Detailed Terms of Reference

Tender title: Comprehensive project management (design and works supervision) assignment for the upgrading of the Laas Geel rock art site, to improve visitor facilities and protect the rock paintings

Project "Protection and Promotion of Somaliland's Archaeological Heritage"

1. Purpose of the Contract

The purpose of this contract is to carry out a project management (design and works supervision) assignment for the upgrading of the Laas Geel rock art site, with a view to:

- improving visitor reception conditions
- ensuring the long-term protection of the rock paintings
- delivering tourism development compatible with conservation requirements

2. General Information

Assignment title	Comprehensive project management (design and works supervision) assignment for the upgrading of the Laas Geel rock art site, to improve visitor facilities and protect the rock paintings
Beneficiary	Ministry of Trade and Tourism of Somaliland
Country	Somaliland / Somalia
Estimated cost of the upgrading works	€250,000 exc. tax
Estimated duration	10 months (target date: September 2027)

3. Background and Rationale

Somaliland has an exceptional concentration of archaeological sites of varied age and nature. These include caves containing Paleolithic-era remains, a significant number of rock shelters with walls adorned with Neolithic-era paintings, numerous megalithic burial sites, and important remains of medieval-era settlements.

This exceptional cultural heritage fully deserves to be surveyed, studied and protected. It also represents a significant potential for sustainable tourism. Within this context, the Laas Geel site, discovered in 2002 by a team of French and Somaliland archaeologists, very quickly emerged as one of the most important rock art sites in East Africa.

The site is a granite hill rising from an eroded plateau, comprising some twenty rock shelters located on its slopes, particularly the north-east slope. These natural shelters are richly decorated with polychrome paintings depicting mainly cattle and human figures in a distinctive style characteristic of a rock art tradition found throughout Somaliland.

This art is particularly representative of the symbolic world of the earliest cattle herders of the Horn of Africa. It is estimated to be around 5,000 years old.

To promote the knowledge, protection and public opening of this site, and more broadly to help consolidate the protection and promotion of Somaliland's cultural heritage, Expertise France, with financial support from Agence Française de Développement (AFD), established a partnership with the government of Somaliland, represented by the Ministry of Trade and Tourism (MoTT).

The project “Protection and Promotion of Somaliland’s Archaeological Heritage” comprises two components: a first component focused on strengthening the institutional framework and national heritage management capacities (legal framework, training, documentation, partnerships); and a second component, to which this contract relates, dedicated to the protection and promotion of the Laas Geel archaeological site.

The current assignment falls under the second component. Upgrading works are planned for the Laas Geel site in order to improve the visitor experience, ensure the long-term sustainability of the site — including in particular the protection of the rock paintings — and contribute to broader economic development.

4. Objectives and Expected Results

4.1 Overall Objective

Since its discovery, the Laas Geel rock art site has been the subject of scientific studies in the form of archaeological missions conducted by a team of French researchers, who recorded the rock paintings and clarified their context and significance. The site has been open to the public since 2004 and currently receives close to 1,000 visitors per year. For this reason, it has been the subject of works aimed at organizing visitor reception and ensuring the preservation of the paintings. The authorities responsible for the site expressed concern at an early stage about its future, as they lacked the scientific, technical and financial means to fully ensure its preservation. Although the site’s legal status as a heritage site of note has yet to be established under legislation currently being drafted in Somaliland, any intervention must, from now on, give priority to protecting the rock paintings and the natural setting in which they are found.

A team of expert from the Groupement de Recherches Archéologiques d'Agde (GRAA) carried out an assessment of the treats facing the paintings and the site in December 2025, as part of the current project. It identified:

- natural and anthropogenic deterioration factors
- inadequacy of existing facilities
- shortcomings in the management of visitor flows
- issues relating to wildlife, vegetation and infrastructure

This study comprised two main components: a series of studies on the natural and anthropogenic factors that may be causing deterioration of the paintings, a condition survey of the facilities built to receive visitors, and an assessment of the site's management arrangements.

