

RFI-386-14-00001-REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)**Issuance Date: Nov 22, 2013****Closing Date: Dec 15, 2013****Closing Time: 05:00 PM IST**

This is a Request For Information (RFI) which intends to collect details concerning interest, capabilities and market information related to the enclosed concept paper titled '**Innovations for Forest Resources Management (InFoRM)**'. Submissions may be considered to develop a final approach to the concept.

USAID/India is seeking the following:

1. Comments on the concept paper:
 - i. Please ensure comments are concise and specific to information included within the concept paper. While there are no established limits on the length of submissions accepted, USAID values concise, issue-specific responses.
 - ii. Please ensure submitted comments make specific reference to page and section numbers.
 - iii. Please give special consideration to the following questions:
 - a. If this concept paper were to be designed without any changes, what level of effort would be required to accomplish the activity in three years.
 - b. What, if any, inputs beyond those articulated in the concept paper would be necessary for meeting the purpose and goal as articulated in section 3 of the concept paper and the accompanying logical framework.
2. Statement of interest:
 - i. Please provide a statement of your interest in taking up this activity. Please specify one, two or all three intervention areas as part of your statement.
3. Description of qualifications:
 - i. Please describe prior experience with forest resources management and livelihood generation in the context of the concept paper.
 - ii. Please provide information on projects and technical capability relevant to the services required in the context of the concept paper.
4. Description of existing or planned work in the context of the concept paper.
5. Proposed administrative and management structures for delivering services in the context of the concept paper.

6. All submissions will be treated as confidential and not shared outside the U.S. Government.

Please note USAID is not seeking technical or cost proposals at this time. *Do not submit a full proposal.*

Disclaimer

Issuance of this notice does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation of response to the RFI. It should be noted that responding to this RFI will not give any advantage to any organization in any subsequent procurements.

This RFI will be open from the date of release through December 15, 2013 at 05:00 PM IST. Please send all responses and inquiries for further information regarding this RFI via email to Paul Seong at aseong@usaid.gov.

Innovations for Forest Resources Management (InFoRM)

Concept paper

1. Problem statement

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our generation that will impact communities, landscapes and markets around the world. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as part of the broader Presidential Global Climate Change Initiative (GCCII), is addressing challenges related to climate change through climate adaptation and mitigation (clean energy and sustainable landscapes) programs. Preventing forest degradation is a cost-effective way to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing sequestration in living trees and plants. Forest degradation is a pressing problem in India and is largely caused by pressures on forests arising due to population increase and the concomitant increase in demand on forest resources.

India is the seventh largest country in the world with a total land area of 3.28 million square kilometers, 23% of which is forested. The forests and trees outside forests¹ in India support rich biodiversity, provide a wide array of goods and ecosystem services, and support millions of forest-dependent people. Forest products contribute 20-40% of total household income in forested areas, with poorer households being more dependent on forest resources such as fuel wood, fodder and other non-timber forest products (NTFPs)².

Although the overall forest cover in India has remained stable over the past twenty years, approximately 40% of the forests have been and continue to be degraded by unsustainable extraction and population pressures. Forest degradation adversely impacts water resources, agriculture, biodiversity, environment, climate change and human health. More specifically, forest degradation leads to the loss of biodiversity, increases the likelihood of emerging pandemic threats, increases carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, and decreases carbon sequestration. Reducing forest degradation will have positive multiplier effects on people's livelihoods and health as well as on the environment.

The most important causes of forest degradation in India center on the substantial gap between supply of, and demand for, forest products. These forest products include timber as well as non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as fuel wood, fodder, medicinal plants, fruits and spices. For example, of the estimated 216 million tons of fuel wood used every year in India, 59 million tons come from the forests. In addition, the large proportion of livestock

¹ Trees outside forests may include, for example, trees grown under social/ agro-forestry programs.

² NTFPs encompass all biological material other than timber, which is extracted from forests for human use.

depend on forests for fodder which adversely impacts the stock and regeneration capacity of forests due to over-grazing and lopping and trampling of young saplings. While a comprehensive country-wide assessment of NTFPs does not exist, forestry experts generally agree that extraction of various NTFPs is one of the leading causes of forest degradation.

In summary, unsustainable extraction of forest products contributes to forest degradation, which in turn reduces the potential of the forest to meet the demand for products and services - such as carbon sequestration.

2. Relationship to applicable Agency Policies and Strategies

This proposed activity contributes to the sustainable landscapes pillar of the Presidential Global Climate Change Initiative (GCCII) - one of three main initiatives to the 2010 Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development Policy that also includes Global Health Initiative and Global Food Security.

