

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Assignment: Firm/Organization to Develop Frameworks for Transboundary Protected Area Cooperation and OECM Recognition, Including Geospatial Analysis

Project: Southeast Asia and Pacific Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program (GEF ID: 11107)

Countries Involved: Bhutan, Lao PDR, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea (with engagement of other SEAP countries as needed)

Linked Outputs:

- **Output 2.1:** Collaboration for management of transboundary protected area landscapes facilitated and supported
- **Output 3.1:** National OECM identification and recognition processes in primary forest landscapes supported

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a global authority on the status of the natural world and measures needed to safeguard it. With more than 1,400 member organizations and the expertise of over 18,000 experts, IUCN works to advance nature conservation through science-based solutions, policy influence, and on-the-ground action.

IUCN is the Implementing Agency for the Southeast Asia and Pacific (SEAP) Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program, funded under GEF8. This program addresses systemic drivers of deforestation and biodiversity loss in the SEAP biome by promoting transboundary cooperation, inclusive governance, innovative financing, and recognition of diverse conservation practices, including Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).

The present consultancy is implemented by IUCN through its Asia Regional Office (ARO) under the Regional Coordination Project (RCP), which provides technical support and regional integration for the SEAP CFB program. The consultancy will deliver critical outputs under Component 2 (Protected Areas) and Component 3 (Primary Forests outside PAs), contributing to Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) Target 3 (30x30) and regional commitments.

1. Background

The Southeast Asia and Pacific (SEAP) Critical Forest Biome contains globally significant primary forests that underpin biodiversity conservation, carbon storage, and community resilience. These ecosystems span political boundaries and sustain millions of people, particularly Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP&LCs).

Despite national progress, significant gaps remain:

- Limited transboundary ecological connectivity.
- Fragmented governance and inconsistent policy frameworks.
- Under-recognition of conservation outside Protected Areas (PAs), especially community, private, and business initiatives.

The **GEF-8 SEAP Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program** aims to close these gaps through enhanced regional collaboration, governance innovation, and technical support. Under this program, the Regional Coordination Project (RCP) implemented by IUCN and

FAO focuses on strengthening **transboundary PA cooperation (Component 2)** and promoting recognition of **Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)** in primary forest landscapes (Component 3).

This consultancy will directly support these priorities by:

- **Developing two regional guidance documents** on transboundary cooperation and OECM recognition.
- **Conducting geospatial analysis** to identify priority transboundary areas and potential OECM sites in primary forest landscapes.
- **Facilitating multi-country dialogue** through a regional workshop for validation and south-south learning.

The work aligns with Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) Target 3 (30x30) and supports the Asia Protected Areas Partnership's (APAP) mandate for advancing connectivity and equitable governance across Asia's protected area systems. It further strengthens the mandate of the CBD Subregional Technical and Scientific Cooperation (TSC) Support Centres relevant to this initiative—namely the IUCN Asia Regional Office (ARO), which hosts the South Asia Subregional Centre, and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), which hosts the Southeast Asia Subregional Centre. By linking with these Centres, the work contributes to regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity development in support of Parties' implementation of the KM-GBF, with a strong focus on inclusive and effective conservation.

2. Objectives of the Assignment

The selected firm/organization will deliver:

1. A Regional Framework recognising Transboundary PA Cooperation potential and existing opportunities for SEAP countries, identifying enabling conditions, governance models, institutional pathways, and priority areas based on spatial connectivity and conservation values.
2. A Technical Note on potential and existing OECM recognition in Primary Forest Landscapes, outlining practical steps for policy alignment and institutionalisation safeguards, IP&LC engagement, and gender mainstreaming.
3. Geospatial Analysis and other Knowledge Products highlighting potential transboundary PA corridors and candidate OECM areas in primary forests.

3. Scope of Work and Tasks

Task A: Desk Review and Institutional Mapping

- Review legal, institutional, and policy frameworks for:
 - Transboundary PA management in Bhutan, Lao PDR, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea, consulting APAP and relevant TSC Centres
 - OECM identification and recognition, including potential business led and customary and community-led governance models.
- Identify policy gaps and opportunities for alignment with KM-GBF, ASEAN instruments, NBSAPs and respective NDCs.

