
Terms of Reference (TOR)
For Finance Advisor (FA) for the Project Management Unit (PMU) of
Assam Project on Forest and Bio-Diversity Conservation (APFBC), Phase-II

(A) PROJECT BACKGROUND

1. French Development Agency (AFD) has partnered with the State of Assam and the Assam Forest Department for the purpose of Sustainable Forest Management and Bio-Diversity Conservation in Assam. This is the 2nd phase of the project.

In the framework of the Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation Society, a Special Purpose Vehicle created by the Government of Assam and registered under 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 Forest Division level would be facilitated by the Field Implementation Units (FIUs).

The overall vision of the project is that it “contribute through the Forest Department to the conservation of nature for 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 neighboring communities through inclusive (collective and individual) supports
- Strengthening the Forest department to better fulfill its missions.

The project is divided into three major components. Brief description about each component is presented below:

- I. **Component 1: Conservation of Ecosystems:** The key focus of APFBC Phase II is conservation of forests and wildlife. It is divided into two sub-components to ensure each receives due attention:
 - a. **Sustainable Forest Management:** This includes a state-wide forest resource mapping to form a comprehensive database of the state’s natural resources and conservation needs. This would be followed by 12,500ha of plantations, efforts towards setting up Climate Change and REDD+ processes and further improvement of infrastructure (construction/ renovation of staff quarters, office buildings etc.) needed by frontline staff to execute these works as well as their regular duties.
 - b. **Biodiversity Conservation:** This subcomponent addresses the pressing conservation needs of the rich biodiversity of the state through improvement of Protected Area management, critical habitat management, conservation efforts for a few key species, man-animal conflict management, strengthening of veterinary & rescue support infrastructure (construction/ upgradation of veterinary hospitals), infrastructure outreach efforts to spread public awareness, and supporting the Assam State Biodiversity Board in making its Biodiversity Management Committees stronger. This component will contain a number of technological interventions aimed at greatly enhancing the department’s conservation efforts and effectiveness.
- II. **Component 2: Community Engagement:** aims to further strengthen the 140 existing communities that were supported in Phase I as well as support 125 new communities through capacitating Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs)/Eco Development Committees (EDCs) for joint forest management and linking them with alternate livelihood options. This is expected to empower them economically and reduce dependence on forests for basic needs

(such as affording gas cooking instead of firewood). There is a major focus on market linkage to ensure that the livelihood intervention provides sustainable economic growth. To further ensure efficiency and sustainability of the intervention, component 2 aims to converge with existing state/center-level livelihood schemes. This will enable the communities (women and men) to reap benefits from the activities even after the project is over.

- III. **Component 3: Institutional Strengthening:** is aimed at improving various departmental cells to enable better management of the staff and resources. This includes strengthening of the legal cell, updation and implementation of a digitized Human Resource Management mechanism, digitizing the department's work by strengthening the Forest Management Information System (FMIS), supporting the research and education cell, supporting the Forest Schools, and addressing few infrastructural requirements. This component also details the project management modalities of Phase II. The goal is to address Forest Department's most urgent institutional gaps, ensuring that it is equipped to deal with the complex challenges it faces.
- IV. **Cross cutting component 4: Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion:** Throughout the project activities, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion will be recurring and crosscutting 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 micro planning 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.

(B) SCOPE AND DESCRIPTION OF POSITION

The Finance Advisor (FA) will inter alia assist the project to maintain financial discipline and control, ensure proper maintenance of accounts and be responsible for the Project Financial Management (PFM) w.r.t aims and objectives of the project. The professional contracted will be accountable for ensuring that project funds are used for the intended purposes, that the annual project financial statements are free from material misstatement, and that the terms of the loan agreement with the AFD are complied with.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: As the Assam Forest Department is committed to promote gender equality in all its activities, female candidates are encouraged to apply for the same.

