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# 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Association of International NGOs<sup>1</sup> (AIN) operates on behalf of its members under the guidance of a three-year strategic plan. The Strategic Plan 2011-2013 is a revision of the previous Strategic Plan 2008-2010, and outlines the current context and principles on which AIN exists and manages its functions and ways of working. It also articulates AIN's mission and key objectives for the next three years. This document is meant to serve as a guide for AIN and its members as activities are planned and implemented. It also should serve as a reference which may help external partners better understand AIN and its intentions.

With the day to day support of its secretariat and the oversight of the AIN Steering Committee, this strategic plan aims to build and strengthen relationships internally among its members, and with external stakeholders to create a more cooperative and conducive environment for development in Nepal. All member organisations contribute through their annual membership and plenary meetings, and have the opportunity to expand their interests through thematic working groups, identifying and addressing priority issues and contributing to a forum for continuous sharing and learning.

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<sup>1</sup> NGO stands for Non-Governmental Organisation, and throughout this paper refers to any civil society organisation operating in Nepal

During this period (2011-2013), AIN will be guided by its mission, aim and objectives as follows:

## **Mission**

AIN aims to be a strong, proactive, and accountable network of INGOs in Nepal which promotes poverty reduction, sustainable peace and equitable development, human rights, social inclusion and good governance among its members and their partners.

## **Aims and Objectives**

By facilitating collaboration in areas of common development and humanitarian interest AIN aims to help members:

- stay abreast of government policies, systems, strategies, and procedures;
- reduce programmatic overlap and duplication of interventions;
- promote diversity, synergy and effective use of resources (geographically and sector-wise);
- organise responses to emerging issues as necessary; and contribute to formation and ongoing revision of development policies.

AIN will contribute to its mission and aims through the objectives outlined below:

1. AIN members are engaging and coordinating with other development and humanitarian actors, including government bodies, NGOs, NGO associations, and funding partners.
2. INGOs in Nepal are continually improving systems towards increased accountability, transparency and diversity.
3. AIN members have access to guidance and resources.
4. AIN members are collaborating in areas of common interest.

## **Key Focus Areas**

In addition, AIN anticipates the following areas of work to be of key interest in this period:

- Federation and decentralisation
- Social Development Act and Foreign Aid Policy
- Regularising the working status of AIN
- Role of INGOs in changing development context, including sector-wide approaches
- Role of AIN and scope of its mandate, including financial implications
- Internal monitoring and working to bring in positive image of INGOs

## **Disclaimer**

AIN has made considerable effort to accommodate the issues and concerns of its members and stakeholders while charting out this Strategic Plan. Given the diverse interests of development stakeholders in Nepal, AIN has had to prioritise the issues and concentrate on AIN's role in civil society as a network of INGOs, as distinct from the roles of individual member organisations.

## **2 – INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 Background**

#### **2.1.1 Structure of the Strategy Paper**

This Strategy Paper consists of three parts: an introduction, a contextual analysis, and the future policy and strategies. The INTRODUCTION provides information about AIN, its history, principles, functions and operating structure. The CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS provides a political, social and economic overview of Nepal and covers the influencing factors on the role of INGOs in the current development environment. The STRATEGY describes where and how AIN intends to direct its focus and involvement. It begins with the foundational documents, the mission, objectives and roles, and then elaborates on major areas of interest.

#### **2.1.2 Process**

The strategic planning process for AIN for 2011-2013 was led by a strategic planning team of AIN members. This team incorporated internal information (specifically the AIN Plenary meeting of February 2010), as well as external information, including from a series of consultations held with external stakeholders. The following documents were reviewed and formed the basis for the AIN strategic plan team to develop this strategy document:

- AIN Strategic Plan, 2008-2010
- AIN Articles of Association of March 2004

- AIN Plenary review and questionnaires – notes of February 2010
- Working Group Coordinators’ meeting with Steering Committee – notes of April 2010
- Ministry of Finance meeting with AIN – notes of July 2010
- NGO Federation meeting with AIN – notes of September 2010
- Government Representatives roundtable – notes of September 2010
- Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare meeting with Steering Committee – notes of June 2010
- Far-Western Region consultation meeting – notes of November 2010

AIN member organisations and key stakeholders were involved in, and contributed to the process of, developing this strategy paper. Several key issues, which emerged from a number of discussions and meetings, were shared with members during the Plenary for comments and were discussed and agreed upon by the Steering Committee. These key issues, outlined in section 4.2, will be discussed and addressed during the period of this strategic plan.

