TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR NATIONAL SPECIALIST CONSULTANT

POST TITLE: National Specialist Consultant to undertake Review and Designation of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) Sites in Savannakhet Province

AGENCY/PROJECT NAME: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) / Sustainable Forest and Land Management in the Dry Dipterocarp Forest Ecosystems of Southern Lao PDR (SAFE Ecosystems Project)

LOCATION OF ASSIGNMENT: Vientiane and project sites in Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR

PLACE OF ASSIGNMENT: Vientiane, Kaysone, and five target districts (Phalanxay, Phin, Songkhone, Thapanthong, Xonnabouly) in Savannakhet Province

DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT: Maximum of 60 days over a 3-month period

STARTING DATE: 16 December 2019, or as soon as possible

1) GENERAL BACKGROUND

The SAFE Ecosystems Project

The UNDP-GEF Sustainable Forest and Land Management in the Dry Dipterocarp Forest Ecosystems of Southern Lao PDR Project (SAFE Ecosystems Project) aims to support the government of Lao PDR to facilitate a transformative shift towards sustainable land and forest management in the forested landscape of Savannakhet Province. This sustainable management will help to secure critical wildlife habitats, conserve biodiversity and maintain a continuous flow of multiple services such as the provision of quality water and flood prevention. The project will be implemented over a period of six-years from May 2016 to May 2022 by the Department of Forestry (DOF) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The Dry Dipterocarp Forest (DDF) ecosystems located in Savannakhet Province are recognized for being globally important as habitat for a number of globally significant and threatened species, and nationally important for their provision of numerous ecosystem services that benefit the people of Lao PDR. In recent decades, DDF ecosystems and the species within them have come under increasing threat from large-scale conversion of forest, degradation of forest ecosystem services, and species loss.

Recognizing their global and national importance, the Government of Lao PDR (GoL) has prioritized the conservation and sustainable management of the Dry Dipterocarp Forests landscape of Savannakhet province. As a measure of the GoL’s commitment to the DDF landscape, it has selected this area to be the site of the newest National Protected Area in the country, and as a demonstration site for testing the implementation of new national policies and processes related to Strategic Environmental Assessment, Integrated Spatial Planning, and High Conservation Value Forests. The GoL has also identified this landscape as suitable for the development and implementation of innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable forest management and protected area management, as well as community participation in protected areas management, ecotourism programs, and livelihoods programs linked to conservation outcomes through formal Conservation Agreement mechanisms.
This SAFE Ecosystems Project will seek to strengthen land and resource use planning capacities and procedures, and the policies and regulations that govern them, while simultaneously expanding and strengthening the management of resources on the ground by government agencies, local communities and private sector actors. Furthermore, the project is developing innovative financing mechanisms and programs (including ecotourism and livelihoods programs) that can ensure the sustainability of improved land use and resource management approaches.

**Existing intact forests designated as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) to strengthen ecological connectivity between forest complexes**

Conservation and Protection forests are not adequately zoned for biodiversity and ecosystem services, which has led to the degradation of areas of natural forest that provide critical habitat and/or important ecosystem services. There is an urgent need to identify such areas and designate them as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) and/or place them under increased PA protection categories/zones. During project preparation, six candidate sites for HCVF designation were identified, based primarily on identifying areas that include significant Dry Dipterocarp Forest ecosystems that provide important habitat, connectivity with existing conservation areas, and/or community benefits.

The project will support the designation of approximately 193,684 hectares of intact forests within the five targeted districts of Savannakhet Province as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs). Designation of sites as HCVFs is intended to maintain and/or enhance critical environmental and social values and to provide a greater degree of recognition and protection to ensure their long-term maintenance, particularly if they may be negatively impacted by practices undertaken in logging concessions, agricultural plantations or other production activities. This involves through greater attention to deciding and implementing appropriate management measures and monitoring both the implementation and effectiveness of these measures.

The project will support a process to adapt HCVF categories to the specific conditions of the Lao PDR. Based on that, the project will follow the step by step approach developed by the “HCV Resource Network” to identify, manage and monitor the selected HCVF sites, starting with a more thorough and detailed HCVF Assessment process, including stakeholder consultations, analysis of existing information and the collection of additional information where necessary. The HCVF Assessment will result in a report that will finalize the selection of HCVF sites and categories, and as far as possible will provide information on areas of habitat, key resources, and critical areas that support such values. Once the selected areas and relevant HCVF designations have been confirmed / revised, the project will define and mark the boundaries of the HCVFs; and support community capacity building for participatory management of HCVF areas.

