Terms of Reference for
Project Validation against the Plan Vivo Standards

Introduction

Fauna & Flora International (FFI)

FFI's mission is to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science, and which take into account human needs. FFI's strategy to achieve this mission is to work with in-country organizations at all levels to support them in identifying and implementing country led sustainable solutions.

FFI has been developing a community forestry and REDD+ pilot project in Hieu commune, Kon Plong district of Kon Tum province since 2011. In April 2018, FFI in collaboration with KfW10 project continue this pilot model to achieve third-party REDD+ certification.

Independent third party validation is required by all projects as part of the process of registration under the Plan Vivo Standard and before issuance of Plan Vivo Certificates (PVCs) can take place. Validation consists of the initial review of a project's design against the Plan Vivo Standard and verification of the accuracy of the description of the proposed project, the project area and potential beneficiaries and of the governance system put in place for its implementation. The validation will be conducted by an independent expert reviewer (the validator) who has been approved by Plan Vivo for this role prior to undertaking the validation.

As per this Terms of Reference (ToR), FFI would recruit and submit a national consultant as a validator to Plan Vivo to undertake initial project validation against the Plan Vivo Standard (2013) and for preparing the validation report for submission to Plan Vivo.

Fauna & Flora International - Vietnam Programme

is recruiting

<u>A national consultant</u>

Terms and conditions

Duration: 16 days from 20th November 2019 to 6th December 2019

- 02 days: Review of project documentation and any other relevant documentation.
- 06 days: Field visits to the project area (including 02 travel days to Kon Tum province) for
  - ✓ Interview and interact with the project coordinator (in-country manager)

✓ Interview local government officials e.g Province Project Management Unit (PPMU) and District Project Management Unit (DPMU) officers and

✓ Field visit to 03 the project communities including FGDs with Community Forest Management Boards, interviewing different stakeholder groups and visiting different land use systems.

- 08 days: Preparation of validation report

Location: Kon Plong district, Kon Tum province

Daily fee: Competitive and Negotiable

Reporting to: Country Director, FFI Vietnam Programme

Objectives

The purpose of validation is to ensure a thorough, independent assessment of project design against the Plan Vivo Standard. This includes confirmation that the project area is physically as described in the project documentation, that project partners have sufficient capacity and understanding to achieve the stated project objectives by implementing the planned activities and that the intended project impacts are likely to be delivered. The validation also makes observations and recommendations based on field visits to the project and identifies any corrective actions necessary before the project can be approved under the Plan Vivo Standard.

Scope and Methods

The validation process involves application of auditing techniques including:

i.   A critical review of project documentation and any other relevant documentation or supporting evidence to enable the project to be properly assessed against the Plan Vivo Standard.

ii. Field visits to the project area taking into account the requirements described in Annex 1, in order to:

- Verify that the project's physical site description and governance structure is as described in the project design document and technical specification(s)

- Identify objective evidence of conformance with each of the requirements in the Plan Vivo Standard by:

    o   Interviewing and interacting with the project coordinator (in-country manager)
    o   Interviewing relevant stakeholders such as participating householders, community members and leaders, local government officials, government forestry agencies and extension services and other projects working in the same area

o Identifying and assessing available supplementary project documentation and tools e.g. planning documentation, databases, templates, legal agreements etc.

o Cross-checking results from interviews with project documentation to ensure that documentation reflects ground realities and staff awareness of project goals and procedures.

- Fully understand the project context and the views of other local stakeholders and experts regarding the project's likely impact and benefits

iii. Preparation of the validation report in the outline given in Annex 2 and submission of this with any supporting evidence to Plan Vivo

Validation questions in four broad themes (governance, carbon, ecosystems and livelihoods) are given in the validation report template (Appendix 2). Validators are expected to answer all these questions with information taken from the field visits undertaken as part of the validation. Sources of information should be identified and, wherever possible, cross-checked with other sources to ensure that the validation report represents an accurate and relevant assessment of the project.

Outputs

The output of the validation is a **Plan Vivo Validation Report**. Along with any supporting documents, it presents the review findings and details of the project's compliance with each of the requirements in the Plan Vivo Standard. The template for the validation report is given in Appendix 2. The validation report template includes the following sections in each of the broad themes. All these need to be completed:

A. Requirement
The validation report should describe how the project meets each requirement of the Plan Vivo Standard (2013). This section gives the specific questions that need to be answered by the validator for each theme/sub-theme. Refer to the Plan Vivo Standard for further clarification of these.

