5+ years of Experience in monitoring the appropriateness, effectiveness, and impact of livelihood program interventions ▪ 5+ years of Experience in design or implementation or monitoring of market linkage projects 	12 months
6.	Economics Specialist (1 position): Key Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Postgraduate in Economics / Forest Economics ▪ 10 years of professional experience in evaluating development projects ▪ Excellent quantitative and analytical background with experience in designing, implementing and analyzing survey data. ▪ Possesses a demonstrated track record of working with economic and sectoral data and analytical tools and models to conduct economic analyses and produce user-friendly written outputs ▪ Good written and oral communication skills. 	24 months
7.	Statistics Specialist (1 position): Key Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An advanced degree in Statistics ▪ 10 years of professional experience working in or with statistical agencies or equivalent institutions ▪ Excellent quantitative and analytical background with experience in designing, implementing and analyzing survey data ▪ Advanced skills in descriptive, inferential and advanced statistical applications ▪ Good written and oral communication skills. 	24 months
8.	Social Development Specialist (1 position): Key Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Postgraduate in Social Development/ Sociology/ Anthropology/ Social Sciences/ Social Work ▪ At least 7 years of experience in social development/ management activities in public/reputed private sector agency(ies) ▪ Proficiency in Computer including in the use of Internet based applications, MS Word, MS Excel and MS Power Point etc. ▪ Good communication and social skills and report writing skills 	12 months

The Consultant may propose any additional specialists, non-key staff, surveyors / enumerators etc. as may be required to carry out the assignment. The CVs of the additional specialists will be reviewed as additional CVs, but it will not form a part of the key professional positions whose CVs will be evaluated during the technical evaluation. CVs of the non-key staff, surveyors / enumerators etc. will not be reviewed by the client during technical evaluation

XII. Reporting Requirements and Time Schedule for Deliverables

The Consultant will submit the following reports/ documents to the Client (the Project Director, APFBC Society) during the assignment period, both in soft and in hard copies. The soft copies shall also include all the data compilation sheets; analysis done by the consultants and others. A final electronic-copy of the report should be submitted to the Client. All the reports and documents shall be in English language and in mutually agreed formats. Further, all reports shall be in draft form for discussion with the Project Director before finalisation as indicated below:

#	Deliverables and time frame			
	Reports	No. of Reports	No of Copies of each report	Timeline from the date of signing the contract
a)	Methodology and Data Collection Tools			
	Study design, sample size and methodology	1 (one)	2 (two)	Within 30 days from the date of signing the contract
	Data collection tools- qualitative and quantitative study	1 (one)	2 (two)	Within 30 days from the date of signing the contract
b)	Mid Term Evaluation Report			
	Draft Mid Term Evaluation Report	1 (one)	2 (two)	Within 90 days from the date of signing the contract
	Final Mid Term Evaluation Report	1 (one)	2 (two)	15 days after comments/ approval by the client
c)	End Term Evaluation Report			
	Draft End Term Evaluation Report	1 (one)	2 (two)	Within 90 days before the last date for closure of the consultancy assignment
	Final End Term Evaluation Report	1 (one)	2 (two)	20 days after comments/ approval by the Client
d)	Others			
	Thematic study reports	6 (six)	2 (two)	Within 180 days from the date of signing the contract
	Success stories	10 (ten)	2 (two)	As indicated by the Client

XIII. Review mechanism :

The Project Director (PD), APFBC Society either by himself/herself or constitute a committee for the purpose to review the performance of the Consultant bi-monthly and also as & when felt necessary, wherein at least the Team Leader of the consultancy firm will have to remain present.

In addition, the PD will review all the reports and the performance of the Consultant after every six months during the period of the assignment, wherein all the key experts of the consultancy firm will have to remain present.

The Activity Director, M&E, PMU will undertake day-to-day monitoring of the assignment.

XIV. Payment Schedule:

Sl.	Deliverables/Milestone	Submission Timeline from contract signing	% of payment
1	Team Mobilization	Within 1 month	10%
2	Methodology and Data Collection Tools Reports	Within 2 months	10%
3	Mid Term Evaluation Report	Within 4 months	40%
4	End Term Evaluation Report	Within 4 months before project closure	40%

XV. Data, Services and Facilities to be provided by the Client:

Services and Facilities: PMU shall provide the Consultant with all services, necessary/relevant inputs, and background information/documents at its disposal in respect of the project, as may be required, including training venue and logistics cost.

Counterpart Personnel from Forest Department's side shall be decided during the project inception meeting
