# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations

Executive Summary........................................................................................................ 1

Background.................................................................................................................... 6

Objective of Evaluation................................................................................................ 10

Limitations of Evaluation............................................................................................ 10

Scope and Methodology of Evaluation........................................................................ 11

Key Findings................................................................................................................ 13

Conclusions.................................................................................................................. 33

Recommendations......................................................................................................... 36

Case Studies.................................................................................................................. 39

Annex............................................................................................................................ 45
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DDMC</td>
<td>District Disaster Management Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCDO</td>
<td>Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOREWARN</td>
<td>Forecast-based Warning, Analysis, and Response Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRI</td>
<td>Global Risk Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICIMOD</td>
<td>Centre for Integrated Mountain Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIRDARC</td>
<td>Karnali Integrated Rural Development &amp; Research Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least Developed Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDMC</td>
<td>Local Disaster Management Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L/NNGO</td>
<td>Local and National NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDRRMA</td>
<td>National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Start Fund Nepal is a collectively managed rapid financing and response mechanism, developed in Nepal by international Start Network members (15) and local/national non-governmental organisations (L/NNGOs) (currently 16) across the country with support from the global Start Fund. It is a member-led, pooled, rapid-response fund that aims to fill crucial gap in small and medium scale humanitarian emergencies. Start Fund Nepal was launched in June 2021, with support from the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Start Fund Nepal’s first pilot year (Phase I) ended in March 2022, following which the exposure and coverage of the fund has grown significantly. Phase II started in April 2022 and is scheduled to conclude in June 2024.

This external evaluation was convened to understand Start Fund Nepal’s overall performance against its stated objectives focusing on some key interrogation areas.
KEY FINDINGS

1. Start Fund Nepal is filling critical gaps through its specialised emergency response model

Start Fund Nepal has done purposeful prioritisation to fill critical gaps in small and medium sized humanitarian emergencies only. It has designed processes, tools and instruments for quick decision making and implementation. Before any decision is taken to respond to an emergency, Start Fund Nepal does participatory analysis about current or emerging critical gaps in a particular emergency response. It also assesses if/what contribution Start Fund Nepal’s 45-day intervention can bring.

2. Start Fund Nepal is able for rapid response through strict deadline based model and local network

Start Fund Nepal apparatus is specifically designed to focus on emergency response. It has a strict deadline-based design and steps to be followed. Analysis of Start Fund Nepal’s action timelines in all its emergency responses revealed that the network has been able to mostly comply with its self-imposed deadlines for different actions related to emergency response. This demonstrated its ability to quickly spring into action. Start Fund Nepal’s processes from alert raising to decision making all rely on standard templates and good knowledge among members on how to use those templates when an emergency happens. Use of these templates saves a lot of time expediting proposal development, award and start of implementation. Local knowledge, access and relationships of Start Fund Nepal members have helped in quick implementation of projects.

On occasions, non-members have been included as project implementing downstream partners for greater local connectivity and efficiency. The existing long-term contract of members with vendors has allowed Start Fund Nepal to save time for quick procurement. Implementing international/national non-governmental organisations (I/NGOs) have often used their internal funds and then been reimbursed from Start Fund Nepal to expedite emergency response activities. Many a time, member NGOs have started emergency response activities by purchasing materials in credit from their vendors even before Start Fund Nepal funds arrive.

3. Greater emphasis on anticipation work is getting traction

Start Fund Nepal has supported to form an entity, FOREWARN (Forecast-based Warning, Analysis, and Response Network), that helps in making forecast-based anticipation of emergencies. Start Fund Nepal used FOREWARN prediction in six of its 18 emergency responses. Five out of 14 emergency response in Start Fund Nepal’s Phase II are based on ‘anticipation’. This indicates Start Fund Nepal is increasingly putting greater emphasis on ‘anticipation’. Though FOREWARN needs to be further strengthened, it has helped Start Fund Nepal to enable quicker response to emergencies. FOREWARN is growing as a large platform of many humanitarian actors, with 37 NGOs, 47 INGOs, three inter-governmental organisations, two academia, etc. being its members.
**START FUND NEPAL’S UNIQUE VALUES**