B. Guidance notes for validators
This section indicates how the specific questions might be answered by the validator by giving some suggestions about where the necessary validation information might be obtained. Other sources or means of answering the validation question might also be possible if available.

C. Findings
In this section the validator should answer the validation questions. This should be a comprehensive response (rather than a simple yes/no) explaining the reason for the answer given. The findings should be used to justify the decision given under 'conformance'.

D. Conformance
In this section the validator should indicate whether conformance with the Plan Vivo Standard

has been achieved.

E. Corrective Actions
Where the validator finds that the project is not compliant with a given requirement of the Plan Vivo Standard, the report should specify the corrective actions needed for compliance and propose a timescale within which it must be implemented. For each corrective action identified, the report should specify whether, in the opinion of the validator, a major or minor corrective action is required.

Major Corrective Action Request (CAR): A non-conformance with the Plan Vivo Standard that is likely to result in the failure of the project or is likely to materially reduce its ability to deliver the benefits intended. A major CAR may include a collection of several less significant non-conformances that collectively suggest critical failings in the project.

Minor Corrective Action Request: A non-conformance that is unlikely to materially affect the project's delivery of the intended benefits but which still needs to be corrected in order to reach the requirements of the Plan Vivo Standard. This may include a single or small number of lapses in maintaining systems, minor omissions or inconsistencies in documentation.

Observations/recommendations
The reviewer may find areas where procedures, data or documentation could be clarified or improved, but which are not deemed material enough to impose a corrective action. In this case, the reviewer should make observations or recommendations, which the Plan Vivo Foundation will follow up with the project coordinator at its discretion. These should also be included in the report.

F. Project Coordinator Response
In the draft validation report, this section should be left blank in order for the Project Coordinator to provide a reply to the specific CAR/Observation raised. The Project Coordinator must ensure they explain why they believe compliance has been achieved and why the CAR/Observation has been addressed. Tables, PDD or Technical Specification extracts of text, photos, Excel tables and so on may be inserted in this section to demonstrate compliance.

G. Status
After the Project Coordinator's response to the CAR have been delivered, the reviewer should assess whether the reply has sufficiently (CLOSED) or not sufficiently (OUTSTANDING) addressed the CAR/Observation raised. The reviewer should also provide supporting arguments for the decision by explaining what steps have been taken by the Project Coordinator in order to demonstrate compliance.

Validation Opinion
The validation report will include a summary validation opinion, as to whether:
   i.   The project documents represent an accurate and clear description of the project and its activities.

   ii.   Based on an objective assessment of the project, the project meets the Plan Vivo Standard.

A project may receive a positive validation opinion with open minor CARs where an agreed time-frame is reached for meeting them, unless the validator considers that the number of minor CARs is so large to suggest that systemic failure is likely.

Projects with open major CARs (OUTSTANDING) should resolve the CARs with the validator before a positive validation opinion can be given.

Project Documentation and Supporting Evidence

The project coordinator will make all project documentation needed for the validation (e.g. PDD, technical specification and any other supporting evidence to show compliance with the Standards) available to the validator at least 2 weeks before the field visit.

The validator reviewer is expected to use his/her expert knowledge and professional judgment to evaluate all the available evidence to determine which of the requirements of the Plan Vivo Standard are satisfied by the project as designed and documented. The reviewer shall refer to indicators provided in the Plan Vivo Standard for guidance and also any other supporting materials provided by the project.

Publication of Validation Reports

The validation report, all of its contents and any drafts will remain confidential until the Plan Vivo Foundation publishes its contents following its decision regarding project registration.

All validation reports will be published on the Plan Vivo website and comments invited.

Required qualifications

- Master level degree at least in natural resources management, forestry, community forest management or other related fields.
- Minimum of 10 years of professional experience in forestry and REDD+/PFES activities.
- Plan Vivo training

Interested candidates should send an application including a cover letter and a CV to the email address: viet.hong.le@fauna-flora.org by 12th November 2019.