Terms of Reference

for

Technical Assistance Consultant for

Investment planning in afforestation, pasture improvement and erosion control under Clean and Resilient Environment for Blue Sea project

I. Background of the Project

To support the National Waste Management Plan (NWMP) implementation and ensure the regional Municipal Solid Waste Management (MSWM) approach operates as effective and efficient as possible, the Government of Albania and the World Bank have launched the "Clean and Resilient Environment for Blue Sea" (Care4BlueSea) project. The project aims to implement an integrated blue economy approach at both national and local levels, focusing on selected geographic areas with valuable marine and coastal assets, which are under environmental and climate pressures. Care4BlueSea consists of three components: (i) Component 1 "promote(s) integrated and circular approaches for protection of landscapes and water resources," (ii) Component 2 aims to "reduce water pollution in the Vjosa River," and (iii) Component 3 encompasses the project management and monitoring and evaluation needs.

The project takes an integrated approach to preventing pollution at source caused by municipal solid waste and sewage. The dual focus on investments in solid waste and sewage encompasses the foremost protection against pressures on water bodies and coastal landscapes on which the local economy depends. The synergy between these investments reinforces the outcomes of pollution prevention efforts. Potential co-benefits of solid waste management (SWM) and wastewater treatment include preventing clogging of sewers, co-digestion or composting of organic matter, and reuse of sludge as soil amendment for landfill covers and closure. Planned activities align with the technical standards and directives of the European Union (EU) Waste Framework and the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Framework, bolstering Albania's strides towards EU accession goals, particularly in enhancing circularity and water quality.

Main institutional stakeholders are the Ministry of Environment and National Agency for Water Supply and Sewerage /AKUK, which will also closely collaborate with four key partners: (a) National Environment Agency (NEA) for Component 1, (b) Regional Directorate of Water Utilities for Component 2, (c) National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA) for Component 2, and (d) municipalities for all three components since they are expected to benefit from better solid waste and sanitation management, monitoring and improved planning environment, an improved regulatory framework for operational and financial sustainability, and capacity building and training workshops.

Institutional beneficiaries include service providers (Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) and waste management utilities) at the municipal level directly, as well as their customers who indirectly will benefit from operational and efficiency performance improvements realized under the project.

From the project activities, an estimated 138,800 people (5 percent of the Albanian population) are expected to benefit through improved SWM and sanitation services. About 87,000 beneficiaries in selected municipalities will experience improved SWM, including enhanced

collection, separation, and recycling of municipal waste, while approximately 51,800 beneficiaries will gain access to new or improved sanitation services. Moreover, an estimated 200 individuals stand to benefit from land management practices aimed at preventing runoffs and pollution in the Vjosa River and its tributaries. Similarly, civil society organizations will also be expected to benefit from implementing such initiatives and engaging as proponents of a cleaner environment in the South-West Coastal Belt.

Furthermore, tourists visiting the Vjosa River and the country's coastline are anticipated to benefit from the cleaner coastline and natural sites due to the project's interventions. Effective solid waste management at the city level will contribute to reducing marine litter, yielding wide-ranging impacts both within and beyond Albania.

The Activities under the *Sub-component 2.3* aim to reduce non-point source pollution across the Vjosa River Basin by financing and managing targeted, small-scale investments in nature-based solutions (NBS), sustainable land management (SLM), and integrated catchment practices. Priority measures will improve vegetation cover, restore and manage wetlands, and promote sustainable agricultural practices to curb nutrient runoff from farming and limit sediment loads caused by erosion. These interventions are expected to enhance water quality, mitigate stormwater and flood risks, and strengthen environmental sustainability in the basin. The subcomponent is designed to align with broader conservation initiatives, including the establishment of the Vjosa River National Park, ensuring operational synergies with park management regimes and complementarity with planned activities. In this context, the project will support well-scoped, small-scale investments that directly prevent agricultural nutrient discharges and sedimentation.

