



The Mountain Institute  
Himalayan Program Nepal

**Partners and Partnerships Guidelines**  
**An assessment tool for NGO partners**

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# The Mountain Institute

## Partners and Partnerships Guidelines

### **Background:**

The Mountain Institute (TMI) adopted NGO partnerships strategy since 1997 in Makalu Barun area of eastern Nepal to keep low profile in the field and implement community programs and activities through local NGOs. The Final evaluation mission of the project stated that the beauty of this arrangement is that local NGOs by virtue of their knowledge of local language, culture and norms can develop a quick rapport with local communities. This strategy was initiated with 3 main objectives 1) improving the implementation of field programs and activities, 2) developing the capacities of community groups or organizations and NGOs and 3) developing the partnerships between different stakeholders' to ensure sustained conservation efforts and improved livelihoods.

TMI found that strategy adopted is very positive and impressive. This not only reduced operational costs, but also empowered and strengthened NGO capacities to deliver programs and services in sustainable way. TMI already works with various partners ranging from government line ministries and departments, local government, district and village based non governmental organizations, cooperatives, private sector, community forest user groups, grazing area user groups, mother and women groups, saving and credit groups, buffer zone development council. The mid term and final evaluation mission of the project highlighted the need to further strengthening this strategy and policy for future TMI programs and activities in Nepal. At the mean time, TMI felt necessary of a clear, transparent partnership guideline, which helps to strengthen TMI's partnerships with various stakeholders in Nepal.

This document will help to identify, select and implement various programs and activities through partners. And also provide guidelines to TMI staff to assess and selection process for partners, implementing procedures and monitoring and evaluation of the programs and activities and partners.

### **What is partnership?**

TMI believes that the partnership is based on the mutual trust, and commitment to shared norms and values in order to conserve biodiversity for improved livelihoods. It also aims that each partners bring something, usually skill and resources in collaboration, and also defines clear roles and responsibilities to deliver the programs and services to beneficiaries.

## Why partnerships/Purpose of Partnerships

The purpose of partnerships is to provide TMI's support for institutional development process and capacity development of local partners to participate in sustainable conservation and development process.

The partnership also aims to bring implementation and delivery of programs and services to targeted population thorough different partners in cost effective and sustainable way.

## Who are the Partners?

The Mountain Institute already works with various types of partners ranging from governmental organizations to local community groups. The following table insights on the partners working with TMI.

SN	Partners	Examples
1	Government line ministries and Department	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC)
2	District government line agencies	National Park offices District forest Offices District Livestock/veterinary Offices
3.	Non Government Organizations	The East Foundation Silichung Club Social Development Committee Topke Gola Social Welfare Society Hill Development and Conservation Group (HDCG) Manekor Society Nepal Paldor Peak Youth Club Shree High Altitude Herbal Growers Group Deep Jyoti Youth Group
4.	Community Based Organizations	Saving and Credit Groups Community Forest User Groups Buffer zone development user groups Mothers' and Women groups Medicinal and aromatics plants (MAPs) groups Pasture user group
5.	Local Government	District Development Committees

		Village Development Committees
6.	International NGOs and Professional groups	ICIMOD World Education Organizational Development Center Management Association of Nepal WWF IUCN

## NGO Selection

### Priority in selection of NGO

The Mountain Institute should give priority to the NGO from the project area and registered in project district

- An organization registered in project districts and working in project working area
- Organizations registered and working in project district.
- Organizations registered in other district and working in project area/district
- Organizations having most of the paid or volunteer staff from project working area /district
- Organizations having involvement of female, disadvantaged, *Janjati* and *dalit* in board of directors/executive committee. Number of general members from *dalit*, women and disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities (Janjati)

### Criteria for selecting NGOs

- Registered as legal entity with appropriate agency of the government
- Clear vision, goal, mission and objectives
- Non religious, non political
- Executive members, not actively involved in politics
- Good track record and recognition in community, stakeholders and district community
- Representation of female and disadvantaged group in executives/decision making body
- Relevant experience in delivery of programs and services
- Has track record in mobilizing internal and local resources
- Regularly audit, transparent account and financial transactions
- Democratic decision-making process adopted
- Regular executive committee meeting and general assembly held
- Strong willingness in sustainable conservation and development
- Ready to work with TMI project areas

- Has paid or volunteer staff from project area
- Commitments for rural development

