

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Environmental and Social Specialist – Project Implementation Unit

1. Background

The Zletovica Hydrosystem (HS Zletovica) is a multipurpose water infrastructure system located in the northeastern and eastern parts of North Macedonia, primarily within the municipalities of Probištip and Kratovo. The system was designed to harness the water and hydropower potential of the Zletovska River for the integrated benefit of Kratovo, Probištip, Zletovo, Štip, Karbinci, Sveti Nikole, and Lozovo, collectively serving a population of approximately 100,000 people.

The Zletovica Hydrosystem has been conceived as a phased development:

- Phase I (Completed): Construction of the Kneževo Dam and Reservoir, access roads, and regional transmission mains for drinking water supply. This phase is fully operational.
- Phase II (Planned): Modernization and expansion of irrigation services over approximately 4,563 hectares of agricultural land in the municipalities of Probištip (3,606 ha) and Kratovo (957 ha), including the construction and rehabilitation of primary and secondary irrigation infrastructure, conveyance pipelines, pumping stations, and distribution networks.
- Phase III (Planned): Development of hydropower generation capacity of approximately 9–9.5 MW (around 45.5–48 GWh per year) through the construction of small hydropower plants integrated into the existing water system.

The Government of North Macedonia (GNM) is preparing a World Bank–financed investment operation to support Phases II and III of the Zletovica Hydrosystem. To support project preparation, a Grant Facility for Project Preparation (GFPP) grant in the amount of US\$2.0 million, covering the period July 2026 to December 2027, has been secured. The GFPP will finance preparatory activities, including the updating of technical and hydraulic studies, dam safety documentation, transboundary water analyses, and preparation of environmental and social instruments in accordance with the World Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework (ESF).

The GNM has decided to implement the GFPP through the existing Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the Agriculture Modernization Project (AMP), housed within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE), in close partnership with the Public Enterprise Hydrosystem Zletovica (PE HS Zletovica).

Given the project’s substantial environmental and social risk rating—driven by potential habitat disturbance, changes in river flows and environmental-flow requirements, dam and community safety considerations, transboundary water issues, land and livelihood impacts, labor and working conditions, and stakeholder concerns—the PIU requires a dedicated and qualified Environmental and Social Specialist. The Specialist will provide technical oversight and quality assurance for environmental and social risk management under the GFPP, support preparation of the future investment, and work closely with PE HS Zletovica, the World Bank environmental and social specialists, relevant authorities, technical experts, and consulting firms engaged under the Grant. Where a matter requires expertise beyond the Specialist’s qualifications, including complex resettlement, biodiversity, cultural heritage, or dam-safety issues, the Specialist will identify the need for and coordinate appropriate specialized support.

2. Objective of the Assignment

The objective of the assignment is to ensure that environmental and social considerations are systematically integrated into: (i) the planning and implementation of GFPP-financed studies, surveys, investigations, and other preparatory activities; and (ii) the technical, environmental, social, permitting, procurement, and institutional preparation of the proposed World Bank-financed investment for Phases II and III. The Specialist will support compliance with the World Bank

Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), the Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) determined to be relevant through project screening and assessment, the World Bank Group Environmental, Health and Safety Guidelines, applicable good international industry practice, World Bank Operational Policy OP 7.50 on Projects on International Waterways, as applicable, and the environmental and social legislation of North Macedonia.

The Specialist will serve as the PIU's principal environmental and social focal point. The assignment will cover integrated environmental and social risk management, while recognizing that specialized technical inputs may be required for complex subjects. Particular emphasis will be placed on environmental and social assessment, biodiversity and natural-habitat protection, environmental flows and water quality, pollution prevention, land and livelihood impacts, labor and working conditions, stakeholder engagement and grievance management, dam and community safety, climate resilience, cumulative and transboundary impacts, cultural heritage, and incorporation of mitigation measures into designs, cost estimates, bidding documents, contracts, and supervision arrangements.

3. Scope of Services and Responsibilities

The Environmental and Social Specialist will be responsible for the following:

3.1 Environmental and Social Risk Management and ESF Compliance

- Serve as the PIU's primary focal point for integrated environmental and social risk management and coordinate communication with the World Bank environmental and social specialists.
- Screen all GFPP-financed activities and the proposed investment components for environmental and social risks and impacts, and advise the PIU Coordinator on applicable national and World Bank requirements, instruments, specialized expertise, sequencing, approvals, disclosure, and consultation.
- Ensure that the relevance of ESS1–ESS10 is considered and documented through screening and assessment, and that all ESSs determined relevant are addressed proportionately; this includes confirming whether ESS7 is relevant rather than presuming its applicability or non-applicability.
- Prepare and maintain an environmental and social commitments and compliance tracker covering agreed actions, responsible parties, deadlines, dependencies, review status, permits, disclosure, consultation, and grievance-management milestones.
- Identify emerging or unanticipated risks and promptly recommend proportionate corrective or preventive measures to the PIU Coordinator.