II. Objectives of the Assignment

The objective of this assignment is preparing a field-verified, costed and implementable investment plan for **afforestation/revegetation, pasture improvement, and erosion-control** in prioritized Vjosa Basin locations.

The assignment should produce a design package that is sufficiently clear for procurement and implementation, including site selection, technical design, cost estimates, environmental and social screening, and practical maintenance and monitoring arrangements.

III. Scope of the Assignment and Detailed Tasks

In carrying out the assignment, the Consultant shall work closely with the Care4BlueSea PMT at the Ministry of the Environment, NAPA/RAPA, the Vjosa National Park structures, technical working groups in the participating municipalities, and other relevant projects active in the target area.

The Consultant shall be responsible for preparing and delivering the technical assistance package described below. The work should remain practical, evidence-based and suitable for direct use in the next implementation phase:

A. Inception, Data Collection and Methodology

- Review available project documents, spatial data, protected-area zoning, land-use information, erosion and hydrological data, previous studies and relevant legal/institutional constraints.
- Prepare an inception methodology explaining the approach to site selection, suitability analysis, restoration model selection, stakeholder coordination, field verification, environmental aspects consideration, design preparation, costing and supervision support.

- Define the technical parameters to be used for comparing alternative establishment approaches, including terrain constraints, access, soil moisture, erosion exposure, native species suitability, expected survival, maintenance needs, cost efficiency and replicability.

B. Site Diagnostics and Prioritization in the Vjosa River Basin

- Compile and analyze existing GIS/environmental datasets, including land cover, slope, soil, erosion risk, hydrology, riparian condition, land tenure/use, accessibility, protected-area restrictions and potential sediment/nutrient-runoff hotspots.
- Carry out field verification of candidate areas and identify practical constraints related to access, community use, grazing pressure, ownership/management, seasonal timing, safety, erosion intensity and implementation logistics.
- Prepare a prioritization matrix and GIS-based map identifying the proposed sites for intervention, with a clear rationale linked to pollution prevention, vegetation cover improvement, erosion reduction, technical feasibility, stakeholder acceptance and suitability for replication.
- Confirm land tenure, land-use rights, grazing arrangements and local acceptance before a site is recommended for investment. Sites with unresolved access or use conflicts should not be prioritized unless a practical mitigation route is agreed with the PMT and local actors.

C. Selection of the Restoration and Establishment Model

- Assess feasible restoration and establishment options for each prioritized site, including conventional planting, assisted natural regeneration, enrichment planting, riparian buffers, direct seeding where suitable, soil/moisture-support measures, protective measures and phased maintenance requirements.
- Recommend the preferred establishment model for the pilot intervention, based on transparent criteria such as expected survival rate, planting window, site accessibility, terrain limitations, establishment cost, speed of coverage, maintenance burden, climate resilience and potential for scaling up in other basin locations.
  Give priority to low-risk and low-maintenance approaches where they can achieve the objective, including assisted natural regeneration, temporary grazing exclusion, riparian buffers or targeted enrichment planting. Planting should not be proposed where natural recovery is more suitable and cost-effective.

D. Detailed Design of the Priority Afforestation/Revegetation Intervention

- Prepare detailed GIS maps for the selected intervention areas, including boundaries, access points, micro-zones, slope classes, soil/erosion constraints, protection/exclusion areas and proposed implementation layout.
- Prepare detailed technical design for the priority afforestation/revegetation intervention, including species and seed/seedling specifications, site-preparation method, planting or seeding density, spacing, soil/moisture measures, erosion-protection measures, protection from grazing, maintenance requirements and survival-rate targets.
- Use native and locally adapted species and seed mixes, avoiding invasive or poorly adapted species. The design should explain why the selected species and methods fit the site conditions, climate risks and maintenance capacity.