## **2.2 About AIN**

The Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN) was founded in 1996 by a relatively small number of like-minded INGOs as an informal gathering for mutual learning through sharing of information. Over the last fifteen years, AIN has

grown to a membership of almost 100 INGOs and has become more active and influential. Along with its growth, additional challenges have emerged, including the raising of expectations both internally and externally as AIN has increasingly taken on more responsibility.

Over the past 15 years, AIN has become a common platform for members to discuss and share mutual issues and learn from each other. AIN provides members with information, connects members to related organisations for support, and represents its members with donors and government.

The membership within AIN is for international NGOs only and is voluntary. AIN membership currently stands at 96, which represents a strong voice for INGOs in Nepal.

AIN is neither an NGO nor an INGO, and does not function as a donor. It is a network of INGOs that functions as outlined in this paper.

## **2.3 AIN Principles**

AIN is guided by shared principles and values of equitable development, which are in line with international standards of human rights. These include:

- AIN members are international non-governmental, non-profit, non party-affiliated organisations working in Nepal to advance the public good, including human rights, sustainable development, environmental protection, and humanitarian response.
- AIN member organisations implement their programmes without discrimination regarding gender, race, caste, ethnic origin, geographical location, disability, political affiliation,

or religion, whilst acknowledging that adhering to these principles may involve affirmative action.

- AIN and its members are committed to contributing to an improved quality of life for Nepal's people, especially the poor and excluded, and focus assistance on reducing poverty, meeting the immediate needs and conditions of the poorest people, and enabling communities to be self-sufficient and empowered.
- AIN members ensure their work tackles discrimination, social exclusion and injustice.
- AIN members work with and through local partners – including communities, community based organisations, and government bodies – as partners in planning and implementation of development programmes, as well as with national NGOs, donors and the government on policy advocacy.
- In order to ensure broad ownership of members' work, AIN seeks to be transparent and accountable and to communicate intentions – and widen and deepen dialogue – with partners at all levels.
- As a network of INGOs, AIN recognises that all aid can influence conflict situations and create incentives and disincentives for peace. All AIN member programmes contribute to the strengthening of democratic norms and systems that allow for the nonviolent resolution of conflict.
- AIN and its members mutually respect each other's independence and creativity, while recognising the necessity of discussion and dialogue, and the benefits to be gained from close interaction and coordination.

## **2.4 Functions**

AIN carries out the following key functions on behalf of its members:

- AIN coordinates, shares, learns, documents, and disseminates lessons, knowledge, experiences, and information within its membership.
- AIN represents its members with the Government of Nepal ministries, Social Welfare Council and other government bodies, as well as with funding partners and NGOs, on common issues of specific interest.
- AIN advocates for and promotes good governance, inclusion, accountability and transparency within its membership.
- AIN informs its members about Government of Nepal rules and regulations and encourages them to comply with such laws.
- AIN helps promote healthy dialogue and debate on development issues in the media and other stakeholders.
- AIN holds debates and interactions, generates collective positions on, and acts on issues of common interest to members.

In view of its status, capacity and nature as a network, AIN does not do the following:

- AIN doesn't solicit proposals for projects and doesn't fund projects.
- AIN doesn't generally partner with individual organisations; as a network, it engages with similar associations or federations.

## 2.5 AIN Operations and Ways of Working

AIN holds an annual election to select executive committee members from among nominated staff of the member organisations. This group, called the Steering Committee, comprises nine members and two invitees and reports to the AIN Plenary, which meets regularly.

AIN has a Secretariat with office space normally provided by one of its members without any charge, and currently it is housed within the Save the Children Office. The Secretariat has an Office Manager and a Programme Coordinator. In addition, a part-time Communication Officer helps to fulfil the requirements of the AIN Communication Strategy.

AIN raises an annual subscription from its members to pay for the salary and operating costs of its secretariat staff. In addition, working groups or individual members may contribute money for joint activities. All Steering Committee and other members engage in AIN activities voluntarily.

