

Terms of Reference (ToR)

for

Documenting Indigenous Knowledge, Value Systems, Cultural Significance of Spring Sources and Agrobiodiversity for HI-CAS Project Implementation Sites in Roshi Rural Municipality and Dhankuta Municipality, and Preparing Two site specific Knowledge Products

1. BACKGROUND

The Center for Environmental and Agricultural Policy Research, Extension and Development (CEAPRED), in partnership with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), is implementing the Integrated Climate Adaptation Solutions for the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region (HI-CAS) project in Roshi Rural Municipality and Dhankuta Municipality, Nepal. The project aims to improve climate-resilient and nature-positive livelihoods for rural women, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), ethnic minorities, and other socially and economically disadvantaged groups, while generating biodiversity and climate-mitigation co-benefits.

HI-CAS applies an outcome-driven Integrated Adaptation Solution Package that combines springshed management, renewable-energy-supported irrigation, and climate-resilient agrobiodiversity. The design and implementation of these components require an understanding not only of the biophysical and technical conditions of the project sites, but also of the knowledge, practices, institutions, and cultural values that have shaped the management of water, land, seeds, crops, and other natural resources over generations.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities possess valuable knowledge related to spring locations, recharge areas, seasonal water availability, indicators of spring health, source protection, water-sharing arrangements, and customary management systems. Similarly, they maintain knowledge of local crop varieties, seed selection and conservation, cropping calendars, soil-fertility management, pest control, water conservation, food preparation, medicinal plants, and climate-risk management. Cultural beliefs, sacred sites, customary rules, oral histories, and local institutions may also influence how springs, agricultural landscapes, and agrobiodiversity are conserved and managed. Women and girls are often disproportionately affected because they bear primary responsibility for water collection, household care work, and subsistence farming, resulting in increased labor burdens and reduced opportunities for education, income generation, and participation in community decision-making.

Despite its importance, much of this knowledge remains undocumented and is increasingly vulnerable to loss due to migration, changing livelihood systems, the declining involvement of youth in traditional practices, weakening intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the replacement of local practices and crop varieties by external technologies and commercial inputs. Knowledge may also differ across gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, socioeconomic status, and location. Women, elders, farmers, traditional healers, water users, seed custodians, and other local knowledge holders may therefore possess distinct but complementary knowledge that needs to be recognized and documented through an inclusive process. The knowledge and contributions of women, Indigenous groups, and marginalized communities are often inadequately recognized and represented in formal planning and resource-governance processes.

Systematic documentation of Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices is required to establish a site-specific baseline for the two HI-CAS project sites, identify and recognize local knowledge holders, and understand the relationship between local practices, springshed management, and agrobiodiversity. The findings will support the design of culturally appropriate and socially inclusive interventions, strengthen the integration of local and scientific knowledge, and contribute to the preparation of project knowledge products and approaches for safeguarding and transferring relevant knowledge across generations.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The overall objective of this assignment is to document indigenous knowledge, local value systems, customary governance and management practices related to springs and water resources, and agrobiodiversity practices in the HI-CAS project sites in Roshi Rural Municipality (Wards 1 and 2) and Dhankuta Municipality (Ward 8), and to develop two site-specific knowledge products that inform and support integrated approaches for water security, agrobiodiversity conservation, and climate-resilient livelihoods.

Specific objectives of the assignment are as follows:

- To identify, document and analyze Indigenous and local knowledge, cultural beliefs, community norms, customary governance systems, and traditional practices related to the conservation and sustainable management of springsheds, water resources, agrobiodiversity, seed systems, household nutrition gardens, and local farming systems in the HI-CAS project sites.
- To identify locally appropriate, culturally sensitive, gender-responsive, and climate-resilient practices; validate the findings through community consultations and municipal-level workshops; and develop two site-specific technical knowledge reports for Roshi Rural Municipality and Dhankuta Municipality in accordance with prior informed consent, community ownership, and agreed knowledge-sharing restrictions.