- Prepare typical drawings, technical details and implementation notes for riparian buffers, slope stabilization, micro-catchments, contour measures, protective fencing/exclusions, access arrangements and other supporting works required for successful establishment.
- Ensure that the proposed design is practical for procurement and implementation, with clear performance parameters, acceptance criteria, replacement obligations, and a simple maintenance plan covering at least the first three growing seasons after establishment..

E. Bill of Quantities, Costing and Procurement Inputs

- Prepare an itemized Bill of Quantities and cost estimate for the proposed intervention, including site preparation, seed/seedling supply, establishment works, protection measures, erosion-control works, maintenance activities, supervision inputs, contingencies and applicable taxes. Unit rates should be based on clear assumptions and, where possible, recent market information or comparable local works.
- Prepare technical specifications suitable for procurement of the implementation phase, including output/performance requirements, quality standards, material specifications, acceptance criteria, survival-rate verification and maintenance obligations.
- Prepare a short procurement implementation note proposing packaging/lotting, phasing, timing in relation to the planting window, supervision arrangements and a fair allocation of risks between the implementing entity and the future contractor/service provider. The note should also flag market availability of planting material, likely seasonal constraints and any items that require early procurement.
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F. Environmental and Social Screening, Stakeholder Inputs and Monitoring Framework

- Conduct preliminary Environmental and Social Framework screening in compliance with national requirements, the World Bank E&S standards and Good International Industry Practices for the proposed intervention sites, identifying site-specific risks, likely instruments, community health and safety issues, land-use/access issues, stakeholder engagement needs and GRM access points. The screening should be proportionate to the small-scale nature of the works, but clear enough to guide bidding documents and implementation supervision.
- Prepare environmental and social clauses in an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), to be considered by the PMT/MoE for inclusion in the subsequent bidding documents, including site access, species sourcing and planting protocols, equipment use, waste management, biodiversity protection, community safety, worker safety and chance-finds considerations, where applicable.[1]

[1] Consider application of the mitigation hierarchy: avoid, minimize, restore, and offset in that order. Afforestation and pasture interventions must be designed to avoid modifying any natural or semi-natural habitats that have not already been significantly disturbed. The ESMP must define clear exclusion zones within the protected area where no equipment, workers, or materials may enter, based on the results of the biodiversity baseline. All planting must use locally native, ecologically appropriate species confirmed through consultation with the protected area management authority. The ESMP must include a protocol for verifying that all plant material used in afforestation and pasture improvement is sourced from certified local provenance nurseries, not from wild collection within the protected area. Afforestation and

- Conduct a Biodiversity Baseline Assessment covering the flora, fauna, habitats, and ecosystem functions of the specific intervention sites within or in the buffer zone of the protected area, including an assessment of whether any intervention zones overlap with critical natural habitats as defined under the World Bank ESF. Monitoring of biodiversity outcomes throughout implementation, not only at baseline.
- Confirm that all activities are consistent/compliant with the approved management plan of the protected area. If no current management plan exists for the proposed area, or if activities are proposed for zones where such interventions are restricted, additional approvals from the protected area authority are required before implementation can proceed.
- Define a practical monitoring plan for implementation and post-establishment follow-up, including hectares improved and sustainably managed, number of trees/seeded units established, survival-rate checks, vegetation-cover improvement, riparian buffer length, erosion-control structures completed and proxy indicators for sediment/nutrient filtration.
- Include a simple baseline record for each intervention site, using maps, photographs, GPS points and a short description of erosion, vegetation cover, grazing pressure and access conditions. This will make later supervision and survival-rate verification more credible.
- Given the protected area context, key stakeholders include: the protected area management authority; local communities living within or adjacent to the area; relevant national environmental agencies; and civil society organizations with an interest in the protected area.

