Pre-bid Conference Minutes within

RFP for Support post-COVID financial recovery in rural areas of Georgia through sustainably used NTFPs

Project Title: Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Phase II
Date: April 4, 2022
Time: 15:00 GMT +4

Participants:

UNDP
1. Tornike Phulariani – Project National Coordinator
2. Levan Inashvili – Project Lead/Senior Finance Expert
3. Gigla Ramishvili – Project Admin/Finance Assistant

The representatives of the Companies participated

1. Nino Gaprindashvili - CENN - Caucasus Environmental NGO Network
2. Revaz Getiashvili - CENN - Caucasus Environmental NGO Network
3. Kakhaber Sukhitashvili - CENN - Caucasus Environmental NGO Network
4. Mikheil Kordadze – REC Caucasus
5. Mikheil Pakatsoshvili - Biological Farming Association Elkana

The overall objective of the RFP is to identify the company which will provide services for Support post-COVID financial recovery in rural areas of Georgia through sustainably used NTFPs. The respective RFP was announced on March 30, 2022, with the deadline on or before 07:00 AM (New York time), April 18, 2022.

The pre-bid conference was conducted online on April 4, 2022, at 15:00 GMT +4. The aim of the conference was to clarify questions related to the announced RFP for the potential proposers.

Tornike Phulariani, Project National Coordinator, welcomed pre-bid conference participants, introduced the UNDP representatives to the potential bidders, who also introduced themselves. He provided brief overview of the overall objective of the assignment, which is to support generation of sustainable and fair income for households (with specific focus on women) representing the weakest link in the current supply chain, ensure conservation of plant species through sustainable use of NTFPs, maintain forest ecosystem services for future generations. Mr. Phulariani noted that the winner company will prepare the methodology for NTFPs resource assessment, analyze and identify regulatory or economic incentives opportunities, conduct resource assessment of target NTFPs in at least on pilot region, analyze field data to determine sustainable harvesting volumes, develop recommendations on sustainable harvest techniques and monitoring of species, conduct activities to raise awareness and capacity building in target communities.

The introduction was followed by question and answer session:

Q1. (CENN) – Rezo Getiashvili noted that this particular assignment may serve as a good opportunity for the MEPA to develop a methodology for the assessment of NTFP resources, which may potentially be used by the private companies in NTFP business, that were asked to determine quotas for different NTFP species by themselves. He stated that, it would be important if the project was focused not only local but also national level. Mr. Getiashvili pointed out that methodology should be shared with relevant local businesses as they are afraid to meet their current obligations. He named Association “Forest Product” which is currently actively engaged in this process. Association “Forest Product” supports sustainable commercial use of forest products (including NTFPs),
which is carried out in cooperation with private, cooperative, sectoral, state and public interests between individuals and legal entities collecting, cultivating, producing and marketing raw materials.

A1. (UNDP) – Levani Inashvili - The methodology can be used by private companies as well as the project’s main beneficiary is MEPA, and it will oversee this process. However, the aim of the assignment is to support of sustainable and fair income for households representing the weakest link in the current supply chain. It was identified based on the market research during similar recent assignments under the framework of BIOFIN project. Therefore, current assignment has some limitations such as focusing on up to three target NTTF species based on which the methodology will be elaborated. However, at some point, it can be used for other species as well. It has been noted that, BIOFIN has communicated with mentioned association and based on the consultations target municipality has been identified.

Q2. (CENN) - Rezo Getashvili, noted that the topic of the assignment is new for the country, and potential bidders might consider international expert involvement during the preparation of their proposals. Mr. Getashvili asked to the UNDP representatives for the advice in this regard. He mentioned that the answer to this question would be useful as international expert support is associated with some additional costs.

A2. (UNDP) – Levani Inashvili and Tornike Phulaurian - It has been noted that there are experts with enough capacity at local level to work for this assignment. However, it is up to the organization to select experts and there is no limitation form UNDP.

