



# Plan Nepal Partnership Strategy

## 1. Introduction

Plan Nepal follows the strategic direction of Plan International, which states, 'Plan will actively seek to work in partnership with local, national and international organisations that share our aims and values<sup>1</sup>.' Plan Nepal also abides by the working definition provided by Plan's "Framework on Partnership and Strategic Alliances": 'Partnerships are well defined relationships.... in which vision, risks accountability, resources and influence are shared. Plan will seek relationships, where parties share a common vision and work together as equals<sup>2</sup>.

This document, "Partnership Strategy of Plan Nepal," has been developed on the basis of Plan Nepal's decades of experience of working with governmental organisations (GOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community- based organisations (CBOs), affinity groups and other development players at all levels. The strategy is also informed by the recent study of Plan's partnerships<sup>3</sup>. It is expected that this document will help Plan Nepal improve its current relationships by developing mutual credibility and promoting cooperation and that it will lead to greater achievement in fulfilling their shared objectives, insuring that rights holders, namely marginalised and excluded children, their families and communities, enjoy a better quality of life. The strategy conforms with the requirements of the Government of Nepal's Social Welfare Council (SWC) and its code of conduct for the working modality of INGOs.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Objectives

- To define common grounds for developing relationships into partnerships based on a shared purpose and commitment.
- To define the roles and responsibilities of various partners which work to fulfil the basic goal of any partnership with Plan: to empower children and communities and thereby promote people-led development.
- To provide guidelines for developing mutual trust and for laying out terms and conditions, including cost sharing, for shared works.

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<sup>1</sup> "Working for lasting improvements in children's lives: Introducing Plan's strategic directions and strategic enablers" Plan International, December 2003.

<sup>2</sup> "Partnership and Strategic Alliances: A Proposal Framework for Plan International," p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> "Sahakarya: A Report on Evaluating Plan Nepal Partnerships," Plan Nepal, July 2006.

<sup>4</sup> "Code of Conduct," issued by the Social Welfare Council in 2062.

### 3. Scope

Plan Nepal has partnerships and affiliations with government line agencies, district development committees (DDCs), village development committees (VDCs), NGOs/CBOs, like-minded bilateral and multilateral donors, INGOs, and community affinity groups, such as school management committees, women's cooperatives, and child clubs. Plan's stringent compliance requirements make it difficult to foster relationships based on equality with partners which are funded by Plan itself. The partnership strategy described in this document will focus on facilitating such relationships and thereby on achieving shared objectives, in particular, realising the rights of children.

Plan Nepal's work with its partners will be rooted in mutuality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Plan Nepal and any prospective partner will agree upon a framework for their partnership before signing a contract.

### 4. Guiding Principles

Plan Nepal's partnerships will be guided by the following principles:

- **A shared vision and common goals and interests.** While it is unrealistic to expect that the visions of Plan and any of its partners will be identical, it is essential that both agree to protect and promote child rights, reduce poverty and its adverse impact on children, and foster sustainable development.
- **Child-centred programming.** Shared programmes must be clearly linked to the four main child rights: survival, protection, participation and development.
- **People-led development.** Partners will be committed to empowering vulnerable and deprived children, families and communities by developing the groups and organisations they form.
- **Gender equity and social inclusion.** Partners will seek to mainstream children, women and men from excluded and marginalised ethnic and caste groups as well as the poorest of the poor in the process of development and to reduce existing social and economic disparities.
- **Accountability.** Partners will be **accountable** to stakeholders, including rights holders (children and communities) for the effective and efficient use of resources.
- **Transparency.** Partners will ensure that all stakeholders are aware of all resource mobilisation and utilisation and of all decisions that affect them.

- **Outcome- and impact-orientation.** Partners will focus on outcomes and impacts rather than on inputs and service delivery. This orientation will be exhibited at both the organisational as well as the programme performance level.
- **Sustainability.** Partners will conserve and harness resources without negatively affecting the natural or social environment. To do so, all development interventions will be carried out with the participation of local stakeholders, including target groups and communities.

