



# Terms of Reference (ToR) NbS Project Design Consultancy in Albania

## 1 About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Headquartered in Switzerland, IUCN Secretariat comprises around 950 staff in more than 50 countries.

Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of more than 1,300 Member organisations and some 15,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous people's organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development.

Working with many partners and supporters, IUCN implements a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects worldwide. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being.

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## 2 Background information

Climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity and magnitude of disasters, leading to a higher number of casualties as well as property and economic losses. Nature can provide cost-effective, no-regret solutions, which help increase community resilience beyond their capacity to absorb and recover from a single disaster, such as a flood or drought. IUCN has been at the forefront of developing the concept of [Nature-based Solutions](#) and has recently launched a [Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#). Evidence shows that beyond the positive impact on societies and improved management of disaster risks, Nature-based Solutions benefit habitats and biodiversity as well as support climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Countries in the Western Balkans are among the most vulnerable with respect to climate change impacts affecting numerous sectors and domains. Yet, while Nature-based Solutions are increasingly used and integrated into climate change policy and action planning globally, in particular, in relation to disaster risk reduction and community resilience, in the Western Balkans, the value derived from deploying Nature-based Solutions in response to societal challenges remains underexplored. The contributions of ecosystems and biodiversity towards climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction have not been recognised or sufficiently reflected in relevant strategies and policies in the region. Policies and planning approaches are often fragmented or do not consider capacity gaps with regards to their implementation.

Nature-based Solutions have been well recognised as offering untapped potential to the achievement of the multiple national and international priorities on mitigating climate change, improving livelihoods, reducing desertification and conserving biodiversity. Integrating Nature-based Solutions into national climate change policy and planning is one way to promote and create a more holistic perspective that acknowledges the role of ecosystems and the services they provide. Also, it is critical that investments are mobilized for nature-based solutions through other mechanisms than public sector investments. Additionally, alignment with global and regional policy frameworks, including the Paris Agreement with NDCs as its delivery vehicle, the Sendai Framework, Agenda 2030, CBD and NAPs among others, supports the achievement of international

commitments and reporting requirements. Overlaps between these frameworks as well as other activities, such as the work on UNCCD's land degradation neutrality should also be considered. Global post-2020 negotiations in particular offer opportunities for mainstreaming Nature-based Solutions into ongoing policy development and planning processes, such as updating and / or enhancing NDCs (including how to enhance climate resilience (adaptation), setting LDN targets, and defining the pathways to achieve the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

In addition to global frameworks, the Western Balkan countries strive to align national policies with EU acquis. The recently adopted EU Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy and forthcoming EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change provide new opportunities for Nature-based Solutions actions. The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans currently under development will adapt the EU Green Deal and related strategies to the regional context and align goals with priorities of the Western Balkan countries. ADAPT aims to harness the potential of Nature-based Solutions for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction by capitalising on national, regional and global processes for policymaking and planning that facilitate effective implementation.

[ADAPT: Nature-based Solutions for resilient societies in the Western Balkans](#) is a project funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and implemented by IUCN. It aims to increase ecosystem and community resilience to climate change and environmental degradation in the Western Balkans. The project works at multiple levels and involves government agencies, research institutions and civil society, which offers opportunities for knowledge exchange, wider capacity building and institutional strengthening as well as the potential for scaling up.

The project is implemented through the following three strategies:

1. Enhance knowledge and awareness of nature-based disaster risk reduction solutions among decision makers, natural resource managers and local communities with a specific focus on gender;
2. Integration of Nature-based Solutions and equitable climate-smart planning into adaptation and disaster reduction policy; and
3. Implementation of Nature-based Solutions for disaster risk reduction and their scale-up.

In order to demonstrate the value and multiple benefits of Nature-based Solutions, the project aims at implementing two pilot NbS field projects, one in Kraljevo municipality in Serbia and one in Elbasan municipality in Albania. Apart from the two pilot sites, the project will help prepare a tender dossier and feasibility studies for future NbS projects in selected pilot sites in the other four Western Balkans economies.

