

FOREWORD

We are pleased to present the **Strategic Plan 2017 - 2019** of AIN, the Association of International NGOs in Nepal that aims to support the development efforts by promoting an enabling environment for its members to fulfill their mission and providing policy feedback to the government. Founded in 1996, AIN works in solidarity with one hundred and forty five INGOs working in Nepal. AIN

This Strategic plan has been processed as a Guiding Document to ensure effective implementation of AIN mission, vision and goals. The strategy would further enable AIN to operate in cooperation & coordination with its Members and all concerns.

The Strategic Plan addresses the key areas on which AIN will focus including the strategies to achieve these goals. AIN Strategic Plan aims to portray an enhanced understanding and appreciation of AIN's interventions and involvement as a network.

AIN has built strong partnerships with the Social Welfare Council, SWC the apex body for INGOs and NGOs, line Ministries, National Reconstruction Authority, NRA, civil society groups, NGO Federation, National Planning Commission, private sector, Donors, UN and other strategic allies.

This strategic plan has been prepared by the AIN Steering Committee Members. We would like to acknowledge Consultant Prem Maharjan for his tremendous support in preparing the first draft till the final execution of the plan.

We would like to thank all of those individuals and groups from the various Ministries and the Coordinators of the Working Group who have contributed substantially to the completion of this strategic plan, and we hope that the plan will provide useful guidance for the continued national development.

Our heartiest gratitude goes to the entire AIN Members for their invaluable contributions and support in all stages of the report.

While acknowledging the useful contributions of many specialists, the AIN Steering Committee takes responsibility for the plan, and invites continued correspondence regarding improvements that should be considered over the months and years ahead.

With Best Wishes,



Dr. Prabin Manandhar

Chairperson

AIN

June 2017

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIN	Association of International NGOs in Nepal
AMP	Aid Management Platform
CPAC	Central Project Advisory Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPAC	District Project Advisory Committee
DCP	Development Cooperation Policy
EDP	External Dialogue & Partnership
GA	General Agreement
GoN	Government of Nepal
INGO	International Non Government Organisation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoGA	Ministry of General Administration
MoWCSW	Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NRA	National Reconstruction Authority
PA	Project Agreement
PAFC	Project Analysis and Facilitation Committee
SC	AIN Steering Committee
SD	Strategic Direction
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SP	Strategic Plan
SWC	Social Welfare Council
WG	AIN Working Groups

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Association of International NGOs (AIN) is a network of international non government organizations (INGOs) working in Nepal. AIN was founded in September 1996 primarily to serve as a common platform for members to discuss and share mutual issues and learn from each other. Currently AIN has a membership base of 145 INGOs working on a wide range of issues making noteworthy contributions to development efforts in Nepal. AIN provides members with information, connects members to related organisations for support, and represents its members with donors and government.

This Strategic Plan 2017-2019 has been formulated based primarily on ongoing and foreseen changes in the development environment in Nepal and findings from the wider stakeholder consultation process. It aims to serve as a Guiding Document to ensure effective outworking of AIN mission “to support the development efforts in Nepal by promoting an enabling environment for it’s members to fulfill their mission and providing policy feedback to the government.”

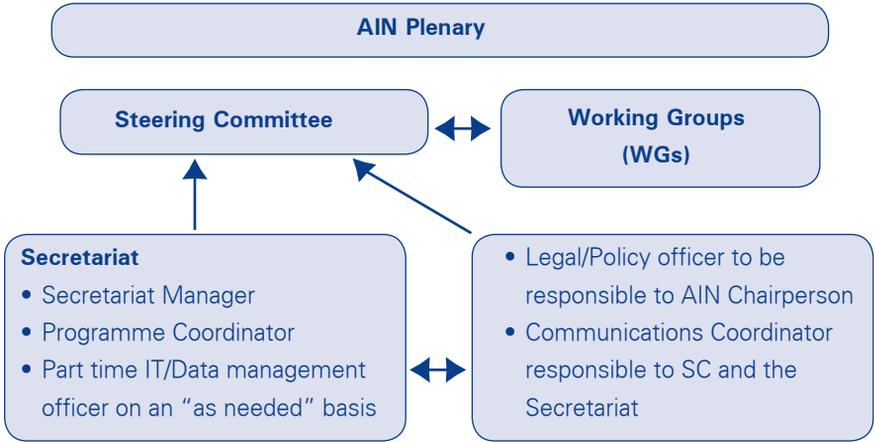
Strategic directions

Founding on its mission, objectives and shared principles and values as articulated in AIN Articles of Association and based on the changed context of Nepal, there will be four Strategic Directions (SD) and corresponding strategic objectives as follows:

