

Advisory support for a Verified Carbon Standard project in Nabajjuzi peatland

Terms of reference

1. Context

In East Africa, peatlands are increasingly recognized for their importance in sustainable development and climate resilience. In Uganda, peatlands have traditionally supported livelihoods and rural economies. However, due to increasing agricultural pressure, infrastructure expansion, clay/sand extraction, burning, biomass (over-)harvesting (e.g. grass, papyrus), and water pollution, many peatlands are now drained and degraded. In Uganda alone, approximately 687,000 hectares of peatlands (~3.7% of the total national area) are at risk¹.

The Peat4People project, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)², aims to enhance the technical and financial capacities of key stakeholders for sustainable peatland management. In Uganda, Peat4People will:

1. **Improve policy and decision-making processes:** Enhance the capacity of stakeholders to develop and implement effective policies for sustainable peatland management.
2. **Promote sustainable paludiculture practices:** Support the adoption of sustainable practices that balance conservation with economic benefits.
3. **Develop the foundation for a sustainable financing mechanism:** Identify and develop a financing mechanism that can support sustainable peatland management at the demonstration site.
4. **Foster regional and international cooperation:** Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders to achieve sustainable peatland landscapes.

A previous pre-feasibility study on carbon finance for peatland restoration and conservation in Uganda identified the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and VM0007 REDD+ Methodology Framework (REDD+MF)³ as the current most viable option to develop a (non-forested) peatland carbon project in Uganda. It highlighted the need for additional technical support for compliance with international carbon finance standards, including tenure analysis, land-access agreements, and benefit-sharing concepts based on a context-specific theory of change. (Silvestrum Climate Associates 2025).

Nabajjuzi peatland has been selected as a demonstration site to pilot different interventions to be developed over the course of the Peat4People project. These interventions carry important implications for the livelihoods and food security of surrounding communities. One of the key activities will focus on **developing a sustainable financing mechanism through a feasibility assessment for the potential implementation of a carbon project**. This feasibility work contributes to building the foundation for sustainable finance options for peatland rewetting and sustainable

¹ https://nilebasin.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/WRM-WBS-2022-09_GHG%2520emissions%2520from%2520drained%2520peatland%2520in%2520Uganda_FULL.pdf

² <https://www.giz.de/en/projects/sustainable-peatland-management-people-climate-and-biodiversity-peat4people>

³ <https://verra.org/methodologies/vm0007-redd-methodology-framework-redd-mf-v1-8/>

management at Nabajjuzi peatland as a blueprint to inform future upscaling at the national level. It supports readiness to progress toward preparation and submission of a VCS Project Description (PD) (and other relevant requirements) for a potential carbon project in the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM) and, in doing so, determine the level of investment and co-funding needed to move from feasibility to implementation. This will require tailored advisory support, including the design and implementation of land or resource rights analyses, as well as feasible and community-grounded benefit-sharing and financing considerations, to enable local communities to adopt sustainable alternatives to peatland conversion while ensuring both carbon and wider socio-economic co-benefits, such as water security, disaster risk reduction (flood, fire, drought) and biodiversity conservation.

Nabajjuzi peatland is part of [Nabajjuzi Wetland system Ramsar Site](#)⁴, which covers Masaka City, and parts of Masaka District, Kalungu District and Bukomansimbi District, spanning 12 sub-counties with over 380,000 people within the Nabajjuzi catchment (2002 census). Nabajjuzi peatland comprises a series of interconnected wetlands and peatlands (e.g. Nakayiba and Nabajjuzi wetlands); for simplicity, this ToR refers to the pilot site as ‘Nabajjuzi peatland’. The total peatland area is estimated at ~7,900 hectares within the larger 90,000 hectares catchment, which connects to the Katonga River as part of the wider Lake Victoria Basin. The Nabajjuzi Community-Based Wetland Management Plan, CBWMP (2004–2008) provides baseline context and preliminary zoning and highlights the need for participatory refinement and safeguards-sensitive implementation.

