



## Terms of Reference (ToR)

for

### “Preparation of Wild Water Buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*) Conservation Action Plan for Nepal”

#### 1. Background

WWF Nepal started its conservation work in Nepal from 1967 when it launched rhino conservation program in Chitwan. WWF Nepal in close coordination with Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and Department of Forests and Soil Conservation (DoFSC), has been implementing landscape level conservation programs for more than three decades. Largely, WWF Nepal's supported biodiversity conservation projects have been executing through Terai Arc Landscape and Conservation Program (TALCP) - a joint program implemented in the leadership of Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE) with WWF Nepal's technical and financial assistance. Currently, WWF Nepal works in five thematic areas- Wildlife, Freshwater, Forests, Climate and Energy and Governance. WWF Nepal's focus has progressed from its localized efforts in conservation of a single species in the 1960s, to integrated conservation and development approach in 1990s, to a new horizon of landscape level conservation encompassing national, regional, and global scales of complexity since the early 2000s.

Wild Water Buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*), also called Asiatic Wild Water Buffalo or Arna, is a large ungulate and herd-loving mega herbivore species. Once widely distributed across South and South-east Asia from Mesopotamia to Indo-China, they are now restricted to small pockets in scattered populations in Nepal, India, Bhutan and Myanmar. Nepal is endowed with second largest population of the species among the species range countries. In Nepal, the species only occurred in the Koshi River flood plain of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR). In 2017, fifteen individuals of Wild Water Buffalo were translocated to Chitwan National Park to develop alternative population. However, none of them survived in the park due to several factors that are yet to be studied.

The species is regarded as the keystone mega-herbivores, carrying crucial ecological roles in maintaining the health of grasslands and wetlands. The global conservation status of Wild Water Buffalo is endangered under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and listed on the Appendix III of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). In Nepal, the species is listed as protected wildlife in National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (NPWC) Act, 2029.

Wild Water Buffalo population in the small and isolated reserve faces genetic and demographic threats to their survival. The species is vulnerable due to the loss of genetic diversity because of introgression with domestic buffaloes and cattle. The habitat of Wild Water Buffalo is highly overlapping with domestic cattle, increasing competition for foraging and other ecological

requirements. Moreover, the probability of transmission of disease from domestic livestock to Wild Water Buffalo and vice-versa has remained a persistent threat in KTWR. The dynamics of the Koshi River course would be another challenge to adapt the species in the flood plain area.

In Nepal, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2014-2020) provides the guiding framework for the management of country's biodiversity. The umbrella biodiversity policy directs the species conservation plans for globally threatened species. Additionally, the species conservation action plans can offer comprehensive insights into threat assessments, emerging challenges, the species' conservation status and habitat, as well as the priority actions required for their long-term protection. The first Wild Water Buffalo Conservation Action Plan for Nepal (2020- 2024) was endorsed by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) in 2020.

This proposed assignment on 'Preparation of Wild Water Buffalo Conservation Action Plan for Nepal' is expected to review the implementation status of the earlier Wild Water Buffalo Conservation Action Plan in terms of fulfilling financial resources, conservation partners' funding support, stakeholders' participation and partnership, current threats, challenges, issues and opportunities, and overall efforts and achievements for the conservation of the species.

WWF Nepal seeks the services of a consultant to prepare a Wild Water Buffalo Conservation Action Plan for a 10 year period (2026-2035) with year wise detailed priority activities for the long-term survival of Wild Water Buffalo in Nepal. The document must be based on the major learnings and gaps from the first action plan implementation. The new action plan is expected to guide systematic conservation efforts for Wild Water Buffalo, from policy level to ground-level implementation that would enhance the long term survival of this species in Nepal.

## **2. Objectives**

The overall objective of the proposed assignment is to prepare "Wild Water Buffalo Conservation Action Plan for Nepal (2026-2035)", addressing prevalent threats and challenges and formulate the necessary management strategies, supported by science and local ecological knowledge for both immediate and long-term conservation efforts of the species in Nepal.

### ***Specific objectives:***

- a) To review the implementation status and outcome of the first Wild Water Buffalo Conservation Action Plan for Nepal (2020- 2024) in terms of its progress, effectiveness, achievements, gaps, and opportunities.
- b) To prepare the Wild Water Buffalo Conservation Action Plan for Nepal (2026 -2035), with incorporating learnings from the earlier implementation plan and prepare the detail year-wise activity plan, providing budget and resource allocation, along with its log frame.

### **3. Methodologies**

#### ***3.1 Work plan***

The consultant team is required to prepare and submit an inception report with a detailed work plan before the planning process. The work plan should describe how the plan's formulation process will be carried out; it should include a work schedule, methods and methodologies for each task as well as type and nature of information to be collected and analyzed. The work plan will be reviewed by the technical committee. Field level activities should be conducted with prior approval and official permits from the DNPWC.

#### ***3.2 Literature Review***

The consultant team should perform a comprehensive literature review, following the systematic review guidelines, to identify the conservation gaps, challenges, and opportunities. The literature includes relevant published articles, unpublished reports (e.g. annual reports of DNPWC and KTWR), and policy briefs. In addition, the team should also conduct an inception workshop to solicit views and inputs following the review and prior to the field work.