Strategic Direction	Strategic Objectives
SD 1: Promoting conducive operating environment for AIN members to fulfill their missions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.1 Clear simple guidelines that are easily available and shared with all1.2 Quick efficient processes that are transparent and consistently applied1.3 One door policy that is agreed upon across government bodies and ministries1.4 Rule of law –safety and security of development actors

Strategic Direction	Strategic Objectives
SD 2: Promoting and facilitating AIN members' development efforts in Nepal	2.1 Accountability to beneficiaries (target groups), government and donors 2.2 Transparency in sharing information with internal and external stakeholders 2.3 Maintenance of ethical standards
SD 3: Contribute to the development policy and over arching development agenda for Nepal	3.1 AIN systematically and actively participates and provides meaningful inputs to development policies, frameworks and agenda, ensuring the role and contribution of I/NGOs is reflected and acknowledged accurately in policy documents and reports. 3.2 Promote the role of CSOs for the engagement in the development agenda
SD 4: Improve communication to create a balanced and accurate image of AIN members' contributions to development in Nepal.	4.1 Consolidating accurate information and evidences of contribution and sharing them with key stakeholders 4.2 Identifying and leveraging our allies 4.3 Proactive information and media campaign (ongoing activity) 4.4 Correct misconception, misunderstanding and wrong information

AIN will continue to remain in current structure in line with its articles of association. The existing secretariat will be extended with additional human resources in order for outworking of new strategic plan 2017-2019. The AIN structure will be as follows:



AIN will prepare annual activity plan along with the detailed action plan and the budget based on the strategic objectives every year. SC will monitor the progress on the strategic plan and share to Plenary on an annual basis.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Association of International NGOs (AIN) is a network of international non government organizations (INGOs) working in Nepal. AIN was founded in September 1996 primarily to serve as a common platform for members to discuss and share mutual issues and learn from each other. Currently AIN has a membership base of 145 INGOs working on a wide range of issues making noteworthy contributions to development efforts in Nepal. AIN provides members with information, connects members to related organisations for support, and represents its members with donors and government. Over the past two decades, AIN has become more active and influential. Along with its growth, many challenges have emerged, including the raising of expectations both internally and externally as AIN has increasingly taken on more responsibilities. More importantly, the country's situation and working environment for civil society organisations (CSOs) and INGOs have changed significantly since its establishment posing new challenges and opportunities in Nepal.

1.2 Strategic Plan Rationale

While AIN completed its second three year strategic plan (2014-2016) in December 2016, the context has significantly changed since the current Strategy plan was developed. This Strategic Plan 2017-2019 has been formulated based primarily on ongoing and foreseen changes in the development environment in Nepal and findings of the stakeholders consultation process. The learning over the past three years has also been taken into account while formulating this Strategic Plan and while keeping AIN Principles and Mission the same. This Strategic plan aims to serve as a Guiding Document to ensure effective outworking of AIN mission.

1.3 Strategic Planning Process

The AIN Steering Committee has formed a five member team to manage and lead the formulation of this plan with the facilitation of an external consultant in the entire process. Key issues for the strategic plan were drawn from an online opinion survey of AIN members, consultative meetings and workshops with AIN SC and working groups and the consultation with a wide range of external stakeholders. The issues were worked on during the Special Plenary of AIN.

Consultations with AIN members at different levels were, however, given primary emphasis in drawing upon the priority issues and actions to take forward in the coming years; while the consultations with wide range of external stakeholders contributed to form contextual analysis of development environment in the country.

A specific report of 'Stakeholder Consultations' was produced that included vast information forming the basis to formulate this Strategic Plan.

1.4 Sources of Information

The followings were the key sources of information to formulate this Strategic Plan:

- i. Review of AIN documents:
 - AI
- ii. Review of legal/policy documents:
 - SWC Rule 1992
 - SWC Foreign Assistance Approval Guidelines 2071
 - SWC INGOs database 2016
 - Development Cooperation Policy 2014
 - Economic Survey of Nepal 2016

- 14th Plan Approach Paper
 - Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030
 - National (Preliminary) Report 2015
- iii. Consultations with AIN
- Meetings with SC
 - Consultative workshop with AIN Working Groups
 - Opinion survey of AIN members
 - Consultative workshop with AIN plenary
- iv. Opinion survey of Non AIN member organisations
- v. Interviews with GoN stakeholders (MoWCSW, MoE, MoF)
- vi. Meetings with NRA and SWC officials
- vii. Interview with a multilateral agency
- viii. Interviews with other stakeholders (NGO federations, Media personality)

2. CONTEXT

This section outlines basically two contextual analyses – the AIN internal context and Nepal’s general context. The context analysis is based on vast information received from a literature review as well as consultations with a wider range of stakeholders. A separate report was produced documenting the findings of stakeholder consultations.

