

# STRATEGIC PLAN

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# 2008 - 2010



**Association of International NGOs in Nepal**

An informal grouping of INGOs working in Nepal

## ■ ■ FOREWORD

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The Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN) is pleased to present their Strategic Plan 2008 -2010. AIN, a network for social and economic development is a coalition of development organizations dedicated to the progress and profound transformation of Nepal. Founded in 1996, AIN now includes more than eighty INGOs, which through its network have forged stronger partnerships with member organizations, civil society groups, government, private sector, various stakeholders, CBO, NGOs and other strategic allies. The network continues to work to unite the efforts of an increasingly broad range of organizations and is building sustainable international alliances that fight for social and economic justice through solidarity among peoples and communities. AIN aims to integrate INGOs' contributions to build its capacity for the best possible results and is gaining momentum and visibility in the development sector by keenly facilitating its members' ideals and objectives, promoting mutual understanding, and fostering companionship and harmony.

This strategic plan aims to portray an enhanced understanding of and direction to AIN's development interventions and involvement over the next two years, in line with the Government of Nepal's Three Year Interim Plan. It addresses the key areas on which AIN will focus, their goals and the strategies designed to achieve them. In essence, it's a tool to accomplish AIN's mission, address the vision and to ensure that services are delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible. While INGOs are working to boost the pace of development by combating disease, fighting poverty with economic growth, expanding education, mitigating conflict and providing social security for the poor and vulnerable, the plan aspires to provide clarity on the development effort through the collective contribution of its members. Furthermore, it seeks to build a more positive and credible future among all development stakeholders through mutual, supportive coexistence.

This strategic plan was prepared by the AIN steering committee members with particular input by Eiichi Sadamatsu, Sten Andreasen and Ram P. Risal and with coordination by the AIN secretariat under the leadership of the AIN chairperson. We would like to acknowledge Basudev Neupane for preparing the first draft and the extraordinary number of people who participated in the focus group meetings and strategy development discussions. Especially we would like to thank representatives from the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Social Welfare Council, Ministry of Education, Department of Education, National Planning Commission, NGO Federation, National Federation of Disabled, Federation of Democratic NGOs, NGO FONIN, ADDCN, DNF Nepal, JICA, UNMIN, UNDP, USAID, Embassy of Denmark, UNOCHA, UNDP, AASMAN Nepal, CWIN, Concern and Seto Gurans who have contributed substantially to the completion of this strategic plan. And sincere gratitude goes to all AIN Members for their valuable inputs and support throughout all stages of its development. Our intention is that the AIN Strategic Plan 2008-2010 will provide useful guidance and input to the

national development process, and while acknowledging the contributions of many specialists, the AIN steering committee takes responsibility for the plan, and invites continued correspondence regarding improvements to be considered over the months and years ahead.

With best wishes,  
AIN Steering Committee 2008



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# ■ ■ Introduction

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## 1.1. Background

The Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN) was founded in 1995 by a relatively small number of like-minded INGOs as an informal gathering for mutual learning through sharing of information. Over the last decade, it has grown in its membership and its scope of operation. At present AIN is more active and influential; it is thus expected to be more responsible and accountable to its members and external stakeholders. At the same time, AIN seeks to maintain its flexibility as an informal network of INGOs. Thus AIN faces a bit of a challenge balancing its desire to maintain its informal and flexible structure while meeting emerging requirements to have a more clearly defined framework of operation and structure of governance to ensure coherence of activities.

In the drastically changing political situation of Nepal, people from every walk of life are now trying to contribute to the nation building process of a 'New Nepal'. Turning our eyes outside Nepal, there also is a rapidly growing tendency among different players in international aid to put increased emphasis on the role of state mechanisms as a main driving force of development. These situations urge AIN to identify its niche and to chart out its role in both national and international contexts.

Under these circumstances, this first ever AIN Strategy Paper intends to clarify what AIN is aiming at and how AIN should achieve its aims during the next three years (2008-2010). We expect that this will help various AIN activities collectively contribute to a set of well defined and clearly understood common objectives.