- To analyze Indigenous and local knowledge and practices through a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) lens, including differentiated roles, workloads, access to and control over resources, participation, decision-making, knowledge ownership, and distribution of benefits among women, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, youth, persons with disabilities, economically disadvantaged households, and other social groups.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

The Consultant shall undertake the following tasks:

- Conduct a desk review of the HI-CAS project documents and other relevant literature, studies, policies, and secondary information related to springshed management, indigenous knowledge, local value systems, agrobiodiversity, climate adaptation, and sustainable livelihoods in the project areas.
- Prepare and submit an inception report outlining the study methodology, work plan, implementation schedule, sampling approach, knowledge-holder mapping, field schedule, data-management plan, ethical safeguards, consent procedures, and data-collection tools.
- Coordinate with the HI-CAS project team, local governments, and other relevant stakeholders to identify and engage key informants, including community leaders, Indigenous Peoples, women farmers, youth, elders, and other knowledge holders .
- Conduct field assessments in Roshi Rural Municipality and Dhankuta Municipality using participatory, gender-responsive, ethical, and socially inclusive approaches. Data collection methods shall include key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), stakeholder consultations, field observations, and other field specific and appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Assess and document indigenous knowledge, local value systems, cultural beliefs, community norms, and traditional practices related to
 - a. spring health, seasonal water availability, recharge-area identification, source protection, water sharing, conflict resolution, and community-based springshed management;
 - b. customary rules, sacred values, rituals, oral histories, and governance arrangements associated with springs and water resources;
 - c. opportunities for integrating relevant knowledge into springshed management and renewable-energy-supported irrigation. And
 - d. the conservation and sustainable management of springsheds, water resources, and agrobiodiversity.
- Assess and document the status and diversity of agrobiodiversity, including cultivated crops, local and indigenous crop varieties, crop diversity, farming systems, traditional seed systems, local food systems, household nutrition garden, wild edible species, and other biodiversity-based practices that contribute to sustainable livelihoods, food and nutrition

security, community seed management practices, including seed selection, conservation, production, storage, exchange, utilization, governance arrangements and the roles of local knowledge holders..

- Identify and analyze priority agrobiodiversity-based value chains with the potential to strengthen livelihoods and diversify income opportunities, particularly for women and Indigenous Peoples.
- Identify locally appropriate, culturally sensitive, gender-responsive, nature-positive, and climate-resilient practices and adaptation options that can inform the HI-CAS Integrated Adaptation Solution Package, including springshed management, renewable-energy-supported irrigation, agrobiodiversity conservation, community seed systems, and livelihood interventions.
- Analyze and synthesize the collected data and prepare draft assessment reports with practical recommendations.
- Present the preliminary findings through municipal-level validation workshops in Roshi Rural Municipality and Dhankuta Municipality. Validation should confirm local names and interpretations, identify sensitive or restricted knowledge, agree on knowledge-sharing permissions, and classify content as: accepted as is; accepted with correction; requiring further verification; not for public use; or restricted/community-only. Incorporate feedback from relevant project stakeholders including CEAPRED, and ICIMOD into the final reports.
- Prepare and submit the final assessment reports cleaned documentation matrices and evidence package, and two site-specific knowledge products (one for each municipality) that highlight key findings, good practices, lessons learned, and recommendations for strengthening integrated approaches to climate resilience, agrobiodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods. Each technical report should be concise, visual, accessible, and suitable for communities, local governments, project partners, and wider stakeholders.

4. METHODOLOGY

The Consultant shall adopt a participatory, gender-responsive, and mixed-methods approach to conduct the assignment. The methodology shall include the following components:

A. Inception and Planning

- Conduct an inception meeting with CEAPRED and ICIMOD to clarify the objectives, scope of work, methodology, work plan, timeline, and data collection tools.
- Prepare and submit an inception report outlining the study methodology, sampling approach, field implementation plan, work schedule, and data collection framework. The methodology shall ensure meaningful participation of women, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

(IPLCs), ethnic minorities, and other marginalized and disadvantaged groups throughout the assessment and validation process.

Research Ethics

- The Consultant shall integrate ethical considerations into all stages of the assignment, from planning and data collection to analysis, documentation, validation, and dissemination of findings. All activities shall be conducted in a culturally appropriate, respectful, and rights-based manner.
- The Consultant shall obtain Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from all participants before conducting interviews, focus group discussions, taking photographs, making audio or video recordings, documenting quotations or case stories, or using any knowledge or information for reports, publications, or other public purposes. Participants shall be informed of the purpose of the assignment, how the information will be used, their right to decline participation or withdraw consent, and any potential risks or benefits.
- The Consultant shall respect Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems, cultural values, customary institutions, and community protocols throughout the assignment. Knowledge holders shall be appropriately acknowledged where consent has been provided, while ensuring confidentiality and anonymity are requested or necessary.
- The Consultant shall classify and manage information according to its sensitivity, distinguishing between information that is public, anonymous, community-only, restricted, or subject to community validation before dissemination. Sacred, ceremonial, medicinal, commercially sensitive, or otherwise restricted Indigenous knowledge shall not be documented, reproduced, or shared without the explicit approval of the relevant knowledge holders and community authorities.
- All data and information collected shall be securely stored and handled in accordance with applicable data protection and confidentiality requirements. The Consultant shall ensure that all outputs accurately represent community perspectives and shall validate key findings with the concerned communities and relevant stakeholders before finalization, where appropriate.

