

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Collaborating with Women Rights Organisations (WRO), Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in Climate Adaptation Solutions under HI-CAS

Project: Integrated Climate Adaptation Solutions for the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region (HI-CAS)

Action Area: Economies



ToR

About ICIMOD

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region stretches 3,500km 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 vulnerable 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 knowledge organisation focused on the HKH region, working since 1983 to deliver greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient development. Our work is guided by our [Strategy 2030](#), [Medium-Term Action Plan V \(2023–2026\)](#) and the associated Results Framework, and our various [policies](#). Learn more on our [website](#).

Background

Women, ethnic groups, the most disadvantaged, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in the HKH region, particularly in Bangladesh (Chittagong Hill Tracts), Bhutan, and Nepal, experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, caste, geography, and poverty. Patriarchal social structures and ethnic marginalisation limit Indigenous women and the most disadvantaged to access to land, water, energy, and decision-making power. Women in the HKH region bear a disproportionate burden of water collection, farming, unpaid care work, and climate coping strategies. Drying springs, water scarcity, and increased disaster risks significantly increase women's drudgery and time poverty, reducing opportunities for leadership and income generation. Indigenous women possess Indigenous climate knowledge, including spring shed management, watershed conservation and agrobiodiversity. However, Indigenous women's knowledge and leadership are frequently undervalued for decision-making, formal development planning, and policy processes.

In Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, ethnic groups, Indigenous women and the most disadvantaged women play leadership roles in sustaining livelihood, managing natural resources and applying the Indigenous knowledge system. Their knowledge of nature-based solutions and adaptation practices is rooted in their local knowledge and the experiences of Indigenous peoples. However, gender norms and a lack of inclusive climate governance structures exclude women from decision making. As a result, climate policies and investments often fail to reflect gender responsive and locally effective solutions for inclusive climate resilience.

About the HICAS Project

The Integrated Climate Adaptation Solutions for the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region (HI-CAS), a multi-country project funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), aims to improve climate-resilient, nature-positive livelihoods of rural women and IPLCs in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. The project will be implemented by adopting gender equality and social

inclusion (GESI)-responsive, locally tailored climate adaptation solutions grounded in feminist and human rights-based methodologies that place the rights, agency, and leadership of beneficiaries (rightsholders) at the centre. The GESI-responsive integrated adaptation solution packages (IASPs) will combine spring shed management, renewable energy technologies to power irrigation systems, and agrobiodiversity practices. Beneficiaries (rightsholders) in the programme area will be supported through capacity building and knowledge sharing to strengthen institutional policies and actions and increase access to sustainable investments in climate action and development, particularly in the water, energy, and agrobiodiversity sectors, with a strong focus on beneficiary (rightsholder) leadership. HI-CAS is designed to enhance the climate resilience of vulnerable communities, particularly women, girls, Indigenous Peoples, and ethnic and other most disadvantaged communities in the HKH region, through activities focused on spring shed management, agrobiodiversity, and the productive use of renewable energy. The project will be implemented in two gewogs (blocks) in Paro and Punakha dzongkhags of Bhutan; two upazilas (sub-districts) in Bandarban and Khagrachari districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh; and two municipalities, Roshi and Dhankuta, in Nepal. Over its four-year duration, the project aims to benefit approximately 40,000 IPLCs and other disadvantaged groups by reducing their exposure and sensitivity to climate change impacts while fostering ecosystem health and climate mitigation outcomes.

HI-CAS project recognises Indigenous women and IPLCs as rights-holders and change agents and seeks to work with Indigenous women's organisations and Indigenous networks to co-design, implement, and scale gender-responsive, Indigenous-led climate adaptation solutions rooted in local knowledge, leadership, and collective action.

This Term of Reference (ToR) is therefore developed to operationalise this commitment by establishing a collaborative framework for strategic engagement between ICIMOD, HI-CAS's partners, and women's rights organisations (WROs)/Indigenous networks to co-develop GESI-responsive activities within the project. The ToR provides a mechanism to jointly develop policy briefs, operational strategies and technical guidelines that advance Indigenous-, women-, and locally led climate adaptation solutions under Activity 1212.1 of the HI-CAS project, while ensuring that women's rights organisations and Indigenous networks are not only consulted but actively engaged as co-creators of solutions and knowledge through the project.