- Rapid response capacity
- Filling critical gaps
- Focused on small and medium sized emergencies
- Delegated and participatory decision making
- Exclusively tailored design for emergency response
- Forecast based pre-warning and preparedness (anticipation work)

4. **Start Fund Nepal has been able to support at risk and crisis-affected people’s immediate needs**

Start Fund Nepal’s proposal development, assessment and implementing processes emphasise understanding and addressing immediate needs of the at risk and crisis-affected people. Start Fund Nepal’s process involves proper assessment and identification of priorities and needs of the affected population through their own participation. The discussions held with crisis affected and at risk people as a part of this evaluation overwhelmingly confirmed that Start Fund Nepal provided support helped affected people meet their immediate needs.

This included catering to the segmented needs of different categories of people, like pregnant, post-partum women, children, elderly, etc. Review of selected Project Distribution Monitoring (PDM) report confirmed over 95% at risk and crisis affected people confirming the support provided were relevant and met their immediate needs, and thus they were satisfied with the Start Fund Nepal support.

5. **Start Fund Nepal’s long-term approach has helped build localised emergency response capacities**

Even though Start Fund Nepal’s typical response is 45-day long, it adopts long-term partnership approach to support its ‘localisation’ agenda shaped by its commitments to the Grand Bargain commitments[1]. Start Fund Nepal adopts structured and longer-term approach to its member capacity building.

Each L/NNGO is assessed against nine due diligence criteria and indicators based on which tier allocation happens. Tier 3 (the highest category) L/NNGOs can access Start Fund Nepal funds, with Tier 1 and 2 only being able to work as ‘consortium partners’ under the leadership of Tier 3 L/NNGO or member INGOs. Based on identified gaps in due diligence assessment, Start Fund Nepal provides capacity building training, including policy making and policy improvement support, so that L/NNGOs can ‘move up’ the tier ladder. For example, the December 2023 due diligence reassessment placed five ‘Contingent Tier 3’ organisations into Tier 3 category and one Tier 1 organisation to Tier 3.

**NUMBER OF L/NNGOS IN TIERS**

Currently, seven out of 16 NGO member organisations are in Tier 3; two organisations in contingent Tier 3; two organisations in Tier 2 and five organisations are in Tier 1 category.

¹ The Grand Bargain, launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations who have committed to get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action. Quality funding, localisation, participation, anticipatory action, multi-sector collaboration, innovative financing mechanisms are part of Grand Bargain’s key objectives.
From alert 1 to 10, only INGO members took the ‘consortium lead’ role in emergency response. From 11 to 20 alerts, L/NNGO led six consortia of which four had INGOs working as ‘consortium partners’ demonstrating increased L/NNGO capacity. An INGO working in the leadership of an L/NNGO is a rather unconventional sight in Nepal because INGOs are often perceived as having more capacity, funds and thus ‘authority’ to supervise NGOs, who tend to be the ‘recipients’ of funds. In Start Fund Nepal’s emergency response related trainings, member L/NNGOs and INGOs were not only participants, but also conducted sessions by proving resource persons in their area of expertise.

6. Start Fund Nepal has created power equilibrium between L/NNGOs and INGOs, removing traditional ‘donor-recipient’ phenomenon, and bringing greater value for funds

Start Fund Nepal has fully delegated alert allocation, project selection and award decisions to its platform of members involving both L/NNGOs and INGOs providing L/NNGOs a ‘level playing field’ with INGOs in various decision making. This is a phenomenal development in a national context whereby the real power remains significantly titled towards INGOs (‘donors’) in conventional partnerships. The Start Fund Nepal model removes the conventional ‘donor-recipient’ relationship because in one alert a member (L/NNGO or INGO) could be involved in allocation and project selection decision. In another alert, the same member can submit a proposal for Project Selection Committee's consideration to be the ‘recipient’ of Start Fund Nepal funding.