### **Brief overview of the development stages of the Albanian pilot site:**

In Albania, field visits and preliminary consultations with partners and stakeholders have led to the selection of the Municipality of Elbasan as a suitable area to implement a pilot NbS project. The municipality is located within the Shkumbini river basin and is particularly vulnerable to flood risk and soil erosion, due to upstream degraded forests and greater occurrence of extreme rainfall, which also increases the risk of pollution being carried by floodwaters, considering Elbasan has several metallurgical production sites. The Shkumbini river basin hosts diverse natural habitats and contains upstream the Shebenik-Jabllanice National Park, middlestream the Kuturman Nature Park and downstream the Divjake–Karavasta National Park. The pilot project is implemented in close cooperation with national and local authorities as well as local interest groups and civil society.

A team of local and international experts conducted a NbS baseline assessment in Elbasan municipality, to identify local challenges and opportunities and provide recommendations for a NbS pilot intervention. This initial assessment is multidisciplinary, covering the topics of water management, biodiversity, socio-economy and gender inclusiveness and provides three NbS measures, with related Cost-Benefits Analysis (CBA). The NbS Baseline Assessment and background studies were finalised in November 2022 and looked more specifically into conservation and biodiversity status, they analysed degradation drivers and proposed options to enhance biodiversity net-gains while providing socio-economic benefits. Two of the NbS measures recommended by the team of experts are dedicated to Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), whereas another NbS measure focuses on Flow and Bedload Transport Regulation (FBTR).

During the first phase of project development, various challenges to be addressed in Elbasan Municipality have initially been identified (solid waste disposal, high industrial pollution, erosion in upstream catchments and along the river banks, etc.) and three potential sites were suggested to implement pilot NbS measures. Following these consultations, the team of experts provided a list of potential NbS measures for three pre-selected sites. Stakeholders prioritised NbS interventions at one of the sites, Gurra stream and its catchment, in Shushica

village. In addition, they also refined the set of NbS measures related to erosion control during a validation workshop organised in July 2022.

The FLR actions suggested by the experts for this NbS pilot project can be divided in two types: 'light' and 'strong' FLR. Light FLR action is considered for an area of approximately 2.3 ha, where it is suggested to treat the area with soil contour bunds and planting local trees. Strong FLR actions targets two areas (total: 2.7 ha) that are heavily eroded, with visible gullies and steeper slope, therefore requiring to treat the gullies by blocking them with permeable stones or wood barriers (app. 60 check-dams were envisaged). In addition, gullies can be planted with suited vegetation, such as trees, annual crops or fodder grasses. For both FLR actions, economic benefits are expected from carefully choosing economic valuable tree species.

Based on discussions during field visits on torrential flashfloods, bedload and sediment transport and bank erosion, the team of experts suggested the implementation of a third NbS measure: to build up to nine large gabion check-dams within the northwards upstream part of the part of Gurra catchment (sub-catchment covering approximately 360ha). The efficiency of this option should nevertheless be demonstrated, based on hydromorphological modelling.

With the wrapping-up of the first phase of development, the project entered in its second phase, namely detailed project design and development of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework for the pilots.

The Inception report, NbS Baseline Assessment for implementation of a pilot project in Elbasan municipality and background studies constitute a useful point of departure to develop the project design study as part of this Consultancy. They provide preliminary information on the NbS sites, most suitable types of NbS and related costs and benefits to be expected. This consultancy seeks to use these inputs, verify their validity, fill potential gaps and supplement them through further data gathering and potentially hydrological modelling, consultations and site visits to design and operationalise NbS measures in the Gurra catchment for disaster risk reduction.

### 3 Scope of work

The Consultant<sup>1</sup> will work closely with the IUCN project management team, relevant IUCN units, project partners and experts and will be responsible for the tasks listed below.