This Activity 1212.1: Conduct inclusive consultations with the full participation of women's groups and IPLC networks to co-develop policy briefs, operational strategies, and guidelines to support policy formulation integrating spring shed specific, gender responsive, integrated adaptation solution packages.

Objectives

The overall objective is to strengthen strategic collaboration between ICIMOD, WROs, IPLCs, and HI-CAS partners in co-designing, advancing, and promoting gender-responsive and locally led climate adaptation solutions at country and regional levels.

Specific objectives:

- To establish strategic engagement and collaboration between ICIMOD, HI-CAS partners, WROs/IPLCs, and the ethnic groups, network as technical knowledge and co-creation partners.
- To co-develop gender-responsive project activities that reflect the needs, priorities, leadership and knowledge of IPLCs.
- To jointly produce policy briefs, knowledge products, and advocacy materials that promote GESI, and Indigenous- and community-led climate adaptation approaches.
- To promote and integrate Indigenous knowledge, women's traditional practices, intergenerational knowledge, and local innovations into climate adaptation planning, programming, and policy dialogue.

Scope of Work

The WROs and IPLCs network, in collaboration with ICIMOD and HI-CAS partners, will;

- Establish strategic collaboration mechanisms at both the country and regional levels.
- Facilitate regular coordination, dialogue, and knowledge exchange among WROs, IPLCs, and relevant stakeholders.
- Contribute to the co-design and co-development of GESI project activities by ensuring the integration of Indigenous knowledge related to spring sheds, agrobiodiversity, renewable energy, and climate adaptation.
- Co-develop policy briefs, evidence papers, and advocacy materials promoting gender-responsive and indigenous- and community-led climate adaptation approaches and support policy dialogue at national and regional levels for inclusive climate adaptation policies.
- Promote women's leadership in defining priorities and solutions, ensuring that adaptation solutions are locally led and GESI-responsive.
- Contribute to research, knowledge products, and document and promote Indigenous knowledge systems, women's traditional practices, intergenerational knowledge and local innovations relevant to climate adaptation and dissemination at regional and global platforms in alignment with [ICIMOD's safeguarding policy](#)
- Provide technical expertise in GESI, participatory approaches, and locally-led guidance, strengthening women and Indigenous-led community groups and

networks in project sites by promoting meaningful and inclusive participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring processes.

Deliverables

The WROs and IPLCs networks will work in close collaboration with ICIMOD and HI-CAS partners to deliver the following activities and outputs, but not limited to:

- Develop an inception report with a detailed workplan, engagement approach, roles and responsibilities and result-oriented implementation timeline that aligns with the HI-CAS project workplan and deliverables.
- Establish and/or support existing coordination platforms/networks with ICIMOD, HI-CAS’s partners, and WROs/IPLCs experts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal, including regular virtual and or in-person coordination meetings (minimum one meeting per quarter).
- Facilitate regular knowledge exchange forums/webinars/dialogues (at least 2-3 per year) on climate adaptation and GESI-responsive solutions, including documentation of key learning outcomes.
- Provide guidance and context-specific recommendations for implementation at project sites, ensuring gender responsiveness and integration of Indigenous knowledge (spring shed management, agrobiodiversity, renewable energy, and other locally relevant practices).
- Co-produce and disseminate at least 3-5 knowledge products (e.g. case stories, policy briefs, summaries) reflecting the priorities, knowledge, and rights of women and IPLCs in climate adaptation.
- Contribute to national, regional, and global platforms through participation in at least 2-3 events per year, including conferences and policy dialogues.

Roles and Responsibilities

ICIMOD	HI-CAS Partners	Indigenous Women’s Organisations/Networks
Provide overall coordination and technical guidance.	Co-design approaches, tools, and adaptation solutions.	Act as a strategic partner, co-design initiatives to ensure Indigenous women’s leadership, rights, and knowledge are central to the HI-CAS program.