Q3. (CENN) - Nino Gaprindashvili, asked for clarification regarding target area - Pankisi.

A3. (UNDP) - Tornike Phulaurian - Pankisi is part of the Akhmeta municipality and more specifically, target area to implement activities envisaged under the assignment is Pankisi gorge territory, including Duisi and Jokholo communities with specific focus on women.

Q4. (CENN) - Nino Gaprindashvili, asked the question about budget ceiling of the assignment.

A4. (UNDP) - Tornike Phulaurian - According to UNDP rules and regulations, budget ceiling cannot be declared to potential bidders. The selection process will be conducted in accordance with the evaluation criteria provided in the RFP.

Q5. (CENN) - Rezo Getashvili, noted that it would be valuable to consider existing interests not only local but also national level during the selection process of the species. Mr. Getashvili mentioned that based on the consultations conducted, long-term observation is needed for calculations of certain NTTF species. He presented Mr. Kakhaber Sukhitashvili (Botanist), with relevant experience in this direction. Mr. Getashvili noted that during the selection process of the species it is important to conduct consultations with MEPA. As he mentioned, the duration of the assignment might need some adjustments, as some species need more observation time than others for calculation.

A5. (UNDP) - Tornike Phulaurian and Levani Inashvili - Species selection process will be conducted in a participatory manner. As the target area and beneficiary is Akhmeta municipality and local communities the assignment will be focused specifically on it. Timeline can be adjusted based on the certain conditions in consultation with winner company, however, based on initial discussions, it has been identified that it is possible to collect relevant information during one season observation, which will be used accordingly. The aim of the BIOFIN project is not only conducting assessments, but it is also important that those assessments are linked to the financial improvements. Therefore, considering project overall duration, long-term observations cannot be conducted. However, created methodology will be used by MEPA in the future and some potential species are already identified which will be discussed with the winner company and MEPA.

Q6. (CENN) - Rezo Getashvili, noted that regardless of the winner, communication with Association “Forest Product” will be useful and necessary.

A6. (UNDP) - Tornike Phulaurian - Main beneficiary of the assignment is Akhmeta municipality, however BIOFIN actively works with any interested parties, and it will be considered as well. The winner company will be open to any interested parties during the implementation of the assignment.

Q7. (CENN) - Kakhaber Sukhitashvili, asked the question if Pankisi area indicated in the RFP is considered as geographical area or the social one, as sometimes, the process goes beyond the geographical area.

A7. (UNDP) - Levani Inashvili - It is a geographical area.

At the end of the question and answer session, Mikheil Kurdadze (REC Caucasus) noted that his question regarding international expert involvement was covered during the session.

Tornike Phulaurian advised potential bidders to create proposals based on a careful reading of the tender documents. Levani Inashvili added that RFP requirements should carefully be analyzed by the bidders. Mr. Phulaurian underlined the importance of meeting minimum requirements by the bidders, and he noted that otherwise if the offeror does not meet any of the minimum technical qualification criteria/requirements it will be automatically disqualified and will not be considered for further evaluation.

At the end of the meeting, Giorgi Ramishvili provided important highlights concerning etendering system:

- Bidders should make sure that all bid factors are answered and for the Bid Price 1 should be entered.
- Financial proposal should be uploaded as a password protected PDF attachment.
• Self-explanatory file names, organized structure and clear content corresponding to the structure of the RFP requirements should be ensured.
• Up to maximum 40 MB size zip files should be used, and file names must not be longer than 60 characters without special characters or letters from different alphabets than English.
• Bidders should avoid attempting to post bids just prior to the deadline as last-minute help desk support is not guaranteed.
• Bidders were advised to be careful when using the “Save for later” function and procedures related to canceling and submitting bids were explained.

Tornike Phulariani added that in the Cost Breakdown section of the RFP, at the end of each needed personnel, there is one additional line for “Other personnel if any *** which, if used, should be justified by the bidder. UNDP can also ask for further clarification if needed.

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