#### 3.1 Specific tasks

##### 3.1.1 Detailed NbS Project Design

Based on the results and recommendations from the existing NbS Baseline Assessment report<sup>2</sup> and background reports (state of biodiversity, socio-economic analysis, gender analysis) in the village of Shushica (Municipality of Elbasan), which has been identified through a multi-stakeholder participatory process as a priority landscape for implementing NbS measures to increase ecosystem and community resilience to climate change and environmental degradation. The NbS Pilot project design will be in accordance with national and local regulatory requirements and include two separate components, as follows:

##### 3.1.1.1 Detailed Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) design

The Study will look into the following aspects (non-exhaustive list):

- Validation of pre-identified land plots for FLR interventions in Gurra Catchment, considering the presence of surrounding protected and conserved areas, existing or potential biological corridors, threatened and endangered species, threats driving species extinction risk<sup>3</sup>. Analyse land ownership, existing or potential Forest Management Plan and potential challenges and/or opportunities related to project implementation. Consider ADAPT logical framework, especially budget considerations and desired mid- and long- term impacts.
- Detailed description and design of FLR actions considering an analysis of potential for biodiversity net-gains, increased ecosystem integrity and functionality, presence of threatened

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<sup>1</sup> In this ToR, the term "Consultant" designates a consultancy company or a team of experts

<sup>2</sup> The existing baseline assessment report and background reports includes information related to socio-economic context, gender inclusiveness, basic physical characteristics of Gurra catchment and the description of potential NbS measures in the territory of the Shushica village.

<sup>3</sup> Using the Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) metric

and endangered species, presence of surrounding protected and conserved areas and existing or potential for creating bio-corridors. Choose the best locally-sourced available species for the FLR action, in accordance with expert local knowledge and experience, site location characteristics, consultations with local communities and availability of seedlings. Detailed geolocation of FLR actions (position of plots, barriers, planting, etc.) must be mapped and related data be provided in an appropriate format (GIS) to facilitate the implementation of FLR actions.

- Build on the existing gender analysis and gender inclusiveness recommendations from the NbS Baseline Assessment to design gender-responsive FLR actions in the village of Shushica, ensuring that the proposed FLR actions have differentiated benefits for women and men, and highlight how they contribute to women's empowerment and gender equality outcomes. Define FLR actions that will improve women's access to finance and increase their business opportunities. These gender-responsive FLR actions will be embedded in the technical design.
- Conduct a full CBA of proposed FLR actions in Gurra Catchment against a business as usual (BAU) scenario. The CBA will examine costs<sup>4</sup> and benefits<sup>5</sup> related to the implementation and management of the chosen FLR actions over a defined period.

### 3.1.1.2 Detailed Flow and Bedload Transport Regulation (FBTR) design

The Study will look into the following aspects (list non-exhaustive):

- Revision of pre-identified Flow and Bedload Transport Regulation intervention within the stream section located northwards upstream of the part of Gurra catchment, considering ecological continuity, threatened and endangered species, threats driving species extinction risk<sup>6</sup> and efficiency of the measures for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Analyse land ownership and potential challenges and/or opportunities related to project implementation. Consider ADAPT logical framework, especially budget considerations and desired mid- and long- term impacts;
- Detailed description and design of FBTR actions, considering an analysis of potential for biodiversity net-gains, increased ecosystem integrity and functionality, presence of threatened and endangered species and existing or potential for creating bio-corridors. Choose the best locally-sourced options for FBTR interventions (e.g. use of local resources to construct gabions), in accordance with expert local knowledge, experience, site location characteristics and consultations with local communities. Detailed geolocation of FBTR actions (e.g. position of check-dams) must be mapped and related data should be provided in an appropriate format (GIS) to facilitate the implementation of FBTR actions.
- Build on the existing gender analysis and further investigate potential for gender inclusiveness to design gender-responsive FBTR actions in the village of Shushica, ensuring that the proposed FBTR actions have differentiated benefits for women and men, and highlight how they contribute to women's empowerment and gender equality outcomes. Define FBTR actions that will improve women's access to finance and increase their business opportunities. These gender-responsive FBTR actions will be embedded in the technical design.
- Develop economic analysis of proposed FBTR intervention<sup>7</sup> against a business as usual (BAU) scenario. The CBA will examine costs<sup>8</sup> and benefits<sup>9</sup> related to the implementation and management of the chosen FBTR actions over a defined period.