G. Technical Supervision Support During Implementation

- Provide technical supervision support during the implementation of the selected pilot intervention, including review of contractor/service-provider work plans, verification of site preparation, species/material compliance, establishment method, density/spacing, protection measures and quality of completed works. The number and timing of supervision visits should be agreed with the PMT and linked to key milestones,
- Prepare supervision notes after each site visit, such as site preparation, planting/seeding, protection works and initial acceptance, , identifying compliance issues, corrective measures, acceptance status and recommendations for maintenance or adaptive management.
- Support the PMT in reviewing implementation progress, verifying quantities and confirming whether technical conditions for milestone acceptance have been met. The Consultant should not replace the contractor's quality control responsibilities, but should provide independent technical advice to the PMT.

IV. Qualifications and Experience of the Consultant

The Consultant firm shall fulfill the following minimum requirements:

pasture improvement activities can increase fire risk during the establishment phase. A site-specific fire risk management plan should be included in the contractor's ESMP.

- Be a registered legal entity with at least five (5) years of demonstrated experience in technical assistance services related to afforestation, revegetation, sustainable land management, erosion control, forestry, watershed management, or nature-based solutions.
- Have proven experience in preparing investment plans, feasibility or pre-feasibility assessments, detailed designs, technical specifications, bills of quantities, cost estimates, or implementation plans for field-based environmental interventions.
- Have successfully completed at least three (3) assignments of similar nature and complexity involving afforestation/revegetation, riparian buffer establishment, slope stabilization, erosion-control measures, catchment restoration, pasture improvement or nature-based solutions for water quality protection.
- Have available, or secure for use during the assignment, the necessary field survey equipment and devices, including GPS units, drones where permitted, tablets or other data-collection tools, measuring equipment and related safety equipment needed for site verification, mapping and field documentation.

The Consultant shall deploy a multidisciplinary team with the minimum qualifications and experience below.

	Expert position	**No of experts**	**Qualification and Experience**	**Tasks to be performed**
1.	**Team Leader / Forest Engineer**	1	- Master's degree in forestry, silviculture, forest engineering, natural resource management or equivalent. At least 15 years of professional experience in afforestation/reforestation, forest restoration, watershed rehabilitation, erosion-control or land-restoration investments. Experience in preparing detailed designs, technical specifications, bills of quantities and supervision of field implementation.	Overall coordination; methodology; site selection; restoration model recommendation; detailed design; technical specifications; BoQ/costing; supervision support; quality assurance of all deliverables.
2.	**Environmental Engineer / NBS and Erosion-Control Specialist**	1	- Master's degree in environmental engineering, environmental sciences, natural resource management, civil/environmental engineering or equivalent. At least 10 years of	Assessment of erosion and runoff risks; integration of practical NBS and bio-engineering measures; ESF screening inputs; environmental clauses; monitoring

	Expert position	No of experts	Qualification and Experience	Tasks to be performed
			experience in nature-based solutions, erosion control, watershed management, sustainable land management or environmental infrastructure.	framework; technical support during implementation.
3.	**GIS / Remote Sensing Specialist**	1	- University degree in GIS, geography, geomatics, environmental sciences, spatial planning or equivalent. At least 10 years of experience in GIS mapping, spatial analysis, land-cover assessment, slope/erosion analysis and preparation of georeferenced investment maps	Spatial diagnostics; data compilation; prioritization maps; detailed GIS maps; geodatabase preparation; mapping of intervention areas, access, constraints and monitoring indicators.
4.	**Agronomy Expert**	1	- University degree in agronomy, agriculture, soil science, pasture management, plant science or a related field. At least 10 years of professional experience in agronomy, pasture improvement, soil conservation, vegetation establishment, seed selection or sustainable land management. Proven experience in selecting appropriate seed mixes, native species, pasture rehabilitation measures or soil stabilization approaches. Knowledge of soil characteristics, vegetation establishment requirements and land restoration practices.	Technical inputs on seed/species selection, soil and vegetation establishment requirements, pasture improvement, soil stabilization and maintenance measures; preparation of technical specifications and BoQ inputs related to seed/plant material, site preparation, establishment and post-establishment care.