2.1 AIN Internal Context

Currently, there are 254 INGOs¹ working in Nepal in diverse schemes both geographical and intervention-wise; 145 of them have subscribed to the membership of AIN as of November 2016.

AIN has a Secretariat office with two staff members - Office Manager and Programme Coordinator. The secretariat does day to day operational business to implement the decisions of AIN Steering Committee by coordinating, communicating and organising the events. All Steering Committee (SC) and Working Group (WG) members engage in AIN activities voluntarily.

2.1.1 AIN Principles²

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

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

¹ Brief Information on INGOs Working Under Agreement With SWC Fiscal Year 2072/073 (2072 Falgun Masant)

² AIN Articles of Association, second revision 2011

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.

2.1.2 AIN Mission³

AIN aims to support the development efforts in Nepal by promoting an enabling environment for its members to fulfill their mission and providing policy feedback to the government.

³ Ibid.

2.1.3 AIN Objectives

The objectives of AIN as articulated in its association of articles are to:

1. engage and coordinate with other development and humanitarian actors, including government bodies, NGOs, NGO associations, and funding partners;
2. continue to improve systems towards increased accountability, transparency and diversity;
3. have access to guidance and resources; and
4. collaborate in areas of common interest

2.1.4 AIN Working Groups

AIN members operate a number of working groups that are responsible to take forward some of the most important thematic issues of common interest. Currently, the following working groups are functioning:

- Child protection
- Communication
- Disability
- Disaster management and climate change
- Education
- Health
- Human resource
- Livelihoods
- Safety and security
- Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

These working groups 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. It has been suggested that WGs should go beyond a platform for information sharing towards strongly getting involved in contributing to development and implementation of national policies.

2.1.5 AIN Services

AIN has a wide range of members which is very diverse in terms of programme focus, size and ways of working in Nepal. AIN members have

a number of successful development and humanitarian results across all sectors and themes over 20 years. There exists influential involvement of members in policy dialogue across many sectors or themes; thus AIN has a credible voice being recognized as INGOs representative and is invited by government and donors. AIN has been able to give voice to all members at different fora - GoN, CSO, Media, etc.

The AIN members survey carried out during the strategic planning process revealed that an overwhelming majority of members were very satisfied or moderately satisfied with the services being rendered by AIN –particularly in getting updates on government policy matters, lobbying and advocacy with united voice of INGOs and information-sharing meetings. Yet there is general feeling that AIN has not been able to address the concerns of a diverse membership and that AIN is very much limited to sharing of information only.

2.2 Nepal Context

Nepal, located between two of the fastest growing big economies of the world, China and India, remains one of the least developed countries of the world, characterized by slow economic growth, socioeconomic underdevelopment and a low level of human development. It is emerging from a politically and socially fragile post-conflict situation, structurally generated poverty and inequality, and deeply entrenched forms of social exclusion⁴. The context of Nepal remains complex and is constantly changing; therefore it is important to have contextual analysis in relation to these aspects:

- Political / Legal
- Economic
- Social
- Development

2.2.1 Political and Legal Context

Following the end of a decade long civil war in 2006, Nepal remains in

⁴ Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030: National (Preliminary) Report, GoN NPC, 2015

transition towards a stable political system. The rift among major political parties on contentious issues impeded the drafting of the country's constitution. However, the disastrous earthquake forced the major political parties come together to promulgate the historical constitution in September 2015, yet disappointing Madhes based political forces with regards to restructuring of states. The enactment of "The Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2071 (2014)" also contributed towards concluding the peace process as per the "Comprehensive Peace Accord 2006".

The "Constitution of Nepal 2072" spelled out a series of elections from local to parliament by January 2018 for institutionalized implementation of the constitution aspiring political stability in the country. The Madhes based political forces want the constitution to be amended and a consensus among all political forces on constitution amendment remain still a far cry at present, fearing uncertainty towards implementation of the constitution within the set deadline.

The promulgation of "The Constitution of Nepal 2072" is a significant milestone towards confirming Nepal's identity being secular, inclusive, democratic and federal. The new constitution promotes the inclusive principles in many aspects and provides wider space to work on rights based development. However, the political instability is likely to continue, leading to impede development works in the county. Uncertain political context related to the country's federal structure and implications to INGOs is still not clear. The government policies and guidelines keep changing with the political instability. Issuance of a number of binding directives, rules and regulations within the SWC has become a big concern for INGOs. Similarly, weak governance and institutional capacity, safety and security situation of country are hindering the smooth functioning of development agencies.