#### ***3.3 Field work and consultation workshop***

The consultant team should organize a one-day consultation workshop at KTWR, in the participation of representatives from KTWR, conservation partners, and community-based organizations. The workshop should highlight the present conservation measures, threats and challenges. Consultant team should also discuss the work plan for the 10-year period during the workshop. The consultant should carry out the field visits to understand the bio-physical and socio-economic aspects; assess the relevant ecological information; and validate the findings gathered from the consultation workshop.

#### ***3.4 Drafting the Action Plan***

Draft of action plan should be prepared in the given time frame.

#### ***3.5 Sharing with Technical Committee***

Draft action plan will be present in technical committee meeting. Comments and suggestions from the technical committee members should be incorporated in the plan.

#### ***3.6 National Workshop***

National Level consultation workshop on draft Wild Water Buffalo conservation Action Plan for Nepal will be organized at Kathmandu by inviting central level stakeholders.

#### ***3.7 Final Review and Submission of Action Plan***

Once the draft is endorsed by the technical committee, it will be reviewed further by the relevant authorities and experts. Comments and suggestions from the reviewers should be incorporated by the consultant team, and the final draft of the action plan should be submitted to WWF Nepal and DNPWC for the approval process.

#### 4. Deliverables

- a) Inception report that includes detail plan of action and methodology.
- b) Hard and digital copies of data collected in the field, including map and shape files of species habitat, distribution, and foraging hotspots.
- c) Draft action plan.
- d) Final action plan incorporating comments and suggestions provided by technical committee, reviewer team, and conservation experts.

#### 5. Time Frame and workplan

The proposed timeline for this assignment will be a three-month period (March 2026 to May 2026).

S.N.	Activities	March 2026 to May 2026		
		March	April	May
1	Preparation and submission of work plan and inception report			
2	Preparation of outline and structure of action plan document			
3	Systematic literature review			
4	Field work and consultation with experts and stakeholders at district and national level			
5	Preparation of draft action plan			
6	Incorporate the suggestions and feedback received from technical committee, reviewer team, and conservation experts.			
7	Submit a Conservation Action Plan, with financial report			

#### 6. Team

The team members will include:

- **Team leader** (species conservation expert/wildlife biologist) - at least master's degree (PhD Preferred) in forestry/ wildlife conservation science with at least 5 years' experience in species biology and research work.
- **Member (Sociologist)** - at least master's degree in relevant subjects with at least 5 years' experience of similar work.

#### 7. Coordination and communication

The consultant team will work under the direct supervision of the Head of Wildlife Program, WWF Nepal following the timeline above and coordinate regularly with technical experts from relevant government institutions (MoFE, DNPWC, and DoFSC) and other stakeholders.

## **8. Proposal Submission**

Interested VAT registered firms in Nepal are requested to submit technical and financial proposals providing a detail breakdown of total budget in Nepali Rupees, electronically to- [proposals-wildlife@wwfnepal.org](mailto:proposals-wildlife@wwfnepal.org). Please mention the subject of the email as- **“Proposal: Wild Water Buffalo Conservation Action Plan Preparation”** and submit the proposal by **Sunday, 22 February 2026**.

The proposal must include the following:

- a) Signed and stamped cover letter.
- b) Technical proposal (Not exceeding 5 pages).
- c) CVs of team members.
- d) Financial proposal (see Annex 1 for template).
- e) Organization registration certificate.
- f) VAT registration certificate.
- g) Latest tax clearance and audit report.

## **9. Mode of payment**

The payment will be made based on the existing norms of WWF Nepal. Fund disbursement will be done in two steps. Other expenses (field costs including travel and accommodation and expenses associated with consultations) not exceeding consultancy fee will be provided in advance upon the signing of the contract. The second and final installment will be released after the acceptance of the report/deliverables by WWF.

## Annex 1: Budget Template

S.N.	Description	Unit	Qty.	Rate	Amount (NPR)
<b>1</b>	<b>Fee (1.1+1.2+.... VAT)</b>				<b>XXXX</b>
1.1	Team Leader-Name	Days			XXXX
1.2	Expert 1 -Name	Days			XXXX
	VAT 13% on Fee				XXXX
<b>2</b>	<b>Other Expense (2.1+2.2+VAT)</b>				<b>XXXXX</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Field Expenses</b>				<b>XXXXX</b>
2.1.1	Transportation	Days			XXXX
2.1.2	Food & Accommodation	Person * Days			XXXX
2.1.3	Airfare....	Times* Person			
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Other Costs</b>				<b>XXXXX</b>
2.2.1	Field level Consultation Meetings (Tea and Snacks)	Event*Person			XXXX
2.2.2	National Level Consultation Workshop	Event*Person			XXXX
2.2.3	Communication	Lumpsum			XXXX
2.2.4	Stationaries	Lumpsum			XXXX
	VAT 13% on Other Expense				XXXX
	<b>GRAND TOTAL (1+2)</b>				<b>XXXXX</b>

\* Note: please add/edit rows as required.

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