

Call for Expression of Interest

**Establishing Baseline for Integrated
Climate Adaptation Solutions for the
Hindu Kush Himalaya Region (HI-CAS)
Project in Bangladesh, Bhutan and
Nepal**

ToR

1. About ICIMOD

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region stretches 3,500 km across Asia, spanning eight countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. Encompassing high-altitude mountain ranges, mid-hills, and plains, the zone is vital for the food, water, and energy security of up to two billion people and is a habitat for countless irreplaceable species. It is also acutely fragile and front-line to the impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), based in Kathmandu, Nepal, is an international organisation established in 1983 that is working to make this critical region greener, more inclusive and climate resilient. For more information, read our [Strategy 2030: Moving Mountains](#) and explore our [website](#). ICIMOD places GESI at the centre of its work guided by its [GESI policy 2024](#). This 2024 policy, which updates and supersedes ICIMOD's previous gender equity policy, builds upon our long-standing commitment to and experience of implementing programmes pertaining to gender issues and taking a proactive stance toward addressing social inclusion. ICIMOD's efforts aim to empower women and disadvantaged groups in the diverse contexts of the HKH and promote an organisational culture well aligned with its core values.

2. Overview of the project

ICIMOD is implementing the **Integrated Climate Adaptation Solutions for the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region (HI-CAS)** project across selected sites in three countries. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the project will be implemented **two upazilas** (sub-districts) in the **Bandarban** and **Khagrachhari** hill districts. In Bhutan, the project covers **two gewogs** (blocks) within **Paro** and **Punakha** districts. In Nepal, the project focuses on selected sites in **Roshi Municipality** and **Dhankuta Municipality**. The HI-CAS project is funded by **Global Affairs Canada** (GAC) through the **Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development**.

Over its **four-year duration**, the project aims to strengthen the climate resilience and improve the livelihoods of approximately 40,000 Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). Guided by **feminist and rights-based approaches**, the project aims to reduce the exposure and vulnerability of these communities to climate change impacts, while promoting ecosystem health and sustainability. Specifically, the project intends to achieve the following outcomes.

Ultimate outcome: Improved climate resilient and nature-positive livelihoods of rural women and Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLCs) with biodiversity and climate mitigation co-benefits in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal.

Intermediate outcome 1: Enhanced adoption of the Springshed specific, gender responsive Integrated Adaptation Solutions Packages (IASP) for climate change adaptation by women's groups, IPLC networks, and local institutions.

Intermediate outcome 2: Increased development and implementation of gender responsive policies, strategies and guidelines by sub-national institutions that enable scaling of watershed specific, gender-responsive IASP.

Intermediate outcome 3: Increased use of climate finance by women's groups and IPLC networks for implementing the gender responsive IASP.

Each of these intermediate outcomes is linked to one or more immediate outcomes and associated output level results. For additional details, please refer to the [HI-CAS results framework](#) and the [HI-CAS performance measurement Framework](#). Project document (declassified) can be found [here](#).

The project will be implemented through the adoption of gender-responsive and locally tailored climate adaptation solutions, **grounded in feminist and rights-based approaches** that prioritize the rights, agency, and leadership of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). HI-CAS focuses on Integrated Adaptation Solution Packages (IASPs). These evidence-based IASPs will integrate watershed management, renewable energy technologies for powering irrigation systems, and agrobiodiversity practices. Together, **these interventions to reduce drudgery, improve income-generating opportunities, and strengthen the leadership of women and IPLCs** in decision-making processes. The IASPs will be complemented by capacity building and knowledge-sharing initiatives aimed at strengthening institutional policies and actions, while also catalyzing sustainable investments in climate action and development—particularly in the water, energy, and agrobiodiversity sectors through gender-responsive policies and enabling environment for scaling innovations- with a strong emphasis on promoting women's and IPLCs' leadership.

