



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultancy

For Independent Evaluation of Environmental and Social Safeguards for the Bhutan For Life Project.

Project Title	Bhutan for Life (BFL)
Title of Consulting	Independent Evaluation of Environmental and Social Safeguards for the Bhutan For Life Project
Type of Consulting	Individual or team
Project Location	Bhutan
Consultancy Location	National
Start of Contract	22 nd April, 2024
Working Days	14 Days spread over one month

1. Background and Introduction

The Bhutan for Life (BFL) project will secure 51 percent of the nation’s territory as managed under its network of Protected Areas (PAs), and serves as the cornerstone of Bhutan’s bold pledge to remain carbon neutral, as re-stated in its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. It is also central to the country’s plans for meeting its constitutional requirement to maintain a minimum of 60 percent of its land area under forest cover

Bhutan for Life is a 14-year financial bridge that allows for immediate improvement in the management of Bhutan’s protected areas for climate resilience, and the prompt delivery of mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity gains, while the country gradually ratchets up its own financing resources. The project will accomplish this objective through the implementation the below components:

Component A: Mitigation: Increasing forestry and land use climate mitigation This component focuses on monitoring systems that detect forest cover change and ecological responses of forests and other systems to impacts of climate change. The findings will be used to develop climate resilient forest management practices and restoration of the degraded lands to conserve and enhance carbon stock.

Component B: Adaptation I: Integrated adaptation in communities and ecosystems to improve natural resource management for livelihoods and climate resilience This component focuses on harnessing climate, hydrological, and natural resources information to design and implement resilience and adaptation measures in Bhutan’s protected areas (PAs). This component will work to benefit nature and the livelihood of the population living both inside and in the vicinity of the PAs.

Component C: Adaptation II: Climate-smart conservation to enhance provision of ecosystem services This component focuses on harnessing climate, natural resource and biological information to design and implement ecosystem-based adaptation management of Bhutan’s PAs. This component will work to secure wildlife, habitat, and reduce human wildlife conflict in the changing climate while ensuring the sustainable flow of ecosystem services.

Component D: Protected areas: Effective management of protected areas This component focuses on strengthening the organizational, institutional and resource capacity for effective management of PAs. This is a crucial component, as the success of the initiative is dependent on fully equipped, well trained staff; full funding; essential infrastructure; and a well-organized system for managing the protected areas.

Component E: BFL program management: Management, monitoring, reporting & evaluation, policy support, contingencies This component groups all the management activities necessary for the effective implementation of BFL. As such, its purpose is to ensure the efficient implementation of the BFL program.

The project is categorized as a Category B Project. The following WWF Environment and social safeguards policies have been triggered as part of the Project¹:

- Environmental and Social Risk Management,
- Natural Habitat,
- Involuntary Resettlement, and
- Physical Cultural Resources.

The Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) was prepared by the Government of Bhutan to comply with WWF’s Environment and Social Safeguard Integrated Policies and Procedures.

2. Scope of Work

As part of the disbursement conditions of Bhutan for Life and the overall strengthening the Project Coordination Unit’s capacity on WWF’s environment and social safeguards, an ESS expert will be recruited by the BFL Fund Secretariat to carry out an annual independent evaluation which will include but is not limited to the following activities:

- Review the list of all planned and ongoing project activities for 2023 and ensure that screening tools were prepared for all planned and ongoing activities with potential adverse social and/or environmental impacts, in line with the ESMF requirements;
- Monitor the compliance of the following documents with the WWF’s safeguards policies, and assess their quality:
 - All screening tools for project activities prepared by PAs/BCs and the ESS specialist at PCU;
 - All Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) for 2023 prepared by PAs/BCs and the ESS specialist;
 - All quarterly and annual reports on social and environmental issues submitted by PCU ESS specialists to the PCU and/or the BFL Fund Secretariat;
 - Any and all records of complaints received as part of the project’s grievance redress mechanism.
- Review all bidding documents and contracts signed by PAs/BCs’ administrations for the implementation of BFL activities for 2023, to ensure full compliance with safeguards requirements

¹ Details on why these policies were triggered and listed in the WWF [compliance memo](#).