## 2.6 AIN Working Groups

AIN members operate a number of working groups that are responsible to take forward some of the most important thematic issues in the interest of its members. At the beginning of 2011 the following groups were functioning:

- Capacity Building
- Climate Change
- Disaster Management
- Education
- Health
- HIV/AIDS
- Peace

In addition to these formal groups, a number of informal coalitions exist among AIN members based on shared geographical working areas (specifically, at present there are working groups for Far Western and Eastern regions). These working groups respond to the needs and interests of AIN members, and thus may change over time. They foster a common knowledge and understanding among member INGOs of the changing context, and liaise with relevant external stakeholders, including line ministries and government bodies.

The working groups may raise contributions from members for joint activities. Additionally, member organisations may apply directly for funding for such activities, as AIN does not apply for funds itself.

**AIN also has three cross-cutting teams:**

- Safety and Security
  - ✧ The safety and security team discuss issues of concern and the way forward for AIN members, and connect these through the Basic Operating Guidelines<sup>2</sup> Officer.
- Communication
  - ✧ The communication team works on sharing information and communicating about AIN and its member INGOs' contribution to the development process in Nepal and connects these through the AIN Communication Officer.
- External Dialogue and Partnership (EDP)
  - ✧ The EDP team focuses on high-level relationships and works with senior level government representatives on strategic issues.

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<sup>2</sup> In Nepal, the impartiality of aid and the degree of access to the needy has been codified through the UN and donor agencies' Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs), a set of measurable working principles that organisations have to apply and advocate on. The BOGs Officer is appointed by this coalition.

## **3 – CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

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### **3.1 Political Context**

Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord and constituent assembly election in 2008, progress has been negligible in terms of the implementation of the peace process. The constitution making process was delayed and a decision was made by political parties to extend its term through to May 28, 2011. Instability and insecurity continue during a protracted transition process. A newly elected prime minister works through uneasy alliances of political parties. While drafting of a new constitution remains a top priority for the political parties, integration and rehabilitation of Maoist army personnel has been a protracted and challenging process which has not yet truly begun.

### **3.2 Social Context**

Nepal is a country with a complex social structure and hierarchy. The nature of social structures both limits and facilitates human action. Recent inclusive policies and laws sought to move away from the traditional stratification of Nepali society based on family name, caste, and patriarchy, to a self-chosen one based on equality, social contract, rational will and self-determination. Traditionally excluded groups, including women, Dalits, Madhesis and Janajatis, have group-specific rights as a result of a political and legal transformation and in recognition of the plurality of Nepali society.

### **3.3 Economic Context**

Nepal has been primarily an agriculture-based economy, but conflict and lack of employment opportunities have contributed to continuing emigration of youth. As such, agricultural production has suffered, even while remittances have helped the economy with liquidity. Externally, the geographical location of Nepal, sandwiched between the world's two most populous nations, has not yet supported its manufacturing growth, but has benefited the country with trade and consumption. While there is a huge potential for Nepal to benefit from the double digit growth of these two countries, political stability remains a limiting factor.

### **3.4 Development Context**

Nepal is one of the least developed countries (ranked 138 out of 169)<sup>3</sup> with some indicators comparable to that of Sub-Saharan Africa. Nepal is committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) via the Government of Nepal's National Planning Commission's Base Paper for the next three year interim plan.

While Nepal is on track to meet many of the MDG targets, there are several that are unlikely to be achieved, including full and productive work for all, universal access to reproductive health, and halving the number of people without sustainable access to improved sanitation. Furthermore, all targets are reflective of the average across the country, but large discrepancies remain between urban and rural areas.

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<sup>3</sup> UNDP Human Development Report, 2010

## 3.5 Role of INGOs

It is important to note that Nepal has made significant achievements in the Human Development Report 2010 despite these challenges; most of the MDGs are either likely or potentially likely to be met by 2015. This is a matter of satisfaction and pride for Nepal and its development partners including INGOs, who have made significant contributions to Nepal's development process as illustrated in a series of documents published by AIN and available on its website.