This latest expert assessment made it possible to clarify the nature of the factors causing deterioration of the painted surfaces and to suggest possible remedial approaches. The same applies to the buildings used for visitor reception and site operations, whose condition and functionality still need to be optimized. Lastly, the shortcomings and inadequacy of the facilities built for the visit route through the decorated shelters call for a substantial overhaul, both conceptually and technically. It should be noted that the treatment of vegetation cover on the Laas Geel rock outcrop (proliferation of invasive species and the role of vegetation in increasing nighttime condensation) must be taken into account in the conservation plan, as must damage caused by biogenic processes (swallow nesting and use of the rock by baboons).

The objective will therefore be to propose a comprehensive site upgrading plan enabling:

- conservation of the rock paintings
- securing of the site
- improvement of the visitor experience
- development of sustainable tourism

The Consultant will design the plan, develop the tendering documents, assist with the recruitment of a contractor, and supervise the works until completion.

4.1.1 Consideration of Prior Studies and Recommendations

The Consultant will have access to the following studies and reports:

- Environmental Impact Assessment, Sustain Enviro Consulting, 2025
- Additional archaeological and scientific study of the Laas Geel heritage site, GRAA, 2026

They constitute reference documents for carrying out the assignment. The diagnostic findings, observations and conservation issues identified therein must be taken into account by the Consultant.

The technical solutions and upgrading approaches proposed therein constitute recommendations, which the Consultant must examine as part of its own diagnostic assessment. Unless expressly stated otherwise in these Terms of Reference, they do not constitute mandatory technical requirements. The Consultant may propose alternative or complementary solutions, provided it justifies their relevance

with regard to conservation, safety, functionality, sustainability, landscape integration and cost-control objectives.

The results of the tourism market study referred to in Section 4.2.7, which is ongoing at the time of this tender, will be provided to the Consultant once available and must be taken into account in the diagnostic assessment and the preparation of upgrading scenarios.

4.1.2 Sustainability, Operation and Maintenance of the Facilities

The proposed solutions must take into account, beyond their investment cost, their operating and maintenance conditions and costs, the local availability of materials, equipment and spare parts, and the maintenance capacities of the site manager. The Consultant shall favor solutions suited to the local context that are robust and help limit long-term maintenance needs and costs.

4.2 Specific Objectives

4.2.1 Physical Protection of the Laas Geel Site

The Consultant must design and propose a physical protection system for the site that, in particular:

- limits unauthorized human intrusion (vandalism)
- limits wildlife intrusion (baboons, warthogs, etc.)
- withstands local constraints (climate, camels)
- is integrated into the landscape
- is durable and suited to the budget available for the works

The choice of materials and technical design for the fence or any other protection system is left to the Consultant's judgment. The Consultant must justify the proposed solutions in terms of their effectiveness, durability, landscape integration, cost, maintenance requirements and the local availability of materials.

A fence was installed in 2019 around the entire site, covering an area of approximately 12 ha over a total length of 1,480 m. The GRAA report (February 2026) notes its deterioration and identifies several design limitations with regard to the site's protection objectives, particularly in relation to wildlife and pressure from camels.

Physical protection of the site must also take into account the specific risks identified at certain shelters, relating in particular to the presence of animals, direct visitor contact with the painted surfaces, or access and circulation conditions.

The GRAA report and the shelter-by-shelter surveys identify several points of attention in this regard and propose various possible responses, including:

- protective measures for shelters 1 and 1b, in the event that occasional and controlled goat grazing is authorized on the site;
- measures to limit direct visitor contact with the painted surfaces at shelters 10 and 11;
- measures to secure access to shelters 6 and 9.

These recommendations constitute reference elements for the design of the facilities. The Consultant must examine them in light of its own site diagnostic and may propose alternative or complementary solutions where it considers these more appropriate, provided the choices made are justified with regard to conservation, safety, landscape integration and sustainability objectives.

The possibility of authorizing occasional goat grazing on the site must be taken into account in the design of the protection systems. The Consultant must assess the implications of this possibility for the conservation of the shelters concerned and propose, where applicable, appropriate protection measures.