## NGO selection Process and Steps involved

1. Identify possible area of partnerships and develop scope of work
2. Coordinate with district based line agencies and stakeholders (specially government line agencies and local government)
3. Prepare district- based information on NGO (refer general information on district based NGO format)
4. Call letter of interest from NGO working in the project area/ district – (1- 2 weeks depending up on the remoteness) Along with the letter of interest. NGO should submit the following documents
  - a. Copy of NGO registration certificate
  - b. Copy of NGO affiliation with Social Welfare Council, if applicable
  - c. Copy of last audit report
  - d. Copy of NGO renewal, if applicable
  - e. Information on NGO profile (NGO profile format attached)
5. Introductory workshop on possible partnerships, area and scope of work, and intended project result – (all interested NGO will be called to participate at this workshop, initial consultation, group discussion, and presentation from each NGO)- this workshop will help to assess the following area of program and organizational capacity
  - a. NGO trained staff and capacity to deliver the programs and activities
  - b. NGO facilities and supplies
  - c. Commitments on program and service delivery
  - d. Track record
  - e. Understanding each others
  - f. Working with beneficiaries
  - g. NGO networking and coordination
6. Preliminary screening of NGO – based on the information supplied/provided by NGO with letter of interest and introductory workshop outcomes – Please refer format to preliminary assessment of NGO
7. Call Program and Financial proposal – preliminary selected NGO will submit detail program and financial proposal (Refer proposal format for detail)
8. Evaluation of program and financial proposal (refer annex for detail)

9. Final selection of NGO(s)
10. Prepare and sign Agreement/ Memorandum of Understanding
11. NGO orientation workshop – 1 day NGO orientation workshop – selected NGO partners will attend – discussion on program and activities implementation strategy and anticipated result
12. Joint Planning workshop – 2 days (TMI and NGO partners will attend this workshop to prepare a 3-year detail work plan
13. Program Implementation – TMI technical and financial back up support when and wherever deemed necessary
14. Monitoring, and Evaluation- Based on detailed Implementation Plan, each NGO should prepare Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (M & E Plan) with indicators and means of verifications.
15. Program review and Review planning workshop

## NGO Profile:

TMI shall collect information of all possible district based NGOs/volunteer organizations, which help to identify the suitable NGO partner to implement programs and delivery of services to beneficiaries. Based on the profile, TMI shall be transparent and open in selecting partner NGO for formal program contract. (*Refer annex..... for detail on NGO profile tool*)

### *General Information on District Based NGOs:*

SN	Name	Address	Registered date	Last renewal	Area covered	Contact Person	Remarks
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							

## NGO Profile and Baseline Information

### *1. General Information*

- Name:
- Address:
- Contact person/address:
- Registration:
  - Name of Government agency where registered:
  - Date of registration:
  - Last date of Renewal:
  - Affiliation with Social Welfare Council, Date and Number:
- Last Audit report:
  - Audit date:
  - Auditor:
  - Key Findings:

- General Members:
  - Male:
  - Female:
  - Disadvantaged/*Dalit*
  - Total:
- Board of Directors/ Executive Committee
  - Total members;
  - Male:
  - Female:
  - *Dalit*:
- Last election as per laws and by laws:
  - Date:
  - Key Decision:
  - Please include
- Goal:
- Area of expertise:
- Area coverage/ working area:
- Number of beneficiaries:
- Major grant obtained:
  - Amount of grant:
  - Donor/ partners
  - Major program Implemented, with beneficiaries
  - Major partnership program implemented
  - Any volunteer program implemented
- Long Term goal/plan of the organization:
  - Please specify and/or attach the document
- Status of operational, personnel and financial policies or guidelines
  - Please specify keynotes on each manual and/or guidelines or attach the document

## 2. *Programs and Activities Implemented*

This chapter highlights on NGO achievements in program implementation and delivery of services. TMI anticipates any report(s) or findings of the impact or evaluation of the programs and activities implemented by NGOs. This helps to understand the expertise and capacity of local NGO, which ultimately help to design the NGO capacity building plan for TMI. This information not only expects the NGO progress through donor or external funding source, also through NGO internal or volunteer basis.

SN	Program/activity	Beneficiaries				Location	Duration	Funding source
		M	F	D	T			




D stands for Dalit, M for Male, F for female and T for Total

**3. Office equipment, supplies and Facilities**

Available office equipment, supplies and facilities are the key factors that affect the program implementation and delivery. This section will help to understand the availability of equipment and facilities available with NGOs. Furthermore, TMI will be benefited to prepare its plan of operation for organizational support grant (OSG) provided to the NGO partners.

