

# **Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI) Development of Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)**

**Yangtze River Basin Biodiversity Conservation Programme**  
Strengthening in-situ Biodiversity Conservation in the Yangtze River Economic Belt

## **1. Background**

### **1.1 Context**

Background projects

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, is the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions (NbS) to global challenges in climate, food, and development. Since 2014, IUCN has been accredited as the Project Agency of Global Environment Facility (GEF).

In 2020, the "Yangtze River Basin Biodiversity Conservation Programme" (Yangtze Programme) was designed for GEF funding and composed by the three partners, IUCN as the Implementing Agency (IA), the NFGA and MEE as the Executing Agencies (EAs), and consists of two coordinated and complementary Child Projects (CPs), the "Strengthening in-situ Biodiversity Conservation in the Yangtze River Economic Belt" Project led by NFGA, and the "Mainstreaming biodiversity in the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt" Project led by MEE. The overall programme will demonstrate effective conservation and threat management practices in three provinces in the Yangtze River Basin (YRB), namely Anhui, Jiangxi, and Sichuan, as well as promote policy, legislation, and coordination mechanism development at the river basin level.

The outcome of the project is to safeguard biodiversity through sustainable protected areas networks in the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt of China

Under the first component the project aims to protect globally important habitats in the Yangtze River Basin by improving in-situ conservation of globally significant biodiversity through strengthened and better financed protected areas network. The second component aims at supporting policy development for protected areas and biodiversity management in the Yangtze River Economic Belt by ensuring that values and conservation of biodiversity as natural capital are considered in the development of the YREB. The third component is about program coordination, and consolidating, documenting and disseminating the project's knowledge and experience.

### **1.2 Relevant Standards**

IUCN has an Environmental and Management System (ESMS) in place since 2014, which has been designed as an intrinsic part of IUCN's project cycle. It provides systematic steps and operational tools for managing the environmental and social performance of projects implemented or supported by IUCN. The system ensures that during their preparation projects are screened on potential negative environmental or social impacts and that suitable measures to avoid, minimise, or compensate for these impacts are developed and integrated into project design. The system also

requires that the implementation and effectiveness of mitigation measures are monitored and that any impacts arising during implementation of the project are addressed.

The ESMS is guided by four standards that reflect key environmental and social areas and issues that are at the heart of IUCN's conservation approach and eight overarching principles. The latter are: Taking a Rights-Based Approach; Protecting the Needs of Vulnerable Groups; Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, Stakeholder Engagement; Free, Prior and Informed Consent; Accountability; the Precautionary Principle and Precedence of the most stringent Standard.

The four IUCN ESMS Standards are Standard on Involuntary Resettlement and Access Restrictions, on Indigenous Peoples, on Cultural Heritage and on Biodiversity and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources. The standards are published as stand-alone documents which describe the Standard's underlying policies and objectives and specific requirements on how to assess and manage associated risks. They are available at [www.iucn.org/esms](http://www.iucn.org/esms).

Aside from the environmental and social risks addressed by the four Standards, thematic coverage of the ESMS' risk identification process is much broader and should cover a wide range of potential environmental and social risks. Among those, seven risk areas have gradually emerged as being specifically relevant for conservation projects, which are:

- Adverse gender-related impacts (including gender-based violence)
- Risks of affecting vulnerable groups
- Risks of undermining human rights
- Community health, safety and security risks
- Labour and working conditions
- Resource efficiency, pollution, wastes, chemicals and GHG emissions
- Risk of project design failing to take climate change into account.

A Guidance Note is available that substantiates the process of identifying environmental and social risks and provides guidance and requirements in terms of the screening process, risk assessment and management of the risk issues.<sup>1</sup>

While all eight ESMS principles are described in the [ESMS Manual](#), the principle on Stakeholder Engagement has been established in form of a Guidance Note in order to ensure effective community and stakeholder engagement, participation and public disclosure, throughout the process<sup>2</sup>. A Guidance Note is further available on the Principle on Accountability / Grievance in order to enable implementing agencies to put in place effective, accessible and safe grievance mechanisms to provide people or communities fearing or suffering adverse impacts from a project with the assurance that they will be heard and assisted in a timely manner.<sup>3</sup>

The ESMS is aligned with globally recognized standards on environmental and social matters. With IUCN being an accredited agency to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the ESMS has been rigorously examined by these two entities and found fully compliant with the entities' relevant policies – with the GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards<sup>4</sup> and the Performance Standards of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) serving

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn\\_esms\\_gn\\_risk\\_management.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn_esms_gn_risk_management.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/esms\\_stakeholder\\_engagement\\_guidance\\_note.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/esms_stakeholder_engagement_guidance_note.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn\\_esms\\_grievance\\_mechanism\\_guidance\\_note-v2.1.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn_esms_grievance_mechanism_guidance_note-v2.1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Updated Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF/C.55/07/Rev.01), Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/PL/01) and Guidelines and Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (GEF/C.42/Inf.03/Rev.1)

as interim environmental and social safeguards of the GCF, as relevant to the nature of the projects implemented by IUCN.

