



Terms of Reference (ToR):

Call for Consultancy Service as Safeguards, Gender and Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities Specialist

IUCN Asia Regional Office

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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. Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of 1,400 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 peoples' 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. Through its status as a Project Agency for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and an Accredited Entity for the Global Climate Fund (GCF), IUCN has been entrusted to mobilise significant sources of multilateral funding and to use its global network of Members and experts to put this funding to greatest effect.

2. Background

At the UN COP15 meeting in Montreal, Canada, the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) agreed on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), which includes a target to protect at least 30% of the planet under effective conservation. IUCN is closely supporting the implementation of the KMGBF across many countries and ecosystems. Framed by IUCN's global agenda on forests, the IUCN Asia Regional Office seeks to combat deforestation and forest degradation in areas of high biodiversity and cultural significance and restore degraded forest landscapes, while ensuring that rights-based land use is enabled, and forest benefits are sustainably managed and equitably shared.

IUCN and FAO are co-leading the GEF-8 Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Programme. The programme addresses the significant loss of primary vegetation in Southeast Asia and the Pacific ranging from Bhutan to Papua New Guinea. The Regional Coordination and Technical Support Project (RCP) acts as a framework at the regional scale to maximise the impact of three country projects in Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand, alongside efforts in other biome countries¹. The overarching objective is to

¹ For the purposes of the Global Environment Facility-funded Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Programme, the biome is considered to comprise Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea.

maintain the integrity of globally important primary forests to maximize carbon and biodiversity benefits. This will be achieved through five interconnected components: creating an enabling policy environment, improving protected area effectiveness, enhancing primary forest conservation outside protected areas, leveraging innovative financing, and strengthening programmatic coordination, knowledge management, and capacity development.

The RCP will focus on delivering outputs with a regional scope and will also respond to the specific needs identified by the country projects. It aims to establish a regional policy agenda for primary forests, improve monitoring and reporting, facilitate transboundary protected area management, and coordinate with other related global initiatives. The RCP will be executed by IUCN and FAO, with CIFOR-ICRAF and Grow Asia as additional executing partners, and will engage regional partners like ASEAN to ensure a collaborative and impactful approach towards safeguarding the region's vital primary forests.

3. Overview and Objective of the Consultancy

IUCN is seeking a Safeguards, Gender and Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities Specialist for the GEF-8 Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Programme Regional Coordination and Technical Support Project. The Specialist will work under the guidance of IUCN and FAO senior staff members, report directly to the Chief Technical Advisor of the Project Management Unit (PMU) and working closely with other members of the PMU.

The main objective of this assignment is to play a critical catalytic and facilitative role in operationalising the planned safeguards risk management across the Programme by way of the activities of the RCP and by offering technical oversight and support to the implementation of safeguards instrument at child project level to ensure there is consistent application of FAO and IUCN policy and cross-fertilisation of project experiences. This will include providing clear, comprehensive, and practical guidance on integrating environmental/social due diligence into project implementation, with a particular focus on gender, indigenous peoples/ethnic minorities, forest governance/land tenure, protected areas, and community-level institutions. The Specialist will be responsible for all aspects of environmental and social risks management for the initial phase of the project (with possible extension).

4. Description of Tasks

The Safeguards, Gender and Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities Specialist will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Act as Safeguards, Gender and Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities Focal Point in the PMU.
- Develop a workplan with priority actions and required resources for the consultancy period, spread across the life of the project.
- Facilitate Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes in all target landscapes and communities as relevant to the RCP's regional support role to child projects, ensuring it meets FAO, IUCN and GEF requirements.
- Conduct consultative validation of the project's Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Gender Analysis and Action Plan (GAAP), and revise them into an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) and updated GAAP as necessary. Review child project-level Indigenous Peoples/ Ethnic Minorities Plans, while proposing, as required, a guiding plan for RCP activities.
- Prepare and deliver safeguards-themed sessions/days at suitable RCP workshops, with a special focus on women and Indigenous Peoples/ethnic minorities.