Finally, the project also will undertake education and awareness raising programs in Savannakhet Province for provincial and district policymakers and natural resource managers, for communities within and adjacent to areas of dry dipterocarp forest, and for the general public. These programs will provide outreach and education on new and existing regulations and policies related to resource management and use, including changes resulting from the expansion of existing protected areas and the designation of HCVFs.

### 2) OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

National expertise is required to: (i) perform an assessment to finalize the selection of HCVF sites and categories at the SAFE Ecosystems Project site, (ii) provide information on areas of habitat, key resources, and critical areas that support such values, and (iii) once the selected areas and relevant HCVF designations have been confirmed/revised, assist the project will define and mark the boundaries of the HCVFs.

For this assignment, the SAFE Ecosystems Project is seeking a National Independent Consultant/Expert to work in close consultation with the UNDP Lao PDR Country Office and relevant agencies of the Government of Lao PDR (Savannakhet Province PAFO, DAFOs, and District Offices of Industry and Commerce of the 5 target districts).

### 3) SCOPE OF WORK
Under supervision of the UNDP Technical Specialist and the SAFE Ecosystems Project National Project Director supported by the Project Manager and Assistant Project Manager, the National Independent Consultant/Expert will be required to undertake the following duties:

- Conduct an initial desk study to review the Preliminary Assessment Report for proposed HCVF Sites within the SAFE Ecosystems Project, as well as other referenced documents.
- Once initial desk study has been completed, conduct a review of the proposed HCVF sites and other relevant materials in consultation with relevant stakeholders.
  - This will need to be done through an inception workshop implemented in Savannakhet Province.
- Conduct field missions and analysis for each of the proposed HCVF sites.
  - Hold consultations with adjacent communities.
  - Work with and obtain confirmation with local authorities regarding the HCVF sites.
- Once field missions have been completed, it will be necessary to prepare a preliminary report collating all relevant information on the HCVF sites, as well as documenting community consultations.
  - As part of this report, develop options for management approaches for each of the sites.
  - The report and recommendations on the way forward will need to be presented to relevant stakeholders at a meeting/workshop (to be determined either in Savannakhet or Vientiane).
- Conduct a second field mission to the designated HCVF sites for clarification of management practices and boundaries.
  - It will be necessary to re-visit adjacent communities, as well as relevant District Authorities.
  - Mapping of HCVF sites to followed-up by ground-truthing of boundaries for signage placement.
- Prepare final draft report; to include a synthesis of data collected and selected HCVF management practices.
  - This report should reflect that different HCVF sites will have different management requirements.
  - Draft report to be disseminated to relevant staff at DOF, PAFO and DAFO for review, edits and comments.
- Prepare and facilitate a final workshop (to be determined either in Savannakhet or Vientiane) to validate collated.
  - Relevant staff at DOF, PAFO and DAFO make final comments on the results.
- Based on results of workshop and comments by relevant staff at DOF, PAFO and DAFO, submit Final Report for approval.

### 4) DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT, DUTY STATION AND EXPECTED PLACES OF TRAVEL

This is a 60-day consultancy service, starting from December 2019. The National Independent Consultant/Expert will be required to travel to Kaysone and the project site (HCVF sites in the five target districts in Savannakhet Province) for at least 80% of the time in close consultation with the UNDP Lao PDR Country Office and relevant agencies of the Government of Lao PDR (PAFO, DAFOs of Savannakhet and DOF).

The National Independent Consultant/Expert must work closely with UNDP Natural Resource Management, Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction Unit, the UNDP Technical Specialist, the SAFE Ecosystems Project Management Team and relevant Government of Lao officers at provincial and district level within the target areas.

### 5) FINAL PRODUCTS

**Output 1: An Inception Report including a methodology and workplan** to be developed within one week after signing of the contract.

(i) The methodology and workplan should provide proposed activities, timeframe, as well as key stakeholders to be consulted in order to complete the tasks and achieve outputs based on the activities listed within the above *Scope of Work* above.

(ii) At least 80% of consultancy days (40 days) must be spent in Savannakhet Province coordinating with relevant Provincial and District Authorities to complete Outputs 2-4.
Output 2: Submission of a Preliminary HCVF Report upon completing first round of field missions and analysis for each of the proposed HCVF sites.
(i) Completion of inception workshop implemented in Savannakhet Province.
(ii) Consultations with adjacent communities.
(iii) Consultations with local authorities regarding the HCVF sites.
(iv) Develop options for management approaches for each of the sites.
(v) Presentation of preliminary results to relevant stakeholders at a Pro vincial meeting/workshop.