2.2.2 Economic Context

Nepal's economic growth contracted to 0.77 % in 2015/16 due to the devastating earthquake and subsequent economic blockade in Terai. This growth is way below the average GDP growth of 4% in the past 10 years. Contribution of the agriculture sector to GDP is in decline having stood at 31.6 percent in 2015/16. The ratio of remittances, however, continue to remain major income that stood at 32.1 percent by the end of current FY 2015/16⁵. Absolute poverty decreased from 42 percent in 1995 to 25 percent in 2010 and decreased further to 21.6 percent in 2016. Increased per capita income leading to increasing consumption trend and decreased poverty index is encouraging; however, there are large disparities in the rates of poverty by gender, social group and geographical area. The economic situation seems to be improving, but it is unsure whether this be the impact of development programmes or remittances⁶. The following remain key challenges:

- Increased general expenses and weak investment capacity of government in development, resulting in poor infrastructure
- Diminishing agriculture production relying more on imported food products
- Less contributions from manufacturing sector in the economy
- Stable economic policy is lacking that is impeding development works
- Development programmes are not reaching to the poor in remote areas, still depriving one layer of people of overall progress

2.2.3 Social Context

Socially, Nepal is very diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion, language and social structures. Traditionally, Nepalese society has remained dominated by feudal and patriarchal power structure in many ways that are reflected in sustained gender inequality, caste system, and so on. The people's movement in 2006 that paved the

⁵ Economic Survey 2016, Ministry of Finance

⁶ Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030: National (Preliminary) Report, GoN NPC, 2015

avenues to establish a federal republic led to an increased awareness in transforming the traditional social structure with gender equality and an inclusive agenda in Nepal. CSOs have also played instrumental roles in creating awareness and addressing social issues. The country's newly promulgated constitution has clearly ensured the rights of all sections in society to health, education, employment, information, etc. The Government of Nepal (GoN) has adopted many affirmative actions and policies to include socially marginalized population.

INGOs focus on social issues: their intervention is widespread and social benefits from INGOs work in some sectors are clearly visible and encouraging. Communities in general are more aware of their rights than ever and hence, people can voice and raise their concerns. Still, some marginalized and vulnerable communities are out of reach and lot of effort is needed. There need be collaboration and thematic partnership among development actors in addressing post earthquake social needs.

2.2.4 Development Context

Nepal's HDI value increased to 0.540 from 0.463, placing Nepal up to 145th from 157th in the previous year; Nepal has also improved its ranking in Gender Inequality Index, ranking the country to 98th from 102nd previous year⁷. Nepal aspires to emerge as an inclusive, equitable, and prosperous middle-income country by 2030 with the spirit of a welfare state. The country aims for sustainable poverty reduction and human development with low vulnerability and higher human security. The effective utilization of development cooperation has been stated as one of key objectives of the country's 'Development Cooperation Policy 2014'.

The contribution of INGOs in total development cooperation funding disbursed to Nepal is USD 144.8 million which is 14.5% of the total funds

⁷ Nepal Human Development Report 2014, UNDP

⁸ Foreign Aid Commitment Vs. Disbursement, AMC, Ministry of Finance

of USD 997.4 million in 2015/16⁸. The Government has acknowledged the services delivered in the rural areas and the contributions made towards social and human sector development by the civil society and the national/international non-governmental organizations⁹. The roles of INGOs are being recognized increasingly by the government, the latter being interested in monitoring their works. There is openness by the government to coordinate with INGOs as development partners which is reflected in the fact that there is good networking with line agencies in some areas.

Civil society organisations have been able to link communities with development efforts. Yet negative perceptions towards INGOs still prevail among government offices, media and general public questioning their performance and roles. The external stakeholders including government, SWC, media expect INGOs to ensure more coordination of their respective work to avoid duplications and aligning with development priorities of the country.

Donors are preferring contractors instead of INGOs in development funding, leading to restricted spaces for INGOs in the country and globally. Donor's priority and working modality seem to favour profit-making organisations - resulting in resource constraints in development organizations working in Nepal.

2.3 National Priorities

The devastating earthquake on 25 April 2015 and subsequent aftershocks have caused loss of nearly 9000 lives with 22,302 people injured and over 600,000 houses fully damaged. The damage caused by this devastating earthquake is estimated at around Rs. 706 billion and the cost of reconstruction and new constructions is estimated to be Rs. 669.50 billion¹⁰. Hence the reconstruction fund is to be a foremost priority of Nepal in the coming few years.

