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**Project Title:** Enabling the Implementation of Georgia's Forest Sector Reform (ECO.Georgia)

**Project/Activity Number:** 20.2275.4-007/C3A1.-50 % & C3A2.-50%

**Title of the assignment:** Assessment of existing capacities of 8 target municipalities and developing concept for improved public participation in the forest sector

## 1. Brief information on the project

Climate change impacts and the demand for fuelwood from rural population put significant pressure on Georgia's forests: up to 90% of rural households (1.43 million people) rely on fuelwood for their energy needs. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that households use obsolete technologies, such as traditional stoves with a lifetime of two years and an efficiency of 35% or less. Fuelwood demand exceeds sustainable harvesting levels, considering reduced productivity of many forests in the country because of extensive forest degradation. This forest degradation leads to a loss of carbon absorption capacity which is projected to decrease by five times between 1990 and 2030.

In order to address this negative development, the project "Enabling the Implementation of Georgia's Forest Sector Reform - ECO.Georgia" supports the Government of Georgia to implement its transformational forest sector reform agenda to put the entire nation's forests under the framework for sustainable forest management (SFM). It will do so by supporting the establishment of a nation-wide SFM system (Component 1) and in parallel promoting market development for energy efficient appliances and alternative fuels (Component 2) to address the main driver of forest degradation. The project will safeguard the reform implementation by diversifying livelihood opportunities and strengthening local self-governance in forest adjoining rural communities (Component 3).

The project is funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) with GIZ being the project's accredited entity. The German contribution is part of the wider German support in the priority area "Environmental policy, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the South Caucasus", which aims at the sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity conservation and climate protection, particularly for the benefit of the rural population. Similarly, both the share of renewables in the energy composition as well as the energy efficiency levels will increase.

Especially rural households using firewood as their source of heating energy will benefit from improved air quality and reduced fuelwood demand through eased access to energy efficient stoves. Forest-related small and medium-sized enterprises and their employees will receive support to improve economic efficiency and environmental sustainability of their business activities. Additionally, staff members of relevant public institutions (National Forestry Agency NFA, Department of Environmental Supervision DES, Environmental Information and Education Center EIEC, Rural Development Agency RDA, municipalities) will receive direct support through human capacity development measures and grant finance.

ECO.Georgia primarily contributes to achieving the SDG 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems) of the 2030 Agenda of the UN, but also to achieving SDG 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all), SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts), SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere), and SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

The duration of ECO.Georgia is from April 2021 until June 2028.

## 2. Description of the Assignment

### 2.1. Context

The GIZ has been supporting the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), main implementing partners: its Biodiversity and Forestry Department (BFD), the National Forestry Agency (NFA), Department of the Environmental Supervision and Rural Development Agency (RDA), as well as Environmental Information and Education Centre (EIEC) in different directions dealing with forest sector reform, with strong focus on introduction of close-to-nature Sustainable Forest Management into forestry practice.

In addition to ECO.Georgia's Component 1 ("Sustainable Forest Management") and Component 2 ("Market Development for Energy Efficiency and Alternative Fuels"), component 3 funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) aims to ensure a socially balanced transition to the new forest management approach, taking into account the needs of rural households ("Livelihood opportunities and local self-governance in forest management"). The overall goal of the SDC project entitled "Strengthening Livelihoods and Social Inclusion in Georgia's Forest Sector Reform" is to diversify the livelihood opportunities and strengthen local self-governance in forest management to increase incomes and reduce socio-economic disparities.

To ensure that municipal authorities and citizens have the relevant technical and human capacities to participate in the sustainable management of forests, the SDC project will develop and introduce municipal-level tools, practices, plans and necessary capacities for participatory sustainable forest management and conservation. Additionally, mechanisms at the local level to better protect the interests of adversely affected stakeholders will be developed, promoted and tested.

The issues related to municipal forest management (MFM) in Georgia are still at an early stage though, at this time the relevant legislation is being developed and the first steps are being taken, despite of the progress deferent issues, such as:

- The MF definition,
- Readiness of municipalities,
- Interest of municipalities
- opportunities in regards of forest management

needs to be assessed in order to plan appropriate activities.

Currently the concept of municipal forest management is at a very nascent stage in Georgia. For the time being, most municipalities lack a strategic approach, practical instruments and tools, economic and technical planning, awareness and human skills and capacities to actively engage in sustainable forest management as stipulated in the new Forest Code.

The new Forest Code in Georgia foresees in the medium to long-term the optional management of forests by municipalities. Currently municipalities are able to establish municipal forests in existing municipal lands, however, the new Forest Code will enable municipalities to request 'forests of local importance' after 2030, which could include forests currently under management of the National Forestry Authority (NFA).

Additional important challenges are the involvement of local population and their participation in forest management planning and implementation (mainly by NFA, in future also in municipalities). Participation in Forest Management Plan (FMP) development is implemented on an elementary level, i.e., without providing sufficient opportunities for local stakeholders to participate in decision-making or to benefit from FMP implementation.

Existing mechanisms and instruments are insufficient to materialize this approach. This is paired with a lack of awareness and technical capacities in local communities needed to participate in potential forest management mechanisms.

## **2.2. Objective(s) of the assignment and work packages/tasks**

The objective of the assignment is:

1. **Capacity Assessment of Municipal Administrations:** Assessment of a) the capacities of 8 municipalities (Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri, Lanchkhuti, Tianeti, Akhmeta, Telavi, Kvareli and Dedoplistskaro) for MFM and b) their political willingness to engage in MFM.
2. **Concept development for improved public participation in forest management planning and implementation:** a) Analysis of the existing participation mechanisms, platforms and approaches in the 8 municipalities, b) Analysis of the participation mechanisms, platforms and approaches in other sectors related to natural resources management and c) Development of a concept for improved public participation.