### **1.3 ESMS and preliminary screening results**

IUCN has established an Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) that provides systematic steps and operational tools for managing the environmental and social performance of projects. The system allows IUCN to screen potential projects for negative environmental or social impacts and develop suitable measures to avoid, minimise, or compensate for these impacts. All system documents are available on the [IUCN website](#).

The project has been screened on E&S risks. The proposed project is expected to have environmental impacts that are highly positive overall. However, activities under outcome 1 and 2 of the project have the potential to give rise to social impacts if not carefully managed.

#### *Standard on Access Restrictions*

Social impacts might be triggered under outcome 1 that aims at improving in-situ conservation of globally significant biodiversity in the Yangtze River Basin through strengthened and better financed protected areas networks. The project analyses the effectiveness of the current protected area network focussing on three provinces (Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui). The analysis is expected to generate recommendations on expansion of existing protected areas, establishment of new ones or the implementation of other protection and restoration programs and initiatives. There is a high probability that such interventions will imply restrictions on the use of natural resources and in case such restrictions would affect peoples' ability in sustaining their livelihood needs, the Standard on Access Restrictions would be triggered. Particular attention should be given to vulnerable groups among these user groups. Current uses (known at this stage) include the collection of bamboo shoots and Chinese herbal medicine resources by communities in the Liangshan KBA as well as mushroom collection and grazing. However, further assessment is required to establish a comprehensive picture the use and the dependency of people on these resources

Potential impacts need to be distinguished according to the geographical scale of the activities and the level of influence of the project on the actual implementation of protection measures. Direct impacts on use and access rights of peoples might be expected from the project's on-the-ground interventions in those protected areas in Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui that will be selected under output 1.2 for enhancing their governance and management effectiveness. It is planned that this will include 8 -10 PAs out of target PAs, including Sichuan Giant Panda National Park, Aden, Jiangxi Sanqing Mountain, Poyang Lake, Anhui Shengjin Lake and other protected areas. Using the Green List Standard of Protected and Conserved Areas (GLPCA), the selected sites will be evaluated on planning, governance and management effectiveness and recommendations for improvement and Green Listed plans will be developed and implemented. As the project will implement at least part of the recommendations, the project is likely to directly cause potential livelihood impacts from access restrictions, and as such would be responsible to address such impacts (if confirmed) following the provisions of the ESMS Standard on Access Restrictions.

Further, but less direct impacts are expected from output 1.1 that involves analysing the PA networks in Sichuan, Jiangxi and Anhui and proposing adjustments towards increased representativeness, coverage and viability by taking into account globally important biodiversity. This is expected to lead to the development of plans for optimized protection of key biodiversity

areas (KBA), which might include expansion and establishment of protected areas or other protection and restoration programs and initiatives. The project focuses on the following KBAs:

- Liangshan KBA (Sichuan Province),
- Mufu Mountains-Poyang Lake KBA (Jiangxi Province),
- Dabie Mountains KBA (Anhui Province),
- Anhui Yangtze River Freshwater Dolphin KBA.
- Sichuan Mamize Nature Reserve

The project only proposes plans for improving and optimizing the protection of these KBAs (based on the existing protected areas network optimization processes), but will not implement specific management measures under this output. Therefore, while the expansion of PAs can lead to future decisions about access restrictions, the actual decisions are not considered part of the project's scope. The project might still be considered as contributing to potential impacts from access restrictions, but not as directly causing such impacts. It follows that the project's responsibility for mitigating the impacts is less pronounced.

The project tries to mitigate potential social risks by promoting good governance using the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard (GLPCA).<sup>5</sup> The GLPCA Standard is an internationally recognized PA standard providing a full set of criteria and indicators aimed at improving governance, planning, management and achieving conservation outcomes of protected areas. Criterion 3.3 (Manage with in the Social and Economic Context of the Area) requires that the designation of management process demonstrates that social and economic benefits of the area are recognized, promoted and are being maintained, or, where such maintenance is incompatible with the maintenance of the area's natural values, any restrictions are designed and implemented in consultation with, and preferably following the free, prior and informed consent of right-holders. Specific indicators of the GLPCA specify the following requirements:

- to make the governance structures and key documents on management readily accessible to civil society in an easily understandable format;
- to identify the social and economic characteristics of the region that may be affected (positively or negatively) by the site's designation and/or current management;
- to assess the location, extent and magnitude of effects of the site on social and economic characteristics;
- to consider social and economic benefits and effects in the development of management goals and objectives for the site in the management plan or equivalent place and
- to put in place a grievance receipt and management process.