3.2 Review and Quality Assurance of Environmental and Social Instruments

- Review and provide consolidated technical comments on environmental and social deliverables prepared by consultants, including, as applicable, the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, Environmental and Social Management Plan or Framework, Environmental and Social Commitment Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Labor Management Procedures, Resettlement Policy Framework, site-specific resettlement instruments, and specialized management plans.
- Lead quality review of studies and plans addressing biodiversity and natural habitats, environmental flows, surface water and groundwater, water quality, erosion and sediment control, pollution prevention, waste management, climate risks and resilience, cumulative impacts, land acquisition and livelihoods, cultural heritage and chance finds, labor and

working conditions, occupational health and safety, community health and safety, and emergency preparedness.

- Confirm that baseline data, impact-assessment methods, alternatives analysis, application of the mitigation hierarchy, monitoring indicators, institutional responsibilities, implementation schedules, cost estimates, and implementation arrangements are technically adequate, internally consistent, and suitable for appraisal, bidding, and implementation, as relevant.
- Verify that environmental and social obligations are incorporated into technical specifications, bills of quantities, cost estimates, bidding documents, contractual conditions, contractor management requirements, implementation schedules, and supervision and reporting arrangements.
- Maintain a comment-response matrix and coordinate consolidation and resolution of comments from MAFWE, PE HS Zletovica, competent authorities, and the World Bank, preserving an auditable record of submissions, reviews, revisions, and clearances.

3.3 Water, Biodiversity, Dam Safety and Transboundary Considerations

- Review the environmental and social implications of proposed irrigation and hydropower alternatives, including abstraction and operating regimes, seasonal flow variation, environmental-flow requirements, water quality, sediment dynamics, and potential impacts on downstream users and ecosystems.
- Assess whether biodiversity baseline surveys and critical- and natural-habitat screening are proportionate to project risks, and verify application of the mitigation hierarchy and preparation of any required biodiversity management, restoration, or offset measures.
- Review the international-waterways analysis from an environmental and social perspective, including potential downstream effects on water quantity, water quality, ecosystems, and water users, and support the PIU in assembling timely and adequate technical information and addressing actions required under World Bank Operational Policy OP 7.50 on Projects on International Waterways, in coordination with the World Bank.
- Coordinate with dam-safety engineers and any independent dam-safety experts or panel to ensure consistency among environmental and social instruments, dam-safety assessments and plans, emergency preparedness arrangements, downstream community considerations, and ESS4 requirements, without assuming responsibility for technical dam-safety determinations.
- Ensure that climate-change projections, drought and flood risks, catchment pressures, greenhouse-gas considerations where relevant, and cumulative impacts are reflected in alternatives analysis, design, environmental and social assessment, and proposed monitoring arrangements.

3.4 Environmental and Social Management of Project Preparatory Activities

- Screen and clear, from an environmental and social perspective, field surveys, geotechnical investigations, drilling, access works, and other GFPP-financed activities before mobilization, and confirm that method statements, permits, land access, worker and community safety measures, waste controls, and chance-find procedures are in place.
- Undertake risk-based site visits and verify compliance with applicable environmental, labor, occupational health and safety, community health and safety, land-access, and cultural-heritage requirements.

- Document non-compliance, agree time-bound corrective actions with the responsible party, monitor closure, and escalate material or recurrent issues to the PIU Coordinator.
- Notify the PIU Coordinator promptly of any significant environmental or social incident or accident and support notification to the World Bank within the timeframe specified in the applicable project commitments and procedures; thereafter support investigation, root-cause analysis, corrective action planning, and closure tracking, as required.
- Maintain complete files of screening records, permits, approvals, monitoring findings, incidents, corrective actions, grievances, correspondence, and other environmental and social documentation.