**In particular, the consultants should fulfil the following tasks:**

### **Work package 1: Capacity Assessment of Municipal Administrations – 40 working days**

1. Submit research concept for the capacity assessment of municipal administrations.
2. Conducting consultation meetings with administrations to learn their political, financial and other interest and perception/awareness in terms of municipal forest management, as well as study the existing capacities of municipal administration in regard to potential municipal forest management. The assessment must follow the logic and consider the interest of each municipality in terms of forest management (recreational forest, commercial) and taking into account the requirements of existing legislation (Forest Code). Based of that analysis the study should identify best scenarios for forest management unite and its components (including resources, budget etc.). Also analyse the information presented in the SDC research study on legal framework of MFM and in addition assess:
  - Institutional set up and human resources
  - Existing equipment and machinery for MFM in possession of the municipality administration
  - Budget structure
  - Financing requirements for each municipality to manage forest based on they interest
3. Development first draft of the report and conduct consultation workshop to verify the findings with detailed capacity assessment, capacity needs description and political and administrative interest of each municipality and provide recommendations on how to improve capacities to increase readiness on MFM.
4. Final draft based on stakeholder consultation.

### **Work package 2: Concept development for improved public participation in forest management planning and implementation: - 40 working days**

5. Conducting consultation meetings with all 8 target municipal administrations, representation of relevant Ministries in Municipality, regional governor's office, NGO and internationally supported projects to identify existing mechanisms of public participations natural resources management sector of each target municipality
6. Conduct consultation meetings with ECO.Georgia local and international team members dealing with elaboration of Akhmeta and Tianeti forest management plans to collect best

practice examples, as well use the findings from the report on sharing best practice approaches in public participation of Tusheti PL and document the lessons learned from the reviewed paper.

7. Assessment of existing mechanisms of public participation in forest sector and planning and implementation of forest management plans, as well as relevant normative acts Elaboration of the draft of concept on “Improved Public Participation Management”, considering ethnical and religious diversity, and youth, based on best available at municipal level practices and internationally recognised approaches in public participation. Ensure that the concept is gender-sensitive and include the needs and interests of women. Ensure specific outreach with municipal level women’s rooms.
8. Discuss concept with project partners and update it according to their feedback. Conduct the process in the following stages:
  - Present the concept to main partners such as - MEPA, NFA, DES, EIEC, ECO.Georgia, and representatives of the target Municipalities;
  - Update the concept based on feedback from consulted partners;
  - Submission of the draft concept on “Improved Public Participation Management” to BFD to be discusses within NFP
9. Develop final draft of the concept considering all comments collected during NFP process.

#### **General considerations:**

- To implement tasks the consultants have to visit all 8 target municipalities (Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri, Lanchkhuti, Tianeti, Akhmeta, Telavi, Kvareli and Dedoflitskaro) to conduct working meetings consultation and interviews, as well as participation in at least 10 workshops
- Review international best practices such as close-to-nature forest management and its approaches especially in public participation
- The consultant is expected to work very closely with MEPA: BFD and local government
- The consultant is expected to coordinate very closely with project regional coordinators and relevant staff members
- The consultants have to take into consideration the baseline survey for SDC outcome indicator 1.3 / GCF indicator I.5.2
- The consultant should review the Research document “Strengthening Livelihoods and Social Inclusion in Georgia’s Forest Sector Reform” and particularly chapters - IV RT 2 – Forest management and local self-governance realities;
- and – V RT 3 – Options for improving public participation in forest management planning

#### **a. Outputs/deliverables**

##### **Expected outputs are:**

1. Final Report on capacity assessment, capacity needs description and political and administrative interest of each municipality with recommendations on improved capacities to increase readiness on MFM.
2. Final Report on existing mechanisms of public participations in different sector of Nature resources and identification of best available practices
3. Final concept on “Improved Public Participation Management”

## b. Schedule and timeframe

	Deadline	Number of experts	Number of days per expert
<b>Deliverable</b>			
Output 1	15.10.2022	1 (Expert 1)	40 WD
Output 2	15.11.2022	1 (Expert 2)	30 WD
Output 3	30.12.2022	1 (Expert 2)	10 WD
<b>Travel expenses</b>		<b>Number of experts</b>	<b>Number of days/nights per experts</b>
• Overnight allowance in country of assignment		2	22
• Travel costs (train, private vehicle)		2	10

## 3. Company and Experts' profiles

### Company/organization -Required competences

- At least 5 years of experience in nature conservation and/or environmental projects, Sociology, Institutional development and Human Resources

### Experts required competences and experience

#### Expert (s) 1 (for the work package 1)

- At least a master's degree in Law, Economy, Human Resources management or Institutional and capacity development, social sciences
- Minimum 10 years working experience and minimum 7 years working experience in capacity development / human resources sector particular with state, municipal or international organisations
- Language skills: Sufficient level of written and oral English is required.

#### Expert(s) 2 (for the work package 2)

- At least a master's degree in Forestry, Ecology, Environmental or Natural Resources management.
- Minimum 10 years working experience and minimum 5 years working experience in public participation
- Language skills: sufficient level of written and oral English is required

## 4. Timing and duration

From 05.09.2022 to 28.02.2023

## 5. Place of assignment

Tbilisi, Georgia

## **6. Reporting**

- The consultant shall report to Lasha Dzadzamia, Advisor and Sofia Tvaradze, Advisor – ECO.Georgia
- Reports must be developed in Georgian and in English, based on demand and agreement

## **7. Other provisions**

Advance (maximum 30% of entire amount) for travel costs can be negotiated, taking into consideration the GIZ regulations.

Final payment will be effected after provision and confirmation services for Output 1,2,3.