

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Sustainable Settlement Specialist

Strategic Group: Resilient Economies and Landscapes

Action Area: Economies

Intervention: Settlements

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](#).

About Strategic Group: Resilient Economies and Landscapes

ICIMOD's Strategic Group (SG): Resilient Economies and Landscapes works to enable the transition from conventional to green, low-carbon economies by enhancing livelihood resilience while protecting biodiversity and environmental health. The SG is comprised of two Action Areas - Economies and Landscapes. The Action Area on Economies focuses on anticipatory adaptation, sustainable livelihoods, enterprise development, sustainable tourism, renewable energy, and sustainable human settlements. Within the Action Area on Economies, the Settlements serves as a dedicated intervention for supporting and promoting resilient and sustainable practices, solutions, and policies for achieving resilience and sustainability in mountain settlements. The proposed Sustainable Settlement Specialist will be positioned within this intervention, contributing technical expertise to advance sustainable settlement solutions that align with the SG's broader goals of economic transformation and environmental sustainability.

Position overview

The Sustainable Settlement Specialist will contribute to delivering activities under the Settlements Intervention of Action Area: Economies. This role offers an exciting opportunity to work in diverse mountain settlements in rural and peri-urban areas across the HKH region, shaped by their unique geography, culture, and environments varying greatly in size and population, ranging from small villages or hamlets in the high mountains to hill station tourist destinations and emerging towns/cities.

Mountain settlements in the HKH are continually becoming vulnerable due to the challenges posed by haphazard and unplanned urbanisation, coupled with increasing impacts of climate change, disaster incidents, increasing youth aspirations, rural-urban migration, and rapid socioeconomic changes. The specialist is therefore expected to leverage his/her expertise to support the Settlements Intervention, overseeing its two

specific components: a) Sustainable and Resilient Buildings, and b) Planned Urbanisation and Circular Economy. The position opens avenues to bridge science policy and practice through evidence-based data generation, knowledge co-creation, and context-specific technologies sharing while fostering collaboration with think tanks, researchers, the private sectors, and other relevant stakeholders to scale viable/proven solutions for a greener, inclusive, and climate-resilient development in the HKH mountains. S/He will have an excellent opportunity to work with a multidisciplinary team at ICIMOD and innovate ideas for holistic and integrated mountain settlement development.

Responsibilities

The Sustainable Settlement Specialist is responsible for delivering results to achieve the planned outputs and outcomes under the Settlements Intervention in line with the commitments we have made in our [Strategy 2030: Moving Mountains, Medium-Term Action Plan V \(2023–2026\): Embracing Change and Accelerating Impact](#) and the associated Results Framework. S/He will work closely with the Intervention Manager and other team members, and will have the following responsibilities:

1. Formulate short-term and long-term plans/policies/strategies at the sub-national and national level on sustainable and resilient settlement development in rural and peri-urban mountain settlements at selected Regional Member Countries (RMCs) of ICIMOD.
2. Conduct policy analysis at national and sub-national levels to provide recommendations on actionable solutions such as contextualised building codes and standards for the mountains, revival of vernacular architecture and heritage preservation, risk zonation and safe shelters, nature-based solutions for planned urbanisation, and circular economy.
3. Generate science-based evidence and proof of concept on low-carbon and resource-efficient building materials, resilient infrastructure, and context-specific nature-based (nature-positive) solutions that ensure sustainable settlement development.
4. Facilitate processes to exchange knowledge, best practices, and innovative technologies with relevant stakeholders (governments, private sectors, I/NGOs, academia, think tanks) from the HKH region and beyond for sustainable and resilient infrastructure development, spatial planning and promotion of the circular economy by ensuring gender and social inclusiveness.
5. Organise various programmatic events, workshops, exchange visits, and awareness campaigns.
6. Coordinate with country partners to ensure timely delivery of results as per the Results Framework of the Settlements Intervention.
7. Support in programme planning, reporting, and maintaining relevant evidence/records on the progress and achievements.
8. Support in proposal development and strengthening donor relationships.
9. Publish scientific articles, policy briefs, and knowledge products targeting diverse audiences at sub-national, national, regional, and global scales.

In addition to the above, undertake any other official assignment(s) as advised by the supervisor to achieve overall outcomes and outputs of the intervention.

Person specification/competencies

ESSENTIAL

- At least a Master's (preferably, a PhD) in sustainable settlement development, urban/rural planning, heritage conservation, architecture, design sustainable architecture or any other relevant field.
- At least five years of relevant work experience for the master's degree holder and a minimum of one year of experience for a PhD degree holder with a proven track record working on sustainable settlements and urban planning projects.
- Good understanding of inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary approaches for effective and result-oriented delivery.
- Good technical/scientific writing, particularly related to technical reports, journal articles and assessment reports.
- Proven communication and networking skills, including public speaking, presentation, and report writing in English.
- Excellent interpersonal and people management skills in multicultural settings.
- Commitment to integrate gender equality and social inclusion into activities under the Settlements intervention.

PREFERRED

- Good understanding of emerging opportunities and key challenges in mountain settlements in the HKH region.
- Experience in working on low-carbon nature-based building materials and solid waste management.
- Know how systemic and sectoral interlinkages for a sustainable settlement.
- Knowledge of the languages and culture of the HKH region.

Reporting and supervising

The Sustainable Settlement specialist will report to and work under the direct supervision of the Intervention Manager: Settlements, with regular guidance from the Lead of Action Area: Economies. The role will also involve close collaboration with other interventions of the Strategic Group: Resilient Economies and Landscapes, ICIMOD's cross-cutting teams, central units, and external partners to ensure timely delivery of results.

Location

You will be working in a cross-cultural, impact-oriented environment at ICIMOD's head office in Kathmandu, Nepal. Frequent travel to remote and high mountain areas in the HKH region will be required.

Kathmandu is a lively and exciting place to live. People are friendly, living costs are comparatively inexpensive, food is delicious (with a range of local and international cuisines), and there are good local and international schools and a low crime rate. Nepal offers amazing trekking trails, white water rafting, and safaris, combined with a rich culture and charming yet lively nightlife.

Duration

The position is until December 2026. There is a possibility of extension, subject to performance and ICIMOD's future funding levels.

Remuneration

This is an international position at ICIMOD. Salaries and benefits at ICIMOD are competitive compared with other international organisations. The starting annual gross salary for this position is **USD 34,062/-** (negotiable based on experience and qualifications). Gross salary comprises basic salary, provident fund, family/post adjustment allowance, and child/dependency allowances. We also offer a comprehensive benefits package which includes insurances (medical, life and accidental), children's education grant for a maximum of 2 children below 18 years of age, severance pay, paid leave (30 holidays and 10 public holidays per year), and day care facility.

For expatriates, there is a tax exemption in Nepal; they are responsible for their home country's tax payments. Expatriate staff are entitled to housing allowance, annual home leave ticket, shipment of personal effects, and an installation and repatriation allowance.

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.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and safeguarding

ICIMOD's human resource selection process is based on the qualifications and competence of the applicants. As an employer, ICIMOD is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, and offers equal opportunities to applicants from all backgrounds and walks of life, including but not limited to gender, age, national origin, religion, race, caste, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or social status. ICIMOD strongly encourages applications from all eligible applicants, especially women, from all parts of the HKH region.

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

Applicants are requested to apply online before **12 October 2025** (11:59 PM Nepal Standard Time, UTC+05:45) through the [ICIMOD Vacancy Application Portal](#).

Only shortlisted candidates will be notified.