This follows that there is a strong correspondence between the GLPCA and the ESMS Standard on Access Restrictions. The only gap that remains is the explicit need to provide mitigation measures to compensate for any remaining livelihood losses caused by the PA creation or extension. While the GLPCA does require the consideration of economic and social benefits in the management plan, this does not seem sufficient for ensuring that livelihood losses are fully restored in all cases. These remaining impacts need to be addressed by the project through a Process Framework that will guide the process of identifying risks and developing and agreeing on mitigation measures. It will be important to consider the timing of the different process and ensure that restrictions should not be put in place before assessing potential impacts and providing for restoration of losses.

The Process Framework will also need to guide the identification and management of social impacts for those sites that will not be supported on the application of GLPCA, but only on the creation or

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/our-work/iucn-green-list-protected-and-conserved-areas/global-standard>

extension of PAs or where the management plans will be adjusted and include enhanced restrictions on the use of natural resources.

The Process Framework should build on the mitigation measures planned under activity 1.2.3 (Pilot conflict management for protected areas and KBAs). It should also take into consideration - as risk minimizing factor - that under activity 1.2.2 (Demonstrate co-management of protected areas and KBAs) the project develops and demonstrate the effectiveness of co-management models including co-management with communities, co-management with the forest chief system and the river chief system, to improve the ability of stakeholders to participate in conservation.

#### *Potential impacts from enhanced law enforcement*

Project activities 1.2.4 to 1.2.7 involve the establishment of an infrared cameras monitoring system with automatic real-time data transmission, technical specifications for the application of remote sensing technology and UAV in vegetation and wildlife monitoring and PA patrol and monitoring, and demonstrating the application of AI technology and big data platform test. These activities aim at support environmental protection of the KBAs, but are likely to involve further social risks. As these systems not only capture data on wildlife but also on human interference, they are expected to contribute to enhanced enforcement of PA regulations. Enhanced enforcement not only increases the probability of impacts from access restrictions, but might further lead to risks related to law enforcement practices in case such practices might implicate human rights violations. These issues need to be further assessed through a dedicated law enforcement risk assessment.

#### *Standard on Indigenous Peoples*

The project also triggers the Indigenous Peoples Standard due to the presence indigenous people or ethnic minorities that meet the characteristics of the IUCN ESMS Indigenous People Standard. Among them are the Yi people which is one of the oldest ethnic groups in China, and who are mainly distributed in Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou provinces and in the northwest of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. They have their own spoken and written language and other unique cultural features. Their beliefs involves the notions of nature worship, totem worship, ancestor worship and animism. They identify themselves as indigenous and are also recognized as such by the government. Yi communities live around the Heizhugou, Meigu Dafengding, and Mamize Nature Reserves of KBA in Liangshan, and enter the reserve to collect firewood, bamboo shoots, Chinese herbal medicine, and for grazing.

Also other ethnic minorities with indigenous peoples characteristics might be present in some of the PA sites selected under output 1.2. These could include the following ethnic groups: Tujia, Yao, Bai, Bouyei, and Miao people. As the concrete intervention sites will only be selected during the project, it is not possible to establish a full Indigenous Peoples Plan during project preparation. Instead, an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) will need to be developed. The IPPF will ensure that indigenous and ethnic minority people can equally benefit from the project, that any negative impacts that might affect them are either reduced or mitigated and that they are involved in the impact assessment and development of mitigation measures. The IPPF also establishes the requirements for FPIC for all project activities affecting IP (positively or negatively).

#### *Conclusions of the Screening Report*

While potential negative social impacts have been identified, none of these impacts are considered of high magnitude, large scale and/or large spatial extent or irreversible. As described above,

project design already provides for a certain level of avoidance and mitigation, mainly by using the GLPCA standard. The remaining impacts will need to be addressed through the Process Framework, the Indigenous People Planning Framework and by measures proposed by the Law Enforcement risk assessment. In order to ensure that these three different risk issues are addressed in a coordinated way, the development of an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will be needed. The ESMF should have dedicated chapters establishing relevant provisions for each of these three safeguard tools (IP Planning Framework, Access Restriction Process Framework and Security risk Assessment).