(C) KEY JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

The key responsibilities include the following:

- a. All works relating to Financial Management of APFBC Society.
- b. Recommending financial approvals to the Project Director/ vetting of financial documents for matters related to the APFBC Society.
- c. Compilation of Accounts of APFBC Society.
- d. Inspect Accounts of the FIUs of APFBC Society, with approval of PD, to ensure accounts are being maintained as per the norms applicable for the APFBC Society Projects.
- e. Monitor and report (to PD) regarding any violation of the Financial Management (FM) by the FIUs of APFBC Society.
- f. Prepare Financial Statements of FIU and APFBC Society as required.
- g. Assess Training needs of the financial Staff of FIUs and organize Training/capacity building

workshops.

- h. Liaise with the Finance Department, Government of Assam on the matters concerning financial management of APFBC Society.
- i. Monitor the works of the Auditors engaged by the APFBC Society in order to ensure audits are submitted to the stakeholders on a timely basis.
- j. Preparation, Consolidation and updating the Financial Management Statements of the APFBC Society.
- k. Supervise the processing of reimbursement claims to be submitted to the CAAA for APFBC Society Projects funded through externally aided sources, as applicable.
- l. Scrutinize the Sanction and Fund Release Proposals (FRPs).
- m. Any other relevant work assigned by the PD.

(D) FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED BY THE CLIENT:

1. PMU will-

- Give access to all the required documents, correspondence, and any other information associated with the project and as deemed necessary.
- Provide a seating arrangement in the PMU along with computer, printer, computer/office consumables, and internet access.

2. **Reporting and Performance Review**

The FA will report to the Project Director, APFBC Society. The performance of the FA will be reviewed by the PD.

3. **Duration of Service**

The FA will have to serve the APFBC Society on full time basis and reporting to the Project Director, APFBC Society and provide services from the Project Management Unit (PMU) at Panjabari, Guwahati. The selected candidate will be engaged initially till 31st December 2025 or co-terminus with the project, whichever is earliest. It may be extended further on the basis of performance evaluation, and the project requirements. The Resignation/Termination shall be as per the HR Policy of the APFBC Society.

4. **Remuneration and payment terms**

Depending on the qualifications, experience, competency, the consolidated fixed remuneration of the FA will be determined and mutually agreed. Tentative range is estimated between Rs. 1.50 lakh to Rs. 2.50 lakh per month. The remunerations shall be inclusive of all taxes. Taxes as applicable will be dealt with as per applicable laws.

(DI) PROFILE

1. **Essential qualifications**

Educational Qualification and Work Experience: The following would be the preferred order of educational qualification and experience. Preference of choice will follow category (a), (b) and (c) in order.

- a. A professional Chartered Accountant (CA) with minimum 5 (five) years of post-qualification experience in the field of finance and accounts. Applicants with higher experience will be given preference.
- b. A member of the Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI)/Cost & Management Accountant

(CMA) having minimum 7 (seven) years of post-qualification experience in the field of finance and accounts.

- c. Full time M. Com. (Accountancy)/MBA (Finance) from recognized University/Institute having minimum 10 (ten) years of post-qualification experience in the field of finance and accounts.

Computer Skills: The FA must have experience of using Internet based applications, using and working with advanced word processing/spreadsheet including MS Word, MS Excel and MS Power Point and other related applications.

Age: Age of the candidates should not be more than 45 years as on 1st January 2024.

Language: High level of fluency in English and Hindi. Local language Assamese is desirable.

2. Desirable qualifications, experience, skills:

The following would be the desirable qualifications, experience, skills etc. and candidates having these qualities would be given preference:

- a. Experience as a head of or independent charge of finance and accounts wing of the organization
- b. Experience of working with public sector agencies
- c. Externally aided projects/Government projects/ Government Institutes or undertakings
- d. Knowledge of Government Financial Rules and Regulations
- e. Experience of working in multi stakeholder environment and multi-tasking
- f. Good analytical and planning skills; the candidate must be self-motivated and should possess ability to work independently as well as in teams.