## 1.2. Structure of Strategy Paper

This Strategy Paper consists of three parts. The first part, entitled CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS, provides an overview of the history and major achievements of AIN since its establishment. It then proceeds with an analysis of national and international contexts and the comparative advantages of being the only widely-recognized network of INGOs in Nepal, and then lists the major stakeholders of the organization.

The second part; FUTURE POLICY AND STRATEGY, describes where and how AIN wants to move forward. It begins by stating foundational documents, AIN's mission, principles, objectives and roles, and then elaborates major working areas and activities – as well as the institutional and financial implications of adopting this new strategy for AIN.

The third part, "STRUCTURE OF AIN", describes the legal status of AIN, its organizational structure and how these are functioning.

### **1.3. Process Followed**

AIN member organizations and key stakeholders were involved in and contributed to the process of developing this strategy paper. All members of AIN were invited to respond to a questionnaire that was critically analyzed and presented to member organizations for comments in a Special Plenary Meeting. A series of focus group discussions with key stakeholders, including government institutions, selected national NGOs and NGO federations and donors were organized to seek input and allow participants to express their expectations for AIN.

Several key issues, which were brought out from the discussion, were once again brought back to a Plenary Meeting for members' comments and were discussed in the Steering Committee for final decision. Those key issues include AIN's legal status, expansion of its mandate and its financial implications, governance and transparency, as well as relations between development and human rights.

### **1.4. Disclaimer**

AIN has made its best efforts to accommodate the issues and concerns of its members and stakeholders while charting out this Strategy Paper. Given the diverse interests of various stakeholders it has, however, been necessary to prioritize the main issues and to concentrate on AIN's role as a network of INGOs, distinct from the roles to be performed by individual member organizations. Therefore readers are expected to understand that this AIN Strategic Plan does not necessarily cover all roles to be played by INGOs in Nepal.

To conclude the introduction, AIN would like to express its hope that this Strategy Paper will also prove to be instrumental in contributing to the process of building a well-governed, credible, inclusive, just, responsive and accountable 'New Nepal' where civil society's contribution would be further recognized and strengthened in the overall nation building process.



## Part I:

# CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS: “Where is AIN now?”

## 2.1. A Historical Overview and Major Achievements of AIN

AIN was founded in 1995 as an informal forum to share information among INGOs in Nepal, with the overall objectives of improving coordination, complementarity and mutual learning. The enactment of the Social Welfare Act a few years later increased the members’ concerns over their relations with the Social Welfare Council (SWC), which was established to regulate and facilitate the work of international and local NGOs.

Initially AIN limited itself in fulfilling its “internal role” of enhancing mutual learning and sharing, as well as developing certain common guidelines for its own members. Over time, however, especially in the changing national context, AIN was obliged to take a series of new steps and to start playing newly emerging “external roles”. The major events which marked the turning points of AIN are summarized as follows:

### 2.1.1. “Peoples’ War”

The “Peoples’ War” fought between the Maoists and the National Security Forces during the years 1996-2006 had a negative impact on the operational space of INGOs. In order to secure “development space” despite the conflict situation, “AIN Recommended Principles & Operating Guidelines” were introduced. These expressed AIN members’ commitment to impartiality and transparency in their operation, thereby requesting both parties of the conflict to respect development space. The AIN Development Space Task Force was established to address issues of operational space and it was decided to publish an analysis of case studies about members’ good practices for ensuring development space. Another initiative was to raise collectively the issue of constricted development space with the donor organizations operating in Nepal, given that these were funding a substantial part of INGO activities. Through this initiative a representative of the AIN Steering Committee was invited to Donor/UN’s Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs) meetings on a regular basis. In 2007, AIN, Donors and the UN jointly formed common BOGs in view of the newly emerging conflict situations in the Terai (plain area) of Nepal.