- Office building
  - Owned
  - Rented
- Office Facilities available
  - Telephone
  - Fax
  - Email/internet
  - Computer and Printers
  - Any software used- finance, programs
- Office furniture, table etc.
- Field gears and other equipment
- Please mention any other facilities available

**4. List of paid staff/volunteers** (name, position, qualifications, responsibilities and any other useful information on staff)

**5. Details of Training attended (staff, volunteer, members)** – Name, position, training course attended, duration of course and applicability of course, and any other information on training/skill development course attended by staff members, volunteer, or executive and genral members)

**NGO Assessment Tool: NGO Institutional development framework**

TMI's experiences in partnerships with local NGOs and CBOs in sustainable conservation and livelihoods program found more effective in terms of cost effectiveness and local representation and participation. This experience also provided

the need for a tool that can assess the NGO development in terms of its own capacity and institutional development, which directly or indirectly affects the delivery of programs and services to local beneficiaries. This assessment or development framework tool is developed with the aim of assessing NGO institutional capacities for smooth delivery of programs and services for anticipated results and impact in rural conservation and sustainable development. Four major components are developed with the indicators. Some components of this assessment tool and institutional development frameworks are adopted from CARE Nepal's NGO Assessment Tool and Management Systems International, USA.

**TIPS:**

***Before using this tool, be sure that:***

- Select the NGO to be assessed
- Meet with representatives and schedule time, date and place
- Assure that NGO staff and representative will provide the information accurate.
- Assign mutually agreed facilitator, if needed.
- Emphasize that the objective of this assessment is not to select an NGO for funding.
- Information collection and assessment may require:
  - Personal interview
  - Group interview
  - After interview and discussion, every indicator will be scored from 0 to 4.

	Score/Notes
1.1 Board of Directors/ Executive members <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular meeting held</li><li>• Annual general assembly and election held on time</li><li>• Renew of memberships on time</li><li>• Number of general members increased by time</li></ul>	
1.2 Organizational vision and goal <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mission statement clear, and written in constitution or policy</li><li>• All members can brief the mission and goal</li><li>• Reflection of programs and activities with the goal and vision of the organization</li></ul>	
1.3 personnel policies and procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Written personnel policy and procedures exists and updated</li><li>• Staff roles and responsibilities clear and understandable</li><li>• Women, disadvantaged groups given priority in hiring staff, mentioned in personnel policy</li><li>• Personnel policy implemented, during hiring staff, and other matters</li></ul>	
1.4 Decision making process and authority <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual meeting and general assembly on time</li><li>• Major or all members are involved during major decision making</li><li>• Annual plans and budget approved by general assembly</li><li>• Clear and transparent authority defined</li></ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect all decisions made by the board</li> <li>• Delegation of authority by chair/director</li> </ul>	
<p>1.5 Administration, procurement and inventory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registered and renew</li> <li>• SWC affiliation</li> <li>• Grant and other agreement (legal documents, contract on place)</li> <li>• Simple inventory of assets and liabilities</li> <li>• Meeting minutes up to date</li> <li>• Systematic filing system (documents, correspondence et</li> <li>• Availability of records and documents to all staff and members</li> </ul>	
<p>1.6 Communication, Information and Networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication channel/mechanism exists</li> <li>• Information shared with all members/ stakeholders</li> <li>• Relevant information shared with targeted population on time</li> </ul>	

## 2. Human Resources and Staffing

<p>2.1 Paid staff and volunteer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of paid staff/volunteer – sufficient for program delivery</li> <li>• Staff diversity exists – technical staff, female, <i>dalit</i> and from disadvantaged groups</li> <li>• Consciousness or interest of having staff diversity</li> <li>• Consciousness or interest of <i>dalit</i>/disadvantaged group representation in staff/ board members</li> </ul>	
<p>2.1 Staff skills and Development Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity in area of expertise – staff involved</li> <li>• Training attended – use of training for professional work</li> <li>• Staff/member performance/development plan exists</li> <li>• Formal counseling or coaching provided</li> </ul>	