This proposed activity directly contributes to USAID's 2012-2016 Climate Change and Development Strategy goal to enable countries to accelerate their transition to climate-resilient low emission sustainable economic development. One of the three strategic objectives seeks to accelerate the transition to low emission development through investments in clean energy and sustainable landscapes. The degradation of forested landscapes not only leads to CO₂ emissions, it also reduces its carbon sequestration potential. Therefore, reducing the degradation of forests would result in reduced emissions and increased carbon sequestration.

This proposed activity also supports the goals of the National Mission for a Green India (GIM) under India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) that, "... acknowledges the influences that the forestry sector has on environmental amelioration through climate mitigation, food security, water security, biodiversity conservation and livelihood security of forest dependent communities." GIM seeks to enhance ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and storage in forests and other ecosystems, hydrological services and biodiversity, as well as other provisioning services such as fuel wood, fodder, and other NTFPs.

USAID/India's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2012-2017 aims to address the primary needs of the base of the pyramid (BOP) populations in India, where approximately 800 million people live on less than \$2 per day.³ Of the BOP populations, an estimated 275 million Indians living in rural areas are dependent on forests for at least part of their livelihood. USAID's Clean Energy and Environment Office aims to improve the livelihood of

³ In terms of purchasing power parity.

those at the BOP through multiple interventions that target access to energy and mitigation of climate change by reducing forest degradation.

USAID/India proposes to support climate change mitigation in the forestry sector through this activity. Specifically, USAID aims to support cutting-edge innovations and practices in forest resources management while enhancing livelihoods of forest-dependent communities. This approach will contribute to achieving the CDCS's Development Objective (DO) 3, "Development innovations impact people's lives at the base of the pyramid (BOP) in a range of sectors in India." Under DO 3, the approach supports Intermediate Result (IR) 3.2, "Low carbon innovations tested and scaled." In addition, interventions will also contribute to DO 2, "Accelerate India's transition to a low emissions economy." Under DO 2, the approach supports IR 2.1, "Reduce emissions and enhance sequestration through landscapes."

While recognizing that forest degradation is large and complex, this proposed activity aims to focus on supporting activities where climate change, forests degradation and the forest-dependent communities (i.e., BOP) overlap to be aligned with USAID/India's CDCS's DO 3 to support innovations that impact people's lives at the BOP.

3. Illustrative interventions in addressing forest degradation

To have an impact on climate change mitigation and on the lives of the BOP population in rural areas whose lives are intricately linked with natural resources (by way of people's sustenance and livelihoods) would require innovations that not only sustain the natural resource base but also promote the livelihood of BOP populations. In the case of the 275 million living in rural areas who are dependent on forest resources, this translates into innovations that help improving the forests as well as increasing the forest-dependent people's income from forest and non-forest resources. Improving the forest condition would help mitigate climate change by reducing the emissions and/or increasing sequestration from forests.

The intervention areas that contribute to the low carbon innovations in the forestry sector to meet the goal of innovations in climate change mitigation impact people's lives at the BOP are:

1. **Supporting innovations in fuel wood management.** The unsustainable extraction of forest resources – especially fuel wood – is the leading cause of forest degradation. Therefore innovations could improve forest condition by reducing demand for fuel wood and/or increasing the supply of fuel wood from areas outside forest. Reducing the demand of fuel wood could be attained by increasing the efficiency of fuel wood usage and/or increasing the usage of alternative technologies.

2. **Strengthening systems for forest resource management.** Forest resource management can be strengthened by adopting methodologies based on sustainable harvest levels. This would ensure that harvests do not impinge on the long-term availability of the forest resources, such as fuel wood, fodder and other NTFPs that form the basis of sustenance and livelihoods of forest-dependent communities. Co-management, i.e. management by community and forest department both, of forest resources provides opportunities for addressing the critical problems of forest resource security and livelihood security of forest-dependent communities. India has policies and legislation that emphasize the role of community and the forest department in managing forest resources. Improving this system of co-management of forest resources would help in adoption of as well as in implementing sustainable forest resource management.
3. **Increasing income of forest dependent communities.** The well being of forests is inextricably linked to the well being of the forest-dependent communities. These communities are disproportionately dependent on NTFPs for sustenance and livelihood. They are the primary collectors of NTFPs but they receive very low returns on their harvest compared to the value of the processed NTFPs. Focusing on increasing the value generated by the harvest through means other than simply pricing of raw material harvested would help in increasing the income of the forest-dependent communities. Innovations for enhancing the efficiency of supply chain that allows the NTFP collectors to realize more from the same through more value addition opportunities near the primary stages of supply chain would help in increasing the income of the NTFP collectors. These value additions, for example, could range from filtering and bottling honey to pickling gooseberries to making turpentine from pine resin. In addition, providing forest-dependent communities livelihood opportunities that are not based on forest resources would also help in increasing their income while reducing the harvest of forest products.