Output 3: Submission of Field Report based on second field mission.
(i) Clarification of management practices and boundaries of HCVF sites.
(ii) Re-visit adjacent communities, as well as relevant District Authorities.
(iii) Mapping of HCVF sites to followed-up by ground-truthing of boundaries for signage placement.

Output 4: Facilitation of a Final Workshop and submission of the Final Report
(i) Synthesis of selected HCVF management practices.
(ii) Reflect that different HCVF sites will have different management requirements.
(iii) Validation by DOF/PAFO/DAFO of the final results.

6) PROVISION OF MONITORING AND PROGRESS CONTROLS

The National Independent Consultant/Expert will report to the UNDP Technical Specialist and the SAFE Ecosystems Project - National Project Director while copying the UNDP Programme Analyst, the Project Manager and the Assistant Project Manager. The consultant is required to have regular meetings to report on the progress with the UNDP team and DOF, PAFO and 5 DAFOs (implementing partner).

7) DEGREE OF EXPERTISE AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Holds at least a Masters’ Degree from a recognized University in the subject conservation biology, environmental governance, protected areas management, natural resource management or relevant fields. A Bachelor’s Degree in combination with a minimum of 10 additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced degree.
- At least 5 years working experience working with High Conservation Value Forests, conservation biology, environmental governance, protected areas management, natural resource management or relevant fields.
- Expert knowledge and experience with High Conservation Value Forests, natural resources and biodiversity.
- Proven ability to analyze complex issues, draw relevant conclusions and produce high-quality, comprehensive technical reports.
- Experience working with Lao PDR government counterparts and local communities
- Excellent communication and consultation skills to liaise with a range of stakeholders including district and provincial authorities, local communities, etc. and ability and experience to conduct training
- Ability to lead and work with teams and to achieve quality outputs under tight timelines
- Excellent report writing skills (in English); excellent command of Lao language.
- Ability and willingness to travel remote areas within Lao PDR.
- Knowledge of UNDP and the UN system is an advantage.

8) REVIEW TIME REQUIRED

Payment schedule will be on an agreed output-basis. UNDP- SAFE Ecosystems Project require at least two weeks for review and approval of delivered outputs before issuing payments.
9) SCOPE OF BID PRICE AND SCHEDULE OF PAYMENT

This is a 60 working days assignment spread over 3 months. Fixed lump sum output-based fees will be paid as per agreed timeframe and satisfactory certification of receipt of outputs by the UNDP/GEF SAFE Ecosystems Project under the Department of Forestry, MAF.

Total amount for professional service fee, DSA, air/ground transportation from Vientiane Capital to/from project site (Phalanxay, Phin, Songkhone, Thapanthong, and Xonnabouly Districts, Savannakhet Province) and miscellaneous, and communication costs are included in the lump sum amount.

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<tr>
<th>Deliverables/Description of payment</th>
<th>Deliverable timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25% of the professional fees shall be paid upon submission and acceptant of below outputs:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Output 1</strong>: An Inception Report including a methodology and workplan to be developed within one week after signing of the contract.</td>
<td>Within 1 week of signing contract</td>
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<tr>
<td>25% of the professional fees shall be paid upon submission and acceptant of below outputs:</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Output 2</strong>: Submission of a Preliminary HCVF Report upon completing first round of field missions and analysis for each of the proposed HCVF sites.</td>
<td>Within 1 month of signing contract</td>
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<td>25% of the professional fees shall be paid upon submission of below outputs:</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Output 3</strong>: Submission of Field Report based on second field mission.</td>
<td>Within 2 months of signing contract</td>
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<td>25% of the professional fees shall be paid upon submission of below outputs:</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Output 4</strong>: Facilitation of a Final Workshop and submission of the Final Report</td>
<td>Within 3 months of signing contract</td>
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10) PRESENCE OF THE CONSULTANT ON DUTY STATION

If the assignment requires full time presence on UNDP premises, a sound justification on why a full-time presence is required.

- [ ] NONE
- [x] PARTIAL
- [ ] INTERMITTENT
- [ ] FULL-TIME

11) ANNEXES TO TOR

This TOR is approved by:

Signature

Name and Designation

Date of Signing