2. Objective

Provide technical advisory support on benefit-sharing, land tenure and application of the VCS Standard to support development of a viable project design for a potential VCM project in the Nabajjuzi peatland, in accordance with Ugandan law and regulations, including [Uganda’s Climate Change Regulations \(2025\)](#)⁵, and in line with the requirements under the VCS Standard, VM0007, and international good practice on safeguards. The assignment will clarify the regulatory context in Uganda, in close collaboration with the applicable legal framework, and provide technical support for: (i) a land and resource rights analyses (including tenure); (ii) a participatory Theory of Change and benefit-sharing mechanism (developed by Peat4People partners through consultations with local communities and relevant government stakeholders, as appropriate); and (iii) the development of practical tools, templates and guidance for project documentation and benefit-sharing arrangements.

The Service Provider (SP) will advise the Peat4People, national and local partners through the process, propose a concrete methodology and workplan, and deliver targeted capacity building and backstopping. The SP will consolidate findings into a **roadmap to PD readiness**, highlighting remaining gaps and practical next steps to address them. Peat4People partners will lead community engagement activities and data collection efforts. The SP will provide technical advisory support through the Peat4People project, which will coordinate with the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs lawyers where legal interpretation, drafting, or clearance is required.

⁴ <https://rsis Ramsar.org/ris/1639>

⁵ <https://www.nema.go.ug/en/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/The-National-Climate-Change-Climate-Change-Mechanisms-Regulations-2025.pdf>

3. Scope of work and key deliverables

The assignment is organized in two phases, with a trigger that activates phase 2. The SP will propose the detailed methodology for achieving the deliverables below.

3.1 Phase 1 – Readiness assessment and process design

Objective: Determine the regulatory and technical readiness of a VCS VM0007 project in Nabajjuzi peatland, advise on the methodology for land and resource rights analyses, and design a participatory theory of change (ToC) and benefit-sharing process including a toolset. Phase 1 deliverables are expected to guide and support engagement with local communities and data collection led by the Peat4People partners.

Key deliverables (Phase 1):

D1.1 Inception report

A short inception report confirming: (i) understanding of the assignment and key assumptions; (ii) detailed methodology and workplan; (iii) roles and responsibilities and a list of required inputs to be provided by Peat4People partners; (iv) the Phase 1 capacity-building and backstopping approach; and (v) key risks/constraints (e.g. data access) with mitigation measures and an agreed acceptance process for deliverables.

D1.2 Regulatory and technical readiness assessment note

A technical note summarizing:

- The regulatory framework, including relevant legal interfaces (roles, mandates, approvals, and decision-making processes) for a VCS VM0007 project and benefit-sharing under Ugandan law and regulations, and the competent authorities;
- Analyse compiled information on land and resource tenure and carbon rights in the proposed project area, based on national law, existing maps and studies, Ramsar and district information (including Nabajjuzi Community Based Wetland Management Plan 2004–2008), any available cadastral data and community mapping, to support benefit-sharing design;
- Required and/or recommended key data and information gaps (including missing or incomplete cadastral and other tenure data) and practical steps to address these;
- Key risks, constraints and enabling conditions for proceeding towards a VCS VM0007 project in Nabajjuzi peatland; and
- Advice informed by relevant Ugandan environmental and land-rights jurisprudence and comparable project precedents to support tenure-risk mitigation measures and benefit-sharing design.

D1.3 Tenure and stakeholder evidence toolset

A practical set of tools (e.g. data collection templates, consultation/consent forms, sample land-access/cooperation templates, sample grievance mechanism structure, simple decision-support system) for mapping tenure, stakeholder rights and interests, and documenting consultations, aimed at generating the evidence needed to assess the project's prospective **right to operate** and **right to claim** GHG emission reductions.

D1.4 Participatory theory of change and benefit-sharing process design

Guidance and practical tools (e.g. guiding questions, facilitation steps, documentation templates) for

co-developing, with communities and stakeholders, a context-specific theory of change and for using it to derive key parameters and criteria for a future benefit-sharing mechanism.

D1.5 Capacity building and backstopping

A targeted training package for a smaller group of Peat4People partners, including service providers leading community engagement, comprising:

- **Online training** covering technical application of the VCS Standard requirements, safeguards requirements, carbon rights and land tenure evidence, and benefit-sharing design, in accordance with Ugandan law and regulations;
- A **slide deck + concise technical guidance note(s)** that set out the step-by-step methodology to be followed for: (i) collecting tenure and stakeholder evidence; (ii) running ToC/benefit-sharing discussions; and (iii) documenting, processing and analysing the information for VCS project design and safeguards documentation; and
- **Remote backstopping** during Phase 1 to support partners/subcontractors in applying the tools (e.g. feedback on first drafts of completed templates, troubleshooting).

