

## CONVENING PAPER

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# End of inception orientation and consultation workshop

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

12–16 January, 2026. Kathmandu, Nepal

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DESPITE BEING LIFELINE FOR MOUNTAIN ECOSYSTEMS AND LIVELIHOODS, SPRINGS IN MOST PARTS OF NEPAL ARE DRYING POSING A SEVERE THREAT FOR SURVIVAL IN RURAL AREAS. Photo: Jitendra Raj Bajracharya/ICIMOD

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<sup>1</sup> International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

## Background

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The Integrated Climate Adaptation Solutions for the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region (HI-CAS), funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), is a multi-country project designed to enhance the climate resilience of vulnerable communities, particularly women, girls, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities, and marginalised communities in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region.

Guided by ICIMOD's gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) policy and Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, the project aims to promote socially inclusive and community-based approaches that address barriers to gender equity, social inclusion, and human rights, with an explicit focus on the most marginalised and vulnerable women who face discrimination, social and economic exclusion, and inequitable access to and rights over resources.

Climate change poses significant challenges to marginalised women and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), exacerbating existing inequalities and creating unique vulnerabilities. The project aims to bridge the gap between high-level climate policy and local climate action by promoting gender-responsive Integrated Adaptation Solutions Packages (IASPs), grounded on the principle that effective climate action must be responsive to local needs, be locally led, ecosystem-based, and socially inclusive.

## About the workshop

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The End of inception orientation and consultation workshop was held from 12 to 16 January 2026, at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) headquarters, Khumaltar, with the aim of bringing together project partners, along with key government stakeholders from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, to build a strong foundation for collaborative and effective project implementation.

The orientation also offered the staff members of ICIMOD, Center for Environmental and Agricultural Policy Research, Extension and Development (CEAPRED), Nepal, Arannayk Foundation,

Bangladesh and Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan, a chance to better understand the project goals and build connections across agencies and stakeholders. Another objective was to orient all staff and partners on core compliance and risk management issues e.g. gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), social and environmental safeguards, GAC reporting requirements and accountability, procurement, and finance processes.

It was critical to build this shared understanding and commitment to ensure human-rights based approach and donor compliance requirements are fully integrated into the HI-CAS implementation plans and country-specific work plans.

The five-day workshop included project updates, discussions on resourcing and governance structures, dialogue on the above-mentioned mandatory compliance topics, Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) and donor reporting, review and feedback on key documents like the Risk register and budget, as well as technical planning on the combined springshed management, renewable energy and agrobiodiversity activities. On the final day, a writeshop session was organised to finalise the key project documents with feedback from the stakeholders.

## Prioritising safety

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The workshop started with a session on safety and precautions by Dambar Bahadur Giri, Senior Administrative Associate (Liaison and Security) at ICIMOD. In the session, he shared protocols for the workshop in case of emergencies, ranging from disasters like earthquakes to unrest and protests. This included having a focal person to contact the delegation by country, forming a messaging group to provide timely updates, and providing assurances for repatriation if necessary. This was proposed as a good practice for implementing partners to adopt for project events.

## Learning together, from each other

Throughout the workshop, participants from both the implementing partners and government had the opportunity to be involved in various discussions on project vision, theory of change, and associated implementation activities. From learning about GESI-responsive actions to co-creating communication strategies, the participants provided inputs about gender equality, possible risks and mitigation strategies while also learning from each other's experiences and expertise in groups.

During the GESI session, participants were able to differentiate project activities according to gender markers like gender unaware, gender neutral, gender aware, and gender responsive. Similarly, during the risk register exercise, the participants were able to identify possible risks and mitigation strategies such as strategic risk, governance risk,

and operational risks, among others, while working with community and government. The safeguarding session introduced the participants about social safeguarding and what it takes as institutions to ensure safeguarding compliance.

Inclusive contextualised communications are critical for bridging the gap between high-level climate policy and local climate action that works for all. Participants thus worked in groups to identify languages, tools and channels to communicate across the project, both with the community and externally, including why sharing stories on failures and challenges are necessary and how to articulate them positively as learning opportunities in the communication strategy session. Divided into country groups during the session, they also discussed their cultural calendars for potential communication and awareness opportunities around key festivals that relate to the project focus areas, such as water and agrobiodiversity.



SHERAB ZANGMO, CPO, MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, BHUTAN, SHARED COMMITMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN IN SUPPORTING THE HI-CAS PROJECT. Photo: Jitendra Raj Bajracharya/ICIMOD

## Key messages

The workshop highlighted several key messages that will guide the implementation of the HI-CAS project, including the establishment of a shared vision and alignment among partners on the project's goals. Some of the key messages are as follows:

- The workshop fostered a shared understanding among government and implementing partners of the three country contexts and key issues and challenges, building a strong foundation for collaborative and effective project implementation.
- The HI-CAS GESI specialist oriented participants on ICIMOD's GESI Policy and Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, reinforcing their central role in guiding the project's approach.
- HI-CAS's safeguarding consultant oriented the partners on the other core compliance issues related to social and environmental safeguarding and what they should do as institutions to ensure safeguarding compliance.
- As part of the risk register exercise, participants identified strategic, governance, and operational risks, analysed their causes, and discussed appropriate mitigation measures.
- The workshop promoted joint learning and engagement through activities such as reviewing the Integrated Adaptation Solutions Package (IASP) design and refining project approaches.
- Collaborative processes, including the writeshop, enabled partners to finalise key documents for the end of inception phase.



SONAM B JHAMTSHO FROM TARAYANA FOUNDATION SHARES A MOMENT WITH SANJEEV BHUCHAR FROM ICIMOD DURING THE WORKSHOP.  
Photo: Jitendra Raj Bajracharya/ICIMOD

## Conclusion: co-creation at its core

A key aspect of HI-CAS is the intention to co-design and co-create the tools and activities across the intervention areas with partners and through the sharing of technical expertise and contextual experience with government stakeholders. The end of inception phase workshop proved to be an effective platform for collaboration not just between ICIMOD and the partners but also among the partners themselves.

The workshop helped the partners and key government stakeholders build shared understanding on priorities and goals, exchange their knowledge of the community and local context as well as provide fresh perspectives to inform quality delivery. From reviewing the proposed design of GESI-responsive IASPs to finalising key inception phase documents together, the workshop was successful in creating an atmosphere of shared ownership and co-creation amongst the ICIMOD staff, partners and the key government stakeholders.



PARTICIPANTS FROM ICIMOD, IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS – ARANNAYK FOUNDATION, CEAPRED, AND TARAYANA FOUNDATION ALONG WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FROM BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, AND NEPAL AT THE END OF INCEPTION ORIENTATION AND CONSULTATION WORKSHOP.  
Photo: Jitendra Raj Bajracharya/ICIMOD



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