INGOs normally implement projects in Nepal in partnership with national and local NGOs, community based organisations (CBOs), and other development partners, all while contributing to government policies and plans. There has been a growing realisation among government institutions that INGOs have been contributing to Nepal's development efforts particularly in poverty reduction; basic services provision; peace, human rights and political stability; and disaster management and risk reduction. INGOs' involvement in development, in some instances for the past fifty years, has continued with earnest even during the ten-year insurgency (1996-2006) when INGOs were able to fill gaps in essential services. This positive role is articulated in the current Interim Plan for 2010/11-2012/13 of the Government of Nepal, which recognises the contributions made by INGOs and seeks their continued support in implementing the three-year plan. Specific ministries have also articulated these views, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Population, and the Ministry of Finance.

Despite these hopeful signs, this is a period of transition for Nepal. Given the current political environment, it may take considerable time to achieve stability and the government's ability to provide services to the needy during this process may

be further hampered. In this context, INGOs will need to be ready to support the Government of Nepal and civil society in meeting the needs of the people.

### **3.6 Challenges and Opportunities**

Internationally, development actors are working to improve aid effectiveness and accelerate development. These international agendas, including the Paris Declaration of 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action of 2008, will affect the ways that national development actors work together. Additionally, donors are increasingly focusing on Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAP), i.e., pooling funding for a certain sector into one basket to be implemented by the Government. These initiatives represent both an opportunity for INGOs to increase the positive impact of development efforts, but also a challenge as various stakeholders work together more closely.

### **3.7 The Need for Coordination, and Comparative Advantage of AIN**

In this context, AIN's role is growing. As the only widely recognised network of INGOs in Nepal, AIN has the advantage of being able to speak with one voice on behalf of INGOs working in Nepal, as well as being the main entry point for other actors wanting to engage with INGOs as a group. The diverse range of membership organisations and the engagement of key organisational representatives in the Steering Committee is a strong base upon which AIN can develop clear positions on several important issues. AIN has the comparative advantage of being able to link with global/regional networks of INGOs elsewhere. Through the extended international network of its members, AIN can also bring in various resources, knowledge, and experience that are relevant to the development needs of Nepal.

AIN emphasises coordination amongst its members, so that development efforts complement each other and duplication is limited. AIN will foster, facilitate and coordinate dialogue with stakeholders, including the government and donors, on areas of common interest, to ensure effective development partnerships. AIN will work to facilitate the development of sector-wide partnerships, particularly representing the collective position of INGOs. AIN will also work to ensure that the role of INGOs evolves in the changing development environment, including the movement towards a sector-wide approach. Additionally, AIN will work in partnership with national NGOs to ensure the national development plans and policies by the Government of Nepal truly reflect the needs and priorities of the poor and marginalised sections of society.

## **4 – STRATEGY FOR 2011-2013**

AIN would like to express its hope that this Strategy Paper will be instrumental in contributing to the process of building a well-governed, credible, inclusive, just, responsive and accountable development environment where civil society's contribution will be further recognised and strengthened in the overall nation building process.

As AIN is a network of INGOs in Nepal, its main purpose is to provide service to its members with regard to their presence and project implementation in Nepal. In relation to the purpose of AIN and its aim, AIN has set out mission and objectives as outlined below.

### **4.1 Mission**

AIN aims to be a strong, proactive, and accountable network of INGOs in Nepal which promotes poverty reduction, sustainable peace and equitable development, human rights, social inclusion and good governance among its members and their partners.

### **4.2. Aims and Objectives**

By facilitating collaboration in areas of common development and humanitarian interest AIN aims to help members:

- stay abreast of government policies, systems, strategies, and procedures;
- reduce programmatic overlap and duplication of interventions;

- promote diversity, synergy and effective use of resources (geographically and sector-wise);
- organise responses to emerging issues as necessary; and
- contribute to formation and ongoing revision of development policies.

AIN will contribute to its mission and aims through the objectives outlined below:

- 1) AIN members are engaging and coordinating with other development and humanitarian actors, including government bodies, NGOs, NGO associations, and funding partners.

**Working Approaches:**

- collection and dissemination of information on national and international policies, debates and initiatives;
- sharing information and resources for joint learning; and
- building an alliance with external development actors, including government at all levels.

- 2) INGOs in Nepal are continually improving systems towards increased accountability, transparency and diversity.