4.2.2 Functionality and Comfort of the Buildings

The Consultant must:

- assess the condition of existing infrastructure (reception area, offices, staff housing, sanitary facilities)
- propose improvements in terms of:
  - functionality
  - comfort
  - durability
- incorporate the enhancement of the visitor pergola

The Consultant must take into account the data provided in the GRAA report (February 2026) regarding the current condition of the reception buildings, offices, staff housing and sanitary facilities. It shall propose the improvements and modifications it considers necessary to optimize their functionality and comfort. The proposal must include the pergola intended for visitors, which is meant to be a place where they can rest and eat.

4.2.3 Electricity and Water Supply, Waste Management

The Consultant must:

- propose a functional electricity supply solution (in particular solar power)
- design a lighting system to deter wildlife
- improve the water supply system
- propose solutions for:
  - wastewater treatment
  - waste management (collection, treatment, landscape integration)

The GRAA report (February 2026) notes malfunctions in the electricity supply: positioning of the solar panels and a non-functioning supply system. The Consultant must remedy this.

Solar power generation also concerns the occasional nighttime lighting system intended to deter baboons. The current system is damaged and non-functional.

Regarding the water supply, the system drawing from the wadi's water table must be reviewed and modified to make it sustainable.

The treatment of wastewater and blackwater must also be addressed.

Waste management must be incorporated into the site upgrading proposals. These must in particular include waste collection facilities along the pedestrian route, as well as a suitable system for the collection, storage and treatment of waste near the reception area. The proposed solutions must meet hygiene requirements and be visually integrated with the site's natural character.

Currently, an open waste-burning area, notably for plastic bottles, is located against the fence near the reception area.

4.2.4 Vehicle Parking

A basic parking area is currently laid out at the end of the access track, on the right bank of the wadi separating the track from the enclosed site. Needs to improve its capacity, usability and the organization of different uses have been identified in the course of prior work carried out on the site.

The Consultant must propose a layout that ensures suitable parking and traffic conditions for vehicles, taking into account in particular the needs of visitors and service vehicles, as well as the site's landscape, heritage and functional constraints.

The proposals must examine the most appropriate ways of separating and/or organizing the different uses and justify the chosen layout solutions.

4.2.5 Pedestrian Visit Circuit

A pedestrian circuit currently connects the reception buildings to the various decorated shelters. The existing facilities, which include paths and concrete steps, were built to facilitate and secure visitor movement, channel flows and limit trampling and soil erosion.

The GRAA report (February 2026, chapter 5.2.5) identifies several difficulties and limitations relating to the design and condition of these facilities and proposes possible remedial measures. This diagnostic and these recommendations must be taken into account by the Consultant in preparing its proposals.

The Consultant must propose a strategy for improving the visit circuit that, in particular:

- ensures the safety and comfort of visitors as they move along the route, including in areas with significant gradients;
- organizes and channels visitor flows;
- limits trampling and erosion caused by visitor traffic;
- improves, where necessary, access conditions to shelters presenting particular difficulties, notably shelters no. 6 and 7a;
- ensures landscape integration suited to the site's natural and heritage character.

The proposed solutions must favor lightweight, reversible facilities and exclude the use of concrete. The Consultant shall determine and justify the technical solutions and safety measures best suited to

the various configurations encountered along the route, taking into account the recommendations set out in the GRAA report.

Optional item: the Consultant shall study the feasibility and merits of a layout providing access to the top of the Laas Geel rock outcrop and, where appropriate, the installation of a viewpoint indicator. Proposals must in particular take into account visitor safety, access constraints, site preservation and the limitation of landscape impact.

4.2.6 Signage

The signage currently present on the site and its surroundings shows signs of deterioration and durability limitations, particularly relating to the materials used, as noted in the GRAA report (February 2026).

The Consultant must propose a comprehensive and coherent signage and visual communication system to guide visitors from the national road and access track through to the reception area and the pedestrian visit circuit.