⁹ Development Cooperation Policy 2014

¹⁰ Economic Survey 2016, GoN, MoF

The country has set the goal of graduating from LDC status by 2022. Of the three criteria for graduation — per capita gross national income (GNI), human assets and economic vulnerability — the country is likely to achieve two of them and lag behind in terms of GNI per capita¹¹. Nepal's development priorities are articulated in the 14th three year plan of Nepal that aims to build an independent and prosperous state while ensuring basic social services and maintaining food, health, energy and job security to build a welfare state. The following five key strategies have been adopted in the plan:¹²

- To increase production through transformation in agriculture sector and expansion of tourism, manufacturing and small and medium enterprises.
- To develop infrastructure for development of energy, road, air transportation, information and communication and rural urban and tri-country affiliation.
- To make higher and sustainable improvement in human development by emphasizing social development and social security and social protection.
- To promote overall good governance by promoting economic, social and governance reform, efficient and accountable public finance, clean, transparent and people friendly public services and human rights protection.
- To increase gender equity, inclusiveness, environment protection, optimum use of science and technology and institutional capacity

The development cooperation policy 2014 has instructed all the project activities implemented through national and international NGOs to be aligned with Nepal's national development and sectoral priority. The government stakeholders and SWC now want INGOs invest more in community infrastructure development activities, e.g. agriculture, health facilities, schools, etc.

¹¹ Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030: National (Preliminary) Report, GoN NPC, 2015

¹² 14th Plan Approach Paper, NPC, July 2016

2.4 Stakeholders Perceptions

2.4.1 AIN Members

The members expect AIN doing more proactive engagement, guidance and interactions on common challenges and issues of member organisations. Members would like to see the next strategic plan addressing capacity building needs of member organisations, promoting transparency, avoiding duplication and bringing synergy of the activities among INGOs. Also, members would like to see AIN working more effectively moving from “representing INGOs” to “being a more effective advocacy platform” for key issues that are significant to its members: e.g. coordination to reduce bureaucratic hassles for better functioning of INGOs work. The members also voiced for developing mechanisms within to avoid duplications at geographic and intervention level.

The low participation of AIN members in plenary and some working groups is considered to be major challenge for collaboration. The involvement of AIN members on SC, WGs and EDP is purely on voluntary basis and that they still have major responsibilities in their own representative organisations. So the adequate time spending from SC, EDP, WGs for policy advocacy and creating enabling environment for serving its members continued to remain a challenge.

2.4.2 Social Welfare Council

SWC has generally acknowledged the contributions of INGOs in social development, including the active contributions at the time of disaster where the government was not able to reach. In the meantime, SWC sees the role of AIN very much like a pressure group mostly approaching SWC pertaining to SWC rules, directives etc. They would expect AIN focusing on the followings in the coming years:

- Strengthening the coordination among its members to avoid duplications

- Consulting with SWC at the project development phase as INGOs should not expect SWC simply to approve projects
- Ensuring that members strictly follow existing government rules and regulations, including SWC directives
- Prioritizing more hardware support in reconstruction activities and reaching difficult to reach and previously unreached areas
- Aligning with national priorities with stronger coordination and prior recommendations by relevant line ministries

2.4.3 Government of Nepal

Given the changed context in Nepal and the world, the government issued 'The Development Cooperation Policy 2014' by replacing 'Foreign Aid Policy 2002' aiming to make more effective and accountable use of external development funding with a vision "to build a self-reliant economy through an effective mobilization of development cooperation and help transform Nepal into a prosperous democratic country". A separate provision is stated in the policy with regard to national and international NGOs that requires all INGOs to align with national priority issues in their projects. It seeks all national and international NGOs to coordinate with the concerned sectoral Ministry while preparing project proposal at centre level; and to coordinate with district level sectoral office and local government bodies while implementing district level projects¹³.

The government officials generally opined that INGOs have made excessive spending on software activities mostly in awareness raising and less in hardware support in the communities. The following were suggested in general by various government authorities during the consultation process:

- INGOs support in the case of health and education sectors were found to be more effective than others and INGOs programme

¹³ Development Cooperation Policy 2014, GoN, Ministry of Finance

should be addressing huge needs in post earthquake reconstruction work with more hardware development activities and less software activities.

- AIN need to focus more on ensuring coordination of the works of its member organisations
- INGOs should focus extending their work to the remote and hitherto unreached areas for equitable development
- GoN will consider amending ORA 2034 to regulate different size and nature of I/NGOs

2.4.4 Other Stakeholders

The multilateral community appraised the crucial role of NGOs and INGOs in health, education and human rights development. They, however, remarked about the need for collaboration among CSOs for better results and synergy to avoid duplication of efforts. They pointed out a need for INGOs going to the remotest parts of Nepal where the presence of government is not found and work very closely with government to complement GoN programmes following the national priority sector.

