ANNEX I. Terms of Reference.

Project title: PODONG: Indigenous Peoples Initiative
Start date: upon signature
Final date: 15 March 2026

Background

The PODONG Indigenous Initiative is a globally co-designed, Indigenous-led effort that aims to elevate and support Indigenous Peoples' vital contributions to biodiversity conservation and climate action. With a name that symbolizes “abundance” and Indigenous women’s wisdom (from the Marma language in Bangladesh), PODONG embodies a transformative approach to funding and conservation — one that is equitable, rights-based, and grounded in Indigenous leadership and knowledge systems.

The initiative is co-led by the IUCN in conjunction with IUCN Indigenous Peoples’ Organization (IPO) Members and the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB). It responds to urgent global needs: the biodiversity crisis, climate change, inadequate funding for Indigenous-led efforts, and the persistent marginalization of Indigenous communities in global conservation and climate finance.

Purpose

Indigenous Peoples are essential custodians of biodiversity, climate resilience, and sustainable natural resource management. Despite their vital role, Indigenous Peoples continue to face structural barriers in accessing direct, timely, and appropriate climate, conservation, and development finance. Financial flows often bypass Indigenous-led organizations due to complex fiduciary requirements, intermediary-heavy disbursement structures, and limited recognition of Indigenous leadership and governance systems.

To bridge this gap, PODONG is seeking to develop a dedicated financial indigenous mechanism that will enable scaling-up direct, inclusive, and culturally appropriate access to financial resources, by Indigenous Peoples, respecting their rights, governance, and self-determined priorities.

Objectives and deliverables

The consultant will be responsible for delivering the following products:

1. **Full and effective participatory stakeholder engagement**

- Conduct targeted consultations with Indigenous organizations, Indigenous Peoples’ representatives, financial institutions, donor agencies, NGOs, and relevant UN and multilateral bodies[1].
- Map Indigenous Peoples preferred financial access pathways (based on the above deliverable), governance structures, capacity needs (the consultants will use a previous capacity needs assessment conducted by IUCN ICI programme), and previous experiences with financial mechanisms.
- Facilitate co-design discussions and participatory workshops (in person during the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity Related to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (SB8J-1), from 27 to 30 October 2025, hosted by the Government of Panama and online) to ensure the future mechanism is culturally appropriate, operationally feasible, and designed to enhance Indigenous Peoples’ financial autonomy.

[1] The list of potential stakeholders to be interviewed will be elaborated jointly with IUCN. IUCN will also facilitate contact and access to such stakeholders to facilitate the interviews.

- Develop visual tools (e.g. stakeholder maps, financial advisory structure diagrams, process flows) to clearly illustrate the proposed support structures, decision-making pathways, and fund access procedures taking into consideration Indigenous perspectives, capacities and needs.

  Deliverable 1: A stakeholder engagement and financial advisory structure report (Word document, approximately 15-20 pages), summarizing key consultation outcomes, Indigenous Peoples' preferred access pathways, and a proposed financial advisory/support structure to enable direct, autonomous, and sustainable financial access.

  Deliverable : A visual representation package (at least 3 visuals) in editable formats:

  - **Visual 1: Stakeholder engagement map -** A diagram showing key stakeholder groups, their relationships, and their roles in the financial mechanism design process.
  - **Visual 2: Financial access pathway flowchart -** A process flow illustrating how Indigenous Peoples would access funds at scale through the proposed financial mechanism, including key steps, entry points, and any required support.
  - **Visual 3: Financial advisory structure diagram -** A schematic showing the financial advisory and capacity support structure, including links to technical partners, potential intermediaries, and Indigenous governance bodies.

2. A analytical report and technical review of financial mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples

- Review global, regional, and national financial mechanisms and instruments (such as Tenure Facility, other Indigenous-led funds like Ikhana Fund, Cultural Survival's Keepers of the Earth Fund, and Podáali) small grant programs, trust funds, direct access entities, payments for ecosystem services, and REDD+ benefit-sharing systems) with a specific focus on[2]:
  - Direct accessibility for Indigenous Peoples.
  - Financial flows, scale, and efficiency.
  - Fiduciary, environmental, and social safeguard structures.
  - Decision-making autonomy and Indigenous governance inclusion.