ICIMOD invites proposals from established firms or institutions to undertake the baseline study for the HI-CAS project. **The call is open to both national and international entities with a proven track record and an established presence in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal.** Preference will be given to firms or institutions with the capacity to execute the baseline simultaneously across all three countries and to assemble a well-balanced team of highly qualified thematic experts, and technical professionals from each country, with demonstrated hands-on expertise in designing and executing well-linked baselines, midline and endline assessments that incorporate **gender-responsive evaluations, feminist and rights-based approaches.**

3. Objectives of establishing the baseline

The overall objective is to establish a robust baseline (evaluation) design that generates reliable, disaggregated data to inform the planning, implementation, performance monitoring, and evaluation of the HI-CAS project, while also providing a framework (basis) for conducting linked midline and endline assessments for evaluating impacts of the project on the key outcomes.

The HI-CAS is a **gender equality targeted** project with Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and the empowerment of women and girls among its major areas of focus for addressing gender inequalities. The baseline will help assess the extent to which gender and power relations - including structural factors and other root causes of inequality, discrimination, and unequal power dynamics- are present, in order to inform a process that is inclusive, participatory, and respectful of both rights holders and duty bearers.

3.1. The specific objectives of establishing the baseline include:

- 1. To generate reliable and disaggregated data** on key indicators to inform evidence-based planning, refine target setting, and strengthen Performance Monitoring System, as well as to update the Performance Measure Framework (PMF) of the project developed during HI-CAS proposal phase, ensuring alignment with project outcomes and results reporting requirements.
- 2. To establish benchmarks** against which project performance can be measured during midline and endline assessments.
- 3. To document the existing status of springshed health, renewable energy access, and agrobiodiversity practices** across target sites, and to assess the current and potential contributions of these resources and technologies to the livelihoods, resilience, and well-being of women and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs).
- 4. To generate data on the status of decision-making power exercised by women and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)** in local-level committees and community institutions, including water user groups, forest user groups, cooperatives, and farmer groups. This objective also includes assessing women- and IPLC-led livelihood options, their self-reported levels of confidence and income, and quantifying the drudgery they experience (e.g., hours spent on water collection and agrobiodiversity-related tasks) in both livelihood activities and leadership role
- 5. To provide evidence for adaptive management** and ensure interventions are responsive to the needs of women and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs).

3.2. The baseline (evaluation) design

Given the project outcomes, duration, and objectives of the baseline study, interested firms are expected to **propose a robust and contextually appropriate baseline evaluation design** for the HI-CAS project. The proposed design should integrate **gender-responsive evaluation** methodologies, **grounded feminist and rights-based approaches**, to establish reliable benchmarks for systematically measuring project performance and impacts during the linked midline and endline assessments, as well as to assess the contributions specifically attributable to HI-CAS interventions.

4. Methodology

Interested firms are expected to **propose a comprehensive methodology and sampling plan** that are **fully aligned with the baseline evaluation design they propose** for the HI-

CAS project. The proposed approach should be methodologically rigorous and contextually appropriate, **ensuring it captures** the complex socio-ecological, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) dynamics. It should integrate both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a holistic understanding of baseline conditions, complemented by geospatial data on Springshed management interventions of the project to map and analyze spatial patterns of adoption and ecosystem health. The use of innovative tools and technologies, such as mobile data collection platforms for surveying baseline subjects, i.e., beneficiaries, comparison groups etc, remote sensing, GIS mapping, and participatory approaches, is strongly encouraged to enhance data accuracy, efficiency, and inclusivity. Furthermore, the methodology should adhere to gender-responsive and rights-based principles, ensuring the collection of disaggregated data that reflects the perspectives and realities of women and IPLCs. The sampling plan should be robust and statistically sound to enable reliable analysis and establish benchmarks for systematically measuring project outcomes and impacts during midline and endline assessments. The proposed methodology should also outline the mechanisms that the selected firm or institution will establish to ensure **traceability** of the baseline subject for midline and endline evaluations.