- Develop and agree upon a capacity building plan, including cross-country learning sessions, for relevant RCP and country project personnel and partner institutions focusing on safeguards, gender, and IP/ethnic minority issues.
- Compile a working list of tools, guidance, data, resources, contacts, and potential institutional counterparts at the regional level useful for safeguards, gender, and IP/ethnic minority protection and empowerment for the Integrated Programme.
- Develop a brief but strategic institutional partnership building plan at the regional level on safeguards, gender, and IPs relevant to the Program's work and operational context. This includes identifying policy-informing technical working groups within regional institutions.
- Establish and maintain a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) and Grievance Log for the RCP, in line with the project document and FAO guidelines.
- Establish and animate a Safeguards Community of Practice incorporating key individuals and institutions across the Programme and within the region, including relevant persons from other Integrated Programmes and agency resource persons.
- Undertake all tasks required to ensure delivery of the major safeguards and gender-related activities of the RCP, with special reference to the ESMF/ESMP, GAAP, and IPP/EMP (or guiding plan).
- In consultations with country projects, develop a common safeguards, gender and IP framework for the Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Programme, ensuring it fits the requirements of all projects (RCP + country projects) and that it maintains linkages across projects.
- Ensure the application of FAO protocols within the RCP regarding FAO policy on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and advise on a monitoring protocol, in consultation with FAO experts.
- Identify the most relevant tools and capacity building opportunities on the topic of land governance in forest ecosystems, including the application of FAO's related Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT), and ASEAN's guidelines on customary tenure, particularly concerning working effectively with women and IPs/ethnic minorities.
- Provide support to country projects to mainstream both safeguards and gender-aware good practice on topics relevant to at least two countries, based on demand and cost-sharing.
- Arrange hands-on peer learning expert events on safeguards and/or gender with key actors from the country level, subject to cost sharing.

5. Key Deliverables and Timeline

The consultancy will start after signature of the contract and should end no later than February 27th 2026. Here follows the list of the deliverables and deadlines. Specific deliverables and timelines will be agreed upon in the initial work plan and refined periodically. Indicative deliverables include:

Action / Deliverables	Deadline
Report including a detailed work plan for the first year and an outline for the project duration.	October 15, 2025

Validated new/updated ESMP, GAAP, and IPP/EMP (or regional guiding plan).	November 14, 2025
Shared safeguards, gender and IP framework for the programme with uniform features, clear linkages, and reporting mechanisms.	November 14, 2025
Capacity Building Plan for safeguards, gender, and IP/ethnic minority issues.	November 14, 2025
Established and operational GRM and Grievance Log for the RCP	December 12, 2025
Materials and reports from safeguards-themed workshops/sessions	February 27, 2026
Strategic institutional partnership building plan for safeguards, gender, and IP issues at the regional level	February 6, 2026
Regular progress reports as agreed with the PMU	monthly
Final consultancy report summarizing activities, achievements, lessons learned, and recommendations	February 27, 2026

6. Required Experience and Qualifications

The consultant should possess the following qualifications and experience:

- An advanced university degree in agriculture, natural resource management, environmental science, rural development, social empowerment, or a similar relevant field.
- At least 7 years of progressively responsible experience in the formulation, review, and application of environmental and social management frameworks, impact assessments, management plans, and reporting frameworks, with a particular focus on issues of gender and/or indigenous peoples.
- Fluency in English is mandatory (writing, speaking, and reading). Working knowledge of Southeast Asian language(s) is an advantage.
- Experience in stakeholder engagement, grievance handling, and disclosure in FAO and/or in other development organizations is considered an asset.
- Experience in rural development in one or more of the project countries (Lao PDR, PNG, Thailand) or in the Southeast Asia/Pacific Region is considered an advantage.
- Experience with the governance of forested landscapes, protected areas (formally or locally recognized, state or community run), biodiversity conservation, land tenure (especially customary tenure) are all considered assets.
- Familiarity with FAO and/or IUCN policies is preferred, particularly safeguards and gender policies.
- Familiarity with the environmental and social safeguard requirements and/or the gender and/or Indigenous Peoples policies of the project's partners (IUCN, UNDP, GEF) is considered an asset.

- Experience working with governments on related issues in Southeast Asia and Papua New Guinea is preferred.

7. Application

Interested candidates are invited to submit the following in one document by email to the following email address: noppawee.chamnanpai@iucn.org and with the subject "Safeguards, Gender and Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities Specialist Application".

- A detailed curriculum vitae highlighting specific experience in relation to the subject of this consultancy.
- A written motivation regarding their suitability for the consultancy service and proposed methodology to conduct the tasks.
- A financial proposition in USD for completion of the required tasks, including the daily rate and availability over the project period.

8. Evaluation of Applications

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: (i) profile and experience in relation to the subject of the consultancy, (ii) the methodology proposed for conducting the tasks, and (iii) the financial offer.