

Terms of Reference

2.1. Background

BirdLife International

BirdLife International works through a unique partnership structure, with 113 Partners around the world, to achieve their conservation objectives. BirdLife Partners are independent, national NGOs whose strategies align with and contribute to the wider Partnership's, yet they also maintain their local priorities and approaches. More information on BirdLife International, the Partnership and our strategy is available on our website.

BirdLife's Forests Programme aims to deliver large-scale forest conservation and restoration, generating local and national economic benefits through biodiversity conservation, combating climate change and promoting sustainable development and maintenance of ecosystem services. The Programme combines BirdLife Partners' on-the-ground action with our collective voice to advocate for forests worldwide. BirdLife's work includes site-based action as well as policy engagement and advocacy at different levels to address the underlying causes of global forest loss and degradation.

The BirdLife Partner in Madagascar is Asity Madagascar. Asity's mission is improved understanding of the biodiversity of Madagascar and its conservation in natural ecosystems, and the promotion of its scientific, social, economic, cultural and ecological importance in Madagascar and world-wide. Asity Madagascar has a democratic governance system rooted in a public, Malagasy membership base, and is staffed entirely by Malagasy nationals. Asity works across several sites in Madagascar, including Tsitongambarika, with a strong community-focused approach.

Madagascar national context

An 'island-continent' almost as big as France, Madagascar has been isolated from other landmasses for so long that around 80% of its species are found nowhere else. The country is also home to 25 million people, growing at around 3% per year and projected to reach 50 million by 2040 (estimated by the United Nations Population Division).

Forest cover is decreasing rapidly. The annual rate of deforestation in Madagascar halved between 1990 and 2010, but since then has almost trebled again, with 1.9% lost in 2017 alone. Increasing fragmentation across the country has led to c. 50% of all remaining forest being less than 100m from an edge. In many parts of the country deforestation and forest degradation occurs mainly as a result of land conversion for agriculture as well as some exploitation for timber, charcoal production and as a traditional method to secure land tenure.

Traditional swidden, or shifting, agriculture largely for subsistence, locally called *tavy* is widely practiced, however, in the context of one of the world's highest population growth rates, this system is typically unsustainable for the farmers as fallow periods shorten resulting in degraded soils, erosion, pushing people to clear more forest.

Madagascar is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change effects, because of the combination of poor infrastructure, high dependence on climate-sensitive natural resources (eg. rain-fed agriculture, fisheries and livestock), poor food security, severe and frequent cyclones and frequent droughts over large areas. The impacts of climate change specifically on the country's forests are complex, but it is very likely to make the situation of forests and the people who depend on them even more precarious.

At the One Planet Summit in Nairobi in February 2019, the President of Madagascar communicated a major reforestation initiative to restore large areas of the country. It was agreed that urgent action is needed to protect remaining natural forests and stop deforestation, restore native forest

ecosystems and create more plantations to reduce human pressure on natural forests for fuel and construction wood.

Tsitongambarika site context

Tsitongambarika forest, one of the last areas in southern Madagascar that still supports significant lowland rainforest, is biologically extraordinary, even by Madagascar's standards. Many species of plant and animal are endemic to Anosy Region, some known only from this site. The local drivers of deforestation are as described above, with a local rate of over 2% per year.

The Tsitongambarika Natural Forest Protected Area was first created in 2008 by the Government of Madagascar, but gazettment was made permanent in 2015, as part of the national initiative to expand the PAs system (noted above). The Protected Area covers virtually all of the Tsitongambarika Important Bird & Biodiversity Area (~58,500 ha, with around 40,000 ha of forest). Through the process of creating and managing the park significant amount of social and ecological data and information was collected and analysed and utilized for the gazettment and management process.

Asity Madagascar, with local communities, has been delegated by Government as the Promoter and Manager of the Tsitongambarika Natural Forest Protected Area. Asity Madagascar then helped to establish a local organization, KOMFITA, as an 'umbrella' body of 55 community associations. It is these associations that, supported by Asity Madagascar and supervised by the Government, manage the forest. The role of the protected area governance structure, with support from external funding and in tandem with any finance scheme, is to coordinate, direct and provide the assistance needed to maintain and improve livelihoods without clearing more forest.

Potential for REDD+

Since 2006, Madagascar has made significant progress on national and sub-national REDD+ systems. Several multi-stakeholder pilot projects, including those with significant NGO involvement, have been developed, some of which alongside protected area creation. In November 2015, the Government submitted an ER-PIN for a subnational programme covering the northeast region, and agreed that Emissions Reductions (ERs) from this programme would be purchased by the World Bank on behalf of the Carbon Fund of the FCPF. In 2018, it submitted the Emission Reductions Program Document, with the ensuing Emissions Reduction Purchase Agreement (ERPA) signed in February 2021.