To this end, it must in particular:

- propose a graphic identity applicable to the various signage and interpretive media;
- identify orientation, information and interpretive needs at the various stages of the visitor route;
- propose and justify the siting, number, nature and characteristics of the signage elements;
- take into account the site's climatic and environmental constraints in the choice of materials and technical solutions;
- favor durable, discreet solutions compatible with the site's natural and heritage character;
- incorporate and enhance the scientific content relating to the painted panels, which will be provided by the archaeologists.

Particular attention must be paid to the signage accompanying the pedestrian circuit and to the interpretive materials associated with the various decorated shelters. The Consultant shall propose, in consultation with the archaeologists, the interpretive approach and the most appropriate locations based on the visit route, the legibility of the signage, and site preservation concerns.

Proposals must specify and justify the choices made regarding siting, media, materials and landscape integration.

4.2.7 Tourism Development and Improvement of the Visitor Experience

The project has commissioned a market study on tourism at Laas Geel, which will examine the expectations of potential visitors and recommend activities that could be developed on and around the site. The results of this study will be provided to the selected Consultant during the preliminary design phase.

The Consultant must propose facilities and features that improve the visitor experience and contribute to the sustainable tourism development of the site. To this end, it must consider:

- proposing tourism facilities: shop, picnic area, cafeteria
- sustainable tourism: waste and resource management
- renewal of the interpretive area: new information panels, potential integration of other media
- activities for families and school groups
- studying the feasibility and merits of a camping area (optional)

Proposals must take into account the current and projected site attendance, conservation and heritage protection issues, and operating and maintenance constraints. The Consultant shall justify the solutions proposed and their scale with regard to these various factors.

5. Governance and Project Stakeholders

The project is steered by the following stakeholders:

- the Ministry of Trade and Tourism (MoTT), the Beneficiary, owner of the site and beneficiary of the project;
- Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the project's funding agency;
- Expertise France, the project's Operator and Contracting Authority, mandated by AFD to implement the project "Protection and Promotion of Somaliland's Archaeological Heritage" in its entirety (institutional strengthening and Laas Geel upgrading), and responsible in this capacity for procuring and overseeing this project management contract;
- the Consultant awarded this contract, responsible for the design and supervision of the Laas Geel upgrading works, under the coordination of Expertise France.

A Working Group, bringing together MoTT and Expertise France, shall approve the main milestones of the assignment (Diagnosis, APS, APD, DCE) and shall arbitrate, where necessary, on matters requiring a decision by the Contracting Authority. Its exact composition and operating arrangements (meeting frequency, referral procedures) will be defined at the start of the assignment.

6. General Technical Requirements

Proposals must comply with the following principles:

- priority given to site conservation
- landscape integration
- reversibility of the facilities
- durability of materials
- adaptation to local climatic conditions
- prior consultation of pastoral communities and customary authorities before any decision affecting site access or grazing regulations (free, prior and informed consent approach)
- compliance with the environmental and social safeguard requirements of AFD and Expertise France.

7. Definition of the Project Management Assignment

The Consultant will be entrusted with a comprehensive project management assignment, structured into 5 phases, proportionate to the nature of the works (lightweight, reversible facilities; rehabilitation of existing infrastructure):

Phase 1 – Diagnosis and Preliminary Design (APS)

- analysis of existing conditions: field mission
- consideration of prior studies (GRAA report, EIA) and of the tourism market study results, once made available by Expertise France
- Consultations with local stakeholders

This diagnostic assessment must make it possible to:

- identify the technical, heritage-related, environmental, social and functional constraints of the site;
- identify intervention needs and any incompatibilities or limitations of existing facilities;
- prioritize the necessary interventions with regard to their urgency, their contribution to site conservation, visitor safety, tourism development, technical feasibility and compatibility with the available budget;
- identify, where applicable, points requiring decisions by the Contracting Authority before development of the upgrading scenarios.

Based on this diagnostic assessment, the Consultant shall propose, within the same phase, several scenarios or levels of intervention (preliminary design) allowing the Contracting Authority to make the necessary decisions with regard to the available budget.

