**Package MAF/IC-41**

**Environment & Social Safeguard Specialist**

Contracting Authority: MAF- Department of Planning and Finance

Location: Based in MAF, Vientiane, with frequent travels to the five target provinces: Xayabuli, Vientiane Province, Vientiane Capital, Bolikhamxay Province and Khammouane Province

Duration: One year, renewable (subject to satisfactory performance).

1. **Introduction**

The Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (GoL) received a US$ 25 million credit from World Bank to implement the Agriculture Competitiveness Project (ACP). The project development objective is to enhance the competitiveness of selected agricultural value chains in the project areas. The project is implemented over 6 years from 2018 to 2024 in five provinces, including Khammouane, Bolikhamxay, Xayabouly, Vientiane Province, and Vientiane Capital. Project implementation agencies include the Department of Planning and Finance (DPF) and technical departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), technical departments of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC), Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Offices (PAFOs), Provincial Industry and Commerce Offices (PICOs) in the five project provinces. The project has four components: (a) Improved Agricultural Efficiency and Sustainability, (b) Enhanced Agricultural Competitiveness, (c) Project Management, and (d) Contingent Emergency Response:

**Component A - Improved Agricultural Efficiency and Sustainability** (**est. US$ 18.2 million, of which International Development Association (IDA) would finance around US$ 16.3 million).** This component supports: (a) the increased adoption of improved varieties and high-quality seeds, (b) the increased application of good agricultural practices, (c) the provision of critical productive infrastructure, and (d) the strengthening of public services delivery.

Subcomponent A1: Promoting Adoption of Good Varieties and Quality Seeds (estimated US$2.5 million, of which IDA would finance around US$2.3 million). This subcomponent supports activities to promote the adoption of good varieties and quality seeds, including the provision of (a) technical assistance (TA) for the establishment of seed multiplication groups (SMGs) and building their capacity to adopt good varieties and quality seeds (including ones resistant to climate variability such as floods and drought); (b) Matching Grants to selected SMGs to carry out Sub-projects (i.e., small works, goods, equipment, and so on) for improving the production and postharvest handling, packaging, and storage of quality seeds; (c) technical and material assistance (i.e., small works, goods, equipment, training, and so on) to build the capacity of PAFOs, DAFOs, MAF technical departments, and research institutions to conduct training for SMGs and to carry out seed quality monitoring and certification; and (d) TA to link SMGs with Farmer Production Groups (FPGs) and agribusinesses in marketing certified seeds.

Subcomponent A2: Promoting Good Agricultural Practices (estimated US$7.4 million, of which IDA would finance around US$6.2 million). This subcomponent supports activities to promote GAP, including the provision of (a) TA for the establishment of FPGs and building their capacity to adopt GAP; (b) Matching Grants to selected FPGs to carry out Sub-projects that implement GAP; (c) TA and material assistance (i.e., small works, goods, equipment, training, and so on) to build the capacity of PAFOs, DAFOs, and MAF technical departments to conduct training for FPGs on GAP and to carry out related extension and certification activities including soil analysis, organic fertilizer production, and organic farming; and (d) TA to link FPGs with agribusinesses in marketing farm produce.

Subcomponent A3: Providing Critical Productive Infrastructure (estimated US$6.2 million, of which IDA would finance around US$5.7 million). This subcomponent supports activities to improve critical irrigation infrastructure and water use practices, including (a) rehabilitation of selected irrigation schemes and (b) provision of TA to establish water user groups and build their capacity to adopt improved water use models. Improving water use, management, and productivity of existing irrigation schemes is expected to enhance their resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Subcomponent A4: Strengthening Public Services Delivery (estimated US$2.1 million, of which IDA would finance US$2.1 million). This subcomponent supports activities to strengthen agricultural and nutrition service delivery, including the provision of technical and material assistance (i.e., small works, goods, equipment, training, and so on) to (a) improve the overall extension service capacity of the PAFOs, DAFOs, and MAF technical departments to deliver better quality services to farmers to promote GAP adoption and enhance resilience to climate change; (b) develop and implement mapping and demarcation pilots for agricultural land in irrigated areas; and (c) conduct studies on integrated farming systems and diversification for nutrition, and carry out social behavioral change communication (SBCC) activities related to dietary diversity, adequate care practices, and processing and cooking for improved nutrition.

