



## CARE Nepal's Partnership Strategy

2015 – 2020

### 1. Introduction

This is CARE Nepal's updated Partnership Strategy in response to a changing context and to reconfirm CARE Nepal's commitment for better engagement with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Nepal with more equal and mutual partnership modality. This strategy has been evolving over the years and is draws on and builds upon the earlier partnership strategy to align with CARE 2020 Program Strategy, CARE Nepal's Business Plan (2015-2020), and CARE International Civil Society Guide. The first strategy was developed in the 1990s based on the realization to make a shift in CARE's working modality by implementing its projects through local organizations and thus fulfilling CARE Nepal's commitment to invest in strengthening partnership with local civil society. Also it is a legal requirement for International NGOs to deliver their work through local partners in Nepal. The partnership strategy of CARE Nepal was first updated in 2003 to align it with the Rights Based Approach (RBA) and later in 2007 to line up it with program approach. This partnership strategy contains a brief context analysis, rationale for working with various civil society actors, clarification on the terms "relationship" and "partnership", definitions, and principles of partnership. The annexes of this document provide detailed guidance for the operation of the strategy.

### 2. Context

In the CARE 2020 Program Strategy, CARE International describes itself as part of an *"increasingly coherent global movement to fight poverty and social injustice"*. The strategy further states that *"CARE works in partnership with a wide range of actors from civil society, government and the private sector. Each of these sectors has a critical and complementary role to play. Given CARE's expertise and knowledge, we aim to be the partner of choice for governments, civil society organizations, social movements, the private sector and donors who seek long-term solutions for fighting poverty and social injustice."*

CARE Nepal acknowledges that it must work in collaboration with other actors to achieve lasting change for its impact groups<sup>1</sup> and that it must support the legitimate voices of these groups and identify and support change agents who can drive the change agendas in the countries and contexts where it works.

In Nepal, the context has shifted dramatically over the past 37 years, since 1978 where we first began working in the country. Nepal has transitioned from being a kingdom with a highly restricted civil society to a multi-party federal republican state with a vibrant and constantly developing civil society. The development paradigm has undergone significant changes; and there has been a dramatic transformation in the role of the state and CSOs where increased emphasis is especially on governance, gender, inclusion, transparency and accountability.

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has recognized international development agencies as ‘development partners’ and has made a mandatory provision for the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGOs) to implement its projects in partnership with local organizations. According to the Social Welfare Council (SWC, 2014), there are more than 39,500 NGOs in Nepal. Many of these organizations have become strong and capable over the years, yet the governance practices of many CSOs still need to improve. It is our firm belief that while CARE Nepal should focus on increasing the capacity of partner organizations to lead on advancing policy agendas and advocacy interventions, it must also work systematically to improve their governance, accountability and institutional capacity.

### 3. Why we value relationships with multiple stakeholders

CARE Nepal realizes that sustainable social change can only be brought through the collective effort of people, organizations, and institutions.

#### ► Not all “relationship” are “partnership” ◀

CARE Nepal distinguishes between a *partnership* with CSOs and other *relationships*. It is involved in multiple working relationships; however, the term ‘partner’ is often used to describe these relationships. But not all relationships can be termed as ‘partnership’ pursuant to partnership strategy of CARE Nepal. For example, a relationship with an organization or company which delivers a service under terms and conditions set by CARE Nepal (such as a consultancy, construction work, etc.) with little scope for negotiation, joint learning or mutual influence would not be termed a ‘partnership’ regardless of the duration or financial magnitude of the task and transaction. It would be a sub-contracting relationship.

<sup>1</sup> CARE Nepal's "Impact groups" comprise of 1) Marginalised Women and (2) Adolescent Girls; these impact groups are those who are poor, vulnerable and/or socially excluded (PVSE).

