Terms of Reference
International Consultancy supporting development of the GEF-8 Mesoamerica Forest Integrated Program

These terms of reference describe the objectives, responsibilities and key deliverables for an International Consultancy supporting IUCN in developing the GEF-8 Mesoamerica Forest Integrated Program.

Issue date: 14 December 2022
Closing date and time: 4 January 2023 23:59 CET

IUCN contact:
Tony Nello
Thematic expert in environmental economics and Development
Email: tony.nello@iucn.org

Overview

Programming for the eighth funding cycle of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF-8)\(^1\) includes resources and programming for a so-called Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program (IP) that seeks “conservation of the last and globally important primary tropical forests”. This IP is operationally divided into 5 separate regional IPs focusing on the Amazon basin, Guinean forests, Indo-Malaya forests, Congo basin forests, and Mesoamerican forests.

IUCN has been selected by the GEF Secretariat and Council to serve as the Lead GEF Agency for the GEF-8 Mesoamerican Forest IP, and to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the Lead agency\(^2\) including leading development of the program. These terms of reference describe the objectives, responsibilities and key deliverables for an International Consultancy supporting IUCN in developing this integrated program.

Background on GEF Program modality

As described more fully by GEF\(^3\), Integrated Programs (IPs) seek to address drivers of environmental degradation and advance systems transformation through an integrated approach. The design, approval and implementation of IPs follow that of the GEF Programmatic Approach, in accordance with the GEF Policy on the Project and Program Cycle\(^4\). This approach involves a two-step approval process:

1. GEF Council approval of a Program Framework Document (PFD) with description of the selected country (and regional/global) child projects included in a work program; and
2. GEF CEO Endorsement of child projects under the program.

The PFD is prepared by the Lead GEF Agency for the IP, and includes a detailed description of the program, theory of change, governance arrangements, results framework, and more. This will serve as a basis for subsequent development and design of all child projects, to ensure overall coherence and consistency in delivering the IP. The PFD will include explicit guidance to all participating countries on specific issues that must be addressed during child project design stage.

---

\(^1\) https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-04/GEF_R.08_29_Rev.01_GEF8_Programming_Directions.pdf


\(^3\) https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-01/GEF_R.08_12_Updated_Note_Operationalizing_GEF-8_Integrated_Programs.pdf

Another key component of GEF IPs is the inclusion of a regional coordination and support child project, funded through GEF set aside (non-STAR) funding. Functions of the regional coordination and support child project include providing high-priority, non-duplicative supports to all constituent national child projects to ensure a coherent, well-coordinated and adaptively managed program with strong links to relevant external platforms and initiatives; supporting harmonized monitoring and reporting; program-level communications and events; and more. The regional coordination and support child project is implemented and executed – in part or fully – by the Lead agency for the IP. In addition, to ensure that this regional child project is under implementation at the start of program implementation, the regional child project will be developed alongside the PFD as much as possible.

**Mesoamerican Forest IP**

Stretching from Central Mexico to the eastern Panamanian frontier, the forests of Mesoamerica are vital and irreplaceable. They are also among the world’s most threatened – nearly half of the region’s natural habitats have been converted to agriculture or urban areas, and out of the 5 remaining intact forests, 3 have lost nearly 25% of their area in just the past 15 years.

To help conserve and protect these remaining forests for present and future generations, the GEF-8 cycle of funding includes a dedicated **Mesoamerican Forest Integrated Program** that provides incentives and resources for Mesoamerican countries to program a portion of their GEF STAR allocation towards conservation of these forests with a landscape approach.

Drawing upon a wealth of experiences including the GEF-7 Amazon Sustainable Landscapes program, Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes program, and other aligned platforms and initiatives, the GEF-8 **Mesoamerican Forest IP** will build upon lessons learned and provide a powerful package of supports to bring about transformative change. Key supports and interventions may include:

- **Expand coverage of protected areas** to safeguard biodiversity, carbon stocks, and connectivity
- **Strengthen management of existing protected areas** and systems (national and sub-national)
- **Promote Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)** and various Nature-based Solutions for conservation outside of protected areas
- **Develop integrated land-use planning and strengthen governance and law enforcement**
- **Support conservation-friendly livelihoods at local and landscape levels** and improve sustainability of the productive sectors to ensure conservation of primary forests
- **Develop financial and other incentives for forest conservation** while eliminating perverse incentives, and improve resource mobilization including REDD.

Key design elements that will be part of and/or pursued in the development of this program include:

- **Programmatic finance and resource mobilization** – partnerships with the private finance and philanthropic sectors together with other providers of public finance will be engaged at the programmatic level to leverage GEF funding and deliver greater impact. Innovative finance approaches and tools will be considered including blended finance, green bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, biodiversity offsets, REDD+ finance, and more.
- **Regional policy coherence and partnerships** to strengthen protections and cooperation, eliminate perverse incentives, and create an enabling policy supporting conservation and sustainable use of Mesoamerican forests
- **Partnerships with private sector producers** – deforestation-free production commitments and action from commodity producers both large and small in the region will be an integral part of this IP, along with incentives and support for accessing more environmentally-stringent markets
- **High-level events and intersectoral communication** to raise the profile of this regional biome to a level commensurate with the Amazon and Congo basin forests, and increase demand, support, and action for conservation and management of these globally important and irreplaceable forest landscapes
Regional web platform and annual knowledge sharing conferences to support knowledge capture and dissemination, South-South learning, a dedicated community of practice, and capacity building on a range of high-priority needs and topics