Phase 2 – Detailed Design and Tender Documents (APD/DCE)

- detailed technical solutions and consolidated cost estimate, based on the selected scenario
- detailed design of the signage and interpretive system (graphic identity, siting, content coordinated with the archaeologists), and of the tourism facilities (shop, cafeteria, picnic area and other visitor amenities)
- preparation of the execution documents and the tender documents (DCE): drawings, Technical Specifications (CCTP), Bill of Quantities/Unit Price Schedule (DPGF/BPU), projected schedule
- preparation of the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), including environmental and social screening

Phase 3 – Contract Award Assistance (ACT)

- analysis of bids
- assistance in selecting the works contractor

Phase 4 – Works Supervision (DET)

- direction and coordination of the works
- compliance monitoring

- monitoring of ESMP implementation
- skills transfer and training for site staff

Phase 5 – Completion Assistance (AOR)

- assistance with completion operations
- follow-up on the resolution of outstanding defects (snagging)

8. Deliverables Expected by Phase

Phase 1 – Diagnosis and Preliminary Design (APS)

- diagnostic report (constraints, needs, prioritization in light of the available budget)
- summary note on prior studies (GRAA report, EIA) and on the tourism market study, where available
- upgrading scenarios with a preliminary cost estimate
- preliminary environmental and social screening note

Phase 2 – Detailed Design and Tender Documents (APD/DCE)

- detailed drawings and technical solutions, consolidated cost estimate
- signage and interpretive design package: graphic identity, siting plan and interpretive content
- detailed design of the tourism facilities (shop, cafeteria, picnic area and other visitor amenities)
- tender documents: Technical Specifications (CCTP), Bill of Quantities/Unit Price Schedule (DPGF/BPU), projected schedule
- Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP)
- note specifying the projected operating and maintenance conditions and costs of the selected solutions, taking into account the maintenance capacities of the site manager and the local availability of materials, equipment and spare parts

Phase 3 – Contract Award Assistance (ACT)

- bid analysis report
- assistance in selecting the works contractor

Phase 4 – Works Supervision (DET)

- site progress monthly reports and schedule monitoring
- monitoring of ESMP implementation
- training and skills-transfer program for site staff

Phase 5 – Completion Assistance (AOR)

- final mission report
- completion certificate and follow-up on the resolution of outstanding defects
- as-built documentation (DOE) and record drawings

- operation and maintenance manual for the facilities (fence, solar power, water, waste, signage and tourism facilities)

9. Implementation Schedule

The overall implementation period for the project management assignment is set at **10 months** up to completion of the works, starting from contract notification. Completion assistance (Phase 5 – AOR) continues beyond this period, throughout the defects liability period (12 months).

The implementation schedule is broken down by phase as follows:

- Phase 1 – Diagnosis and Preliminary Design (APS): 5 weeks from notification
- Phase 2 – Detailed Design and DCE (APD/DCE): 5 weeks from approval of Phase 1
- Phase 3 – Contract award assistance (ACT):6 weeks from approval of phase 2
- Phase 4 – DET: projected works duration estimated at 5 months
- Phase 5 – AOR: until completion of the works and resolution of outstanding defects, followed by continuation throughout the defects liability period (12 months)

The schedule may be adjusted based on project constraints and will be subject to approval at each stage.

10. Implementation Arrangements

10.1 Coordination

The Consultant shall carry out its assignment under the supervision of Expertise France. A kick-off meeting will be held following contract notification.

Close coordination with Expertise France must be maintained throughout, from the preparation of missions through to their completion.

Regular exchanges with the project team and its partners will be held on progress and any difficulties encountered. These exchanges will precede the organization and holding of the various Steering Committee sessions.

10.2 Presence of the Consultant on Site

To carry out general oversight of the works, site visits will take place regularly, as well as unannounced as needed. Continuous on-site monitoring is provided by the Consultant's local correspondent, present on site throughout Phase 4 (DET). The team leader and other thematic experts shall intervene according to the schedule of periodic missions set out in the proposal.