- Identify and assess barriers, bottlenecks, and success factors based on case studies and consultations.
- Special attention will be paid to better understanding incubation processes undertaken until the funds became independent.

  Deliverable 1: A comprehensive, evidence-based report (approx. 50–60 pages) that maps and analyzes existing financial mechanisms (global, regional, national) relevant to Indigenous Peoples; this report must include a clear picture of what has worked and what has not worked with regards to IPs access to nature and climate finance as well as describing successful incubation processes. It must also present specific recommendations to ensure scalability and inclusive access by IPs.

  Deliverable 2: A visually engaging slide deck (approx. 15–20 slides) summarizing key findings and recommendations of the analytical report.

[2] The consultants will use available information from IUCN such as the Diagnostic Study on IPLCs Managed Funds ordered by the Forest and Farm Facility.

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3. **PODONG Financial Mechanism**

- Develop the proposed financial mechanism's architecture including:
  - Suggested Governance and decision-making structures that guarantees Indigenous leadership.
  - Access modalities that ensure direct financing and minimize intermediary layers.
  - Fiduciary management structures that balance accountability with accessibility.
  - Step-by-step process for fund mobilization, disbursement, capacity strengthening, and monitoring.
- Analize financing options (e.g., blended finance, results-based payments, climate-linked funds) that can be integrated into the mechanism.
- Design a roadmap for phased implementation plan identifying short-, medium-, and long-term actions, potential pilot activities, and critical enabling conditions.
- Ensure the process is consultative and participatory throughout the design phase.

Deliverable 5: A detailed financial mechanism design document (Word document, approximately 30-40 pages) including governance charts, stepwise implementation flow diagrams, tables, and risk management frameworks.

Commented [1]: I suggest to restructure this and to have the road map as one deliverable and the financial mechanism as another.

Regarding the financial mechanism, the safeguards, fiduciary structures step bystep proces to fun mobilization, etc. We risk having to do this twice, once for the time while the mechanism is in IUCN and another for when the mechanism is independent.

For example, it makes no sense to prepare an entire set of safeguards procedures and standards while they are still in IUCN, it will have to work with some adjustment to what htye currently have and then a new set is needed for when it is independent. Even more is the case with the fiduciary management, it makes no sense to do it for when they are in iucn, iucn fiduciary structure is in place and has to be used, they were accredited with that structure and need to follow it. In the case of the step by step, we might need one for when they are in iucn and another for when they are independent.

Timeframe and budget

The Assignment must be completed by 15 March 2026.

Item	Deliverable	Due Date
1	Stakeholder engagement and financial advisory structure report	December 15, 2025
2	Detailed consultative process	December 15, 2025
3	Landscape analysis report	January 15, 2026
4	Slide deck (deliverable 1,2)	January 15, 2026
5	Draft financial mechanism design document	January 30, 2026
6	Final financial mechanism design document	March 15, 2026

Payment Schedule

Payments will be made in tranches upon acceptance of the following deliverables:
- Tranche 1 I 30,000 CAD: Stakeholder engagement report and visuals (Deliverables 1 & 2)
- Tranche 2 I 30,000 CAD: Landscape analysis report (Deliverables 3 & 4)
- Tranche 3 I 30,000 CAD: Final Financial Mechanism Design Document (Deliverable 5)

Reporting

The consultant will report to Verónica Ruiz, Senior Climate and Resilience Manager.

Requirements

Suitable individuals or firms for the assignment will need to have:

- Proven professional experience and track record in the financial sector including networks, financial service providers, regulators and other key actors.

- Proven expertise and experience in working on developing financial mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples and Local communities.
- At least 5 years of demonstrated expertise in Indigenous rights, governance systems, and financial inclusion.
- Minimum of 5 years of experience conducting participatory processes and stakeholder consultations with Indigenous organizations and communities.
- Experience in developing and managing data collection in the context of the target groups.
- Proven ability to develop complex financial architecture and visualize multi-layered processes.
- Experience in analysing quantitative and qualitative data sets.
- Advanced degree(s) or equivalent in economics, development studies, finance, or related field.
- Full proficiency in English and Spanish are a must, with solid writing and presentation/facilitation skills. Frech would be a valuable asset.