

TERMS OF REFERENCE: RESEARCH ASSISTANT



Location : Vientiane

Languages Required : Lao, English

Duration of Contract : **3 months probation, renewable based on performance**

1. Background

Environmental management is central to the health, livelihoods and vulnerability of poor people in Asia and the Pacific. Mainstreaming seeks to improve environment outcomes that contribute to achieving the MDGs. Governments and other stakeholders improve environment outcomes that matter to poor people by mainstreaming poverty environment issues into key processes and their implementation – including national plans, sectoral strategies, environmental policies, economic decision making and subnational planning. The UN and other development partners can encourage mainstreaming by expanding knowledge and strengthening capacity, incentives and institutional processes to give a higher priority to environment issues that matter to poor people.

The Joint UNEP and UNDP Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) was formulated in Lao PDR to integrate pro-poor environmental concerns and opportunities in the national development planning, implementation and budgeting processes. PEI will provide targeted support to the Government of Lao PDR's on-going efforts to achieve poverty reduction through sustainable natural resource management. PEI programme will be implemented until 2015 by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and provincial authorities in targeted provinces with support from the UNDP Lao PDR. Its expected outputs include the integration of poverty-environment linkages in the 7th National Socio Economic Development Plan (NSED), awareness raising of the National Assembly in the areas of natural resource management and strengthened capacity for investment management for poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

The Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) program of support to the National Economic Research Institute (NERI) focuses on research on the economics of ecosystem services and land use. NERI's research is designed to directly contribute to ongoing work in the other PEI outputs. Potential research topics for 2012 will include an analysis of the economic and environmental impacts of contract farming systems and development projects.

The PEI-NERI program is looking to recruit a full-time research assistant to provide support to the development of all research matters related to the project and provide general administrative and programmatic support to the PEI-NERI project team with frequent travel to selected provinces. The position will provide excellent opportunities for developing/enhancing research skills and increasing knowledge to innovative methodologies and approaches for assessing environmental and economic issues.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

Under supervision of the Director of National Economic Research Institute (NERI) and International technical advisor working within MPI, the research assistant provides support to the development of all research matters related to the project and provides general administrative and programmatic support to the PEI-NERI project team with frequent travel to selected provinces, as needed.

The responsibilities include, but are not restricted to the following:

1. Program administration activities (30% of time):
 - Assist the organization of workshops and logistics associated with the investment component of PEI
 - Support the development of regular reports (e.g. annual report, quarterly reports)
 - Participate in project monthly meetings
 - Take minutes for meetings.
 - Drafting of PEI-NERI related documents, as required and requested.
 - Provide comprehensive support including technical services and basic translation to implementation of the PEI-NERI project.
 - Logistical and translation support for workshops, training activities and field work. as necessary.
 - Any other tasks as assigned.

2. Research activities (70% of time):
 - Assist the PEI-NERI team in all tasks related to its research initiatives, particularly in the form of literature searches, processing/compiling data, data analysis, technical writing and report editing.
 - Develop presentation materials and reports as requested.
 - Provide research and technical inputs to the development of technical papers
 - Collection, analysis and presentation of background information for the implementation of PEI Programme.
 - Review literature and legislation relevant to the program
 - Manage and compile research data
 - Coordinate and interact closely and regularly with expert group for research work
 - Other duties as required.

3. Qualifications

Education

Post graduate qualification preferred but not essential. The assistant should have a university degree in the fields of Economics, Social sciences, Natural Resources or similar. At least 2 years relevant work experience in research required, preferably with international organizations. Sound knowledge of poverty and environmental issues in Lao PDR is required.

Other Skills/ Competencies

- Demonstrable experience conducting and analyzing field research;
- Ability to write short research papers or summary of literatures reviews;
- Strong interpersonal skills with ability to establish and maintain effective work relationships with people of different national and cultural backgrounds;
- Excellent coordination skills, with ability to work under pressure and handle multiple activities and projects concurrently,
- Ability to work independently and to participate effectively in a team based information sharing environment;
- Knowledge of UNEP, UNDP and the UN system, including the UN common country programming process an advantage;
- Fluency in spoken and written English is essential;
- Full computer literacy;
- Ability to travel on demand;
- Ability to translate from English to Lao and vice versa is an asset;
- Lao National only.

4. Reporting, Supervision and Performance Evaluation

- The research assistant will report to the PEI-NERI Project Manager.
- He/ She will work closely with the NERI research team and PEI/UNDP project team.
- Performance will be evaluated by the PEI-NERI Project Manager.