Start Fund Nepal’s direct funding model to its programme implementing members removes the often existing intermediary agency through which donor funds are channeled to NGOs in Nepal. The Start Fund Nepal model, thus, not only provides L/NNGOs and INGOs the opportunity to be directly involved in leading emergency response activities, but also removes the intermediary costs bringing greater value for money.

Start Fund Nepal has been able to deepen localisation by promoting more L/NNGO participation in its two crucial decision making committees. In both committees, L/NNGO participation has significantly improved after 10 L/NNGOs were inducted to Start Fund Nepal in October 2022.
7. Start Fund Nepal’s Indirect Cost Recovery (ICR) approach is incentivising L/NNGOs but improvement needed

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8. Despite many achievements, Start Fund Nepal has its own challenges

Start Fund Nepal collects a lot of information as part of its alert raising and proposal development processes. However, this information remaining fully internal to Start Fund Nepal limits its potential to help the broader humanitarian response community understand about critical gaps through dissemination of Start Fund Nepal gathered information. Such dissemination can also help Start Fund Nepal to engage in more robust networking with the wider humanitarian actors in its next phase.

While many member L/NNGOs and INGOs have accessed Start Fund Nepal funds, there are some member INGOs who are not interested to access Start Fund Nepal funds. This is either because the Start Fund Nepal grant amount is too small for them, or because they don’t have time and energy to go through a rapid proposal development process away from their own portfolio of work, which may or may not be awarded. These INGOs, however, do have high appreciation of Start Fund Nepal and plan to stay in the network. Start Fund Nepal may need to find creative solutions to engage these INGOs even if they may not be accessing Start Fund Nepal funds.

### AVERAGE PARTICIPATION OF L/NNGO AND INGO MEMBERS PER ALERT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBERS’ PARTICIPATION IN ALLOCATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS</th>
<th>MEMBERS’ PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT SELECTION COMMITTEE MEETINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the first 10 Alerts, the average participation of L/NNGO per allocation meeting was 1.8 while it was 3.2 for INGOs.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 11 to 20 Alerts, the average participation of L/NNGO per allocation meeting rose to 3.2 and INGOs went down to 1.7.</td>
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MEMBERS’ PARTICIPATION IN ALLOCATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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In the first 10 Alerts, the average participation of L/NNGO per allocation meeting was 1.8 while it was 3.2 for INGOs.
Background of Nepal

Nepal’s population was 29 million in 2021 with average growth of 0.92%². The country adopted a federal system of governance with a new constitution in 2015, creating one federal, seven provincial and 753 local governments. Nepal has made improvements in human development index (HDI) with its HDI score reaching higher than the least developed country (LDC) average in recent years³.

The country is due to graduate from LDC status in 2026 and has set a target of reaching middle income country group and achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The average multidimensional and consumption poverty have fallen in recent years⁴. According to the 2020 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) trend data, no country with a similar starting level of poverty reduced MPI or its incidence faster than Nepal⁵.

Despite some progress on reducing poverty, Nepal remains one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world due to its topography and climate. Economic Vulnerability Analysis shows that Nepal exhibits huge losses due to large exposure at risk and its high level of hazards. This risk can cause loss of lives and properties, pose severe threats to physical infrastructure, and also disrupt economic development⁶.

Nepal was ranked 10th among the ten most affected countries by climate change during 2000 to 2019 with a loss of US $233.06 annual average with purchasing power parity⁷.

Warming in Nepal is projected to be higher than the global average. By the 2080s, Nepal is projected to warm by 1.2°C–4.2°C⁸.

Nepal falls under one of the very high-risk seismic zones. Between 1990-2019 seismic events have caused over USD 5 billion in damages and affected nearly 6 million people⁹. The vulnerability of Nepal’s communities, particularly those living in poverty, in remote areas, and operating subsistence agriculture, increases the risk posed by climate change ¹⁰.