Hence, we need to actively join hands with likeminded actors to contribute and complement in achieving Nepal's national development agenda. This includes addressing the root causes of poverty and vulnerability of the most marginalized and excluded people by seeking to influence and change power structures which tend to retain the status quo. In Nepal, CARE will work with multiple actors to contribute to sustainable change, including

***The Government of Nepal sees CSOs as “the sphere of voluntary organizations and organized activities that are neither part of government, business, nor family, either delivering services or trying to influence development policies and practices of key stakeholders in society,”***

*An **alliance, coalition, federation and network** is usually an arrangement where organizations which share common concerns and have similar goals coordinate their activities and efforts to actively seek to complement rather than compete with or duplicate the activities of others.*

***Social or People's movement** is a collective effort in favor of poor and marginalized people, principally emerge from the grass root level and has clear social objectives (not limited to single political agenda). For example- dowry system; gender equality; child marriage; right of agrarian bonded labors etc*

state and government stakeholders at national, district and local level; civil society at international, national, regional and local level; media, academic and research organizations; as well as private sector actors. CARE Nepal has working relationship with CSOs, government and private sector actors as per the following outline:

**3.1. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):** CARE Nepal categorizes CSOs as Networks; Federation; Alliances; local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs); Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Social or Peoples' Movement. CARE Nepal will work with change agents and ally with potential entities who can bring transformational and lasting changes in the lives of our impact groups. The efforts required for such changes include: evidence based policy advocacy<sup>2</sup>; piloting and developing innovative development models; and approaching and influencing service providers in favor of poor and marginalized to multiply the impact. Partnership with civil society is also crucial to deliver humanitarian assistance at the time of disaster and crisis. CARE Nepal can also enter into partnership with unregistered organizations like loose networks; federations; and professional associations if they can add value to the program. The partnership can be done through a tripartite agreement

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<sup>2</sup> The CARE International Advocacy Handbook (2014) defines advocacy is the deliberate process of influencing those who make decisions about developing, changing and implementing policies [in CARE's case: to reduce poverty and achieve social justice].

between CARE Nepal, its existing partners and respective unregistered organizations with clearly define scope of work of all parties involved.

**3.2. Public Institutions:** CARE Nepal defines public institutions as local governmental institutions such as Village Development Committee (VDC); District Development Committee (DDC); sectoral line agencies; Ministries; National Government and Public bodies. The government is the key duty bearer responsible for fulfilling the human rights and development aspirations of the citizens of Nepal. The role of CARE Nepal should therefore, be a combination of holding the government accountable as well as providing support to impact group to access the local services and creating intermediate spaces for the citizens to take their issues to the state. This work may involve collaboration, capacity building and exchanging learning at different levels (national to local) to meet the demands of service delivery to impact groups. The attempt to strengthen the overall governance of public institutions will be at the centre of collaboration and intervention of CARE Nepal. In order to materialize partnership with public institutions, CARE Nepal encourages to sign a Memorandum of Understanding- MOU (strategic and non-funding) with the government authorities (line ministries and agencies) to align CARE Nepal's work with government policies and their development priorities.

**3.3. Private Sector:** CARE Nepal classifies private sectors as financial institutions, cooperatives, international and national companies, Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI)<sup>3</sup> and private firms. The private sector can positively or negatively impact the lives of our impact groups through their activities. CARE Nepal has the possibility of working with private sector to encourage them to leverage their resources as part of shared goal to reduce poverty and vulnerabilities as well as holding them accountable for certain social and environmental standards and encouraging to fulfill their corporate social responsibilities (CSR). This work may involve economic empowerment and pro-poor, gender friendly markets (value chain, enterprise development, microfinance, pro-poor banking, crop insurance, livestock insurance, vocational and technical education); influencing their corporate policies; solicit support for development of social and environmental standards; and collaborate to work together at the time of emergencies. Another area of our engagement with the private sector could be facilitating and fostering public-private partnerships (collaboration of public institutions and the private sector) for enhancing capacity of public institutions for effective service delivery towards the impact groups.

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<sup>3</sup> FNCCI is umbrella organization of business in Nepal.

However, CARE Nepal does not provide its grants to any profit making organizations through partnership process.

#### **4. Why we work in partnership with civil society organizations**

Partnerships are central to CARE Nepal's theory of change which recognizes the important role of civil society in holding the government accountable and also supporting the progressive realization of human rights and Nepal's national development agenda, thereby contributing to lasting change. CARE understands its role in Nepal as a capacity builder, facilitator and supporter of CSOs who represent or work for CARE's chosen impact groups.

This partnership strategy emphasizes the position that local CSOs who represent the voices of impact groups must have a major say when it comes to defining and advocating for development agendas in Nepal. CARE Nepal therefore seeks strategic partners who are legitimate voices of its impact groups or who have comparative advantages to move a certain rights/development agenda forward and address the underlying causes of poverty and exclusion of the impact groups. CARE Nepal identifies organizations or social and people movements that can act as agents of change and supports their efforts to fight for the rights of the impact groups at various levels. CARE Nepal will partner with CSOs to make the most effective alliances to empower impact groups, to represent impact groups' issues at policy advocacy forums and to leverage internal and external resources to address the issues and concerns of impact groups.