## 3. Financial Resource management

<p>3.1 Financial Policies and Procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial policies and procedures exist- written document available</li> <li>• Financial reports and records are clear and transparent</li> <li>• Qualified accountant available</li> <li>• Bank account available</li> <li>• Internal and external audits properly carried out</li> <li>• Audit reports provided to concerns agency on time</li> <li>• Account signatory (two or more people)</li> </ul>	
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<p>3.2 Fund Raising strategy and Financial security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal writing for fund raising strategy exist</li> <li>• Number agreement/ number of grants obtained/source of funds from different organizations</li> <li>• Any verbal/ written commitments for funds support</li> </ul>	
<p>3.3 Internal source of funds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal source of fund mobilized – levy, member donation etc.</li> <li>• Member fee regularly collected</li> <li>• Human resource or other resource mobilized for fund raising strategy</li> </ul>	

#### 4. Coordination, Networking and Recognition

<p>4.1 stakeholders coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to work with communities</li> <li>• Regular interaction and coordination with government line agencies</li> <li>• Legal letter of authority – if required from government agency</li> <li>• Regular meeting with donor agencies</li> <li>• Feed back mechanism exists</li> </ul>	
<p>3.2 Networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with similar NGOs – member of any organized forum</li> <li>• Track record on working with other in common interest</li> <li>• Leadership record – initiation taken to create cohesion with other like-minded organizations</li> </ul>	

#### 5. Program Management

<p>4.1 Program Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate time involved with communities for need assessment</li> <li>• Application of different tools (PRA, AI) for baseline information collection</li> <li>• Regular meeting and interaction with communities, DDC and VDC</li> <li>• Program endorsement with DDC, VDC and other government agencies</li> <li>• Feed back mechanism exists</li> </ul>	
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<p>3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation plan with indicators</li> <li>• Reporting system and formats</li> <li>• Information collection and dissemination system adopted</li> </ul>	
<p>3.3 Local skill, Resource and Knowledge mobilized during program cycle</p> <p>Local skill and knowledge identified</p> <p>Local human resource developed and utilized</p> <p>Innovative approach</p>	
<p>3.4 Gender Sensitivity in Program cycle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue of women and disadvantaged groups addressed</li> <li>• Involvement of women and disadvantaged groups</li> <li>• Group formed and mobilized at community level</li> </ul> <p>Women group and Mixed groups</p>	

**Funding support mechanism:**

The Mountain Institute provides partnerships support in three forms

***Program Partnerships Contract (PPC)***

Program Partnership Contract (PPC) is a grant assistance provided to local NGOs to implement programs and activities and deliver the services to project beneficiaries. Based on the NGO proposal and TMI annual work plan, these contracts are provided to the NGOs with aim to strengthen NGO capacity through program delivery and implementation. TMI provides financial assistance to cover the benefits of NGO personnel involved in delivery of services and program implementation. Besides of this, TMI also provides a maximum of 7.5% of total program budget as project overhead to cover the office management expenses. The amount of this contract is based on NGO proposal, TMI's annual program, and level of NGO as described under this guideline. (Refer annex .....for detail PPC)

***Organizational Support Grant (OSG)***

In order to strengthen NGO capacity in delivery of programs and services, a direct organizational support grant is provided. This grant will be utilized in office equipment (such as computer, printer), which accelerates the smooth implementation of program delivery. The form and extent of this grant is based on need felt of NGO, level of program delivery, and level of NGO as described under this guidelines.

***Technical Assistance (TA)***

TMI provides technical assistance to NGOs as a back up support for quality programs and delivery of services. Technical assistance can be provided in any area of expertise required for NGO to implement programs and activities. Technical training and organizational management training provided to NGO are also the part of Technical

Assistance. At the time of proposal, NGOs are requested to submit the scope of technical assistance required.

## **Financial Management:**

*Use of Funds:* Funds provided through PPC and/or OSG shall be used for those activities necessary to complete the programs and activities as described in the respective agreement and operational plan. Funds shall not be used for the following activities

1. Commerce and Business
2. Religious activities, which however, don not include the programs and activities related to renovation of religious and pilgrims sites, conservation and dissemination of customary cultural knowledge as described in the operational plan
3. To support violence, or violation of the law
4. Political activities
5. Donations. Excluding grant assistance provided to local groups as described in the operational and work plan.

*External and internal Auditing:* NGOs shall be responsible for auditing of grant assistance provided as per their approved norms and decision of board/board of directors through independent public Auditor. TMI internal auditor in accordance with TMI policies and procedures shall also audit the assistance provided through PPC or ODG by TMI.

*Audit Report:* NGO audit report shall be submitted to TMI as soon as it is completed and should include all management letter comments, findings, or adjustments that are specific and required for the partnerships. NGOs shall ensure that appropriate corrective actions are taken with in three months on the recommendations contained in NGO audit report.