NGO federations perceive the relationship with INGOs not fully based on principles of true partnership as there lacked transparency in partner selection in many cases. They see many areas of common interest between INGOs and NGOs in Nepal for collaborative efforts e.g. creating enabling environment for NGOs/CSOs to work in Nepal, promoting inclusive development, etc.

Nepalese media are due credit for good works and contributions of INGOs in the country's development works for long time. However, generally they perceive INGOs having high overheads and less resources directly allocated to real target communities; hence the 'economy of scale' is not followed implementing the project.

2.5 Challenges and Opportunities

Despite wider acknowledgement of INGOs contributions to Nepal's development, the following remain as key challenges:

- The proportion of hardware and software programme expenses has been set at least 60:40 by SWC directives.
- INGOs face vulnerability to arbitrary government bureaucracy while pursuing GA, PA and renewal processes.
- Controlling government policies which control civil society organisations
- Perceived or real politicisation of NGOs
- Political instability and policy inconsistencies

As the presence of NGOs and INGOs in Nepal is primarily to contribute to achieving local needs in line with national priorities, the following can be seen as the opportunities:

- SDGs and effective development agenda exist for INGOs to work in Nepal
- Contribute in effective achievement of targets as set out in the 14th plan
- Democratic transition and inclusive agenda is still on
- Capacity building opportunity for CSO independent role
- Capacity build SWC for more effective operation and management
- Deepen collaboration with NGO federation on sustaining an enabling operating environment
- Influence policies at different levels through getting engaged with multiple stakeholders by linking learning from the grassroots.

2.6 Key Issues for AIN

The following key issues were surfaced primarily from the stakeholder consultations that need to be addressed by AIN over the next period. Some of the issues remain the same from the past periods.

- Despite wider acknowledgement of INGOs contributions to Nepal's development, they are still generally portrayed negatively by government and media. It requires proactively promoting accurate portrayal of INGOs work in Nepal, especially through engagement with the media and concerned government authorities.

- DCP 2014 has clearly stipulated SWC as sole regulating body for the works INGOs. Recently amendments were made in a number of rules, guidelines and directives by SWC that concern the operation of INGOs. Hence, it requires rigorously strengthening the coordination with SWC by representing all members.
- Both AIN members and the external stakeholders have emphasised the proper coordination amongst INGOs to avoid duplications at programme at field level and AIN has the role to make that happen.
- Strengthen AIN's ability to be an effective platform for sharing information a) about the work of its members; b) about AIN; c) about rules and regulations of government; d) about the development community and background information on development and country issues
- Reinforce AIN as a meaningful player in the dialogue with external development partners and government regarding policy and operational space by bringing real life experience from field work
- Many members acknowledge and appreciate the services being rendered by AIN in terms of communications and coordination; members still see the areas of improvement within AIN to satisfy members' expectations in more effective ways.
- Government stakeholders want INGOs work strictly aligning national priorities including remote locations, earthquake recovery and reconstruction, etc.
- Despite having occasional informal dialogues, the government officials particularly find themselves awkward to have formal linkage with AIN for being not a formally registered entity. Also, there is no clear legal way for AIN to be registered in Nepal.
- Being SC and WG members working voluntarily for AIN while having their own organisational commitment, giving adequate time in AIN works particularly in communications and coordination with relevant stakeholders remains a big challenge.
- Given restructuring of state under federal structure, AIN may anticipate to restructure itself in terms of devolving its services to scattered members.
- Donor communities tend to be shifting in their funding modality, preferring private actors in development; this is a growing concern for INGOs, in that it would pose difficulty in accessing the resources. Yet there is little room for AIN to be involved in this matter.

3. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Founding on its mission, objectives and shared principles and values as articulated in AIN Articles of Association and based on the changed context of Nepal, there will be four Strategic Directions (SD) of AIN as follows:

SD 1: Promoting conducive operating environment for AIN members to fulfill their missions.

Due to political instability, INGOs face vulnerability to arbitrary government bureaucracy along with number of regulatory policies that currently tend to discourage smooth operation of INGOs in Nepal. Given an increasing and wider recognition of INGOs roles in development of Nepal by the government, and that AIN is a network of INGOs in Nepal, it is crucial that AIN would facilitate creating a conducive working environment for its members so that the member organisations could smoothly contribute to achieving development priorities of Nepal. This requires review of all existing policies, rules, guidelines and laws that are directly concerned to INGOs and dialogue with relevant government entities for necessary amendments.

Similarly, providing its members with access to information and guidance is one of key objectives of AIN. Therefore it is crucial that AIN is able to satisfy its members by rendering necessary support services and information with regards to their operational needs.