The Index for Risk Management (INFORM) Global Risk Index (GRI) measures the risks that disasters pose to 191 countries. In the 2024 INFORM Global Risk Index, Nepal ranked 65 out of 191 with an overall risk of 4.1/10, which INFORM categorizes in the “medium risk” class. However, for earthquake the risk score is 9.8, for river flood 6.9 and for epidemic 6.6¹¹.

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² Government of Nepal. Census 2021 report
³ Nepal’s score reached 0.579 in 2018, higher than the LDC average. UNDP 2019 National Human Development Report (NDHR)
⁴ NPC Nepal’s Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021
⁵ Ibid
⁹ UNDRR/ADPC Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal: A Status Report 2019
Background of Start Network

Start Network is made up of 98 humanitarian agencies across five continents, ranging from large international organisations to national non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Together, its aim is to transform humanitarian action through innovation, fast funding, early action, and localisation.

The global Start Fund is Start Network’s flagship programme, first activated in 2014 and subsequently disbursing more than £125 million across 76 countries. The Start Fund is designed to enable rapid response to a range of crises and the decision to determine whether the allocation of funding via the Start Fund is appropriate, both from an operational and a strategic perspective.

Start Fund aims to tackle what it believes are the biggest systemic problems that the sector faces. Problems including slow and reactive funding, centralised decision-making, and an aversion to change mean that people affected by crises around the world do not receive the best help fast enough, and needless suffering results. Start Fund prioritises four core areas to change the system:

- Localisation: shifting power to those closest to the front line for more effective response.
- New forms of financing: providing fast, early, and predictable funding to improve community resilience and preparedness.
- Collective innovation: sharing expertise, insights, and perspectives to shape a more effective humanitarian system.
- Anticipatory action: becoming proactive in disaster response by analysing forecasts, and member-driven research.

Background of Start Fund Nepal

Start Fund Nepal is a collectively managed rapid financing and response mechanism, developed in Nepal by international Start Network members (15) and local national NGOs (currently 16) across the country with support from the global Start Fund. It is a member-led, pooled, rapid-response fund that aims to fill crucial gap in emergency humanitarian funding. Start Fund Nepal was launched in June 2021, with support from the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and its first pilot year (Phase I) ended in March 2022, following which the exposure and coverage of the fund has grown significantly. Phase II of Start Fund Nepal started in April 2022 and is scheduled to conclude in June 2024.

As part of its localisation plan, Start Fund Nepal promotes active participation of local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs), also investing in their capacity building. Start Fund Nepal has been designed in the spirit of the Grand Bargain¹ and World Humanitarian Summit commitments to promote localisation.

* The Grand Bargain, launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations who have committed to get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action.
Since Start Fund Nepal was launched, 20 alerts have been raised, of which 18 have been activated, and a total of 26 projects were implemented by different Start Fund Nepal members, and non-members as downstream partner(s). By March 2024, Start Fund Nepal had worked in all seven provinces with a cumulative investment of GBP 2.366M, providing assistance to 157,705 emergency-affected people.

FOREWARN Nepal (Forecast-based Warning, Analysis, and Response Network) is an initiative of Start Fund Nepal, following in the footsteps of the global FOREWARN of the Start Network. It aims to mainstream anticipatory and early action in disaster risk management by providing capacity-building training, creating cross-network partnerships, and supporting Start Fund Nepal members to issue timely anticipatory alerts.

After a series of consultations, FOREWARN was officially launched in Nepal in May 2023 as a formal network of professionals working in Anticipatory Action in Nepal. It serves as an entity that collaborates with existing groups and practitioners already present in the field.