B. Desk Review

- Review the HI-CAS project documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the project's objectives, implementation approach, planned interventions, and expected outcomes.
- Review relevant literature, municipal reports, policies, previous studies, and other secondary information related to indigenous knowledge, local value systems, springshed management, agrobiodiversity, climate adaptation, and sustainable livelihoods.

C. Field Assessment and Data Collection

- Conduct field visits to the HI-CAS pilot sites in Roshi Rural Municipality and Dhankuta Municipality.
- Collect qualitative and quantitative data using participatory and gender-responsive methods, including key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), stakeholder consultations, field observations, and other appropriate tools (Historical timeline, Participatory seed network analysis, four square analysis, diversity fairs).
- Ensure that data collection and stakeholder engagement are undertaken through a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) lens to capture diverse perspectives and experiences.

D. Data Analysis, Validation, and Reporting

- Analyse and synthesise the collected data in line with the objectives of the assignment.
- Present the preliminary findings through municipal-level validation workshops with representatives from local governments, communities, CEAPRED, ICIMOD, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Incorporate feedback, comments and recommendations received during the validation process into the final assessment reports.
- Prepare and submit the final assessment reports together with two site-specific knowledge products, one for Roshi Rural Municipality and one for Dhankuta Municipality.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CEAPRED

CEAPRED shall be responsible for:

- Providing the Consultant with relevant project documents, background information, and necessary reference materials related to the HI-CAS project.
- Facilitating coordination and communication with the target local governments.
- Supporting the organization of key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), knowledge holder interview, transect walks, stakeholder consultations, validation workshops and field visits, as and where necessary.
- Assisting in the identification and mobilization of relevant stakeholders, representatives of marginalized groups, and municipal officials for consultations and discussions.
- Reviewing draft deliverables and providing timely feedback and comments to the Consultant.

- Monitoring the overall progress of the assignment and ensuring quality compliance.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONSULTANT

The Consultant shall be responsible for:

- Carrying out the assignment professionally and independently in accordance with the approved methodology, work plan, and timeline.
- Conducting necessary consultations, KIIs, FGDs, meetings, field visits, and stakeholder interactions in coordination with CEAPRED and the target local governments.
- Ensuring meaningful participation of women, Dalits, Janajatis, persons with disabilities, youth, and other marginalized and vulnerable groups during the consultation process.
- Promoting the participation of marginalized groups not only in consultations but also in validation and feedback processes.
- Preparing and submitting all deliverables within the agreed timeline and maintaining the quality of outputs.
- Incorporating comments and feedback received from CEAPRED and local governments into the draft documents.
- Maintaining regular communication and providing progress updates to CEAPRED throughout the assignment period.
- Maintaining confidentiality and secure management of information and documents received or generated during the assignment, including consent records, sensitive knowledge, photographs, recordings, and community-agreed restrictions; Submitting the final versions of the reports and knowledge products to CEAPRED upon completion of the assignment.

6. DELIVERABLES

Deliverables	Timeline
Inception report, including a detailed methodology and work plan	Within 7 days of contract signing
Draft assessment reports	Within 45 days of contract signing
Final assessment reports incorporating feedback, along with two knowledge products (Technical report)	Within 60 days of contract signing

7. REPORTING AND SUPERVISION

The consultant will work under the overall supervision of the HI-CAS Program Coordinator/CEAPRED and will work in close coordination with other HI-CAS project designated technical team in Roshi Rural Municipality and Dhankuta Municipality throughout the assignment.

The consultant shall also coordinate with ICIMOD and relevant project stakeholders to ensure the quality and relevance of the assessment.

The consultant shall:

- Submit all deliverables to CEAPRED within the agreed timelines.
- Participate in inception, progress review, and debriefing meetings as requested by CEAPRED.
- Present preliminary findings and recommendations to CEAPRED and other relevant stakeholders for validation before finalizing the assessment reports.
- Revise and finalize all deliverables based on comments and feedback provided by CEAPRED within the agreed timeframe.

