

# Terms of Reference

## Support to the Nepal Safeguards Information System

**Anticipated duration of appointment:** between August and December 2024

**Duty station:** Nepal

### 1. Background to the assignment

#### *REDD+ safeguards requirements*

REDD+ is an initiative under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that offers incentives for developing countries to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. Under this initiative, developing countries may receive results-based payments (RBPs) for the results of REDD+ actions in five activity areas: (1) reducing deforestation, (2) reducing forest degradation, (3) conservation of forests, (4) sustainable management of forests, and (5) enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Parties to the UNFCCC have also agreed a broad set of environmental, social and governance safeguards to ensure that REDD+ activities deliver positive outcomes while avoiding and limiting risks, known as the Cancun Safeguards (see Annex 1). To participate in REDD+, countries need to meet requirements in relation to the Cancun safeguards which are:

1. Make sure that the UNFCCC Cancun safeguards for REDD+ are addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities;
2. Develop a Safeguards Information System (SIS) for providing information on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected;
3. Provide periodic Summaries of Information (Sol) to the UNFCCC on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected.

#### *REDD+ in Nepal*

Nepal is participating in REDD+, including through the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and other programs. The country has developed a National REDD+ strategy<sup>1</sup> to implement REDD+ readiness programs and projects to reduce emissions from carbon focused management of Nepal's forests, and its Emission Reduction Program Document (ERPD) was endorsed by the Carbon Fund portfolio of the FCPF in 2018, covering 13 districts of the Terai Arc Landscape for the period 2018 to 2028<sup>2</sup>. Nepal is also developing and implementing other

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<sup>1</sup> Nepal's National REDD+ Strategy (2018) is available here:

<https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/Nepal%20National%20REDD%2B%20Strategy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The FCPF ERPD (2018) for the Sustainable Forest Management-Based Emission Reduction Program in the Terai Arc Landscape project, is available here:

REDD+ and related programs, including under the Green Climate Fund (GCF)<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has been developing a jurisdictional REDD+ program covering the entire area of its three provinces including Bagmati, Gandaki and Lumbini to access potential results-based payments from the LEAF Coalition. The country is anticipating an Emissions Reduction Purchase Agreement (ERPA), which will formally commit to earmarking emissions reduction and removal (ERR) units for sales to LEAF between 2022 to 2026.

## ***Forestry and safeguards information***

As Nepal progresses towards accessing climate finance through implementing national and sub-national REDD+ initiatives, there remains some gaps in data and information, for example on forestry statistics and safeguards information, which are priorities to address. Sub-national levels such as provincial and district offices have mechanisms to collect forestry and other data, however collection and storage process is scattered since there is no single platform to input, store, review and report at national or sub-national scale. Division Forest Offices (DFOs) under the province forests ministries implement activities, monitor changes, and generate reports, but still have relatively low capacity for collecting, storing, and retrieving data and generating information. Despite having institutional arrangements and human resources, DFOs' lack the capacity to maintain a systematic database and information management system. There is a need to streamline the process of forestry data collection, quality control, and review, and update the system for consistent reporting.

To address the data availability and integrity issues, the REDD Implementation Center (REDD IC) has recently developed two platforms, namely the National Forest Information System (NFIS)<sup>4</sup> and the Safeguards Information System (SIS)<sup>5</sup>. These platforms are intended to be overarching information collection and management systems for REDD+ policy interventions in the country, and for accessing relevant forest information related to forest category, management regimes, systems, forest types, household records, forest condition and area, and related information on safeguards:

- The NFIS links to available databases related to national forests and relevant others, analysis, synthesis, tabulation, and other thematic tools. It includes tools for decision support modules and user-friendly graphical user interfaces for data query and reporting, basic GIS data visualization of existing layers on forest management regimes. The current NFIS is envisioned as a platform for sub-national data entry, review, and monitoring of forestry statistics to support sub-national and national REDD+ initiatives.
- The SIS aims at collecting, compiling and showing information on how the social and environmental safeguards set forth by the UNFCCC and clarified in the Nepal context are being addressed and respected in the country. This portal is to regularly monitor the social and environmental impacts of the REDD+ programmes and communicates information on how the safeguards are addressed and respected. The SIS is also intended to link to Nepal's REDD+ Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) to provide

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[https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/Nepal%20ERPD%2024May2018final\\_CLEAN\\_0.pdf](https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/Nepal%20ERPD%2024May2018final_CLEAN_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> More information on GCF funded project "Improving Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Communities and Ecosystems in the Gandaki River Basin, Nepal" is available here: [FP131: Improving Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Communities and Ecosystems in the Gandaki River Basin, Nepal | Green Climate Fund](#)

<sup>4</sup> <http://nfis.redd.gov.np/nfis>

<sup>5</sup> <http://sis.redd.gov.np/sis>

information on how and to what extent grievances and stakeholder feedback are collected and addressed. The SIS information is made accessible through a website and structured according to key principles, criteria, and indicators (PCIs) for each safeguard in line with the national clarification of safeguards. In addition, updating the SIS will help the country to show progress on how safeguards are being addressed or respected appropriately while implementing REDD+ Programs, including the LEAF Program.