5. Scope of work

a. Baseline study design development and execution

1. Develop a **methodologically sound and gender-responsive baseline evaluation design** that is closely aligned with the project's objectives and Performance Results Framework, while adhering to the [Results-Based Management guidelines of Global Affairs Canada](#) (GAC).
2. In close consultation with project team, develop tools (household/community survey questionnaires), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guidelines, Key Informant Interview (KII) protocols and community resource mapping templates that are **inclusive, culturally sensitive, and participatory**, ensuring they reflect the perspectives of rights holders (women and IPLCs) and duty bearers incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure robust and triangulated findings. All the tools must be aligned with project results and adapted to the socio-cultural context of each country to ensure relevance, inclusivity, and consistency across the project sites.

b. Data collection and analysis

3. Lead and **manage the execution of baseline data collection simultaneously across HI-CAS project sites in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal**. Work in close coordination with the ICIMOD HI-CAS core team and implementation partners in each country, while maintaining strong communication and engagement with all relevant stakeholders throughout the assessment process.
4. Design and oversee fieldwork to **ensure meaningful participation of women and IPLCs**. Ensure gender-balanced representation and apply inclusive, culturally sensitive approaches aligned with ICIMOD's GESI commitments and Global Affairs Canada's equity and inclusivity guidelines.
5. Undertake primary and secondary data collection – if applicable, using participatory and inclusive methodologies that amplify the voices of marginalized groups, particularly women and IPLCs.

6. Map and document the status of Springshed health, renewable energy access, and agrobiodiversity practices in the project target sites

Collect and analyze data on:

- Decision-making power of women and IPLCs within community-level institutions (e.g., water user groups, forest user groups, cooperatives, and farmer groups).
- The current and potential contributions of Springshed management, renewable energy solutions, and agrobiodiversity practices to livelihoods, resilience, and well-being.
- Women- and IPLC-led livelihood options, self-reported levels of confidence and income, and the extent of drudgery experiencing.
- Analyze data with results disaggregated by country, geography, gender, ethnicity, and other relevant social dimensions in line with project requirements.

c. GESI and Power Relations Assessments

7. Conduct a **gender and power analysis** to identify structural factors and root causes of inequality, discrimination, and unequal power dynamics in relation to project interventions within target communities to identify information gaps, opportunities, and community-specific contextual factors to inform the baseline assessment.
 - Assess how existing **gender norms, roles, and relations** influence access to resources, decision-making, and participation in livelihood and leadership opportunities.
 - Document barriers and enablers for **women's empowerment and IPLC inclusion** to inform project strategies.
 - Provide actionable recommendations for strengthening project implementation and adaptive management processes to ensure responsiveness to the needs of women and IPLCs.

d. Baseline report(s)

The selected firm is expected to produce high-quality, **country-specific baseline reports** each for Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal, in line with the baseline report format agreed upon during the inception phase and to the highest satisfaction of ICIMOD. In addition, the selected firm or institution will prepare an **overarching cross country executive report** (10 –15 pages) that synthesizes key findings and major takeaways from the three country reports, presented in a flyer or other innovative, user-friendly format.

6. Processes and stages

The most promising firms or institutions expressing interest in this assignment, to the best satisfaction of ICIMOD, will be shortlisted and invited to submit full technical and financial proposals. The selected firm or institution will then be required to prepare and submit an inception report and subsequently execute the baseline data collection under ICIMOD's oversight and quality assurance framework, as the implementing entity of the HI-CAS project.

Full Proposal (for shortlisted firms or institutions)

Shortlisted firms or institutions will need to submit a full proposal to undertake the HI-CAS Project's baseline assessment, which outlines comprehensively:

1. An understanding of the assignment
2. All team members' qualifications and relevant experience
3. Detailed baseline (evaluation) design and methodology including a rational of the sampling plan. In close consultation with the HI-CAS core team, agree on key indicators and variables for the baseline to ensure consistency across midline and endline assessments.
4. Final baseline report(s) structure, and structure for the overarching cross country baseline executive report
5. Full, itemised budget provided on the prescribed budget format
6. Proposed work plan and corresponding timeline

The selected firm will then be required to submit an **Inception Report**, followed by execution of the baseline study, under **ICIMOD's oversight and quality assurance system**.