(focusing in particular on adherence to international occupational safety and working conditions standards).

- Assess the quality of grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) operated by all PAs/BCs. The assessment should focus on issues such local communities' awareness of the availability of GRMs, the ease of accessibility of the GRMs to local communities, the uptake of the GRMs by local communities (e.g., how many complaints are submitted, by whom), investigation procedures and standards, feedback provided to local communities, complainants' satisfaction with the GRM process, etc.
- Assess the capacity of the Implementing Agencies in screening the activities (ESS form), preparing its ESMP, and reporting the implementation of ESMP including GRM.
- Assess the quality of community consultations that are carried out by PAs/BCs as part of ESMP preparation and in line with the ESMF requirements. The assessment should focus on whether the consultations were inclusive, whether participants had full opportunity to voice their views, whether and how participants' inputs were taken into account, etc. This assessment will necessitate the consultant to attend few selected consultation meetings, in coordination with the ESS specialist at PCU.
- Conduct mandatory field visits to project sites where safeguards issues have been identified by PCU Safeguards specialist (e.g., adverse construction impacts, adverse impacts on natural habitats, restrictions of access to livelihoods, human-wildlife conflicts). (Representative sampling from western, central, eastern and southern region- Parks and BCs and functional divisions)
- Additional virtual discussions with PA and BC managers and BFL focal officers are encouraged.
- Monitor the compliance with mitigation plans/measures executed by the IAs according to the ESMPs developed for 2023.
- Based on the needs of the BFL Secretariat, review all documents and reports on project-related issues that may have any social or environmental impacts.

3. Deliverables

The deliverables of this consultancy will include the following:

1. Detailed compliance report that summarizes the consultant's activities (including site visits with photo evidences) and outlines the primary safeguard issues and those that have been addressed.
2. Comments on ESMPs particularly on the mitigation plans (progress, challenges and caveats) and other safeguards documents, as needed.
3. Recommendations on safeguard challenges/issues faced during 2023
4. Recommendations for any capacity strengthening activities.
5. Input to annual reports and other reports as necessary.

4. Reporting Requirements

The consultant will report directly to the BFL Fund Secretariat.

WWF's Lead Safeguards Specialist, GCF Agency and the GCF Agency BFL Project Manager will be available to respond to questions as needed.

5. Duration

The consultancy will be for 14 working days starting tentatively from **April 22, 2024** to **May 30 2024**

6. Qualification

- Postgraduate or other advanced university degree (at least M. Sc. or equivalent) in biology, ecology, law or social related sciences;
- At least 5 years of professional experience in environment and social safeguards in conservation projects;
- Preferably familiar with WWF's Environment and Social Integrated Policies and Procedures;
- Demonstrated experience conducting capacity building on safeguards;
- Demonstrated experience working in South Asia;
- Fluency in English;
- Fluency in Dzongkha, highly preferable;
- Demonstrated ability of analytical and report drafting work;
- Good communication, writing, and computer skills (Excel, Word, etc.) required;
- Availability to travel to the different areas of the project.

7. Evaluation Criteria

Criteria and the points system for the evaluation of Technical Proposals are:

- (i) Consultant [50]
 - Relevant Qualification of the consultant [15]
 - Relevant work experience of consultant
 - a. Environmental safeguards [15]
 - b. Social safeguards [20]
- (ii) Adequacy of the proposed technical approach, methodology and work plan in responding to the Terms of Reference [50]

8. Service & Support to be provided by BFLFS and PCU

BFLFS and BFL-PCU will facilitate the meetings with stakeholders and provide feedback on the draft deliverables.

For this assignment, BFLFS will provide:

- i. Office space with internet access;
- ii. Arrange meeting with key stakeholders
- iii. Adequate access to the documents required for review

9. Period of Performance

The duration of the consulting work will be approximately 14 days, including field visits. Payment will be made upon delivery of the report.