FOREWARN has been working at its full capacity as a relatively well-known group of experts and potential experts in the field of Anticipatory Action. The FOREWARN Roster currently comprises 99 experts from various organizations including 47 NGOs, 37 INGOs, two academia, two private organisations and others. Initially, the roster consisted of a handful of experts from Start Fund Nepal members. However, with a growing appetite for crisis anticipation and the promotion of the group, many other experts from the non-member category have also joined. The group experienced exponential growth between May and December 2023.

The Start Fund Nepal Committee is a general committee, consisting of member L/NNGOs and INGOs. It is made up of representatives of all Start Fund Nepal members in Nepal and has delegated decision making authority to Start Fund Nepal Steering Committee, Allocation Committee and Project Selection Committee. The Start Fund Nepal committee members meet biannually.

**BOX 1: PAHIRO ALERT**

Pahiro alert is an application developed in technical partnerships with the Institute for Himalayan Risk Reduction, NAXA, and Plan International Nepal through the Start Network’s Anticipation Toolkit Grant. Pahiro Alert can calculate landslide risks by overlaying landslide susceptibility, exposure, and the overall vulnerability of communities at risk of landslides. It has been used by many organizations like ActionAid, KIRDARC, Oxfam People in Need and Plan International adopting the platform to map landslide risk prone areas and collect relevant information.
Start Fund Nepal Steering Committee is a governance structure of nine member organisations. The committee is formed to provide strategic guidance in needed areas. It consists of a Chair, Co-chair, general members and Start Fund Nepal secretariat. The members of committee are from six INGOs and three L/NNGOs. Start Fund Nepal Programme Manager is the ex-officio member of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee requires 33% female members. It holds four meetings a year, one in every quarter.

With the increase in the members, the Allocation Committee now has 31 members in total so the members were split into two Rotas of 15 and 16 members. Rota 1 and Rota 2 assumed responsibility respectively from April to October 2023, and from November to March 2023. While on duty, members discuss and make allocation decisions for each Start Fund Nepal crisis alert raised. Five members make the quorum of the Allocation Committee.

There are two members from each organization (thus altogether 62) in the Project Selection Committee (PSC). If their organisation is not submitting a proposal for specific alert response, they can volunteer themselves for specific project selection decision within Start Fund Nepal’s system of avoidance of conflict of interest. PSC has Start Fund Nepal’s delegated authority to assess and select proposals for award based on defined criteria. When a crisis alert is activated, a PSC is convened from the wider pool of PSC members in the roster. Four members make the quorum of the PSC.

Based on the global Start Fund’s guidelines, Start Fund Nepal follows a strict deadline based operational model, with a 45-day implementation cycle.

Funding decisions are made within 72 hours of a raised crisis alert. Responses are meant to reach crisis-affected populations within seven days of project award (and thus 10 days of alert raise).
OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the performance of Start Fund Nepal as a funding mechanism from inception to present (Phase I and II). The evaluation assessed Start Fund Nepal’s performance in the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filling a critical gap in humanitarian funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting early action in responding to humanitarian crises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addressing the immediate needs of the affected population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building the capacities of L/NNGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting locally led decision making and direct funding to L/NNGO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIMITATIONS OF EVALUATION

The evaluation did not have a first-hand look at the implementation of Start Fund Nepal projects as they were happening. Despite selecting greater number of cases from Phase II, the data on many projects depends on what staff or community members could remember from projects which were completed many months before the evaluation.

Due to diverse range of respondents consulted through key informant interview (KII) in selected districts and in Kathmandu, 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) organised and several reports and other related documents reviewed, the evaluation team feels confident that the evaluation reasonably reflects the reality.

The evaluation primarily followed a ‘systems approach’ looking at Start Fund Nepal’s emergency response mechanisms and their effectiveness in implementation. The evaluation is not a ‘deep dive’ study of emergency response programme quality.
SCHEME AND METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION

Study Design

The evaluation study is designed to be through collection of primary data and review of secondary data. The study is primarily qualitative with quantitative data used to support findings and analyses.