SD 2: Promoting and facilitating AIN members' development efforts in Nepal. AIN represents a wide range of INGOs with diverse expertise and resources locally and globally. Also, AIN has the comparative advantage of being able to link with global and regional networks of INGOs elsewhere through which it can access various resources, knowledge and experience that are relevant to development needs of Nepal¹⁴.

¹⁴ AIN Strategic Plan 2014 - 2016

Recognizing that AIN members are very diverse in terms of budget, staff size, scope of work, technical expertise¹⁵, AIN has greater roles in promoting and facilitating the development efforts of its members so as to help all in promoting accountability, transparency and ethical standards in common.

SD 3: Contribute to the development policy and overarching development agenda for Nepal.

Being an authentic representative to speak with one voice on behalf of INGOs, AIN has leverage in coordination with all stakeholders in general and government and SWC in particular for policy advocacy on sectoral development including contribution to SDGs, democratic transition, inclusive agenda and improvement in the government system by bringing the learning from domestic and global grassroots that the members have.

This requires AIN to be proactively engaged, with meaningful inputs, in policy dialogue and collaboration with relevant CSO networks and NGO federations.

SD 4: Improve communication to create a balanced and accurate image of AIN members' contributions to development in Nepal.

Considering the fact that INGO community as whole is contributing to 10-15 percent of Nepal's development budget and that It is crucial that all forms of misconceptions and generalised negative rumors against INGOs due to negative acts of a few INGOs and inefficiency in government mechanism itself must be clarified among government, media and general public by conveying true messages and pictures of INGOs contributions to development in Nepal. Improving both formal and informal public relations to enroll the positive interests of all concerned is key in achieving this.

As only formal meetings and interactions are not enough, informal meetings and relationship building with various stakeholders should play a greater role. AIN will focus on building meaningful relationships with all its stakeholders

¹⁵ Ibid.

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, recognising that AIN’s stakeholders may be different from member to member.

3.1 Strategic Objectives and Activities

The following matrix provides the list of strategic objectives and associated actions for year one corresponding to each strategic direction:

Strategic Objectives	Year One Activities
<p>1.1 Clear and simple guidelines that are easily available and shared with all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review MoWCSW, MoF, MoGA , SWC documents –policy, rules, regulations, directives • Regular meetings with relevant ministries, particularly SWC • Prepare and disseminate the required documents to members • Retreat for SWC and relevant line ministries (PAFC) beyond CPAC
<p>1.2 Quick and efficient processes that are transparent and consistently applied</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the process of OD review and Technical Capacity assessment of SWC and lead process of getting funding to implement this • Review existing GA, PA, CPAC, DPAC processes and prepare AIN position paper • Collect the government administrative procedures and hurdles faced by the members and prepare strategies to minimise unnecessary hurdles.

Strategic Objectives	Year One Activities
1.3 One window policy that is agreed upon across government bodies and ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map out the existing processes e.g. NRA, SWC; and prepare position paper
1.4 Rule of law –safety and security of development actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a common security guidelines for all members Form a link with MoHA to ensure safety and security of members
Strategic Direction Two: Promoting and facilitating AIN members’ development efforts in Nepal.	
2.1 Accountability to beneficiaries (target groups), government and donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare minimum standards for beneficiaries’ selections and treatment Define hardware and software interventions in coordination with government authorities, and inform members accordingly
2.2 Transparency in sharing information with internal and external stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compile members’ programme impacts on beneficiaries and disseminate major findings with government and other stakeholders Document best practices through thematic groups and sharing at various levels
2.3 Maintenance of ethical standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare code of conduct or ethics in relation to practitioners, beneficiaries, government and donors Follow ups/update periodically on ethical issues and actions taken
Strategic Direction Three: Contribute to the development policy and overarching development agenda for Nepal.	

<p>3.1 AIN systematically and actively participates and provides meaningful inputs to development policies, frameworks and agenda, ensuring the role and contribution of I/NGOs is reflected and acknowledged accurately in policy documents and reports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate and advocate during national planning processes with all line agencies at local and central levels • Engage with government stakeholders regularly for formulation of new policies and effective implementation of existing policies through AIN bodies, e.g. SC, EDP, WGs, etc. • Support SWC, line agencies, local bodies to include updated information about results of INGOs' work in their reports
<p>3.2 Promote the role of CSOs for engagement in the development agenda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for involving AIN by the government in NGO related policy formulation processes and donors' initiatives to work more with civil society in Nepal. • Work in collaboration with CSOs/NGO Federations on common areas of interests, e.g. policy advocacy. • Participate and influence processes related to CSO engagement/contributions related to national and international development agenda and priorities
<p>Strategic Direction Four: Improve communication to create a balanced and accurate image of AIN members' contributions to development in Nepal.</p>	