### 2.1.2. SWC’s “Code of Conduct of I/NGOs”

SWC’s attempt in 2005 to introduce a “Code of Conduct of I/NGOs” could have imposed limits to the freedom of INGOs working in Nepal. Following the

announcement by the Government of plans for this Code of Conduct, AIN engaged in joint advocacy with the NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN), Donors, and the UN to stop the Code of Conduct from being implemented and enforced. At the same time, AIN also realized that it could not expect extensive support for the campaign unless it sincerely addressed the governance issue of I/NGOs that was a vital concern of the general public of Nepal. This led to the adoption of the “AIN Recommended INGO-NGO Partnership Guidelines.” Since then, the AIN Capacity Building Task Force has been actively disseminating and supporting the implementation of the Partnership Guidelines.

### **2.1.3. INGOs’ Contribution to National Development**

In response to perceived insufficient recognition by the Government of Nepal towards INGOs’ contribution to the national development process, AIN published a series of documents to demonstrate its members’ significant contribution to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nepal.

### **2.1.4. Jana Andolan (Peoples’ Movement) in April 2006**

AIN for the first time in its history took to the streets and organized a peaceful sit-in to appeal for “Peace, Human Rights, and Democracy.” As a result, more than one-hundred staff members of AIN member organizations, including AIN’s Chairperson, were arrested, and many of them were kept in custody overnight. Afterwards there was in-depth discussion in a Plenary Meeting debating whether AIN should be involved in “political issues,” during which members finally reached a consensus that “ensuring fundamental human rights is a necessary pre-condition to achieve AIN’s common goal of poverty reduction and sustainable development.”

After democracy was once again restored and the first steps for peace and reconstruction began, the Government of Nepal began to show signs of increased recognition of the important role of INGOs, paving the way for a new phase of collective and more thematic dialogue beyond SWC. Some examples were the start of interactions between the AIN Education Task Force and the Department of Education (under the Ministry of Education) and between the AIN Peace Group and the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction.

AIN was also invited by the National Planning Commission to be on the Committee responsible for writing a chapter on the role of I/NGOs in the Three Year Interim Plan. The National Planning Commission, along with the SWC, also officially formed a new Committee and invited both the AIN Steering Committee and the AIN Task Forces to discuss overall mutual cooperation in the framework of the Three Year Interim Plan. This enabled AIN to more directly reflect the needs of the poor and marginalized in the National Development Plan. This will be one of the important roles of AIN in view of the international context as discussed in detail later in this paper.

Despite the impressive and successive evolution of AIN set forth above, it should also be noted that AIN has been acting mainly in a reactive and ad-hoc manner. AIN tends to act only after some important event or incident happens around it. AIN must now develop its capacity to have better foresight and to act more pro-actively with a longer-term perspective.

Therefore, it is high time for AIN to develop its strategy and to strengthen its governance so that various initiatives undertaken by AIN will collectively contribute to a set of common objectives that are well-defined, clearly understood and mutually agreed to by its members.

## **2.2. Situation Analysis**

### **2.2.1. Socio-economic Conditions (National Context)**

In the recent past, Nepal was trapped in a decade-long armed conflict, experienced the royal takeover and suffered a severe economic crisis. The unprecedented success of the people's movement was instrumental in restoring democratic rights and freedom, contributing to the peace process and expanding development space. Civil society organizations were an inseparable part of the entire People's Movement, and they made a substantial contribution to the Movement by bringing a large number of people to the forefront of demonstrations and protests in innovative ways. The achievements made after the success of the People's Movement, the peace process and the Constituent Assembly elections have provided unique opportunities to civil society organizations in general, and NGOs in particular, to ensure their crucial presence in the overall development of the country.

The socio-political and economic situation of the country remains fragile, however, and the peace process is still ongoing. INGOs therefore need to be careful and attentive in monitoring and analyzing current rapid and potential changes – and be prepared to respond to these changes. Nepal is still in a fragile stage due to the extended period of political transition, the weak institutional capacity of state institutions, including the legislature, as well as political parties.

Hence, the existing tenuous situation requires civil society organizations and NGOs to come up with a proactive and creative role in launching concerted and coordinated activities to support national development goals.