The above three intervention areas together contribute to the purpose of low carbon innovations in the forestry sector tested and scaled as given in the logical framework.

Logical Framework

Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators and Targets	Means of Verification / Data Source	Important Assumptions/Risks
Goal: Innovations in climate change mitigation impact people's lives at the base of the pyramid (BOP).	• Increase in income of forest-dependent communities. • Greenhouse gas emissions, estimated in metric tons of CO2 equivalent, reduces, sequestered, and/or avoided as a result of USG assistance.	Project reports, baseline reports and surveys, evaluation reports	
Purpose (i.e. central result): Low carbon innovations in the forestry sector tested and scaled.	• Number of innovations that help reduce forest degradation developed/adapted. • Number of innovations integrated in government guidelines, policies and/or working plans.	Monitoring reports, field surveys Government reports, project reports	The government, which 'owns' the majority of forests in India, would invest resources to scale the innovations.
Sub-purpose 1: Innovations in fuel wood management supported.	• Number of innovations that reduce consumption of fuel wood and increase the use of alternative technologies developed/adapted.	Project reports, survey and evaluation reports	
Outputs (for sub-purpose 1): 1.1. Efficiency of fuel wood usage increased.	• Reduction in use of fuel wood among targeted households.	Baseline survey, mid-term assessment reports and evaluation reports	It is assumed that these technologies would be affordable and cost-effective, and the capacities of the targeted households to use them can be built.
1.2. Access to alternative technologies to meet energy needs developed.	• Increase in the use of alternative technologies to meet energy needs in targeted households.	Baseline survey, mid-term assessment reports and evaluation reports	
Inputs (for sub-purpose 1): 1.1 Innovative methods, tools, and processes for fuel wood efficiencies.	• Number of innovative methods, tools, and processes for fuel wood efficiencies supported.	Work plans and project reports	

1.2 Alternative technologies and market linkages.	• Number of alternative technologies accessed by the community. • Number of market linkages established.		
Sub-purpose 2: Systems for forest resource management strengthened.	• Research on forest resource management completed and its results integrated in government guidelines, policies and/or working plans.	Work plan, government reports	
Outputs (for sub-purpose 2): 2.1. Sustainable harvest levels of key NTFPs determined.	• Number of applied research papers on production function on key NTFP species developed.	Research reports, conference reports	Determining the sustainable extraction level of NTFPs should be a part of a more comprehensive assessment of the sustainability of the forest ecosystem.
2.2. Systems for co-management of forests resources improved.	• Number of research papers on co-management of forest resources developed.		The government/ forest department is amenable to improvement in system of co-management.
Inputs (for sub-purpose 2): 2.1. Studies of production function of key NTFP species.	• Number of research studies completed.	Work plan and project reports	
2.2. Studies of existing governance system in focus areas.	• Number of existing governance systems analyzed.		
Sub-purpose 3: Innovations to increase incomes of forest dependent communities supported.	• Increase in income of the targeted households.	Baseline and evaluation reports	
Outputs (for sub-purpose 3): 3.1 Enterprises to add value to sustainably-harvested NTFPs created.	• Number of enterprises for key NTFPs developed in the target area.	Project reports	It is assumed that sustainable extraction limits of NTFPs are known.

3.2 Non-forest based livelihood opportunities developed and supported.	Number of non-forest based livelihood opportunities developed and supported in the target area.		It is assumed that capacities of the forest-dependent communities can be enhanced to take on non-forest based livelihood activities.
Inputs (for sub-purpose 3) 3.1. Support development of enterprises to add value to key NTFPs.	Number of enterprises involving NTFPs introduced.	Work plans and project reports	
3.2. Support and promote alternative livelihood opportunities in forest-dependent communities.	Number of alternative livelihood opportunities introduced.		

STANDARD PROVISIONS**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION OR SOLICITATION FOR PLANNING PURPOSES (OCT 1997)**

(a) The Government does not intend to award a contract on the basis of this solicitation or to otherwise pay for the information solicited except as an allowable cost under other contracts as provided in subsection 31.205-18, Bid and proposal costs, of the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

(b) Although “proposal” and “offeror” are used in this Request for Information, your response will be treated as information only. It shall not be used as a proposal.

(c) This solicitation is issued for the purpose of assessing technical feasibility and informing project design.

(End of provision)