CALL FOR CONSULTANCY

Assignment Title: Technical Studies and Support for Strengthening Provincial and District-Level Mining and Environmental Governance in Northern Lao PDR

Project: Mining Responsibly: A Replicable Model for Provincial Rare Earth Mining Governance Under Climate Stress in the Nam Ma and Nam Neun Basins, Northern Lao PDR

Location: Vientiane, Lao PDR

Duration: 15 November 2026 – 31 March 2027

Level of Effort: 25 working days

Contracting Organisation: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Reporting to: Lee Xiong, IUCN Reporting Manager

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

SNV and IUCN have received a grant of GBP 250,000 from the UK Government to implement the project *Mining Responsibly: A Replicable Model for Provincial Rare Earth Mining Governance Under Climate Stress in the Nam Ma and Nam Neun Basins, Northern Lao PDR*. The project will run from 1 October 2026 to 30 September 2027.

The project aims to establish a replicable model of provincial and district-level mining and environmental governance under climate stress. It will work with the Department of Geology and Mines (DGM), Department of Environment (DoE), Department of Water Resources (DWR), and their respective sub-national agencies to ensure that rare earth mining activities in the Nam Ma and Nam Neun river basins do not pollute the surface and groundwater resources on which downstream communities depend. The project will also promote the replication of this governance model nationally and across the Lower Mekong region.

Currently, mining pollution control in Lao PDR operates primarily at provincial and district levels, reflecting the fragmented nature of rare earth mining concessions. Responsibilities are distributed among several government agencies:

- DGM supervises mining concessions, commissions Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs), and conducts site inspections.
- DoE reviews ESIAs, issues Environmental Compliance Certificates, and enforces the Environmental Protection Law through the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MAE)'s provincial and district offices.
- DWR monitors river and groundwater quality.

However, these agencies operate with different institutional priorities and limited coordination. Routine compliance monitoring remains limited, enforcement mechanisms are inadequate, and DGM lacks essential pollution-detection equipment and systematic follow-up monitoring capacity.

Mining governance in Lao PDR also presents significant political and institutional challenges. Rare earth mining in the Nam Ma and Nam Neun basins expanded rapidly from 2021, following the economic crisis triggered by COVID-19 and unsustainable government debt. Initially approved as pilot operations, the number of Chinese-owned rare earth mines increased substantially without adequate environmental impact assessment and follow-up monitoring.

In February 2024, a major cyanide leak at a rare earth mine in Sam Neua District resulted in serious downstream contamination. Field observations documented fish mortality, reduced suitability of river water for irrigation, and deteriorating water quality in affected communities.

Against this background, the project seeks to strengthen institutional coordination, operational oversight, environmental monitoring and enforcement capacity at provincial and district levels.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The objective of this consultancy is to provide technical, institutional and high-level government liaison support to facilitate effective coordination among DGM, DoE, DWR and relevant government agencies.

The consultant will support the project in establishing a replicable model of provincial and district-level mining and environmental governance under climate stress, ensuring that rare earth mining in the Nam Ma and Nam Neun river basins is conducted without polluting surface and groundwater resources.

The assignment will also contribute to strengthening government engagement, informing policy and legislative development, and promoting improved environmental governance and sustainable mining practices in Lao PDR.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The consultant will undertake the following tasks:

Task 1. Government engagement and project approval

- Prepare a report for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) leadership outlining the project's objectives, expected outcomes and proposed implementation approach.
- Facilitate the necessary government approvals and understand institutional concerns, mandates and sensitivities that may affect project implementation.
- Identify potential institutional and operational challenges and recommend appropriate approaches to address them.

Task 2. Support to project inception and stakeholder engagement

- Participate in and support the facilitation of the project inception workshop in Vientiane.
- Facilitate bilateral meetings with relevant government departments and key stakeholders.
- Support discussions to ensure a common understanding of the project objectives, expected outcomes and implementation arrangements.

Task 3. High-level government liaison and institutional coordination

- Facilitate bilateral engagement with DGM, DoE and DWR, as well as senior leadership within MoIC, MAE and other relevant ministries with authority over national mining policy.
- Promote improved environmental governance, operational oversight and clarification of institutional roles and responsibilities.
- Facilitate agreement on inter-agency coordination arrangements and identify opportunities to strengthen institutional collaboration.