## **2. Duties and responsibilities of the Assignment**

The objective of the consultancy is to develop the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) for the project, in line with the IUCN ESMS standards and ESMS principles and as required by the ESMS preliminary Screening as explained in chapter 3. While impacts from access restrictions and from law enforcement as well as implications for indigenous peoples can only be substantiated once results of the analysis to be carried out under output 1.1. are available (e.g. effectiveness of PA network, strategies for improvement have been proposed) and sites are selected for being assisted in the GLPCA process, the assignment should nevertheless already provide for a preliminary assessment of these social impacts. This should also include the identification of potential other environmental and social impacts.

The identified impacts should be addressed through a Process Framework (PF), an Indigenous People Planning Framework (IPPF) and by measures proposed by the Law Enforcement risk assessment (carried out during the project). In order to ensure that these three different risk issues are addressed in a coordinated way, they should be integrated in the ESMF with dedicated chapters establishing relevant provisions for each of these three safeguard tools (IP Planning Framework, Access Restriction Process Framework and Security risk Assessment).

The appointed international consultant will be overseen by JIN Wenjia on all matters relevant to the project design process and the project context and by the IUCN ESMS Coordinator, based at IUCN HQ on all safeguard relevant matters. The international consultant will be supported by a local consultant Prof. LI Diqiang and his team, whom could provide 15 days supports and will visit 3 provinces.

### **2.1 Scope of consultancy**

The main tasks of the assignment consist of the following:

1. Participate in an inception meeting with IUCN and NFGA to
  - clarify the objectives of the consultancy, tasks, deadlines and schedule
  - present the methodological approach for developing the ESMF
  - clarify the project's geographical area of influence.
  
2. Based on the decisions about the project's geographical area of influence, conduct site visits to interview affected communities and other relevant stakeholders (including PA management authorities) in order to gather data as required by the relevant standards and for addressing all tasks; the preliminary list of sites to be visited is:
  - Liangshan KBA (Sichuan Province),
  - Mufu Mountains-Poyang Lake KBA (Jiangxi Province),
  - Dabie Mountains KBA (Anhui Province),

- Anhui Yangtze River Freshwater Dolphin KBA.
  - Sichuan Mamize Nature Reserve
3. Description of people and communities potential affected by access restrictions (in particular vulnerable groups) and of indigenous peoples affected by project activities, including:
    - a. Description of the communities constituting the affected peoples (e.g. names, ethnicities, estimated numbers, language, , etc.);
    - b. Description of the resources, lands and territories to be affected and the affected peoples' connections with / dependency on those resources, lands, and territories;
    - c. An identification of any vulnerable groups within the affected peoples (e.g. women and girls, the disabled and elderly, others);
    - d. Based on a preliminary list of resources likely to be restricted resulting from interview with PA authorities, EA and IUCN, identification of the potential impacts from access restrictions;
    - e. Description of the local institutions and leadership structures.
  4. Summary of Rights and Legal Framework: A description of the rights of local communities with regard to natural resources and of indigenous peoples and the applicable legal framework; including an analysis of applicable domestic and international laws affirming and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and of actual implementation.
  5. Analysis of the implications of applying IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas (GLPCA) to improve the governance and management effectiveness of selected protected areas with respect to the Standards on Access Restrictions and Indigenous Peoples. Identification of opportunities to strengthen the process of applying the GLPCA to ensure stronger correspondence with the requirements of the two ESMS standards.
  6. Summary of preliminary assessment of social and environmental impacts and high-level recommendations for mitigation measures
    - a) A summary of the preliminary assessment of social and environmental impacts from access restrictions and implications for indigenous peoples;
    - b) Recommendations of the required social and environmental impact studies to be carried out during the project (e.g. targeted risks assessment), specifically those related to impacts from access restrictions, implications for indigenous peoples, and risks from law enforcement;
    - c) Elaborate on the project's level of influence with regard to impacts from access restrictions differentiating between (i) causing impacts and (ii) contributing to impacts and associated level of responsibility to mitigate impacts;
    - d) Specify how affected indigenous peoples will participate in such study and in developing recommendations and mitigation measures;
  7. Participation, Consultation, and FPIC Processes
    - a) A summary of results of the culturally appropriate consultation and, where required, FPIC processes undertaken with the affected peoples' which led to the indigenous peoples' support for the project and to the IPPF.
    - b) A description of the mechanisms to conduct consultation and consent processes as part of the PF and IPPF. Identify particular Project activities and circumstances that shall require consultation and FPIC.