ICIMOD	HI-CAS Partners	Indigenous Women's Organisations/Networks
Ensure financial, technical, and institutional support for effective engagement.	Participate in joint planning, reflection, learning, and review processes.	Lead culturally grounded engagement with Indigenous women and communities on HI-CAS priority areas.
Engage and follow up with recommendations made through WRO/IPLCs/experts wherever possible.	Integrate Indigenous women-led inputs into project planning, reporting, and learning systems.	Provide expertise to ensure Indigenous women's rights, knowledge, and leadership are integrated throughout the project.
Facilitate linkages with policy platforms, Government stakeholders, and other project partners.	Support the implementation of nationally relevant agreed activities and coordination at different levels.	Coordinate with local partners, develop linkages with relevant government institutions, community institutions, and the HI-CAS team for advocacy and policy work.

Modality for engaging WROs and IPLCs network in HI-CAS

- Form a reference platform with 6–10 organisations (2-3 from each country and one regional organisation/network) representing Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal.
- Develop a Collaborative Framework with the identified WROs and IPLCs networks in compliance with ICIMOD's partnership policy and procedure.
- Experts from the selected WROs and IPLCs networks will be represented in the platform and act as a focal point for coordination and communication with their wider network
- Participation in key events, consultations, and workshops will be supported through a daily rate/engagement fee recognising their time and expertise in alignment with ICIMOD's policy and procedure.
- A separate task-based agreement will be developed in cases where platform members take the lead role for specific activities.
- Facilitate regular virtual and in-person coordination meetings (quarterly/biannual).

Onboarding WROs and IPLCs networks

An EOI call will be out for the WROs and IPLCs network to submit their expression of interest.

Online consultations with selected organisations to gather inputs and build shared understanding. Followed by mapping and stakeholder analysis of relevant WROs and IPLCs networks to ensure inclusive representation.

A Collaborative Framework will be established with the selected WROs and IPLCs networks in compliance with ICIMOD's partnership policy and procedure. Priority areas of work are co-developed and agreed upon with the network, supported by regular quarterly meetings to maintain coordination and collaboration.

Agreed action plans will be developed with a monitoring plan, generate evidence to support learning and decision-making, and work together to plan and carry out joint advocacy efforts for inclusive and gender-responsive outcomes.

Duration :

August 2026 – March 2029 (subject to contract start date; implementation period until March 2029).

2026

- Formalised collaborative framework with WROs and IPLCs networks outlining roles, responsibilities, and areas of collaboration.
- Jointly develop an action plan with a timeline and responsibilities, and defined outcome indicators.
- Contribute to facilitating trainings on GESI, participatory approaches, and locally led adaptation for network members.

2027

- 2-3 workshops organised at the national and regional levels (in a year)
- Joint advocacy through policy review and paper presentation in different national, regional and global platforms on climate adaptation
- Regular quarterly meetings
- Evidence generated on women's leadership and climate adaptation solutions

2028-29

- 2-3 joint policy advocacy workshops organised at the regional level
- Generate evidence (papers, case studies, research, and others) on Indigenous women's leadership and climate adaptation

Criteria for the selection :

The organisation or network should meet the following criteria.

1. Experience of working at the national and international level on Indigenous/ethnic group/most disadvantaged on climate-related issues in the HKH region.

2. Has developed plans/strategies/policies and capacity development activities on climate change, NbS (Nature-based Solutions) and adaptation plans.
3. Organised capacity-building trainings with a focus on Indigenous/ethnic group/most disadvantaged and local communities.
4. Has previous experience in collaboration for policy review with governments and/or international organisations.
5. Has experience with expertise in Climate Change Adaptation, NbS, Livelihoods, feminist and human rights-based approach (HBRA) with focus on Indigenous women, ethnic groups, and most disadvantaged groups to deliver the work as outlined in the Terms of Reference
6. Demonstrated experience preparing analytical briefs, assessments, plans, and reports

Criteria for EOI evaluation :

Criteria	Maximum score	Details
Understanding of the proposed tasks and project area	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-structured and comprehensive understanding of the ToR requirements; the proposal demonstrates a strong understanding of the ToR.
Organisation experience	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrated experience in working on topics related to climate change, biodiversity, NbS and/or community development with a focus on women from Indigenous/ethnic and most disadvantaged communities at regional level at HKH Level - Experience working with international organisations/donors in managing environmental/climate-related projects in the region. - Engagement in local/regional networks and collaborations across sectors