**Component B - Enhanced Agricultural Commercialization (est. US$ 7.2 million, of which IDA would finance around US$ 4.8 million).** The project supports (a) establishing an Agriculture Value Chain Facility (AVCF), (b) measures to better link farmers to markets, and (c) studies to improve the enabling environment for agro-enterprise and value chain development.

Subcomponent B1: Establishing an Agricultural Value Chain Facility (estimated US$5.3 million, of which IDA would finance around US$2.9 million). This subcomponent supports the establishment and operation of an AVCF for the purpose of extending technical and financial services to agribusinesses, including the provision of (a) TA to establish and operate the facility and provide advisory and Subproject implementation support to agribusinesses; and (b) Matching Grants to selected agribusinesses to carry out Subprojects for upgrading their processing and postharvest handling facilities and their management capacities to improve product quality, increase operational efficiency (including improved energy efficiency), reduce physical losses, and link with FPGs to improve marketing of the farm produce.

Some 30 ABs operating in rice, maize, and vegetables will be selected and provided with matching grants. Sizes of the matching grants (50% of total cost) range from around US$25,000 for a vegetable AB to around US$ 125,000 for a rice AB. The total matching grants for ABs under the project will be around $2.9 million. The eligible items that will be financed by ACVF include: goods, consulting services and civil works, as defined by Project Operation Manual (POM).

The AVCF will be supervised, on behalf of the Government, by a National Food Security Committee Secretariat, with the participation of representatives from the Government and private sector. This committee will approve work plans and review progress reports of the AVCF. An independent management entity (the consulting firm) is selected to be the “AVCF Management Team”. The AVCF Management Team will report on a day-to-day basis to the DPF. The business cycle of AVCF will consist of two stages:

Preparation phase:

(1) Call for business proposals and assist interested ABs in preparing and submitting business proposals.

(2) Assist the selected ABs whose business proposals are accepted to develop and submit the full business plans.

Implementation phase:

(3) Provide technical advice to assist selected ABs in implementing the approved business plans.

(4) Monitor the progress and evaluate the results

Subcomponent B2: Linking Farmers to Markets (estimated US$1.4 million, of which IDA would finance US$1.4 million). This subcomponent supports activities which help link farmers to markets, including the provision of TA to (a) strengthen the horizontal links of farmers within FPGs for implementing procurement, marketing, and other collective actions, and the vertical links of FPGs and agribusinesses in productive partnerships to undertake further processing and marketing of the produce; and (b) develop an improved agriculture market information system to provide reliable market information for productive partnerships. Strengthening the market linkages is expected to make farmers more resilient to climate change.

Subcomponent B3: Improving the Enabling Environment (estimated US$0.5 million, of which IDA would finance US$0.5 million). This subcomponent supports technical departments of MAF and MOIC and other relevant agencies in implementing policy studies to help improve the enabling environment for supporting agribusiness investment and agricultural trade policies, including the development of improved sanitary and phytosanitary standards, rice standards, rice export policies, and improved import and export legislation focusing on agriculture inputs and farm machinery.

**Component C - Project Management (est. US$ 2.9 million, of which IDA would finance US$ 2.9 million).** The component supports (a) project management and (b) monitoring and evaluation.

Subcomponent C1: Project Management (estimated US$2.4 million, of which IDA would finance US$2.4 million). This subcomponent supports the day-to-day implementation, coordination, and management of project activities, including planning and execution, financial management (FM), procurement, internal and external audits, and environmental and social safeguards management.

Subcomponent C2: Monitoring and Evaluation (estimated US$0.5 million, of which IDA would finance US$0.5 million). This subcomponent supports the day-to-day monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of project activities.