8. Appropriate Benefits:

- a) An identification of the measures to be taken to ensure that people affected by access restrictions are provided with measures for livelihood restoration (as part of the PF)
  - b) An identification of the measures to be taken to ensure indigenous peoples receive equitable social and economic benefits that are culturally appropriate, including a description of the consultation and consent processes that lead to the determined benefit sharing arrangements (as part of the IPPF).
9. Identify areas of capacity support required in the project including:
- a) Description of project activities aimed at increasing capacity within the government and/or the affected indigenous peoples, and facilitating exchanges, awareness, and cooperation between the two.
  - b) Description of measures to support social, legal, technical capabilities of indigenous peoples' organizations in the project area to enable them to better represent the affected indigenous peoples more effectively
10. Propose a grievance redress, including
- a) description of the procedures available to address grievances arising from project implementation, in particular brought by people affected from access restrictions and by human rights impacts from law enforcement and by affected indigenous peoples;
  - b) establish the link to the overarching IUCN institutional grievance mechanism<sup>6</sup>;
  - c) specify how the grievance mechanisms take into account indigenous peoples' customary laws and dispute resolution processes.
11. Monitoring, Reporting, Evaluation
- a) Propose a mechanisms to ensure that people affected by access restrictions and indigenous peoples are involved in monitoring, evaluating, and reporting.
  - b) Define the mechanisms put in place to allow for periodic review and revision of the IPPF in the event that new project circumstances or project adaptive management warrant modifications developed through consultation and consent processes with the affected indigenous peoples.
12. Describe institutional arrangement responsibilities and mechanisms for carrying out the measures contained in the PF and in the IPPF, including participatory mechanisms of affected indigenous peoples. Describes role of independent, impartial entities to audit, conduct social and environmental assessments as required, and/or to conduct oversight of the project.
13. Incorporate the results of previous tasks into a draft report.
14. Finalise the report based on comments received from IUCN and the NFGA.

## **2.2 Timeline of the consultancy**

Expected start date: 15 Jan, 2022

Expected date for the 1<sup>st</sup> draft: 10 Mar, 2022

Expected date for the final report: 31 Mar, 2022

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn\\_esms\\_grievance\\_mechanism\\_guidance\\_note-v2.1.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn_esms_grievance_mechanism_guidance_note-v2.1.pdf)



### 3. Key deliverable and schedule of payment

<b>Reporting period and key milestones</b>	<b>Report due</b>	<b>Payment Percentage</b>	<b>Review and Approvals</b>
Payment upon the sign of the agreement	NA	30%	NA
Payment upon submission and acceptance of the following deliverables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A draft report, addressing all the tasks stated in chapter 4 and in compliance with the IUCN ESMS</li></ul>	1, Mar, 2022	30%	10, Mar, 2022
Payment upon submission and acceptance of the following deliverables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A final report, capturing all of the comments from IUCN and EA.</li></ul>	20 Mar, 2022	40%	31 Mar, 2022

### 4. Education, experience and competencies

- Master's degree or higher in social sciences or anthropology, conservation management or related fields of expertise.
- Minimum 7 years' experience working with developing countries on one or more of the following: community engagement, indigenous peoples, protected area management; biodiversity conservation or related fields;
- Demonstrated experience in the developing PF and IPPFs and conducting relevant consultations or similar exercises carried out in the context of the application of social safeguards;
- Experience working in China (relevant provinces a plus) and in GEF projects and working in challenging environments is desirable.
- Ability to work independently and to deliver high quality programs with minimal supervision
- Excellent oral and writing communication skills

Complete applications should be submitted electronically with the subject line of:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To: Ms. JIN Wenjia (Programme Officer, IUCN China) <a href="mailto:wenjia.jin@iunc.org">wenjia.jin@iunc.org</a></li><li>• cc: Mr. ZHANG Yan (Country Coordinator, IUCN China) <a href="mailto:yan.zhang@iucn.org">yan.zhang@iucn.org</a></li></ul> |
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## Expression of Interest

<b>Name of institution</b>					
<b>Postal and Email Address</b>					
<b>Technical proposal articulating:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How the consultant will approach the think piece, including a preliminary conceptual framework indicating the main sections with brief description of each section.</li> <li>- List 10 proposed sources of information</li> <li>- Indicate number of days expected for each task and deliverable.</li> </ul> <p><i>(Max 4 pages)</i></p>					
<b>Summary introduction to previous work highlighting relevant expertise (max 300 words)</b>					
<b>References (including web links) to previous work and published papers</b>					
<b>Name and email addresses of the core team (max 3), along with a 50 word summary (for each member) indicating qualifications and skills. Please also attach Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the team lead.</b>					
Proposed budget and details of expected expenditure, such as number of days, daily rates of staff etc in the format suggested below.					
Budget Line	Description	Unit	No. of units	Cost per unit	Budget in local currency
1.1					
1.2					
1.3					
1.4					
Total					