To date, no similar program has been designed for the southeast region, including Tsitongambarika, the target area of this project. However, policies in place to support national and subnational REDD+ will have a significant impact on the feasibility and viability of any potential REDD+ project. The feasibility of new REDD+ projects is unclear in the current policy context; at a minimum any proposed project must be fully consistent with national REDD and other political and environmental policy processes.

Through REDD+ pre-feasibility studies that were carried out recently, the development of Tsitongambarika as a REDD+ project has potential given the scale of the site and demonstrated emissions reductions through addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Proof of concept has been shown through existing and ongoing investments in the area.

The objective of the project proponents is to scale up and replicate these approaches, thereby reducing emissions and providing both direct and indirect economic benefits using REDD+ as a funding mechanism. It is envisioned that a REDD+ project could include direct payments to communities and fund sustainable development actions, as described above, as well as cover some of the costs of other forest management actions.

2.2. Scope of the Assignment

Objective

The main objective of the consultancy is to assess the feasibility of a REDD+ project at Tsitongambarika, and to produce a report based on this assessment. The resulting report will inform project proponents' decision if and how to proceed.

Expected results and timing

The project should be undertaken in two phases, with all outputs and activities completed within 6 months. All reports should be well written in English and presented clearly. The consultancy will only be able to start phase 2 once phase 1 has been completed and validated.

Phase 1 of feasibility

1. **Review Madagascar REDD+ legislation** and regulatory framework, including recent decrees to review the possibility and set up for a nested REDD+ project within the national framework. The study should look to successful examples of this from other countries to propose to the government of Madagascar.
2. **Refine VERs projections** using methods approved by the government of Madagascar for ongoing national REDD+ initiatives and utilizing data collected during pre-feasibility study for the site, national baseline assessments and any other components of Madagascar's emerging REDD program. Based on these VER projections an initial assessment should be made for carbon stocks, baseline deforestation rates, emissions reductions potential, recommended methodologies, high level cost estimates.
3. **Engage KOMFITA, Government agencies and private sector partners** and carry out preliminary consultation. Government discussions should discuss the feasibility and key steps to be taken to develop a nested REDD+ project with a highlighted pathway identified to a signature authority. Discussions should also review funding and revenue sharing structures that would agree with national policies.

Output: Interim Feasibility report including the results of the three points to be submitted to project partners for review and discussions.

Timing: This output is expected to be completed within two months of signing the contract.

Phase 2 of feasibility

4. **Continue and refine components** above as required and based on feedback from discussions. This Phase is likely to include visiting the Tsitongambarika itself to ground truth the project design and risk mitigation, and further refine the Technical and Financial assessment done in Phase 1.
5. **Collect and analyse** available information from project partners concerning **risk mitigation, social safeguards and benefits sharing options** to then **develop** a proposed set-up to be implemented through a REDD+ project. Details should include a proposed REDD+ governance structure, proposed process for enabling free, prior, informed consent (FPIC), a proposed participatory design for implementation of shared benefits and results of the assessment highlighting work needed to be completed to comply with the safeguard requirements for REDD+ in the country.

6. Carry out a **financial viability analysis, cost effectiveness assessment & cash flow model**. This should then be followed by **investment/implementation plan** explaining what could be delivered in emissions reductions within the project zone.

Output: Final feasibility report.

Timing: This output is expected to be completed within three to four months after completion and validation of phase 1.

Method of Working

It is expected that the consultant will conduct both desk-based work and in-country work in Madagascar. The assessment should draw on and incorporate information from existing technical materials made available to the consultant, such as management plans, socio-economic studies, biodiversity surveys, budgets, and other documents. It is expected that the project team will consult with government agencies (especially the Bureau National des Changements Climatiques, du Carbone et de la REDD+ ([BN-CCCREDD+](#)), Asity Madagascar and KOMFITA, as well as other experts, NGOs, representatives of communities and stakeholders. This may take the form of both one-to-one meetings and/or small focus groups, as appropriate.

2.3. Profile of consultant

The consultancy should be carried out by a core team of Expert consultants. It is expected that the Team will demonstrate expertise, experience and abilities including:

- Expertise in REDD+ and social and environmental safeguards (specifically for REDD+)
- Experience bringing REDD+ credits to market
- Experience developing projects in Least Developed Countries, with rural communities and within high biodiversity areas
- Familiarity with Madagascar and ability to conduct activities in-country Ability to facilitate, collect and synthesize input from diverse sources and Stakeholders
- Ability to clearly articulate and evaluate multiple scenarios and options
- Ability to work collaboratively with project proponents and key stakeholders
- High proficiency in spoken and written English and French languages

Due to the possibility of Covid-19 impacting travel restrictions, it is strongly recommended that the application include key staff that are present within the country who can lead on any in-person meetings and primary data collection.