Study site, sampling method and sample size

The evaluation selected six out of Start Fund Nepal’s 18 alerts activated. The sample projects cover a diversity to make them fairly representative of Start Fund Nepal’s performance. The sampling includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six different types of disaster (flood, landslide, food insecurity, dengue, earthquake, cold wave)</th>
<th>One project from the first phase and five from the second phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five out of seven provinces (Bagmati, Gandaki, Karnali, Koshi, Madhesh)</td>
<td>An anticipation project from each phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four response, two anticipation projects</td>
<td>Three NGO-led and three INGO-led consortia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of the six selected projects were from within seven-month period of this evaluation’s start. More second phase projects were prioritised due to memory of these projects remaining relatively fresh in respondents’ mind. More latter projects were also selected so as to understand recent reality of how Start Fund Nepal has evolved from the pilot (Phase I) to the Phase II.

Different categories of respondents were selected so as the data and information could be triangulated (See Annex 1 for the list of respondents). The sample of respondents included government and L/NNGO officials.

- KIIIs were held with local government officials (both elected and staff), relevant federal and provincial government officials, L/NNGO (both member and non-member), member INGOs and Start Fund Nepal existing and former Steering Committee members.
- Twelve FGDs were held with six male and six female groups of crises affected people.
- One interaction meeting was held with member L/NNGOs and INGOs in Kathmandu, who were involved in implementing the six projects selected for this study and some from outside these six projects.
- Two separate interactions were held with Start Fund Nepal secretariat team at CARE Nepal.
- An anonymous survey was completed by 15 Start Fund Nepal L/NNGOs and INGOs.
Data collection and processing

Data was collected by filling the KII questionnaire forms and by use of FGD guide. A Master Questionnaire was developed based on which individual questionnaires were created for different category of respondents. Altogether nine KII questionnaires; one FGD guide; one case study guide, one checklist and one ‘informed consent’ form were developed. A total of 41 KIIs were held and 165 at risk and affected communities or people participated in 12 FGDs.

An Analysis Table was designed based on key interrogation areas of the study. Individual answer sheets were compiled by enumerators in Analysis Table based on a template provided. The Analysis Table data from field enumerators were compiled in the clusters of specific questions under different interrogation areas.

Report writing

Data were then interpreted for each question under different interrogation areas and report was written. Some enumerators were consulted further during report writing for some additional information or for clarification in the data provided.

Quality assurance

Field researchers were provided orientation on data collection instruments and methodology. Team Leader and Senior Researcher provided necessary guidance to field researchers on any queries during field work. Notes of the KII and FGD were taken and safely compiled in computer.

Informed Consent

The purpose of the study was explained to respondents and their informed consent was taken for the use of data provided, with an explanation that anonymity of respondents will be maintained.
KEY FINDINGS

1. Start Fund Nepal’s strict deadline approach has helped to achieve rapid action

Start Fund Nepal’s mandatory seven-day deadline (since alert raise) for the first response to reach affected population creates an urgency. It has designed quick-response system and appropriate tools and instruments tailored for time saving during rapid response needs. Its pre-agreed systems, templates, and widely dispersed membership network allows it to assess and respond to small and medium sized emergencies across the country in lesser time.

There was significant concurrence among respondents on Start Fund Nepal’s ability to act rapidly in emergency response. Some respondents - both from government and Start Fund Nepal partner sides - who have worked with some other funding mechanisms confirmed that Start Fund Nepal often tends to be quicker than many others.

Start Fund Nepal stands out as a remarkably swift and efficient emergency support mechanism. When alerts are raised locally, Start Fund Nepal responds promptly, avoiding delays often encountered in traditional emergency support structures. Quick information sharing among stakeholders ensures everyone is well-informed and can act swiftly.

The process of allocation, selecting projects and making funding decisions is streamlined, minimising bureaucratic hurdles and accelerating resource allocation process. We have worked with other international agencies in emergency response, however, Start Fund Nepal is quicker in emergency response.