CEAPRED shall review each deliverable and provide consolidated feedback. Approval of deliverables shall be subject to their satisfactory quality and compliance with the requirements outlined in the Terms of Reference.

8. QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE

1. The consultant should possess the following qualifications and competencies:
2. Master's degree in Agriculture, Sociology, Anthropology, Natural Resource Management, Rural Development, or a related field.
3. At least **five (5) years of relevant professional experience** working with Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the mentioned thematic area.
4. Demonstrated experience in conducting qualitative, participatory, and inclusive research on agrobiodiversity, springshed management, natural resource management, or related fields.
5. Good understanding of the indigenous knowledge, value systems, and cultural practices of the Tamang and Aathpariya Rai communities, particularly in relation to agrobiodiversity conservation and springshed management.
6. Excellent communication, facilitation, and stakeholder engagement skills, with the ability to effectively work with local government representatives, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized and disadvantaged groups.
7. Proven ability to travel to remote areas and facilitate participatory documentation processes that ensure meaningful inclusion of women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and other knowledge holders, leaving no one behind.
8. Demonstrated experience in preparing high-quality research reports, assessment reports, case studies, and knowledge products.
9. Excellent written and verbal communication skills in both English and Nepali.
10. Working proficiency in Tamang, Rai, or both languages will be considered an added advantage.

9. DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT

The assignment will be carried out commencing from the date of contract signing.

10. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Payments will be made upon satisfactory completion and approval of the agreed deliverables by CEAPRED, as follows:

Milestone	Payment
Submission and approval of the inception report	30%
Submission and approval of the draft assessment reports	30%
Submission and approval of the final assessment reports and two knowledge products	40%

11. OWNERSHIP AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

All reports, datasets, tools, field notes, photographs, recordings, matrices, tools, documents, and other materials, knowledge products, developed or collected under this assignment shall remain the exclusive property of HI-CAS project/CEAPRED, subject to ethical safeguards, community ownership of Indigenous knowledge, and community-agreed access and knowledge-sharing restrictions. The consultant shall not publish, reproduce, distribute, or use any materials, data, or information generated through this assignment without the prior written consent of HI-CAS project/ CEAPRED.

The consultant shall ensure that all outputs produced under this assignment are original and do not infringe upon the intellectual property rights of any third party.

12. ANTI-FRAUD, ANTI-CORRUPTION, AND ETHICAL COMPLIANCE

The consultant shall perform the assignment with the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and ethical conduct, and in full compliance with all applicable anti-fraud, anti-bribery, anti-corruption, and anti-money laundering laws, regulations, and CEAPRED's organizational policies.

The consultant shall:

- Not offer, promise, solicit, or accept any improper payment, gift, benefit, or advantage intended to influence any decision or obtain an unfair benefit in relation to the assignment.
- Avoid any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest and promptly disclose any circumstances that may give rise to such a conflict.

- Immediately report to CEAPRED any suspected or actual incident of fraud, corruption, bribery, financial irregularity, or other unethical conduct related to the assignment.
- Cooperate fully with any investigation or audit conducted by CEAPRED or authorized agencies concerning allegations of misconduct.

Failure to comply with these obligations may result in suspension or termination of the contract, recovery of funds where applicable, and any other legal or administrative action deemed appropriate.

13. SAFEGUARDING COMPLIANCE

The consultant shall conduct all activities under this assignment in accordance with applicable safeguarding laws, regulations, and CEAPRED's safeguarding policies and procedures. The consultant shall uphold the principles of dignity, respect, inclusion, non-discrimination, and "do no harm" throughout the assignment.

The consultant shall:

- Ensure that all interactions with project participants, particularly women, children, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons, and other vulnerable or marginalized groups, are conducted safely, respectfully, and ethically.
- Refrain from engaging in or facilitating any form of abuse, exploitation, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment (SH), discrimination, intimidation, or any other inappropriate behaviour.
- Identify, minimize, and appropriately manage safeguarding risks throughout the implementation of the assignment.
- Ensure that any personnel or associates engaged under the assignment understand and comply with CEAPRED's safeguarding requirements.
- Promptly report any safeguarding concern, allegation, or incident in accordance with CEAPRED's established safeguarding reporting procedures and cooperate with any subsequent investigation.

Non-compliance with safeguarding obligations may result in corrective actions, including suspension or termination of the contract, and any additional legal or administrative measures considered necessary by CEAPRED.