### 3.1.2 Permits and approvals FLR and FBTR actions

Together with the ADAPT PMT, establish the full list of administrative steps and documentation needed to obtain all necessary approvals for the proposed FLR and FBTR actions. The Consultant will develop a workflow of all anticipated permits and approvals, with corresponding timeline and responsibilities. This will entail, liaising with administrative services of the Municipality of Elbasan, City Council, public enterprises, private land owners if necessary, private business, and other relevant actors.

<sup>4</sup> The different costs considered are: (a) civil engineering and planting costs; (b) management and maintenance costs; (c) opportunity costs of implementing the FLR action.

<sup>5</sup> Benefits come from the sale or consumption of forestry products, and any other benefits identified during the analysis.

<sup>6</sup> Using the Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) metric.

<sup>7</sup> Only the costs for civil engineering have been calculated in the NbS Baseline Assessment for the FBTR intervention.

<sup>8</sup> The different costs considered are: (a) civil engineering and, if necessary, planting costs; (b) management and maintenance costs; (c) opportunity costs of implementing the FBTR action.

<sup>9</sup> Potential sources of benefits have not been determined in the Nature-based Solutions baseline assessment for pilot project in Elbasan municipality.

### 3.1.3 Develop methodological guidance for the preparation and design of Nature-based Solutions projects.

This document should detail every necessary step for the development and implementation of a NbS pilot on the ground, especially considering the needs and requirements of IUCN's Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions. It is envisaged that the main phases in an NbS pilot project include the following stages. The below stages have been proposed. However, the Consultant is free to propose changes, additions, restructuring, in coordination with the ADAPT PMT:

- a. Planning and preparatory phase:**
  - i. definition of project scope, budget and timeline;
  - ii. pilot site identification through stakeholder consultations and best available science;
  - iii. socio-economic, gender and environmental baseline assessments.
- b. Project design & permitting phase:**
  - i. detailed project design with regards to restoration measures;
  - ii. development of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework, based on the existing MEF produced for the pilot project in Albania;
  - iii. design a management plan, that will clearly spell out a protocol for operational management of the pilot, will define clear roles, responsibilities and budget needs for maintaining and monitoring the pilot site;
  - iv. design a financial plan, that will recommend solutions for meeting the financial needs especially with regards to maintaining the pilots after the project lifetime;
  - v. application for all necessary permits and approvals.
- c. Field project implementation**
  - i. organisation and prioritisation of field work;
  - ii. training of local stakeholders for operation and maintenance;
  - iii. coordination and supervision of field work;
  - iv. implementation of the monitoring and evaluation framework, through management and maintenance plan.

There is an early draft version of the methodological guidance based on the lessons learnt gathered during the development phase of the ADAPT NbS pilot project in Serbia that can be used to prepare a comprehensive methodological guidance, especially including experience acquired through the implementation of the ADAPT NbS Pilot project in Albania.

### 3.1.4 Develop a management and maintenance plan for the FLR and FBTR actions

Following completion of the first drafting of project design, the Consultant will work closely with the Monitoring and Evaluation Expert to integrate monitoring elements into a Management and Maintenance Plan (see 3.1.3.b) specific to the NbS Pilot Project implemented in Elbasan, in coordination with the ADAPT PMT. This Management and Maintenance Technical Note will also include adaptive management actions.

### 3.1.5 Develop a financial plan for the maintenance of the FLR and FBTR actions

The Consultant will work closely with the Monitoring and Evaluation Expert to (see 3.1.3.b) to develop a financial plan, in coordination with local stakeholders, especially the Municipality of Elbasan, and the ADAPT PMT. The financial plan will accompany the management and maintenance plan, as it will identify financial needs and ensure financial sustainability of the NbS Pilot project after the project lifetime and take into consideration adaptive management actions proposed in the management and maintenance plan.

### 3.1.6 Design and perform one operation and maintenance trainings for local stakeholders

This task will entail the design of all necessary training materials, define participants list in consultation with ADAPT PMT and beneficiaries and perform the trainings. Target audience includes local and national authorities and/or other relevant stakeholders (e.g. representatives of local communities, women groups, etc.).