##### **4.1. Evolving partnership with CSOs**

CARE Nepal is open to forging partnerships with CSOs that have comparative advantages even if they have limited capacities in certain areas. The choice of partnership depends on the nature of the intervention and value addition that partner organizations can bring. For example, for national level advocacy work, CARE Nepal would look for a partner with capacity and leverage to undertake this type of work. In case of the implementing partnership, CARE Nepal will give priority to local organizations who can add value, are familiar with the local context and have close working relationships with stakeholders at village and district levels. Further, respecting GoN's agenda and taking into account CARE International's program strategy, CARE Nepal gives priority to building the capacity of CSOs that are smaller, constituency based and accountable to the impact groups. The partner selection process is guided by CARE Nepal's partner selection guideline (Annex-1) and is focused on pre-requisites such as alignment of interests and objectives; internal governance; gender and social inclusion; advocacy capacity; program management capacity; financial management

capacity and value addition from partner. However, more priority is given to the organizations that represent our impact group during the partner selection process.

#### **4.2. Capacity building of CSOs**

CARE Nepal seeks to work with CSOs from the time of program design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. CARE Nepal believes that working with CSOs which are closer to the community is one of the sustainable options to continue its effort for longer term. Thus CARE Nepal will put its energy and resources and contribute for strategic investment to develop the capacity of CSOs and make them responsible and accountable partners of development. For example- the core role of NGOs is to take lead on social mobilization and they may seek capacity development in fund raising, policy formulation and financial management. While the capacity building needs of federations and networks may be enhancing their organizing, mobilizing and advocacy capacity. The capacity building areas may include (but not limited to) organizational development, strategic planning and policy formulation, internal organizational governance, leadership development, financial management and advocacy. CARE Nepal will use Due Diligence Assessment (DDA) Tool (Annex-2), Partner's Capacity Assessment (PCA) Tool (Annex-3) and its financial policy to identify possible capacity building areas of partner organizations and extends its support for capacity strengthening on those identified areas.

#### **5. Partnership: definition and types**

CARE Nepal believes that partnering with a broad range of actors in the Nepalese society will enhance the promotion and protection of people's rights. We work in partnership with a wide range of actors from civil society, government and the private sector CARE Nepal is committed to striving towards more equitable partnerships and a greater degree of mutuality in its relationship. Partnership is a process whereby various partners assume collective responsibility for bringing about sustainable social change through the sharing of resources, skills, knowledge and experience. Additionally, a partnership includes a commonly held vision and commitment, in a relationship of mutual trust, respect, responsibilities and accountabilities. CARE Nepal's partnership strategy distinguishes between two main types of partnership in practice:

##### ***CARE Nepal's Partnership Definition***

*"Partnership is a formalized institutional relationship between two or more organizations committed to working towards mutually defined and shared development or humanitarian goals that bring about positive and lasting change to the lives of impact groups."*

**5.1. Strategic partnership (financially resourced or non-resourced):** A strategic partnership implies a relationship between two organizations based on shared vision, trust, mutuality and complementarity. The leadership of the organizations will commit to the partnership based on joint or shared vision; values and goals. The organizations will influence each other's strategies and plans and will commit to joint learning and sharing. The partnership is beyond project funding and implies a program level commitment with equal power balance in setting the partnership agenda. Similarly, enhanced capacity of one of the partners will result in enhanced capacity of the other through their mobilization for peer to peer support mechanism.

Strategic partnership will often be of longer duration as the nature of the joint work will often be long-term, though strategic partnership can also be shorter term. However, "long-term" does not automatically mean "strategic" partnership. Strategic partnership can be formalized through signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between two or more organizations. Besides the MoU, CARE Nepal and its strategic partner might enter into partnership grant agreements for specific funded interventions. When a partnership include an exchange of resources, the partners will strive towards an equal power balance, and CARE will exhibit flexibility and willingness to align with partner policies, procedures and practices if these are assessed to be living up to donor requirements and applicable government regulations.

The decision to enter into strategic partnership should be made by the Decision Making Committee (DMC)<sup>4</sup> and informed by the program objectives. The decision cannot be made by an individual, project or program teams; although strategic partnership could develop out of projects and design processes with an existing implementing partner and the beneficiaries of its implementation area.