## 5. Pre-requisites for Partnership

- **Legal.** To be a Plan partner, an NGO or CBO must be registered with the Government of Nepal. This requirement ensures that financial transactions comply with all relevant national legislation and regulation.
- **Participatory and democratic governance.** Partners will have participatory governance structures, conduct regular meetings and hold general assemblies in order to reach appropriate decisions. Proceedings will be transparent to all their members.
- **Conflict of interest.** No member of an executive board will serve as a staff member or consultant on a partner's payroll. The management of Plan and the management of its partners will be independent. Plan will not partner NGOs which are governed by extended family members, whether related by blood or marriage.
- **Specialised know-how.** Plan's partners, especially NGOs, will have adequate expertise and work experience in the projects and activities they execute in partnership with Plan.
- **Non-partisan:** Partners will be non-partisan. They will not advocate or support any political party or religious ideology and they will always stand for equity, peace and non-violence.
- **Diversity:** The executive board and members of Plan partners will represent diverse ethnic groups, and partners will uphold the principles of social inclusion and gender equity. Exceptions may be made in the case of NGOs which are established in homogeneous local communities.
- **Child Protection:** Partners will commit themselves to protecting children and strictly refrain from practicing any form of child abuse or exploitation.

## 6. Roles of Partners

- **Organic<sup>5</sup> community groups.** Plan Nepal's priority is to help strengthen emerging organic community groups such as child clubs, women's cooperatives, school management committees, ECCD committees and CBOs so that they will ultimately be able to mobilise resources and sustain development activities on their own. Plan expects that all its partner NGOs and local CBOs<sup>6</sup> will commit to and develop a clear strategy to this end. Local communities or CBOs may seek to develop an association with an external NGO for the purpose of capacity building or technology transfer. Selection of an appropriate partner will consider their views and ideas as far as possible.
- **Local NGOs/CBOs:** Local NGOs/CBOs which evolve from user groups and are led by marginalised and disadvantaged communities are Plan's preferred partners for delivering desired outputs to communities, but if such organisations lack adequate technical or organisational know-how, they may form time-bound partnerships with specialised external NGOs to obtain it.
- **External NGOs:** Plan seeks to establish partnership with external NGOs which can build the capacity of or transfer technology to local organisations. Any such partnership will be phased out over a specified period of time once its purpose has been served. Agreements between Plan Nepal and external NGOs must clearly spell out the targets, indicators, and timeframe for each project and activity they implement, the expected resource contributions of each party and a phase-out plan.
- **Plan Nepal:** Plan facilitates local NGOs/CBOs/community groups in building the capacity they need in order to lead development initiatives. Plan provides resource support and technical backstopping to NGOs/CBOs/GOs that build capacity of the organic groups. It helps develop strategies, policies, approaches and procedures with its partners and communities. It also monitors and evaluates the processes adopted and programmes implemented.
- **GOs:** The ultimate aim of partnership with GOs, which include ministries, departments, district line agencies, DDCs and VDCs, is to enable family, groups and communities to access the services provided by mainstream GOs. In addition, Plan aims to see its initiatives mainstreamed within government programmes so that the children, families and communities it now serves will continue to get service in the future and so that more people benefit. Plan will also help government agencies to reach the most marginalised and disadvantaged families and communities.

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<sup>5</sup> Organisations evolving from or representing communities.

<sup>6</sup> Plan has partnered a number of local CBOs which are registered and thereby no different from NGOs in legal terms. Unlike NGOs, most CBOs emerge from local communities and are at earlier stages of organisational development than the more specialised NGOs, which operate at district and national levels.

Because Plan's programmes and projects will complement and contribute to achieving the government's plans and priorities, Plan expects the government's cooperation in monitoring and in sharing resources and information.

- **Alliances and Networks:** Plan will build networks and strengthen alliances with concerned INGOs, with bilateral donors, and with multilateral agencies, including the UN, in order to expand its reach and influence policy. Plan Nepal will enter into joint-venture partnerships and any other form of collaborative partnerships, including commitments to basket-funding and joint implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Depending on their scope, partner INGOs may take full or partial initiative for activities

## 7. Partner Selection Process

The process of selecting partners will be transparent to all stakeholders, including communities and the partners themselves. In order to ensure that decision-making is unbiased, Plan will use the assessment system given in Annex 1, which evaluates dimensions such as management, human resources, and work experience. The guiding principles and prerequisites for partnership, mentioned above in Sections 4 and 5 will also inform the decision. The selection process is described below:

- **Terms of Reference (ToR):** Plan will prepare ToR which include details about the service expected, the skills and competence of the human resources needed, and a tentative budget and phase-out plan, and then solicit proposals.
- **Competitive bidding:** Open bidding will be invited in print media and candidates will be short-listed using general assessment criteria. Prospective partners will then be invited to present their proposals and evaluated more precisely using the framework and scoring system provided Annex 1.
- **Risk analysis:** Before any agreement is signed, an assessment of the risks involved will be carried out using the *Plan Nepal Operational Manual*. Plan Nepal's compliance requirements will apply to all agreements.
- **Agreement:** The agreement between parties will specify the commitments of each party, their respective resource contributions in financial, human and material terms, and their detailed roles and responsibilities. The agreement will contain a detailed proposal of the work the partner plans to carry out as well as other Plan Nepal requirements (see Section 9). If the nature and scope of a project warrant it, Plan Nepal can enter into multi-year agreements with the partners.
- **Scoring:** The weightage score in the variables of Selection Criteria, given in Annex, will be developed by the NMT and reviewed regularly. The scores in the variable will be multiplied with that of the NGO. Those NGOs having highest scores will be selected for partnership.

- **Selection Team:** Representatives from Plan's programme, finance and human resource departments will work together to finalise the selection of partners. If necessary, Plan Nepal will seek the professional input of specialists.
- The process described in Section 7 is not applicable to GO partners.

## 8. Number of Partners

The number of partners will vary depending on the number that a given programme unit (PU) can manage and on the need to keep operational costs at a minimum yet not compromise the quality of service delivery provided to address the issues identified in the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) and Country Programme Outlines (CPOs). A PU's resources must also be adequate for sufficiently supervising and tracking the performances and outputs of all the programmes of all the organisations it partners. On the other hand, the partners should not be overstretched as well.

It is recommended that, in addition to GOs and local CBOs, there be up to two external NGOs for each CPO in each PU or one NGO working in the area of each major issue in a given thematic area. This becomes increasingly possible when the role of NGOs is focused on providing specialised technical services to CBOs, GOs and communities rather than on directly delivering outputs<sup>7</sup>.

The exact number of NGOs will vary according to the following considerations:

- The issues addressed and the corresponding programmes/projects
- The number and distribution of families and communities to be served and the accessibility of the geographical location involved
- The frequency and intensity of family and community visits required
- Community-capacity strengthening strategies and plans, particular in term of duration and approach
- Comparative analysis of other organisations and donors involved in the same area
- The extent of specialisation required (if NGOs with multiple functions can serve, another specialised organisation may not be needed)
- Costs incurred in the partnership

Before entering into any new partnership, a PU must secure the approval of the Country Director of Plan even if the proposed budget falls within its allocated limits.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, in Child Developing and Learning, one NGO can adequately provide technical support for ECCD, while a number of CBOs or ECCD management committees deliver services to ECCD centres. In Livelihood, two NGOs may suffice, one to help develop rural micro-finance and one to promote means of livelihood.

## 9. Partnership arrangement

Every partnership agreement must meet the following requirements:

- Specify a timeframe for the proposed involvement. The strategic partnership can be signed for long term. But the project agreements involving budgetary commitments will be signed and renewed each year. Multi-year project agreements are also possible in case of the projects with confirmed grants.
- Follow the provisions laid out in Plan's *Field Operation Book* (FOB).
- Specify phase-out targets and indicators. Plan prefers to partner with organisations that have a systematic plan for becoming self-financing projects within four or five years. Plan's support is generally channelled only to the start-up and capacitating phases of a project.
- State the roles and responsibilities of Plan and of its partners and specify which stages in the process require consultation, combined action and joint decision-making, to be carried out by a joint project steering committee (PSC) comprised of representatives of both partners.
- Show how the agreed-upon programmes and projects are linked to the objectives and indicators of the CSP and CPOs.
- Adhere to Plan's standards in terms of both operating costs and salary and benefits for staff. These standards will be based on the nature of the project concerned and variations from PU to PU will be minimal. They will be developed by the County Office in consultation with concerned PUs and updated as the market situation changes.
- In the case of external NGOs, require that resource matching and sharing be practiced.