Relevance and strength of the proposed team	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant academic qualification and experience - Regional experience in the proposed areas in the ToR (Climate change, NbS, capacity building, renewable energy) with focus on women, indigenous/ethnic/most disadvantaged groups in Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan or at regional level - Developed plan/ strategies/policy and capacity development activities on climate change and adaptation over the past three years - Demonstrated experience preparing analytical briefs, assessments, or reports - Demonstrated experience of national, regional policy advocacy on climate-related issues.
Organisation Profile	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation is legally registered under applicable national laws and has demonstrated international experience in climate change-related work over the past three years
Total	100	

Ethical considerations

The organisations will be required to take all the necessary actions to handle the collected data responsibly (see [ICIMOD Responsible Data Policy](#)) to ensure data privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. The grantee needs to adhere to the in-country regulations while executing the project.

ICIMOD's Core Values

Our core values are integrity, neutrality, relevance, inclusiveness, openness, and ambition. These values are an expression of our culture and are central to the guiding beliefs and principles of our work and behaviour. Our core values will lie at the heart of ICIMOD operations and delivery. They will underpin everything we do and frame how we work with our partners. They reflect our founding intentions and the balances we seek to hold, while equipping ourselves for the future.

Our commitment to the prevention of sexual harassment

ICIMOD is committed to the prevention and redressal of sexual harassment at the workplace and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults and expects all staff, consultants, grantees, and volunteers to share this commitment. We will do everything possible to ensure that only those who are suitable to work within our values are selected to work for us.

Confidentiality/non-disclosure

All material issued in connection with this ToR shall remain the property of ICIMOD and shall be used only for this selection exercise. All information provided shall be either returned or securely destroyed for unsuccessful applicants at the conclusion of the selection exercise.

During the performance of the assignment or at any time after expiry or termination of the agreement, the grantee shall not disclose to any party or otherwise make use of any confidential information which they have obtained or may during the agreement relating to partner organisation/ICIMOD, the respondents, or otherwise.

The grantee will be required to sign a non-disclosure/confidentiality agreement as part of their undertaking of this work.

Intellectual property, copyright, and ownership of all prepared information

ICIMOD will retain all rights to pre-existing (background) intellectual property or materials collected by the grantee in the delivery of this project. All arising intellectual property, ideas, materials, processes, or processes formed in contemplation, course of, or as a result of the project should be passed to ICIMOD without restriction.

The grantee shall warrant that all arising intellectual property, materials and/or products produced in pursuit of this project shall be original and shall not infringe on any third party's claim. All technical or business information, in whatever medium or format, originated, collated, or prepared by or for the grantee in contemplation, course of, or as a result of this assignment shall be transferred to ICIMOD without restriction on completion and shall not be used by the grantee for any other purpose without express written permission of ICIMOD.

Copyright of all arising documents, data, information, or reports produced by the grantee under this agreement shall belong to ICIMOD and will be passed to ICIMOD without restriction. Such documents, data, information, and reports shall not be used by the grantee for any other purpose other than in conjunction with this project, without the express written permission of ICIMOD's Head of Programme Funding.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and safeguarding

ICIMOD is dedicated to establishing and upholding a safe and nurturing work environment, where all its employees can participate fully and meaningfully without fear of violence, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Any type of abuse or harassment, including sexual misconduct (including child abuse), by our staff, representatives, or stakeholders is not condoned or tolerated.

Method of application

In the first phase, the organisations are requested to submit their EoIs along with valid legal documents through email to consultancy.int@icimod.org by 20 July 2026 (11:59 pm Nepal Standard Time, UTC+05:45).

- EOI – Comprising all the required components and estimated budget for experts' honoraria.
- CV of all major team members
- Organisation registration certificate with renewal, if any
- Tax registration certificate (e.g. VAT/PAN/TPIN registration as per statutory requirements)
- Tax clearance or annual tax return of the last fiscal year
- Audit Report of the last 3 years including audited financial statements
- As per ICIMOD's policy, English is the official language for all agreement documents. Therefore, all required documents must be submitted in English. If any certificates or supporting documents are issued in a national or local language, a certified English translation must be provided along with the original document.

For further inquiries or to submit proposals, please contact:

consultancy.int@icimod.org

+977-1-5275222 | ICIMOD | Kathmandu, Nepal