<p>4.1 Consolidating accurate information and evidences of contribution and sharing them with key stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop GIS survey developed into graphs, maps, tables, info-graphics of key information on AIN members to use in advocacy, public relations/communications • Update website to include GIS Survey, info sheets, Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQs) • Allow the working groups to upload information about their actions and accomplishments with consent of SC liaison person on respective WG • Manage AIN on social media by Communications WG 'core admin' group • Produce updated profile of AIN members, disseminate to all concerned on website and link to social media • Compile the evidence-based works of individual members and place them on website for public sharing. • Showcase the good works of AIN members through practical and realistic consolidated data.e.g. working group level • Prepare interactive orientation materials (induction kits) for new AIN members and other stakeholders
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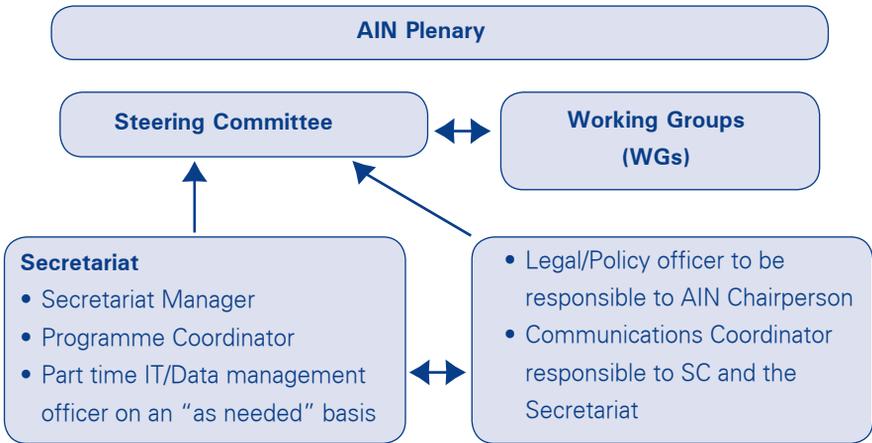
<p>4.1 Identifying and leveraging our allies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a comprehensive stakeholder analysis of all potential allies • Prepare a list of media allies and get engaged with them. • Provide regular updates to donors on key issues affecting AIN members for joint lobbying • Request key allies in government to make statements in support of AIN members' work • Organise at least one sharing meeting every year with media and donors and give out AIN information pack including a 'fact sheet'. • Strengthen relationship with NGO federations, social movements, and networks for collaboration on common issues through regular meetings and sharing
<p>4.3 Proactive information and media campaign (ongoing activity)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise Media Literacy Workshop • Promote development discourse with journalists • Organise quarterly 'Talk Development Sessions' - Collaborate with FNJ and other AIN WG-group • Use media to publicise AIN, e.g. strategic TV interviews, etc.
<p>4.4 Correct misconceptions, misunderstandings and wrong information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use evidence based information generated by AIN and the members to demystify INGOs • Conduct a survey of public perceptions on INGOs, including focus on government, partners, and the community beneficiaries • Prepare action plan to address the key issues identified in the survey of public perceptions

4. AIN STRUCTURE

AIN will continue to remain in current structure in line with its articles of association since there has been no clear conclusion about federal structure in terms of state and local body restructuring given ongoing uncertainties. Eventually, it can be anticipated that AIN may require a decentralised support mechanism with tri-layer common platforms to effectively implement its mission.

The general consensus from the plenary group was that at the beginning AIN should start its extended arms in each province through ad-hoc coordination committees and thematic working groups and gradually institutionalize them as per the needs of the members in the province. This should however be reviewed and determined once the country comes up with a clear federal structure.

Since all AIN members on SC and WGs are serving voluntarily while still having full commitments to their respective organisations, it is evident that the actual workout of AIN strategic plan will require the AIN secretariat to be adequately resourced in terms of both financial and human resources. The existing secretariat will be extended with additional human resources. A senior level legal/policy officer will be recruited to review existing legal policies/rules/guidelines and develop AIN Position Paper. This position will be responsible to the AIN Chairperson. Similarly, a Communications Coordinator will be recruited to compile and document thematic good practices for dissemination to relevant stakeholders and this position will be responsible to the SC and the Secretariat. Also, an IT cum data management Officer will also be hired on need basis. Hence, the AIN structure will be as follows:



5. MONITORING THE PROGRESS

AIN will monitor membership on a yearly basis looking at active participation in AIN (for example plenary, cross-cutting teams and working groups) and compliance with AIN's Code of Conduct and Principles through an online survey.

AIN will prepare an annual activity plan along with the detailed action plan and the budget based on the strategic objectives. SC will monitor the progress on the strategic plan and share to Plenary on an annual basis.