### 3.1.7 Coordination and supervision of field work

The Consultant will coordinate and supervise all field works related to implementation of the NbS pilot project. This will be done in collaboration and with support from the ADAPT PMT and local actors. Based on suggestions

and budgets made in the project design phase, the Consultant will support the procurement of goods and services for the pilot implementation in a transparent, timely and professional manner.

#### 4 Expected deliverables and tentative timeframe

	Deliverables	Tentative timeframe
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Forest Landscape Restoration project design</li> <li>Draft Flow and Bedload Transport Regulation project design</li> <li>Final FLR and FBTR project designs</li> </ul>	31 March 2023 31 March 2023 28 April 2023
2	Assist the ADAPT PMT and the Municipality of Elbasan to obtain all necessary permits and approvals.	15 May 2023
3	Develop a methodological guidance for the preparation and design of Nature-based Solutions projects using the IUCN Global Standard for NbS	26 May 2023
4	Develop a Management and Maintenance Plan for the FLR and FBTR pilot	15 May 2023
5	Develop a Financial Plan for maintenance for the FLR and FBTR pilot	15 May 2023
6	Design and perform 1 operation and maintenance trainings for local stakeholders	15 June 2022
7	Coordination and supervision of field work	TBD - Autumn 2023

The tasks, deliverables and timelines presented above have been prepared in accordance with the current project work plan and logframe. Tasks, deliverables and timeframes may be adjusted in accordance with adaptive project management and updated yearly work plan and logframe. This will be done in consultation between the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework consultant and the ADAPT project management team.

#### 5 Methodology

The main documents available are the ADAPT NbS Baseline Assessment Report and background reports and data (inception report, state of biodiversity, cost-benefits analysis, gender analysis, GIS data, etc.), the IUCN Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS), which provides a systematic procedure to check IUCN projects for potential adverse environmental and social impacts to assure that negative impacts are avoided or minimised to the extent possible while positive impacts are stimulated. The IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions will enable stakeholders in the Pilot landscape to establish a common understanding of the NbS concept, and the Standard will be used by the Consultant to ensure that the design of FLR and FBTR actions are in adherence to increase the effectiveness, sustainability and adaptability of these actions beyond the life of ADAPT.

#### 6 Resources

Read more about the ADAPT project, guidelines and tools related to Nature-based Solutions and Monitoring and Evaluation:

- [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#)
- [ADAPT project](#)
- [Environmental and Social Management System | IUCN](#)
- [IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation Policy](#)
- [Green Agenda for the Western Balkans](#)

#### 7 Duration of the assignment

The duration of this assignment will last over the period from the signing of the contract to **31 December 2023**. to allow for enough time for all steps in the development of the pilot projects to take place, notably, the design and coordination and supervision of field works.

## **8 Meetings and travel**

The Consultant may be requested to participate in a number of physical meetings and consultations. This will require travel that will be subject to IUCN's travel policy and potential COVID-19 travel restrictions in place at the time of planned travel.

Where possible in-person meetings will be prioritised, but if these are not possible due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and measures, then virtual meetings and validations will take place.

Approval of costs for travel will be subject to prior written approval by IUCN ECARO and submission of all receipts.

## **9 Responsibilities and communication**

The Consultant is mandated by IUCN for all the tasks and deliverables mentioned in above sections. All deliverables need to be submitted to IUCN ECARO in English by the given deadline.

## **10 Experience and qualifications**

The consultancy is open to a consultancy company or a team of experts with the following expertise:

- Ten (10) years of experience in forestry, hydrology, ecology, civil engineering, and other related fields of expertise.
- Demonstrated experience in pilot project design and coordination of field works;
- Excellent analytical skills and proven record of preparing similar project design studies and reports;
- Experience in the Western Balkan region and understanding of the regional and national regulatory contexts;
- Demonstrated experience of working in collaboration with government agencies, international and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs);
- Proven knowledge of global and EU frameworks and agreements relevant for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, including the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, Agenda 2030, EU policy i.e. EU Green Deal and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans etc.;
- Excellent English language proficiency.