- An implementing member organisation (L/NNGO)

Due to Start Fund Nepal emphasis on ‘life saving response’ it is quicker than many other actors.

-An implementing member organisation (INGO)

Local knowledge, access and relationships

Start Fund Nepal has significant outreach in all key administrative and geographical regions of the country due to its 15 INGO and 16 L/NNGO’s direct or partner operational presence as well as Start Fund Nepal’s policy to allow non-member organisations to be involved in emergency response activities. For example, 17 non-member NGOs have participated in Start Fund Nepal’s 12 Alerts as local consortium partners.

The local knowledge, access and relationships help Start Fund Nepal members to kick off early action. The implementing Start Fund Nepal member/pre-existing partner’s operational presence in the target area needs to be explained in the project proposal (See Box 2).
The submitted proposals are assessed and selected also based on the capacity and presence of the proposal submitting member on the ground, and its consistent access to the region\(^{13}\). Consortium lead partners can tap in another Start Fund Nepal member or non-member organisations to enhance their local knowledge, access and network to implement emergency response.

**Quick procurement**

Start Fund Nepal procurement tends to be faster as all its procurements are done by awarded partners, who would have pre-identified vendors and long-term contracts with such vendors. In all cases of INGOs and in most cases of L/NNGOs being awardee, members have used their own funds after project award decisions. They have started their activities even before Start Fund Nepal formal processes are sorted out and fund is deposited into partner accounts. There were many instances whereby L/NNGOs had taken goods in credit to keep pace with demands of emergency response due to having long-term framework agreement with vendors and trust-based relationship.

*We used our internal funds to immediately start action after we learned that we have been awarded the project.*

- Member, L/NNGO

We have purchased things on credit for identified vendors to make quicker action

- Member, L/NNGO

**Work on anticipation of emergencies**

Start Fund Nepal has been included in the Community of Practice on Anticipatory Action, providing access of 16-member L/NNGOs to the Anticipatory Action national space and additionally, on a global level through FOREWARN (global). FOREWARN, which is still developing, has helped in constant monitoring of different forecastable crises through the network, and sharing the analyses through respective WhatsApp and skype groups along with bilateral discussions among experts from different institutions.

The mix of professionals from various levels, ranging from technical to policy, helps FOREWARN in guiding Anticipatory Action more effectively. This diverse composition enables the group to provide technical support to others when needed and engage multiple stakeholders, fostering critical discussions within the community. FOREWARN has helped Start Fund Nepal to get a sense of pre-season forecasts in its WhatsApp and Skype community which often trigger a discussion on whether a Start Fund Nepal response would be needed or not.

Since its establishment FOREWARN has organized capacity building exercises such as information management and GIS trainings. FOREWARN collaborated with different national and international organisations such as International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and Institute of Himalayan Risk Reduction (IHRR) on preparing and promoting heat and cold wave toolkit; and with International Federation of Red (IFRC) on networking of organizations. FOREWARN has also collaborated with National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) and other government bodies, MapAction, Practical Action, Humanitarian Open Street Map Team (HOTOSM), and UN on anticipation work.

\(^{13}\) Start Network Sept 2019 Guide to Project Selection, Assessing Proposals’ Section
FOREWARN has done data sharing among organisations such as IHRR and National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET) which is a community of Nepali professionals belonging to various physical and social sciences with a common goal of contributing towards disaster risk management.

Partners appreciated FOREWARN’s contribution in making them more prepared based on weather forecast analysis. FOREWARN has sensitised partners on the value of anticipation. For example, a flood was anticipated in western Nepal based on incessant rain forecast. This allowed for a partner to liaise with District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) and local governments; identify critical gaps also based on pre-known capacity of institutions; and expected government resource allocation. Within Start Fund Nepal also, an anticipation alert was raised.