*Payment of Audit:* NGOs are responsible for payment of audit.

### *Financial record inspection:*

1. NGOs shall maintain at its principal office full and complete records and books of accounts in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles covering financial details applicable to the activities funded under partnership agreement. These records shall include copies of all solicitations made for bids or quotations for commodities or services; bills of lading or other evidence of shipment for commodities; and such other pertinent documents related to procurement as sales, other services contracts and the (NGOs)'s substantiation for procurement.

2. All records required to be kept under this section shall be maintained in a manner that will permit verification of NGOs compliance with their representations, warranties, and obligations contained under the partnership agreement.
3. NGOs shall preserve and make available such records for examination and audit by TMI or authorized representatives and other related donors until the expiration of one year from the date the final reports are submitted to TMI.

## **Reporting Mechanism**

NGO shall submit standard and comprehensive reports on quarterly basis along with detailed financial reports and supporting documents.

### **a. Financial Reporting**

3 copies of the quarterly status of advances as well as expenditure report should be sent to TMI by the end of April, July, October, and January. The report shall follow the format provided by TMI.

### **b. Quarterly Progress Report**

3 copies of quarterly progress report will be submitted to TMI by the end of April, July, October and January.

### **c. Annual Report**

Within 20 days of the agreement year of partnership contract, NGO shall submit 3 copies of comprehensive annual report to TMI.

### **d. Final Report**

Within 30 days of the termination of NGO partnership agreement, NGO shall submit 3 copies of detail and comprehensive final report to TMI. The annual report will include a full accounting of expenditures and, if applicable, reasons why established goals were not met, including any problems or difficulties requiring the attention of both TMI and NGO that seek further improvement.

### **d. Special Reports**



1. Between the required program performance reporting dates, events may occur those have significant impact upon the program. In such instances, NGO shall inform to TMI as soon as the following types of conditions become known:
2. Problems, delays or adverse conditions that will materially affect the ability to attain program objectives, prevent the meeting of time schedules and goals, or preclude the attainment of work units by established time periods. A statement of action taken, or contemplated shall accompany this disclosure, and any TMI assistance needed to resolve the situation.
3. Favourable developments or events that enable time schedules to be met sooner than anticipated or more work units to be produced than originally projected.
4. If any performance review conducted by NGO discloses the need for changes in budget estimates in accordance with the criteria established in partnership agreement, (NGOs) shall submit a request for budget revision to TMI.

#### **Institutional development:**

TMI's major objective for NGO partnerships is to build the capacities of its partners for overall development to improve the quality of program delivery and outputs. There are many ways that MI can assist and provide support for institutional development to NGO partners. More specifically TMI help NGO to develop technical areas of expertise and management system development.

Some area of possible institutional development support;

- Technical, Managerial and Skill development training
  - Organizational development
  - Participatory planning, monitoring and Evaluation
  - Gender
  - Report and Proposal writing
  - Project management
- System Development
  - Develop and formulate long term strategic plan
  - Personnel and Financial policies and strategies
- Equipment support
  - Computer /printers
  - Solar system
  - Typewriter /photocopier

- With an objective of developing a longer partnership, TMI will help NGOs develop and formulate their own long time strategic plan, both in the skills and program strengthening and organisational development.
- NGOs are encouraged to develop proposal and seek other funding as well to support their overall program and administrative cost.
- NGOs are encouraged to assess the training needs of their staffs and members and will prepare training plans.
- NGOs are encouraged to review and design their staffing structure if required to implement this partnering program.
- NGOs are encouraged to maintain and ensure balanced representatives of gender in the Executive Board as well as in staffing.
- TMI will assign its staff to provide direct support to NGOs as and when needed.

## **Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism**

### **Program Coordination:**

**District Level Coordination:** TMI shall organize a district level coordination meeting, comprising of all NGOs and district based line agencies. DDC in each project district shall be the coordinator for district level coordination meeting. Such meeting shall be held in every six months to review program and progress, and other issues related to the program implementation and delivery of services.

**NGO Level Coordination:** TMI shall form an NGO coordination committee. All TMI partner NGOs shall be the member of this committee. Meeting of this committee shall be held in every six months.

**Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism:** Based on detail monitoring and evaluation plan, each NGO partners are responsible for program monitoring. Methodologies and means of verifications shall be developed jointly with NGO partners and TMI. Program review meeting shall give the directives for future program implementation and approach for program and service delivery.