**5.2. Implementation partnership (resourced):** Implementation partnerships are relations which go beyond sub-contracting in the sense that there is a level of shared vision and objectives; mutual capacity building; influence, accountability and learning. Implementation partnership will always have defined and agreed results, targets, outputs, budgets and time-bound to a specific project or funding source. Implementation partnership can be shorter or longer-term. The process of selecting implementation partnership is guide by partner selection guideline of CARE Nepal (Annex-1). Implementation partnership will always have

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<sup>4</sup> DMC is a committee of senior members of CARE Nepal that makes decisions about partnership

a partnership grant agreement as per the Sub-Grant Agreement Management Guideline (Annex-4).

CARE Nepal can also undergo in consortium partnership at the time of project design. The purpose of consortium partnership is to increase access to resources and to undertake a specific initiative which requires skill and resources, which are not fully possessed by any individual parties of consortium. CARE Nepal enters into consortium partnership with like minded organizations by signing formally stated agreement to bring a value-added approaches to program.

## **6. Principles of partnership**

CARE Nepal has identified the following principles of partnership, around which partnership relations will be built and nourished.

### **6.1. Shared vision and values**

Shared vision, values and goals is a precondition for a partnership. These values must include a shared belief in the equal realization of the universal human rights for men, women, girls, and boys, and an organizational commitment to gender equality and respect for diversity. The organizational values must not only be committed to in principle but be demonstrated by CARE Nepal and its partner organizations. Equal commitment to mutually agreed goals is a precondition for any partnership of CARE Nepal. Partner selection guideline will help assess and compare shared vision and values.

### **6.2. Good governance and accountability**

CARE Nepal commits to principles of good governance and accountability and expects partners to commit to the same. CARE Nepal's Internal Accountability Position Paper (Annex-5) promotes the mutual accountability between CARE Nepal, partner organizations and impact group. This involves adherence to policies and agreements; transparency in conducting any program actions; high standards of financial management; and zero tolerance of fraud, misconduct, sexual harassment and discrimination. CARE Nepal and partners have mutual accountabilities to common stakeholders, including donors, but most importantly to the impact groups in whose name we raise and mobilize resources. CARE Nepal will commit to being transparent by adhering to its own accountability policy and encourage its partner organizations to ensure accountability towards the impact group and stakeholders. This includes sharing financial and non-financial information with partners and impact group, and actively seeking and responding to feedback and complaints from partners and impact



groups. CARE will support partners in designing systems and procedure for carrying out similar practices.

### **6.3. Respect for each other's unique identity**

CARE Nepal recognizes that in many of our partnership, especially the ones which involve funding, there are likely differences on systems, policies and management practices among CARE Nepal and partners. Therefore, it will address this difference by respecting partners' autonomy and exhibiting flexibility where possible. To ensure this, CARE will listen to partners, respect their views, respond to and incorporate their feedback, and align agreements and working modalities and practices with partner policies, procedures and practices when these are evaluated to live up to donor requirements and government regulations. While respecting unique organizational identity and autonomy of the partners, capacity strengthening measures will be mutually undertaken by CARE Nepal and partners so that partners become a vibrant civil society force with new, improved and accountable working models.

### **6.4. Value addition, synergy and complementarity**

CARE Nepal will seek to add value by bringing together different actors working on similar issues, seeking opportunities for synergy and collaboration. In the spirit of the program approach, CARE Nepal is committed to learn innovative approaches in a partnership and share those learning among the partner organizations. CARE Nepal believes in the principle of complementarities and will specify mutual value addition in the partnership by clearly spelling out the unique roles, responsibilities, mutual benefits and expected contributions to achieve mutually agreed goals. The role of CARE Nepal and partners will depend on the nature and scope of intervention. However, CARE Nepal will demonstrate its role as a facilitator and bring its expertise and values in the development process, lead on documentation of good practices and their dissemination, technical backstopping to implementing partners and contribute to organizational development of partner organizations. CARE Nepal trusts that partners' knowledge of local context and social dynamics are essential to achieving the common goals of our development work.

## **Annexes**

*Annex-1: Partner Selection Guidelines*

*Annex-2: Due Diligence Assessment (DDA) tools*

*Annex-3: Partner's Capacity Assessment (PCA) tools*

*Annex-4: Sub- Grant Agreement Management Guideline*

*Annex-5: CARE Nepal's Internal Accountability Position Paper*