Phase 1 deliverables and coordination schedule (indicative)

Indicative Phase 1 period: 1 May–30 September 2026

Review and feedback: For D1.1, D1.2, D1.3 and D1.4 *draft* deliverables, the SP will provide one round of consolidated comments (allow a minimum of two weeks for feedback). The SP will incorporate the consolidated comments and submit the revised final version as part of the agreed deliverable schedule.

Deliverable/ Coordination meeting	Format	Indicative timing	Expert days (indicative)
M1 Kick-off meeting	Virtual meeting	By Week 1	0.5
D1.1 Inception report	Word + PDF	By end of Week 2	1
M2 Mid-point check-in meeting	Virtual meeting	By Month 2	0.5
D1.2 Regulatory and technical readiness assessment note	Word + PDF	By end of Month 2 (review draft at mid-point check-in)	5
D1.3 Tenure and stakeholder evidence toolset	Editable Word/Excel templates + short guide/decision-support system	By end of Month 2 (review draft at mid-point check-in)	3
D1.4 Theory of change and benefit-sharing process design	Guidance note + templates (Word)	By end of Month 2 (review draft at mid-point check-in)	3
D1.5 Capacity building and backstopping	Webinar(s) + PPT deck + guidance note(s)	Training by Month 2; backstopping available throughout Phase 1;	6.5
M3 Phase 1 close-out meeting	Virtual meeting	By end of Month 6	0.5
Total			~20 days

3.2 Phase 2 – Benefit-sharing plan and roadmap to PD readiness

Objective: Develop a formal benefit-sharing framework and plan, associated technical documentation/templates and a roadmap to a VCS carbon project design applying VCS requirements and templates.

Trigger for Phase 2: Phase 2 will be activated once:

- i. Phase 1 key deliverables have been delivered and accepted; and
- ii. sufficient tenure, theory of change and stakeholder consultation evidence generated and documented by Peat4People partners in line with Phase 1 tools and guidance (including, where possible, relevant cadastral and other tenure data).

Key deliverables (Phase 2):

D2.1 Benefit-sharing framework and site-specific Benefit-Sharing Plan

A coherent benefit-sharing framework and site-specific Benefit-Sharing Plan that:

- Builds on the agreed ToC and documented community inputs;
- Is consistent with Uganda's Climate Change Regulations and international good practice on safeguards; and
- Is suitable for inclusion in a VCS Project Description under VM0007 using VCS templates.

D2.2 Draft template contracts and clauses

Priority memoranda of understanding, land-access agreements and suggested carbon-rights/benefit-sharing clauses tailored to the documented tenure arrangements and institutional set-up, for further adaptation and finalization with government legal counsel.

D2.3 Roadmap to PD readiness

An action plan identifying remaining gaps and steps required to fully demonstrate rights to operate and to claim GHG emission reductions, complete safeguards and benefit-sharing documentation, and finalize agreements needed for submission of a VCS Project Description.

D2.4 National stakeholder workshop

Subject to budget limitations and commissioning of Phase 2, the SP shall plan one in-person 1–2-day workshop in Uganda aimed at relevant national stakeholders, providing an overview of VCS project design requirements for carbon rights, land tenure evidence, safeguards, and benefit-sharing, to support future scaling up to other peatland areas.

Phase 2 deliverables and coordination schedule (indicative)

Indicative Phase 2 period: ~Q4 2026–Q2 2027, subject to trigger and continuation decision.

Review and feedback: For D2.1, D2.2 and D2.3 *draft* deliverables, the SP will provide one round of consolidated comments (allow a minimum of three weeks for feedback). The SP will incorporate the consolidated comments and submit the revised final version as part of the agreed deliverable schedule.