## ***Nepal's SIS***

The SIS is a requirement set by the UNFCCC decision (Decision 12/CP.17) for providing information on how Cancun REDD+ safeguards are addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the REDD+ actions. Nepal's SIS system was first initiated during the second phase of REDD+ readiness project in 2019, which was disrupted because of the COVID 19 pandemic, and finally established by 2021: <http://sis.redd.gov.np/sis>.

The website is meant to be accessible by all relevant stakeholders and demonstrate that the safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation, with information available in Nepali and English<sup>6</sup>. However, the platform is not yet fully functional with data recorded against the safeguards. This information will be coming from a number of different sources, depending on the indicator, including:

- NFIS and other forestry data, including from DFOs (see above) (example: data on natural forests, data on community forestry, etc);
- Key policy, strategy and legal documents of the country related to safeguards (example: relevant objectives, principles and provisions from NRS, Forest Regulation, Law on Information, etc);
- Data from other sectors and agencies in Nepal (example: on population of ethnic nationalities, protected areas, etc);
- Reporting from REDD+ ER programs, such as the FCPF ERP, the LEAF program, etc (example: ERP FPIC procedures, ERP reporting on non-carbon benefits, etc).

Along with compiling and sharing information on safeguards, the SIS website also has functions related to grievance registration and tracking but real results are not yet displayed/monitored. Nepal's SIS is built on a PHP Laravel Framework and PostgreSQL Database, with a back-end system accessible through credentials, providing various levels of access.

## ***Challenges and priorities***

As mentioned above, the SIS platform doesn't yet provide information on how safeguards are addressed and respected in the country. However, it already provides a list of background information, a list of relevant Policies, Laws and Regulations (PLRs), some key documents and the previous set of Principles, Criteria's and Indicators (PCIs) on safeguards in the Nepal context.

Several key priorities have been identified in terms of further developing and strengthening the SIS, and ensuring its long-term operations:

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<sup>6</sup> Preferred option is summarized information in both languages in front-end, while back-end database uses English.

- Although the overall institutional arrangements for administration of the SIS are clearly under the mandate of RIC, and an IT manual was developed, the specific processes for data entry, review and validation, publishing of data, update of the system, and related procedures are not yet clear or documented (e.g. in a comprehensive SOP).
- The PCI has recently been updated in Q1 2024 as part of Nepal's SOI process, with consideration of meeting new requirements under ART-TREES and aligning with REDD+ developments in the country. Once stakeholders have reviewed the SOI and the new set of PCI, these should also be updated within the SIS platform, as they form the structure of the SIS database.
- The revised indicators need to be checked for appropriate "verifiers" and data sources, i.e. each indicator should have a clear means (i.e. means of verification) to report against it and a clear and viable data source.
- The SOI, along with the ART-TREES registration document, have involved the collection and write-up of information on safeguards in Nepal, particularly on how the safeguards are addressed (i.e. on relevant PLRs) and on procedures (e.g. FPIC, benefit sharing plans). With the approval of the SOI, this information can be packaged for the SIS and uploaded, thus allowing for some of the necessary information to be added to the platform.
- A full round of information collection against all indicators in the PCI, however, has not yet been carried out.
- The back-end of the platform needs to be fit for purpose, allowing the relevant users to input data into the system, as well as functions like aggregation of information, review and approval of entries, and sharing of information to the front-end. In addition, data providers have not been fully identified, nor trained in the operation of the SIS and inputting data.

Nepal's GRM for REDD+ (based on the design of the FGRM) is founded on both existing channels/structures for grievance redress (e.g. DFOs, village courts, Hello Sarkar), as well as proposed additional channels specific to REDD+ (e.g. email/SIS website forms). However, it is not yet fully operational. It is challenging to demonstrate the operation of the existing and new GRM channels, and its operations and link to the SIS need to be ensured, with appropriate capacities and procedures in REDD IC and related agencies (like DFOs).