3.5 Stakeholder Engagement, Grievance Management and Social Coordination

- Coordinate implementation and periodic updating of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan during the GFPP, ensuring timely, meaningful, inclusive, and culturally appropriate engagement with project-affected parties and other interested stakeholders, including disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.
- Support disclosure and consultation on draft environmental and social instruments and ensure that stakeholder feedback is documented, responded to, and reflected in final documents where appropriate.
- Establish or operationalize accessible project and worker grievance mechanisms; maintain confidential grievance records; monitor acknowledgement, referral, resolution, and closure; and prepare anonymized periodic summaries.
- Coordinate assessment of land acquisition, restrictions on land use, physical or economic displacement, and livelihood risks; review the Resettlement Policy Framework and any subsequent resettlement instruments for compliance and implementation readiness; and identify when specialized land or social expertise is required.
- Verify incorporation of labor and working-conditions requirements, including terms and conditions of employment, occupational health and safety, codes of conduct, worker grievance arrangements, and management of contracted workers, into GFPP-financed activities and future procurement documents.
- Ensure that gender, disability, vulnerability, social inclusion, and barriers to participation and benefit are appropriately considered in engagement, assessment, design recommendations, and mitigation measures.

3.6 Coordination with Authorities and Institutional Capacity Building

- Coordinate with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, MAFWE, municipalities, and other competent institutions regarding national EIA procedures, environmental and water permits, nature-protection requirements, land matters, construction-related approvals, and other regulatory obligations.
- Prepare and maintain a permitting and approvals tracker identifying each required permit or decision, the responsible institution and PIU focal point, required inputs, dependencies on design or studies, submission and decision dates, conditions, and outstanding actions. The Specialist will coordinate and quality-assure environmental and social inputs to applications; formal submission and statutory responsibility will remain with the competent entity designated by law and the PIU.
- Advise the PIU and PE HS Zletovica on sequencing national and World Bank processes and identify gaps between national requirements and applicable ESS requirements.

- Assess environmental and social capacity needs within the PIU and PE HS Zletovica and deliver targeted training, guidance, templates, and practical tools for project preparation and future implementation.
- Participate in technical meetings, World Bank missions, consultations, and project-preparation events, and provide concise briefing notes, presentations, and agreed-action records.

3.7 Reporting

- Prepare concise monthly environmental and social progress reports for the PIU Coordinator covering instrument preparation, consultations and grievances, field activities, permitting, compliance, incidents, risks, corrective actions, decisions required, and milestones for the following month.
- Provide environmental and social inputs to quarterly and semi-annual GFPP progress reports, annual work plans, procurement documents, aide-mémoires, and other project documentation.
- Prepare incident notifications and follow-up documentation in accordance with the applicable project commitments and procedures.
- Prepare an Environmental and Social Readiness Report at completion of the assignment summarizing instruments prepared, disclosure and consultation, permitting status, integration into design and procurement, institutional capacity, unresolved risks, and priority measures required before appraisal, bidding, and implementation.

4. Deliverables

Deliverable	Timing/Frequency	Minimum Content and Acceptance
Inception work plan and compliance tracker	Within 15 working days of commencement; updated monthly	Work program, review schedule, risk and commitments tracker, permitting map, stakeholder-engagement schedule, document-control arrangements, and proposed site-visit plan; accepted by the PIU Coordinator.
Screening and readiness records for GFPP field activities	Before mobilization of each relevant activity	Risk screening, applicable requirements, permits and land access, method-statement review, mitigation and monitoring measures, and recommendation for environmental and social clearance; accepted by the PIU Coordinator.
Technical review notes and comment-response matrices	For each consultant deliverable or procurement package, normally within 10 working days unless otherwise agreed	Consolidated, prioritized, and actionable comments; assessment of compliance, technical adequacy, internal consistency, implementation readiness, and incorporation into design, quantities, costs, bidding documents, contracts, and supervision arrangements; accepted by the PIU Coordinator.
Monthly environmental and social progress report	Within five working days after the end of each month	Status of instruments, permitting, engagement, grievances, field activities, compliance, incidents, corrective actions, decisions required, and next-month milestones; accepted by the PIU Coordinator.

Quarterly and semi-annual reporting inputs	According to the GFPP reporting calendar	Validated environmental and social information, results, risks, actions, and supporting evidence suitable for incorporation into project reports and World Bank documentation.
Stakeholder, grievance, monitoring, incident, and corrective-action records	Maintained continuously; summarized monthly	Complete, current, confidential where required, and auditable records, including closure evidence and anonymized reporting.
Training and briefing materials	As agreed in the approved work plan	Needs-based materials and records of delivery covering priority ESF, national regulatory, and implementation-readiness topics.
Final Environmental and Social Readiness Report and handover package	Draft at least 20 working days before assignment completion; final within 10 working days after comments	Status of all instruments, permits, disclosure and consultation, design and procurement integration, institutional arrangements, unresolved risks and actions, and an indexed handover file; accepted by the PIU Coordinator.