### **2.2.2. International Context**

One of the prominent issues that will directly affect INGOs for the coming few years in the current international context is the Paris Declaration of 2005. The Paris Declaration was adopted by both Donors and host countries to improve aid effectiveness. For this purpose, it has addressed five key issues; ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability. One of

the remarkable characteristics of the Paris Declaration is its strong focus on the concept of state-led development.

A similar tendency is observed also in the Sector-wide Approach (SWAPs). This approach encourages donors to provide their funds to recipient countries not on the basis of different projects, but on the basis of certain sectors, such as education, health, etc. The national government of the host country is then expected to have more ownership through the process to determine how best to spend the funds.

The idea of putting national governments in the driving seat of development is not wrong in and of itself. The approach, however, is based on an assumption that the national development plans and policies developed will truly represent the development goals of its people in an inclusive and equitable manner. An important role of AIN in this context, therefore, will be to ensure the national development plans and policies by the Government of Nepal will truly reflect the needs and the priorities of the poor and the marginalized sections of society.

### **2.2.3. Comparative Advantages of INGOs/AIN**

Being the only widely-recognized 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 organizations and the engagement of key organizational representatives in the Steering Committee is a profound base upon which AIN can develop clear positions on several important issues. AIN has the comparative advantage of linking with global/regional networks of INGOs elsewhere and to foster global solidarity. 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.

### **2.2.4. Priority Areas of Work**

INGOs are making significant contributions to the overall development of Nepal. AIN's member organizations have expressed a wish for AIN to continue to assist in building and promoting a conducive environment for its member organizations through its intervention in sector coordination, advocacy and capacity building. It is expected that the contribution of members to Nepalese society could be in addressing needs, rights, or a combination of the two through development initiatives. AIN will encourage and facilitate member organisations' implementation of conflict sensitive programs and projects, in particular at local level in marginal and deprived districts. Based on this general understanding, AIN's member organizations have prioritized a focus on the following areas during the next three years. These are the areas where collective energy, efforts and inputs are required from AIN members:

- a) Human rights and social justice

- b) Social inclusion (with respect to gender, age, race, caste, ethnicity, language, religion, disability, geographical location)
- c) Conflict sensitive reconciliation, reintegration, rehabilitation, reconstruction & development
- d) Civil society governance
- e) INGOs' image building
- f) Legal framework

While a) to c) will collectively contribute to the peace process and nation building within the overall aim of the "New Nepal", d) to f) are closely related with issues of transparency and accountability of INGOs, which is the most frequently asked question by our stakeholders as well as the general public of Nepal.

The majority of AIN members are either development agencies or humanitarian aid agencies or both. Nevertheless the bottom line for AIN is that protection from human rights abuses, physical threats, violence and extreme economic, social, and environmental risks, as well as territorial and sovereignty threats are necessary preconditions to achieve its members' shared goal of poverty reduction and sustainable development and to make lasting improvements in the lives of Nepalese people. Based on this conviction, AIN will engage in various advocacy and collective actions, guided by internationally defined principles and standards of human rights.

### 2.3. Relationship with Stakeholders

First of all, AIN recognizes Nepalese citizens as its key stakeholders. However, for the functional purpose of promoting pro-poor sustainable development, AIN will have a strong relationship and build alliances with Nepalese NGOs, the Government of Nepal, local government bodies, the Social Welfare Council, donors (bi-laterals and multi-laterals), political parties, the media, the corporate sector and other civil society networks.

**Nepalese NGOs:** Partnerships for mutual capacity building, institutional strengthening, awareness raising, resource sharing, alliance building and service delivery.

Government of Nepal: Coordination and harmonization of development aid in the best interest of the poor and the marginalized sections of society.

**Local Government Bodies:** Partnership through local partners (NGOs, 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 programs with development policies and plans of the Government of Nepal.

**Donors (bi-laterals and multi-laterals):** 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:** 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

**Media:** Partnership to advocate with government and donors and the community. Working together for awareness spreading at the community level.