10.3 Logistical Resources and Operation of the Assignment

It is understood that the Consultant bears all operating costs and logistical arrangements required to carry out its services in full, within the specified timeframe. It must equip its experts with all the

logistical resources and inspection equipment required to carry out their assignment. Site safety throughout the duration of the project, from the design phase through to completion of the works, must be ensured by the Consultant.

11. Required Qualifications and Experience

a) General Experience of the Firm

- Legally established for at least 5 years in the field of project management or heritage engineering
- At least 3 references for similar assignments carried out over the past 10 years (upgrading of heritage, tourism or natural sites open to the public), with certificates of satisfactory completion
- Sufficient financial capacity, evidenced by average turnover over the last 3 financial years
- Sworn statement of absence of conflict of interest, particularly with respect to the teams that carried out the prior studies (GRAA report, EIA, pastoral assessment)

b) Specific Experience Sought

- Proven experience in the upgrading of heritage, tourism or archaeological sites
- Experience in the Horn of Africa or a comparable context (fragile states, difficult access, limited logistical resources)
- Development of sustainable tourism activities
- Development of archaeological interpretation/outreach activities
- Experience managing construction and development projects in Somaliland desirable
- Familiarity with the environmental and social safeguard requirements of international donors

c) Key Team (Mandatory Positions)

Local Expertise

- Local correspondent / site supervision officer, based in Somaliland, present on site continuously during Phase 4 (DET): familiarity with the institutional, linguistic (Somali) and community context, and experience in construction works supervision. Capacity to evaluate the availability, costs and import delays of materials and equipment.

Thematic Experts on Periodic Missions

Mobilized mainly during Phases 1 and 2 (diagnosis, preliminary design, detailed design) for project design, and thereafter for one to two monitoring missions during Phase 4 (DET):

- Team leader / heritage architect: architecture degree or equivalent, minimum 10 years' experience, including 5 years on heritage or archaeological sites; responsible for the overall design of the facilities, including light conservation, structural and site-works (VRD) aspects appropriate to works of this nature
- Responsible tourism / tourism site development expert: minimum 5 years' experience in sustainable and community-based tourism development at heritage or natural sites; responsible for the design of the signage and interpretive system and of the tourism facilities and visitor experience components of the project

- Environmental and social expert: minimum 5 years' experience, familiarity with community consultation procedures (FPIC)

Depending on the needs identified during the diagnostic phase, the Consultant may mobilize additional expertise on a periodic basis (conservation-restoration, structural/site-works engineering, etc.), without these constituting separate mandatory positions.

The technical proposal must include, for each mandatory position, the CV of the proposed expert (qualifications, years of general and specific experience, language proficiency), as well as the number and projected schedule of missions for each thematic expert.

The Consultant may, if needed, propose other complementary expertise depending on the nature of the planned activities and the skills required to carry out the assignment. The Consultant shall clearly indicate the specialty and duration of involvement of each.

In the event of replacement of an expert for a reason acceptable to Expertise France, the newly proposed expert must have at least the same profile and experience as the expert being replaced.

d) Selection Arrangements

Given the value and nature of the services (a project management assignment for lightweight, reversible facilities), selection will be based on the qualifications and experience of the Consultant, taking into account the following elements:

- general experience and references of the firm;
- qualifications and experience of the proposed key team;
- understanding of the site's issues and the suitability of the proposed methodological approach;
- consideration given to consultation with local communities and to environmental and social safeguard requirements.

Selection will proceed through a single, open competitive tender, evaluated in three stages:

- **Administrative eligibility:** reviewed by the Expertise France project team, verifying compliance with the documents required under section (e) below;
- **Technical evaluation:** carried out by a Technical Evaluation Committee assessing proposals against the criteria set out above;
- **Financial evaluation and selection:** carried out by Expertise France, independently of the project team, on the basis of the technical evaluation and the financial proposal.

All parties associated with this tender are invited to commit to respecting the tendering process described above and the decision of the Selection Committee once the evaluation is complete.