**Working Approaches:**

- sharing good practice and quality standards of governance, gender, social inclusion, ethics and transparency;
- systematising public and social audits; and
- encouraging AIN members to publish information online.

- 3) AIN members have access to guidance and resources.

**Working Approaches:**

- orientations for members on safety and security systems, and development sector relationships;
- working towards regularisation of the Social Welfare Council interactions with INGOs on operational requirements, including

documentation on policies and systems through strengthening the Community of Practice on liaison work; and

- assisting in dissemination of research on policies and practices that help facilitate sustainable development, specifically through hosting an online Resource Centre.

4) AIN members are collaborating in areas of common interest.

**Working Approaches:**

- working group meetings in areas of common interest – thematic or geographic; and
- policy advocacy on issues that help facilitate sustainable development.

### **4.3 Priority Issues for 2011-2013**

Across the above objectives, AIN anticipates a number of key priority issues over the next strategic period, as identified by AIN members and external partners. These issues include:

- Federation and decentralisation
  - ✧ Recognising the likelihood of Nepal’s political federation, AIN will work with its members to adequately address repercussions on INGOs (including decentralisation).
- Social Development Act and Foreign Aid Policy
  - ✧ Recognising that these policies are developing, AIN will work with government on these, considering the implications for INGOs.
- Regularising the working status of AIN
  - ✧ Addressing the current challenges that AIN faces as a non-registered entity, with the legal and financial issues related to full registration.
- Role of AIN and scope of its mandate, including financial implications

- ✧ AIN will work to clarify its role, balancing the desire to achieve more, with the recognition that members have different interests.
- Role of INGOs in changing development context, including sector-wide approaches
- Internal monitoring and working to bring in positive image of INGOs

This identification of issues is not binding, but anticipatory. AIN and its members may identify and prioritise other issues as necessary during this period.

## 4.4 Stakeholder Relationships

AIN will focus on building solid relationships with all its stakeholders to contribute to Nepal's peace and development process. Good relationships and better understanding among stakeholders will help to provide improved services to the AIN membership.

AIN considers following as its key stakeholders:

- **The people of Nepal** (including citizens, non-registered Nepalese, and refugees): These are the key stakeholders of AIN. For the functional purpose of promoting pro-poor sustainable development, AIN will have strong relationships with Nepali NGOs, the Government of Nepal, local government bodies, the Social Welfare Council, funding partners, political parties, the media, the corporate sector, and other civil society networks.
- **Nepali NGOs:** Partnerships for mutual capacity building, institutional strengthening, awareness raising, resource sharing, alliance building and service delivery.

- **Government of Nepal:** Coordination and harmonisation of development aid in the best interest of the needy and the marginalised sections of society.
- **Local Government Bodies:** Partnership through local partners (including NGOs and CBOs) for strong coordination and provision of technical support to government line agencies for their capacity building.
- **Social Welfare Council:** Partnership for facilitation of INGO activities in Nepal and for dialogue concerning alignment of INGO programmes with development policies and plans of the Government of Nepal.
- **Funding Partners:** Resource sharing for joint initiatives such as advocacy. Jointly pursue best practices for NGO partnership. Ensure development space under difficult security situations through the Basic Operating Guidelines.
- **Political Parties active in Nepal:** Engage in debate on issues related to poverty, injustice, violation of human rights, and lack of space for development, to support the poor and excluded, whilst still retaining AIN's and its members' essential political neutrality.
- **Media:** Partnership to advocate with government, donors and the community. Working together for dissemination of information about constructive development work of INGOs.
- **Corporate Sector:** Advocate for the fulfilment of corporate social responsibilities, including generally strengthening AIN members' ties with the private sector.
- **Other Networks:** Build alliances around identified issues for joint lobbying, advocacy and capacity building.

## **4.5 Monitoring**

One outcome of the strategic review process was the realisation that AIN has not adequately monitored its own work and progress towards its objectives. In order to address this in the coming period, AIN will form a monitoring team from among members, as agreed during the plenary. This team will develop indicators and tools to monitor the implementation of AIN's strategic functions and activities. The outputs of the monitoring team will help AIN communicate its work and value to potential members and external stakeholders.