Deliverable/ Coordination meeting	Format	Indicative timing	Expert days (indicative)
M4 Phase 2 kick-off meeting	Virtual meeting	By Week 1	0.25
M5 Mid-point check-in meeting	Virtual meeting	By end of Month 2	0.5
D2.1 Benefit-sharing framework and site-specific Benefit-Sharing Plan	Word + PDF	By end of Month 4 (review draft at mid-point check-in)	5
D2.2 Template contracts and clauses	Editable Word templates + PDF	By end of Month 4 (review draft at mid-point check-in)	3
D2.3 Roadmap to PD readiness	Word + PDF	By end of Month 5	3
D2.4 National stakeholder technical workshop	1 day in-person workshop + PPT deck	By Month 5	3
M6 Phase 2 close-out meeting	Virtual meeting	By end of Month 6	0.25
Total			~15 days

4. Expert profile requirements

The SP should propose a team with clearly defined roles. At a minimum, proposals should include 2-3 experts to cover the following roles:

- Lead expert (international or regional): at least 15 years of demonstrated experience in land tenure and carbon rights, benefit-sharing arrangements, and safeguards requirements for voluntary carbon projects, including under the VCS.
- Safeguards expert (international or regional): relevant experience in FPIC, grievance mechanisms, and social risk management in nature-based/land-use projects.
- Uganda regulatory expertise: demonstrated Uganda-specific experience.

5. Proposal submission requirements

The SP shall submit a technical and financial proposal.

Technical proposal

The technical proposal (max. 10 pages, excluding CVs, references, and annexes) should include:

- Understanding of the assignment and proposed approach.

- Proposed methodology and workplan aligned with the deliverables in this ToR, and any suggested additions or modifications.
- Proposed team composition, roles and relevant experience (incl. CVs).
- Timeline with key milestones and deliverable dates.
- Proposed level of effort (expert days) by key deliverable and by expert profile (as applicable).

Financial proposal

The financial proposal should include a detailed budget, including:

- Total cost (all-inclusive).
- Daily or hourly rates per expert/profile and, where feasible, linked to tasks/deliverables.
- For travel expenses: a separate breakdown of transport, accommodation and per diem costs, in line with applicable German travel expense and tax rules (Bundesministerium der Finanzen, "Steuerliche Behandlung der Reisekosten und Reisekostenvergütungen bei betrieblich und beruflich veranlassten Auslandsreisen ab 1. Januar 2025" including country lump-sum tables for international travel⁶).
- All costs should include applicable taxes, fees, charges and overheads.

6. Selection procedure and criteria

Selection will be based solely on the evaluation criteria below during the review of the written technical and financial proposals; no interviews will be conducted.

Evaluation criteria:

- Technical quality and feasibility of methodology/workplan (incl. capacity building and backstopping approach);
- Relevant experience (VCS/VM0007; tenure/rights; safeguards/FPIC; benefit-sharing; national regulatory context);
- Team composition and roles;
- Best overall fit for the activities described in this ToR

Exclusion criteria: Proposals will be excluded if:

- The technical proposal exceeds the maximum page limit (10 pages excluding CVs/references/annexes);
- Required documents are missing (technical and/or financial proposal, CVs);
- The proposal does not address the minimum expert profile requirements; or
- The proposal is submitted after the deadline.

All tenderers will be informed of the selection outcome within approximately two weeks after the submission deadline.

⁶https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/DE/Downloads/BMF_Schreiben/Steuerarten/Lohnsteuer/2024-12-02-steuerliche-behandlung-reisekosten-2025.html

7. Payment terms

Payment shall be made upon invoice following satisfactory delivery and written acceptance of key deliverables. Deliverables shall be submitted in editable format (MS Word/Excel/PowerPoint as applicable) and PDF, in English.

Phase 1 payment: one payment upon written acceptance of all Phase 1 deliverables (i.e. D1.1, D1.2, D1.3, D1.4 and D1.5).

Phase 2 payment: Phase 2, and the associated payment, will be commissioned only upon the agreed trigger and continuation decision, in line with contract arrangements. The Phase 2 trigger includes:

- i. Phase 1 deliverables have been delivered and accepted; and
- ii. sufficient tenure, theory of change and stakeholder consultation evidence generated and documented by Peat4People partners in line with Phase 1 tools and guidance (including, where possible, relevant cadastral and other tenure data). A single Phase 2 payment will be made upon acceptance of Phase 2 deliverables (i.e. D2.1, D2.2, D2.3 and D2.4).