- Provide senior-level liaison and support the resolution of issues requiring escalation.

Task 4. Engagement with the National Assembly

- Subject to the National Assembly's legislative schedule, facilitate engagement to feed relevant project findings and recommendations into the development of new mining legislation.
- Ensure alignment and coordination with the related work being undertaken by The Asia Foundation with the National Assembly.

Task 5. Facilitation of high-level government meetings and workshops

- Identify and engage an appropriate senior government official to convene relevant counterparts and technical staff for a high-level workshop to present the project and address government questions and concerns.
- Support the planning, organisation and facilitation of the high-level meeting and workshop.

Task 6. Preparation of technical briefing notes

- Prepare briefing notes drawing on international experience, global practices and insights from international experts in mining regulations and governance.
- Provide recommendations to the Lao Government on effective regulatory enforcement and environmental standards to minimise the environmental and social risks of rare earth mining while supporting a competitive and sustainable mining industry.

Task 7. Consolidated reporting and governance handover

Prepare a consolidated report for IUCN incorporating the following components:

a. **Inception and stakeholder engagement note:** Key government concerns, stakeholder mapping, institutional sensitivities and recommended engagement approaches.

b. **Draft inter-agency coordination protocol:** A proposed coordination protocol for DGM, DoE and DWR covering institutional roles, focal points, communication channels, meetings, information sharing, decision-making and escalation arrangements.

c. **Facilitation outputs:** Records of agreed actions, decisions and follow-up commitments arising from key bilateral and joint discussions.

d. **Final governance handover note:** A summary of key achievements, outstanding issues, recommendations and proposed follow-up actions to support the continuation of improved mining and environmental governance arrangements.

4. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The consultant is expected to deliver the following outputs:

No.	Deliverables	Timeline
1	Government engagement report and support for project approvals, including institutional concerns and implementation recommendations (Task 1).	November–December 2026
2	Participation in and facilitation support for the project inception workshop and bilateral stakeholder meetings (Task 2).	November–December 2026

3	High-level government engagement, inter-agency coordination, legislative engagement and support for high-level meetings and workshops (Tasks 3, 4 and 5).	November–December 2026
4	Technical briefing notes on international mining regulations, environmental standards and good practices (Task 6).	February 2027
5	Final consolidated report, including the inception/stakeholder note, draft coordination protocol, facilitation outputs and final governance handover note (Task 7).	March 2027

5. DURATION AND LEVEL OF EFFORT

The assignment will be undertaken from **15 November 2026 to 31 March 2027**, with a total level of effort of **25 working days**.

The indicative allocation of working days is as follows:

No.	Tasks	Period	Working days
1	Tasks 1, 3, 4 and 5	November–December 2026	12
2	Task 2: Inception workshop and key meetings	November–December 2026	6
3	Task 6: Preparation of briefing notes	February 2027	5
4	Task 7: Final consolidated report	March 2027	2
	Total		**25**

The consultant will work closely with the IUCN Reporting Manager and relevant project team members. The detailed schedule of activities will be agreed with IUCN during the assignment.

6. LOCATION

The assignment will primarily be based in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Any additional travel or field engagement required for the assignment will be agreed in advance with IUCN.

7. REPORTING AND COORDINATION

The consultant will report directly to Lee Xiong, IUCN Reporting Manager, and maintain close coordination with the IUCN project team.

All deliverables must be submitted in English, unless otherwise agreed with IUCN. Deliverables will be reviewed and approved by IUCN before the corresponding payments are processed.

The consultant is expected to maintain confidentiality regarding all information obtained during the assignment and comply with applicable IUCN policies and procedures.

9. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Interested consultants are requested to submit the following documents:

- An updated Curriculum Vitae (CV) demonstrating relevant professional experience and expertise.

- A brief technical proposal outlining the proposed approach and understanding of the assignment.
- A financial proposal detailing the proposed consultancy fee and any applicable costs.
- Contact details of at least two professional referees.

Submission deadline: 10 November 2026

Submission email: Lee.Xiong@iucn.org, copied : Oulaykham.PHOMMACHAK@iucn.org

Email subject: Consultancy – Technical Studies and Support for Mining and Environmental Governance in Northern Lao PDR.

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.