## 2. Objectives of the assignment

The proposed assignment will provide information management and IT support to the REDD Implementation Centre (REDD IC), under MOFE, for the further development and operationalization of Nepal's SIS. The specific objectives of the assignment are to work with REDD IC, UNEP-WCMC and UN-REDD partners to:

- Implement agreed upgrades to the functions and information of the Nepal SIS
- Provide IT related inputs to a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the SIS;
- Develop a User Manual for the SIS;
- Provide IT-related inputs to training materials and help to deliver training to users of the SIS

## 3. Scope of Services

The prospective firm shall carry out the following tasks in relation to assessing and updating the SIS, as well as building capacity in its operations:

**1. Study the design and current format of the SIS:** The consulting firm need to understand thoroughly SIS system and webpage, and will prepare a workplan for the assignment at this stage.

**2. Help to develop SOP document for the SIS:** The SOP is aimed at setting out the objectives and key procedures for the overall operation of the SIS. It's main target audiences are the REDD IC, as administrator of the SIS, and users and other SIS stakeholders who wish to understand its general operations. The SOP will include an overview of institutional arrangements, roles, and procedures for maintaining, updating and reviewing the SIS. Together with UNEP-WCMC, and with guidance from REDD IC and UN-REDD partners, the IT service provider is expected to:

- 2.1 Jointly develop the first draft SOP together with UNEP-WCMC (in English), based on an outline to be shared by UNEP-WCMC.
- 2.2 Together with REDD IC and UN-REDD, organize a small workshop (1 day) with REDD IC and other key identified stakeholders to: 1) introduce the draft SOP and agree key components (including link to GRM) and procedures (e.g. frequency of update, access levels, etc); 2) confirm the revised PCI (used for training and piloting of data entry); and 3) discuss any IT questions to be answered for further development/revision of the SIS platform (see activities below). The service provider will also be responsible for producing minutes documenting the outcomes of this workshop.
- 2.3 Revise the second draft SOP, together with UNEP-WCMC, following the workshop and share with REDD IC for any remaining feedback. And English & Nepali final draft will then be developed for use in the SIS training (see below).
- 2.4. The SOP will be further refined following the training, based on lessons learned.

**3. IT upgrades to the SIS platform** will be carried out, involving the following proposed steps, to be carried out by the IT service provider:

- 3.1 Review the current SIS platform, including back-end and front-end, to identify areas for improvement and updates in line with the draft SOP (e.g. levels of access, how review/approval of information is managed, language versions, data providers, document repository, etc), within the areas of improvement determine priority actions for immediate updates and suggestions for potential updates in the future.
- 3.2 Upload the revised PCI (including MOV) within the system, providing the structure for the SIS database.
- 3.3 Prepare any data entry forms and/or other tools as needed to allow administrators and data providers to enter and update the necessary information, based on the agreed structure of the SIS.
- 3.4 Propose options to set up a link or share data between SIS and NFIS for certain kinds of forest sector data.
- 3.5 Help to upload initial, currently available safeguards information into the system e.g. adding information from the SOI/TRD for some indicators, as guided by UNEP-WCMC).

- 3.6 Present the updates and changes made to the system, and results of initial information added in a call with REDD IC, UNEP-WCMC, and UN-REDD partners, and make any immediate corrections in the platform.

**4. Develop a user manual for the SIS.** The user manual for the Nepal SIS will be a step-by-step IT guide for the maintenance and update of the SIS, including the back- and front-ends. It will be targeted at the administrator of the SIS database and website, and the users, e.g. data providers. The IT service provider will:

- 3.1. Prepare a draft of the user manual (which is based on the upgraded/updated system), in English, to be shared with UNEP-WCMC, REDD IC and UN-REDD partners for comments.
- 3.2 Integrate feedback and prepare a second draft manual in English and Nepali, for use in training on the SIS (see below).
- 3.3 Following the training, and based on lessons learned, prepare a final draft user manual in English and Nepali and share with REDD IC, UNEP-WCMC and UN-REDD partners for final comments. Integrate any final feedback into a final version of the user manual.

**5. Training and technical support on SIS operation and data collection/entry** will be held with REDD IC, DFOs and other key stakeholders / users of the SIS. Please also see also separate training concept note. The IT service provider will carry out the following tasks related to the training:

- 4.1 Provide inputs to the SIS-NFIS joint training concept note, which has been developed by REDD IC and UN-REDD, and will be finalized prior to the training session.
- 4.2 With guidance from and participation of REDD IC, prepare materials and conduct training with a focus on DFOs and other key NFIS and SIS users and data providers, such as REDD+ ER Program units/leaders. Through the training, some indicators may be filled through "learning by doing". The training will also include discussion of current GRM functions and guidance to DFOs on GRM operations, if feasible/agreed.
- 4.3 Depending on the extent of national level data entry / roles (e.g. validation), national level administrators and data providers may need a joined or a separate session on SIS administration and entry of national level data.
- 4.4 REDD IC, with support from the IT service provider and UNEP-WCMC, will also coordinate one round of SIS data collection and entry following the training, e.g. in the 3 months following the training, with the goal of improving the information compiled from DFOs and other users.
- 4.5 Together with UNEP-WCMC, prepare a report on the training, document learnings and any recommendations for training/capacity building on NFIS and SIS in the future.
- 4.6 Coordination of additional training for REDD IC and/or 1-2 additional meetings related to finalization of safeguards information as needed.