**Corporate Sector:** Advocate for the fulfilment of corporate social responsibilities.

**Other Networks:** Build alliances around identified issues for joint lobbying, advocacy and capacity building.



## Part II:

# FUTURE POLICY AND STRATEGY:

## “Where and how does AIN want to move forward?”

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### 3.1. AIN's Mission and Principles

#### 3.1.1. Mission

A strong, proactive, and accountable forum for INGOs in Nepal for mutual learning and collective dialogue that takes positions on critical issues, coordinates activities, advocates in the interest of the poor and marginalized, and safeguards the interest of its members, and achieves the above by promoting poverty reduction, sustainable development, human rights, gender equality and good governance among its members and their partners.

#### 3.1.2. Principles

AIN is guided by internationally defined principles and standards of human rights.

1. AIN members are international non-governmental, non-profit, non party-affiliated organizations working in Nepal to advance the public good, including human rights, gender equality, sustainable development, environmental protection, and humanitarian response.
2. AIN will implement its programs without discrimination regarding gender, race, caste, ethnic origin, geographical location, disability or religion, whilst acknowledging that adhering to these principles may sometimes involve affirmative action.
3. AIN is committed to contributing to an improved quality of life for Nepal's people, especially the poor and excluded, and will focus assistance on reducing poverty, meeting the immediate needs and conditions of the poorest people, and enabling communities to be self-sufficient and empowered.
4. AIN seeks to ensure that its assistance tackles discrimination, social exclusion and injustice.
5. AIN members work with and through local communities, civil society organizations and local government bodies as partners in planning and implementation of development programs, as well as with national NGOs, donors and the government on policy advocacy.

6. In order to ensure broad ownership of our work, AIN seeks to be transparent and accountable and to communicate intentions – and widen and deepen dialogue – with partners at all levels.
7. As a network of INGOs, AIN recognizes that all aid can influence conflict situations and create incentives and disincentives for peace. All AIN programs seek to strengthen democratic systems that allow for the nonviolent resolution of conflict.

In abiding by these principles, AIN commits to coordinate and share information, and refrain from taking unilateral action.

### **3.2. Strategic Objectives**

In order to progress towards its Mission during the next three years, AIN intends to concentrate on the following strategic objectives:

- 1) To improve coordination, complementarities and mutual learning among AIN members through regular sharing of information and undertaking joint initiatives
  - a) Specifically, this will include the following roles:
    - Collect and disseminate information about national and international policies, debates and initiatives with relevance to and implications for INGOs.
    - Share information and resources for joint learning within sectors.
    - Support new members by providing them with basic knowledge regarding how to operate in Nepal.
  - b) Activities planned for 2008-2010:
    - Develop guidelines on conflict-sensitive approaches to development<sup>1</sup>.
    - Collect and disseminate information on an ad hoc basis about national and international policies, debates and initiatives with relevance to and implications for INGOs.
    - Develop “Inductive Information Package” for new AIN members.
- 2) To act as a resource centre and provide information about INGO activities and create a conducive working environment for INGOs in Nepal.
  - a) Specifically, that will include the following roles:
    - Pro-active engagement to create an INGO-friendly legal environment (such as the Social Development Act).
    - Institutionalize periodic interaction with the SWC/PAFC.
    - Advocating for compatibility and coherence among different line agency directives with the Social Development Act.

- Develop guidelines on AIN members' response to the Local Self Governance Act and the Rights to Information Act.
  - Coordinate the information flow from members regarding space for development to be shared, and when necessary, bring it to the attention of relevant authorities and stakeholders.
  - Set various guidelines or conduct reviews or surveys which help AIN members to secure development space, establish sound relations with local partners, improve their organizational management and thereby conduct their activities successfully.
  - Proactively seek opportunities to inform others – particularly government, civil society and bilateral donors – of the positive contribution that INGOs make in Nepal.
- b) Activities planned for 2008-2010:
- Publicize AIN members' contribution to Three Year Interim Plan.<sup>1</sup>
  - Communication with non-state actors to ensure development space through the BOGs group.<sup>1</sup>
  - Publication of AIN Membership Report, including an annual media launch.
  - Exposure visits for key stakeholders of media and government to INGOs' field programs.<sup>1</sup>
- 3) To undertake policy advocacy and research on pro-poor policies and practices that help to facilitate sustainable development, democracy and human rights.
- a) Specifically, that will include the following roles:
- Formation and continued proactive functioning of different Working Groups, particularly the following:
    - Education
    - Peace
    - Health
    - Climate Change
    - Disaster
    - HIV/AIDS
  - Initiate collective dialogue and advocacy work to influence government policies to focus on poverty reduction, sustain democracy, address human rights, social exclusion, gender inequalities and other social justice issues in the interest of poor and marginalized people.