A regional knowledge sharing, coordination and support project – funded through GEF set-aside funding, this project will provide key supports to all constituent projects to ensure a coherent, well-coordinated and adaptively managed program with strong links to relevant external platforms and initiatives including the Central American Commission for Environment and Development, the AFOLU intersectoral initiative, sustainable commodity initiatives, and more

Duties and Responsibilities

The selected International Consultancy firm or individual will support IUCN in developing the GEF-8 Mesoamerica Forest Integrated Program. Specific duties and responsibilities will include the following:

1. Under the direction of the IUCN GEF/GCF Task Manager for Global Programs and senior staff in IUCN regional and country offices in Mesoamerica, lead in coordinating a facilitating a consultative PFD development process with all selected countries, partnering GEF Agencies, GEF Secretariate, and key external partners including those from the private sector, civil society, and academia.

2. Lead the organization and implementation of a regional Program Development Inception Workshop, with participation of country representatives, GEF Secretariate, GEF Agency potential partners, and potential executing partners, to better inform PFD and Regional child project design which will allow – among others- to orient the countries and GEF Agencies on the next steps and procedures.

3. Lead the drafting of the Mesoamerica Forest IP PFD, in accordance with the transformative vision defined by GEF-8 programming and IUCN, and inputs from participating country representatives – through nominated national focal points and in close coordination with the NDA, participating GEF Agencies, and other stakeholders. The PFD shall meet all requirements for approval by the GEF Secretariate, GEF Science and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), and GEF Council, and be informed by the best and latest science and best practices on conservation and sustainable management of forests, and tailored to the context and drivers of degradation specific to participating Mesoamerican countries and selected landscapes. Supporting work may include desk studies and field missions to partnering countries and sites.

4. Lead the drafting of the Regional Coordination and Support child project concept (template to be provided by GEF), that supports and ensures a coherent, well-coordinated and adaptively managed program, and that provides identified high-priority, high-value, non-duplicative supports to constituent national child projects.

5. Lead the organization and implementation of a regional PFD and Regional Child project Validation Workshop, with participation of country representatives, GEF Secretariate, GEF Agency partners, and potential executing partners, for participants to validate the design of the developed PFD and Regional child project concepts.

6. Revise draft PFD and Regional Coordination and Support I child project concepts to respond to all GEF Secretariat, GEF STAP, Agency partner, and Country comments sufficient to achieve GEF approval of the PFD.

Key deliverables to be developed by the International Consultancy and provided to IUCN:

- Program Development Inception Workshop Terms of Reference (TORs)
- Key information and orientation guidelines disseminated to the countries for the design of national Child Project
- Baseline assessment of relevant initiatives, policies, partners, and other relevant elements to inform development of an impactful and transformative IP
- Draft Mesoamerican Forest IP PFD
- Regional Coordination and Support Project Concept
• PFD and Regional Child project Validation Workshop TORs
• Revised draft PFD and Regional Coordination and Support project concept with all required annexes sufficient for approval by GEF

**Timeline**

The anticipated period of work for these TORs is from January 2023 through December 2023. Key dates for deliverables and workshops include the following:

- Program Development Inception Workshop Terms of Reference (TORs) – **by January 20, 2023**
- Baseline assessment of relevant initiatives, policies, partners, and other relevant elements to inform development of an impactful and transformative IP – **End January, 2023**
- Guidelines on priorities & procedures for EOI/Child Projects - **End January 2023 (and throughout the first half of 2023)**
- Regional Program Development Inception Workshop - **Mid-February 2023 (TBD)**
- Draft Mesoamerican Forest IP PFD – **by March 3, 2023**
- Regional Coordination and Support Project Concept - **by March 3, 2023**
- PFD and Regional Child project Validation Workshop TORs – **Mid- March 2023 (TBD)**
- Revised draft PFD and Regional Coordination and Support project concept with all required annexes sufficient for approval by GEF – **end of March 2023**

**Requirements**

The selected International Consultancy firm or individual will have the following experience and competencies:

1. Extensive experience in the design of large, complex natural resource management projects and programs funded by multilateral funds including GEF
2. Experience applying methodologies and tools for the design of performance and impact monitoring systems of projects and programs
3. Demonstrated technical understanding and expertise across a range of relevant themes and issues including sustainable forest management and conservation, landscape restoration, environmental economics, climate change, natural resource governance, biodiversity conservation, environmental and social safeguards, and gender and youth inclusion
4. Demonstrated ability to engage and partner with high-level stakeholders and representatives from government, civil society, and the private sector at different level
5. Working experience in Latin America, and in particular in Mesoamerica and familiar with national and regional organizations and networks of the Region is an advantage.
6. Excellent writing, communication and systematization skills
7. Fluency in both English and Spanish
8. Demonstrated ability to organize and facilitate large workshops and consultation processes
9. Highly organized, efficient and motivated, with a strong track record of on-time, on-budget delivery under pressure