## 4. Output/Deliverables

After carrying out the scope of activities, the consultant should handover the following output and deliverables to the REDD Implementation Center:

SN	Deliverables	Remarks
A	Workplan for assignment	A short workplan in English, setting out tasks, deliverables and timeline, and any initial findings from review of the SIS (activity 1)
B	Draft and final SOP for the SIS in English and Nepali, integrating feedback from small workshop, REDD IC and partners	
C	Small workshop held with REDD IC on PCI, SOP and related questions, and meeting minute documenting results	1 day workshop for < 20 participants to be held in Kathmandu
D	Upgrades to the SIS platform, including implementation of revised PCIs, proposed data entry forms, and initial information uploaded; call held with REDD IC partners to present the system	Updates in English version first; once agreed, in Nepali (prior to the training)
E	Draft and final user manual for the SIS in English and Nepali, integrating feedback and lessons from training	
F	Inputs to concept note, training materials and training delivered for SIS users, and inputs to training report	
G	Final round of data collection and updates to the SIS	Updates in English and Nepali

## 6. Qualification and work experience

### 6.1 Qualification and experience of the firm:

10 years of documented experience of system software design and web based applications design, development and implementation of similar project types in the forest or natural resource management sector, particularly for government, NGOs, INGOs and similar.

### 6.2 Professional Staff and key Person Involvement

Description		Person Man- Days	
1. Key Professionals	No.	Input	Total
1.1 Project Manager (Team Leader)	1	20	20
1.2 Designer	1	5	5
1.3 Developer	1	20	20
1.4 Documentation Expert	1	5	5

#### 6.2.1 Project Manager (Team Leader)

Role	Overall project management
Qualification	At least Master's Degree in the field of IT/Software/IS/Engineering or equivalent

<i>Experience:</i>	At least 7 years of experience in web based ERP/MIS/DSS solution development/implementation and management. Should have specific experience as Project Manager (Team Leader) in at least three project related to ERP/MIS/DSS/database management, etc. within last five years.
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### 6.2.2 Designer

<i>Role</i>	Designer
<i>Qualification</i>	At least Bachelor's degree in IT/Software/IS/Engineering or equivalent
<i>Experience:</i>	Minimum 3 years of experience in system designing and system development.

### 6.2.3 Developer

<i>Role</i>	Developer
<i>Qualification</i>	At least bachelor's degree in IT/Software/IS/Engineering or equivalent
<i>Experience:</i>	Minimum 3 years of experience in computer programming, preferably having experience in development of data management system, JAVA, PHP, .Net. The programmers must have demonstrated experience of developing web based applications relevant to the assignment (PHP Laravel Framework and PostGRESQL Database)

### 6.2.4 Documentation Expert

<i>Role</i>	Documentation Expert
<i>Qualification</i>	At least Bachelor's degree in Computer/IT Engineering or related field
<i>Experience:</i>	Minimum 3 years of experience in documentation, report writing, proof-reading, user manuals and technical manual preparations. Having documentation related certificates will be added advantages.

## 7. Applications

The service provider shall submit the following documents in English:

- A short cover letter (up to 2 pages long) stating how they meet the qualifications for this assignment.

- A financial proposal (in table format) showing: i) how many days would be allocated to each task and the associated daily rates; ii) estimated cost for small workshop and any travel associated with the assignment; and iii) total estimated cost for the assignment.

## 8. Proposed schedule

The consulting firm should complete all the tasks and reporting within 5 months of agreement signing. The proposed timeline is as follows:

<b>Task/Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Study system & prepare workplan	By mid August
First draft SOP for SIS	By end of August
Small workshop on PCI, SOP and other issues	By mid September
2nd draft SOP	By mid September
Initial updates to the SIS platform and call to present	By mid-September
First draft user manual	By late September
Inputs to training concept note, training materials and subnational training delivered	By end September 2024
Training report; any additional session(s) delivered for REDD IC / national users related to finalization of safeguards information as needed	By mid-October 2024
Revised SOP and user manual, integrating lessons learned	By early November 2024
Additional round of data collection facilitated and final updates to the SIS system (English & Nepali)	By end of November 2024

The assignment is expected to run from August to December 2024.