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<sup>1</sup> Expected to be financed by collaborative funding; others will be supported by core funding

- Be responsive to the dynamics of the current political situation, concentrating on reconciliation, (re)integration, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development as appropriate.
  - Monitor the implementation of pro-poor government policies to ensure their positive results.
- b) Activities planned for 2008-2010:
- Guidelines for AIN members on how to act upon and report human rights violations, including gender-based violence.
  - Preparedness to respond to critical human rights situations.
  - Organized dissemination of Basic Operating Guidelines, especially in the Terai.
  - Interface with the Gender & Social Inclusion Group of donors (SDC, DFID, WB, etc).
  - Critical review of existing and new government plans/policies in relation to inclusion and empowerment of marginalised groups, including women.<sup>1</sup>
- 4) To foster, facilitate and coordinate dialogue with the government and donors on areas of common interest, including guidelines and policy.
- a) Specifically, that will include the following roles:
- Facilitate voluntary coordination of programs and projects of INGOs (with each other and with donors and government) to avoid overlapping and duplication and to promote synergy and effective use of resources (geographically and sector-wise).
  - Encourage INGOs to align with government policies, strategies, institutions and procedures when they are in line with AIN's principles, mission, and objectives and do not contradict with the members' missions.
- b) Activities planned for 2008-2010
- Alignment with government plans and policies (Including the Three Year Interim Plan, SWAPs, and LPC).
  - Periodic dialogue with the Peace Ministry and the State Restructuring Commission.
  - Interface with the "Thematic Peace Dividend Action Group" of donors/ UN.

- 5) To initiate activities that can help build the capacity of NGOs and promote good governance in the development sector in Nepal, including among INGOs.
- a) Specifically, that will include the following roles:
- Encourage and facilitate AIN members to help partners to work in ways that encourages good governance and gender equality in partners and in greater civil society, as well as government.
  - Promote strategies to enhance good governance among AIN members.
- b) Activities planned for 2008-2010
- Collect information on social inclusion among INGO staff members and AIN members' affirmative action policies.
  - Develop guidelines for Social Audit.<sup>1</sup>
  - Strengthen linkage between AIN members and Capacity Building organizations.<sup>1</sup>
  - External promotion of Partnership Guidelines with NFN, SWC, etc.<sup>1</sup>
  - Revive interaction with donor's Best Practice Study Group.<sup>1</sup>

## ■ ■ Part III: Structure of AIN:

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### 4.1. Legal Status of AIN

After critical review and intensive discussion among its members and stakeholders, AIN has decided to maintain its basic nature as “an informal network of INGOs.” Though it recognizes some members’ as well as stakeholders’ opinion that AIN should have a formal legal status to expand its mandate, it sees for now more advantage in remaining an informal network of legally registered INGOs. AIN believes that this unique nature, which has allowed the body to be flexible and responsive the changing circumstances, has been one of the most important factors that has helped AIN to develop steadily.

At the same time, however, AIN is aware that it must strengthen its internal governance so as to fulfill its social responsibility and accountability to its members and stakeholders. Though AIN will maintain the present basic governance structure consisting of the Plenary/General Assembly as the supreme decision making body, the Steering Committee as the executive board, the Working Groups (Task Forces) as thematic joint initiatives, and the Secretariat as the office addressing day-to-day operational matters, it will strengthen the respective parts in the following manner:

### 4.2. Plenary/General Assembly

The Plenary/General Assembly is the supreme decision making body where main policy decisions will be made, and which will mandate the Steering Committee and Secretariat to execute these decisions. The General Assembly will be held once every year in June to elect Steering Committee Members and to approve the annual plan and budget of AIN. Plenary Meetings will be held not less than five times a year. The Plenary is responsible for making strategic decisions and issuing concrete directives for achieving AIN’s mission and objectives. In special circumstances, the Steering Committee may convene Special Plenary sessions in order to make the decision making process more participatory and inclusive. To further promote active participation of members in the Plenary, Special Thematic Plenaries will also be organized periodically to discuss emerging needs of the members and stakeholders.