**Component D: Contingent Emergency Response (US$0 million)**

This component with a provisional allocation of zero dollars is included under the project in accordance with OP10.00, paragraphs 12 and 13, for projects in situations of urgent need of assistance or capacity constraints. This will allow for the rapid allocation of project proceeds in the event that the Government declares that a crisis or emergency has occurred and the World Bank Group agrees with such determination. This component would finance public and private sector expenditures on a positive list of goods and/or specific works, goods, services, and emergency operation costs required for emergency recovery. An Emergency Response Manual (ERM) will apply to this component, detailing FM, procurement, safeguards, and any other necessary implementation arrangements.

1. **Objective of the assignment**

The Environmental and Social safeguard specialist will overview the project compliance with the environment and social management framework and relevant national laws and WB policies. The following World Bank safeguard policies are triggered: (i) Environmental and Social Assessment (OP/BP 4.01); (ii) Pest Management (OP 4.09); (iii) Natural Habitats; (iv) Indigenous Peoples (OP/BP 4.10); (v) Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12); (vi) International Water Ways (for irrigation rehabilitation). The consultant will be assigned to the Project Component (3) Project Management.

1. **Duties and Responsibilities**

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The Environment Safeguard specialist will be responsible for the implementation of, and compliance with, the environmental and social safeguard requirements. She/he will work under the supervision of the international social and environmental safeguard supervisor and the national project manager and work closely with other consultants and experts engaged in project implementation at both central and provincial levels. More specifically, the Environment and Social Safeguard Specialist will undertake the following tasks:

* Assist in conducting the screening and additional specific environmental and social (E&S) assessments for proposed project investments under different project components
* With guidance from the international social and environmental safeguard supervisor, assist in drafting and updating the required safeguard documents, including Environment and Social Codes of Practice (ECOPs) and the Environmental and Social Management Plans (EMPs) for sub-projects, Compensation and Resettlement Plans (CRPs), Ethnic Groups Engagement/Development Plan (EGEPs/EGDPs), etc., where applicable in accordance with the complying the Environment and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and the Project Operational Manual (POM). Ensure coherence in safeguard documents between Feasibility studies and technical design and between environmental and social safeguard chapters.
* Collect data and relevant information, including conducting visits to the subproject sites when necessary to prepare the required safeguard documents.
* Assist in information disclosure and data collection for monitoring; monitor safeguards compliance during the construction/implementation phase.
* Consolidate comments and suggestions received from the stakeholders during the consultation and implementation processes to recommend mitigation instruments to be included in the safeguard reports; report issues related to environmental and social safeguard to MAF and WB as required.
* Assist in semi-annual and annual safeguards monitoring reports, including the status of Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) as required by the World Bank, provide safeguard inputs to semi-annual and annual project progress reports for submission to the WB.
* Prepare and provide advice on the safeguard compliance monitoring and reporting system for the NPMO of MAF.
* Assist in training provincial environmental and Social management and safeguard focal teams through training workshops, on-the-job training, and implementing recommendations and corrective actions as required by MAF and World Bank.

1. **Duration**

**Timeframe of the Assignment**

The services of the Consultant are for Eighteen (18) months with intermittent mobilization over the project 2-year timeframe (2022-2024). The position is based in Vientiane Capital at MAF, with extensive travel to target provinces.

1. **Consultant Qualification Requirements**

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* At least a Bachelor’s degree in one of the following fields of study: natural resources management, environmental and social studies, environmental and social management, or other relevant fields.
* Good experience in preparing the environment and social safeguard documents for irrigation rehabilitation and other investments in the agriculture sector, preferably with funding from World Bank.
* Ability to effectively communicate in English and Lao languages and strong report writing skills is essential.
* Appreciate gender, ethnic groups, and local cultures in Laos.
* Good interpersonal skills are required.
* Willingness and ability to perform fieldwork and in-country travel to provinces.

1. **Source of information**

*Department of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry*

*Lao Agriculture Competitiveness Project (LACP)*

*Tel/Fax: 021 410074*