Task B: Geospatial Analysis

- Compile regional spatial datasets on:
 - Protected areas, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), primary forest cover, and ecological corridors, biosphere reserves, Ramsar sites and other IDAs.
 - Business and Community-managed areas and known OECM candidates.
- Conduct connectivity modelling to identify priority landscapes for transboundary collaboration and primary forest zones suitable for OECM recognition.
- Prepare maps and analytical outputs to inform guidance documents and stakeholder discussions.

Task C: Stakeholder Consultations

- Organize bilateral virtual consultations and targeted dialogues with:
 - Government agencies and national focal points.
 - APAP member institutions and ASEAN bodies (e.g., ACB, ASOF).
 - IP&LC organizations, gender-focused NGOs, and technical partners.
 - IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas
 - CBD Subregional TSC Support Centres
- Integrate local knowledge and perspectives into draft frameworks.

Task D: Drafting Technical Guidance Notes

- Prepare two concise, action-oriented documents:
 1. *Regional Framework for Transboundary PA Cooperation* (institutional models, governance arrangements, best practice cases).
 2. *Technical Note on OECM Recognition in Primary Forests* (criteria, safeguards, reporting under KM-GBF, IP&LC and gender considerations).

Task E: Regional Workshop Design and Facilitation

- Develop concept note, agenda, and technical content for a 3-day workshop (January / February 2026, Thailand).
- Present geospatial findings and draft guidance for validation.
- Document recommendations for follow-up actions.

Task F: Finalization and Reporting

- Incorporate stakeholder feedback into final outputs.
- Submit final guidance notes, geospatial maps, and a Workshop Proceedings Report summarizing commitments and collaboration pathways.

4. Deliverables and Timeline

Deliverable	Description	Due Date
Inception Report	Methodology, work plan, stakeholder mapping, GIS approach	November 2025
Geospatial Analysis Package	Maps and datasets identifying priority transboundary & OECM areas	December 2025
Consultation Summary Report	Inputs from consultations with stakeholders	January 2026
Draft Guidance Notes (2)	1. Transboundary PA Framework 2. OECM Recognition Note	February 2026
Regional Workshop Design & Facilitation	Agenda, facilitation materials, geospatial presentations	February 2026
Final Outputs	Two validated guidance notes, geospatial outputs, workshop report	March 2026

Duration: 6 months (October 2025 – March 2026)

Estimated Budget Range: USD 50,000 - 60,000

5. Required Qualifications (Firm/Organization)

- Proven track record in conservation planning, transboundary governance, and OECM policy development.
- Demonstrated experience in geospatial analysis for biodiversity conservation, including GIS modelling and connectivity assessments.
- Strong understanding of KM-GBF Target 3, ASEAN biodiversity frameworks, and APAP mechanisms.
- Experience in multi-country stakeholder engagement, participatory processes, and technical writing.
- Team with combined expertise in:
 - Environmental governance and policy.
 - Protected and conserved areas.
 - Geospatial science and landscape connectivity.
 - Social science and gender-responsive approaches.

6. Reporting and Coordination

The firm will report to the Protected, Conserved and Heritage Areas Team (IUCN Asia Regional Office) and coordinate closely with:

- Project Management Unit.
- FAO Regional Technical Team.

- IUCN Asia Regional Technical Team,
- APAP Secretariat.
- IUCN-WCPA Specialist Groups (Transboundary Conservation & OECMs).

7. Gender Equality, IP&LC Engagement, and Safeguards

All activities must comply with GEF and IUCN Environmental and Social Safeguard Standards, ensuring:

- Meaningful participation of women, youth, and IP&LC representatives in all stages.
- Application of FPIC principles for IP&LC engagement.
- Integration of gender and equity considerations into governance frameworks and OECM processes.

8. Intellectual Property and Confidentiality

All deliverables, datasets, and reports will remain the property of IUCN and FAO. Any external use requires prior written consent.