### **4.3. Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee functions as an executive board, and it is responsible for making executive decisions and also for supervising the Secretariat in overall matters. The Steering Committee will recruit members and carry out operational financial monitoring of AIN.

In order to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the Steering Committee, a clear TOR will be prepared for each of the office bearers, as well as for other Steering Committee members, in order to ensure that agreed tasks are not borne only by Office Bearers (Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer), but are more widely shared among Steering Committee members.

In addition, in order to strengthen linkage and accountability between the Steering Committee and Working Groups (Task Forces), at least one member from the Steering Committee will be assigned to join each Working Group.

### **4.4. Working Groups**

Several thematic Working Groups, accountable to the Steering Committee and the Plenary, will be formed to ensure better coordination and linkages with other stakeholders. Each Working Group, represented by one Steering Committee Member and other members engaged in the relevant sector, will serve as a focal point to establish linkage and contact with other stakeholders, including the government. The following working groups have been formed to date, but more can be proposed and added in future in line with the strategic priorities of AIN:

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

### **4.5. Secretariat**

The Secretariat will be made more responsive and able to take operational decisions and to supervise the overall operations of AIN on the basis of approved operational guidelines, annual programs, action plans and budget. The Secretariat will also represent AIN in different forums and foster relationships with various national and international stakeholders. The Secretariat will also be responsible to support Working Groups.

## **4.6. Regional Forum**

Regional Forums are a new structure of AIN, building on two forums already existing informally (in Biratnagar for the east and in Nepalgunj for the west) These forums will be autonomous in terms of their activities and financing but will have close links and coordination for advocacy on various issues nationally. An effective communication system will be established between the AIN Steering Committee and the Regional Forums.

## **4.7. Financial Resources**

For securing sufficient financial resources to develop AIN as envisaged in this Strategy Paper but without creating external dependency or internal politicization, AIN will seek the following three different sources for different purposes of funding:

### **4.7.1. Operational Expenses from Membership Fee (Core Funding)**

A set annual membership fee will be collected from each member to cover core expenses of AIN, including administrative expenses to manage the Secretariat, as well as some key activities prioritized by this Strategy Paper. The specific amount will be determined and may be increased as necessary with approval from the Plenary. Each member bears an equal amount of membership fee regardless of its budget size or manpower. This is to secure the core budget without depending on either external parties or particular members only and to promote equity for all members regardless of size.

### **4.7.2. Activities Based Expenses from Members' Additional Contributions (Collaborative Funding)**

Advocacy by the Plenary/Steering Committee and other thematic programs by Working Groups will be funded by spontaneous and additional contributions from AIN members for a specified purpose on an individual or group basis.

### **4.7.3. Common Interest Program from external parties (Special Funding)**

Specific but limited common interest programs can be implemented with funds raised from other stakeholders such as bilateral donors or the corporate sector.

#### **4.8. Some Operational Activities for AIN during 2008-10**

- General Assembly – Institutionalize approval of annual plans and budgets, annual programs and financial reports.
- Plenary Meetings – Special Thematic Plenaries.
- Steering Committee – TOR developed for non-office-bearer members, linkage with WGs.
- Secretariat – Delegation of more authority through the Operating Guidelines.
- Regional Networking – Systematic information sharing, clarification on structure and roles.
- Code of Conduct – Sorting out and editing existing core documents (Articles of Association, Basic Principles and Operating Guidelines, Partnership Guidelines) and promote adherence to key principles.
- Periodic salary survey and its sharing with members and bi/multilateral agencies.

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