7. Reporting and supervision

The selected firm or institution will report to the head of ICIMOD's Strategic Results, Partnership, and Business Development (SRPBD) Unit, and work in close collaboration with Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist and the HI-CAS Project Coordinator.

8. Qualifications & Experience

- **Technical depth and rigour:** The firm or institution must have an excellent track record in developing robust baseline evaluation designs and conducting midline and endline assessments in multi-country, multidisciplinary settings. They must demonstrate proven expertise in applying gender-responsive evaluation guidelines and integrating feminist and rights-based approaches. Eligibility will be validated through client testimonials and submission of a high-quality sample report produced within the last five years.
- **Implementation capability and logistics strength:** The firm or institution has a demonstrated proven capacity of executing studies similar to the HI-CAS baseline across multiple countries, delivering high-quality outputs within sharp timelines for international organizations.
- **Team composition and balance:** The firm or institution has assembled a well-balanced team of highly qualified **thematic experts aligned with the HI-CAS thematic priorities**, along with technical professionals from each country. The team demonstrates hands-on expertise in designing and executing **gender-responsive research** as well as applying **feminist and rights-based approaches**.
- **Core team members** should hold at least a Master's degree (preferably a PhD) in disciplines relevant to the HI-CAS thematic priorities, with a **minimum of eight years** of demonstrated experience in their respective fields. Technical team members must possess excellent knowledge and understanding of advanced statistical techniques, qualitative and

quantitative data analysis, geospatial methods with proven expertise in generating high-quality analytical reports. Team members must have demonstrated expertise in planning, designing and conducting high-quality socioeconomic surveys in climate change adaptation and environmental settings.

10. Proposals Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Weight
Technical Proposal	(70%)
Firm's or institution's capability to execute the assignment	15%
Baseline design, methodology and detailed work plan – aligned to ToR	35%
Team composition, qualifications and experience	20%
Financial Proposal	(30%)
Value for Money	30%

9. Ethical Considerations

All baseline assessment activities must strictly comply with ICIMOD's research ethics and data protection standards. Informed consent must be obtained from all participants prior to any data collection, ensuring they understand the purpose, process, and potential use of the information provided.

Special care must be taken when working with women, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized or vulnerable groups to maintain dignity, privacy, and safety throughout the engagement. Sensitive data must be collected and stored securely, with strict confidentiality and anonymization protocols where applicable.

All information and data collected under this assignment shall be transparently declared for potential use in regional reporting, analysis, and knowledge dissemination. Prior permission must be obtained from ICIMOD, as custodian of the data, before any form of data sharing or publication. The selected firm or institution must ensure that all protocols related to ethical clearance, data storage, security and usage rights are adhered to in line with ICIMOD's policies.

10. Specific deliverables & Timeline

Deliverable	Description	Timeline
Full proposals received	Shortlisted firms or institutions from the call for expression of interest (EoI) to submit full proposals	August 25, 2025
Proposals assessed	Selected firm or institution notified	September 5, 2025
Inception meeting	First (inception meeting with selected firm or institution	September 8, 2025
Inception report	Draft inception report from the selected firm or institution received	September 19, 2025
	ICIMOD provides inputs on inception report	September 30, 2025

	Final inception report received from the selected firm or institution	October 10, 2025
Field work	Selected firm initiate baseline data collection	13 th Oct – 5 th Nov 2025
Validation of baseline preliminary findings	Selected firm or institution conducts a validation workshop and shares preliminary findings in a face-to-face workshop modality in one of the HI-CAS countries.	Week of 10 th Nov. 2025
Draft baseline reports	Selected firm shares: a. The first draft of country specific baseline reports each for Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. b. An overarching executive report summarizing major takeaways from each baseline report	November 25, 2025
Inputs provided on the draft baseline report	ICIMOD provides inputs on the draft baseline reports, and on the overarching executive report	December 17, 2025
Final baseline report(s)	Selected firm or institution submits the final reports	December 25, 2025

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