All contractual deliverables shall be prepared in Macedonian and English, with professional written quality in both languages. Stakeholder-facing materials shall be prepared in the language or languages needed for accessible and meaningful engagement. Deliverables will be submitted to and accepted by the PIU Coordinator, following coordination with PE HS Zletovica and consultation with the World Bank where applicable. Unless otherwise agreed, the PIU will provide one consolidated set of comments within ten working days of receipt, and the Specialist will submit a revised deliverable within five working days thereafter. Acceptance by the PIU does not substitute for any review, clearance, or approval required from the World Bank or a competent national authority.

5. Qualifications and Experience Requirements

5.1 Education

- Advanced university degree (master's degree or equivalent) in environmental engineering, environmental or social science, ecology, civil/water engineering with a strong environmental specialization, or another directly relevant discipline.
- Additional education or training in social impact assessment, stakeholder engagement, occupational health and safety, biodiversity, water resources, dam safety or World Bank environmental and social requirements will be an advantage.

5.2 Professional Experience

- At least seven (7) years of relevant professional experience in environmental and social impact assessment, environmental management, social risk management, or environmental and social supervision of infrastructure projects.
- Demonstrated experience preparing or reviewing ESIAs, ESMPs or ESMFs, stakeholder-engagement instruments, labor-management measures, land-acquisition or resettlement instruments, and specialized environmental or social studies for complex infrastructure projects.

- Relevant experience in the water sector—preferably involving dams, reservoirs, irrigation, hydropower, river-basin management, or water-supply infrastructure—is required.
- Demonstrated knowledge of biodiversity and natural-habitat assessment, environmental flows, water quality, pollution prevention, climate resilience, cumulative impacts, land and livelihood risks, stakeholder engagement, labor and working conditions, and occupational and community health and safety.
- Experience with World Bank-financed or other multilateral development bank-financed projects and good working knowledge of the World Bank ESF or a comparable framework is strongly preferred.
- Experience integrating environmental and social requirements into designs, cost estimates, bidding documents, contracts, and supervision arrangements is required.
- Knowledge of North Macedonia’s environmental, water, nature-protection, land, EIA, permitting, and construction-related regulatory framework is required.
- Experience working with public institutions, public enterprises, affected communities, and multidisciplinary technical teams is required.

5.3 Skills and Competencies

- Strong analytical, review, drafting, and reporting skills, with the ability to translate environmental and social requirements into practical design, procurement, permitting, and implementation measures.
- Excellent communication, consultation, facilitation, and coordination skills, including the ability to work effectively with government institutions, technical consultants, local authorities, workers, and affected communities.
- Ability to manage several workstreams, meet deadlines, identify decision points, and maintain clear and auditable records.
- Full professional proficiency in written and spoken Macedonian and English sufficient to prepare, review, and present all contractual deliverables in both languages. Knowledge of Albanian will be considered an advantage where relevant to stakeholder engagement.
- High professional integrity, independence of judgment, respect for confidentiality and personal data, and commitment to environmental and social sustainability.

6. Reporting and Duration

The Specialist will report directly to the PIU Coordinator, who will serve as the contract manager and sole approving authority for the Specialist’s work plan, timesheets, and contractual deliverables. The Specialist will work in close coordination with PE HS Zletovica management and technical staff, World Bank environmental and social specialists, consultants preparing technical and environmental and social documentation, and relevant national and local authorities. PE HS Zletovica and other stakeholders will provide inputs through the PIU Coordinator to maintain a clear and consistent reporting line.

The assignment is expected to commence promptly after contract signature and continue through completion of the GFPP, currently anticipated on 31 December 2027, subject to contract effectiveness, satisfactory performance, availability of financing, and any approved extension of the GFPP. The services will be provided on a full-time basis for an estimated 12 staff-months. The final level of effort, work schedule, and any extension provisions shall be confirmed in the Request for Expressions of Interest and contract. The Specialist will support project preparation and readiness; services during

implementation of the future investment are not included unless separately agreed through a contract amendment or new assignment.

7. Duty Station

The duty station will be agreed with the PIU and specified in the contract. The Specialist will be expected to work regularly from PE HS Zletovica offices and undertake travel to PIU office, project sites, communities, government institutions, and meetings elsewhere in North Macedonia as required. The financial proposal and contract shall clearly state the treatment of travel time, transport, accommodation, and per diem for approved missions.