V. Timeline for Completion of Tasks and Deliverables

The overall planning and deadlines for milestones and deliverables are listed below. All deliverables will be delivered in English. The deadlines should be counted from the Commencement Date and should allow enough time for field verification and consolidated feedback from the PMT.

Scope	ID	Deliverables	Deliverable Description	Due
Inception	D0	**Inception Note & Workplan**	Methodology, datasets, site-selection criteria, field-verification plan, stakeholder coordination map initial assumptions and risk register, detailed schedule, propose the owner, user as well as local community acceptance methodology.	Day 10
Diagnostics & Prioritization	D1	**Site Diagnostics and Prioritization Report**	GIS-based hotspot analysis, field verification findings, land-use and access constraints, prioritization matrix, recommended intervention sites and initial restoration model options.	Day 25
Model selection and concept design	D2	**Restoration Model and Concept Design Package**	Technical comparison of feasible establishment approaches, recommended model, concept layouts, preliminary quantities, risks and maintenance assumptions.	Day 35
Detailed design and procurement inputs	D3	**Detailed Design, Technical Specifications and Bill of Quantities**	Detailed GIS maps, design drawings/typicals, species/material specifications, site-preparation method, implementation methodology, BoQ, cost estimate, maintenance requirements, acceptance criteria, lotting/phasing and procurement note.	Day 60
ESF and monitoring	D4	**ESF Screening & Monitoring Framework**	Preliminary ESF screening, ES clauses for bidding documents, stakeholder record , GRM access	Day 60

			points, baseline and monitoring indicators, survival-rate verification approach.	
Implementation support	D5	**Supervision Notes and Final Supervision Report**	Site-visit notes at agreed milestones, verification of implementation quality, corrective measures, acceptance recommendations and final supervision report.	During implementation

VI. Language and Communication Requirements

All deliverables, reports, technical notes, maps, drawings, specifications, bills of quantities, and other written outputs shall be prepared and submitted in English. The Consultant shall ensure that all documents are clear, technically accurate, easy to review, and suitable for procurement preparation and implementation.

Working meetings, consultations, site visits, and coordination with national institutions, municipalities, protected area administrations, local stakeholders, and communities may be conducted in Albanian, as required. The Consultant shall ensure effective communication with all relevant stakeholders and shall provide summaries or records of key discussions in English when relevant for the assignment deliverables.

The Consultant shall maintain regular communication with the PMT throughout the assignment and shall promptly inform the PMT of any technical, institutional, environmental, social, seasonal or implementation-related issues that may affect the quality or timely delivery of the assignment.

VII. Reporting and Coordination

The Consultant shall report to the CARE4BlueSea PMT at the Ministry of Environment. The PMT shall coordinate the review of deliverables with relevant institutions, including NAPA/RAPA, Vjosa National Park structures, NEA and municipalities, as appropriate.

Deliverables shall be submitted in Word, Excel and GIS/CAD formats, as applicable. Costing outputs shall include editable Excel files with quantities, unit rates, subtotals, contingency, taxes and totals. GIS outputs shall include editable geodatabases or shapefiles, with coordinate system, data sources and map layouts clearly documented.

Upon receipt of each deliverable, the PMT and MoE shall carry out a quality and compliance review and issue either consolidated comments or written acceptance preferably within five (5) working days. Where comments are issued, the Consultant shall revise and resubmit the deliverable within five (5) working days, unless otherwise agreed. Deficiencies attributable to the Consultant's quality shall be corrected at no additional cost.

All data, designs, maps, specifications, quantities, cost estimates and reports prepared under this assignment shall become the property of the Ministry of Environment. The Consultant shall also provide editable source files and a short handover note explaining how key datasets, maps and cost tables are organized.

VIII. Period of Contract

The Period of Contract shall be **six (6) months** counted from the Commencement Date, defined as the date of contract signature.

IX. Selection

The service will be selected under the provisions of the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers (Procurement Regulations), dated September 2023, based on Open National Consultant Qualification Selection method (CQS), Lump Sum Contract.