**Anticipation related trainings have helped us in anticipation of emergencies. Anticipation is now in our consciousness. The weather based forecast training helped us to get a sense of when flood may come and what scale of damages could be done. We look at weather-forecast data of Department of Hydrology and Meteorology and other relevant websites to do forecast.**

-Member, L/NNGO

The forecast-based preparedness plan created in conjunction with DDMC included setting up system for upstream settlements to inform the downstream settlements. People in the communities were included in the preparedness plan. When the first rain started falling, the member, with other relevant actors, went into a ‘monitoring on wheel’ action to do assessments. The flood effects were reported to DDMC and a collective emergency response action was activated, with the involvement of government, NGOs and the private sector (local Chamber of Commerce).

Based on weather analysis, a heatwave is anticipated in May/June 2024 so the member is planning to engage with both Start Fund Network, DDMC and concerned local governments on preparing an anticipation plan.

In Start Fund Nepal's Phase I, one (25%) out of total four alerts were Anticipatory Alert. In Phase II, five Anticipatory Alerts (33%) were raised out of a total 16 alerts. This demonstrates that Start Fund Nepal is increasingly working more on anticipation.

Since the establishment of FOREWARN in May 2023, eight alerts have been raised of which three were anticipatory alerts using FOREWARN. In the five anticipatory projects, the first assistance reached the crisis affected communities in 4.4 days on average against the seven days for the three projects before the establishment of FOREWARN (also See Box 3)

**BOX 3: QUICKER ACTION DUE TO FOREWARN**

After FOREWARN was formally launched, a heat wave allocation (N-13) was made within 36 hours of Anticipatory Action alert raise against an internal deadline of 48 hours. A new alert type (Food Insecurity N-14) was raised as well, which relied on Start Fund Nepal’s access to ICIMOD on forecasting and technical analysis of rainfall and drought in project areas of Karnali province.
Effective adherence to deadlines

Start Fund Nepal has been designed as specialised apparatus for early action. The design integrates high level of emergency-sensitivity allowing for rapid actions with specific activity needing to be conducted by specific deadlines. The project selection needs to happen within 72 hours of alert raising. The first assistance to people needs to take place within seven days of the project award. (See Figure 4)

An analysis of all 20 alerts (out of which 2 were not activated) showed 100% of alert allocation decision took place within required 24 hours of alert raising; 100% proposal were submitted within required 48-hour period and 100% project selection was done within required 72-hour period. Start Fund Nepal’s first assistance reach has significantly improved in the second phase from a low base of 40% in the first phase I, with a scope to improve it further in future.

Figure 4: Start Fund Nepal Alert Cycle
### TABLE 1: START FUND NEPAL PROJECT PERFORMANCE AGAINST DEADLINES IN ITS 20 ALERTS RAISED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start Fund Nepal Requirement</th>
<th>No of activity that complied to the requirement</th>
<th>% of activity that complied to the requirement</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allocation Committee meeting within 24 hours of Alert raising</td>
<td>18 alerts</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal submission within 48 hours of Alert raising (2 Alerts not activated)</td>
<td>18 alerts</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal selection within 72 hours of Alert raising</td>
<td>18 alerts</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of 'Principal Activities' (any activity listed in proposal as 'Principal Activities' or activities such as beneficiary selection, procurement, etc.)</td>
<td>26 projects</td>
<td>88.46</td>
<td>This was 40% in Phase I (4 projects); 71% from project N05 to N11 (Year 1 of Phase II) and 86% from project N12 to N20 (Year 2 of Phase II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First assistance reach</td>
<td>26 projects</td>
<td>73.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project end within 45 (or 60 days with extension request) of the award</td>
<td>22 projects (2 latest projects yet to report)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1 project delayed due to incessant rainfall and roads being washed away; 1 project received no-cost extension (went up to 70 days)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard templates and good knowledge of processes

Start Fund Nepal has prepared more than 20 different templates that provide operational guidance related to emergency response. Partners have been trained on the use of standard templates to expedite the processes. Some of these templates and guidance include: Alert note template, Critical questions for decision makers when allocating fund, Project Proposal Template, Guide to Project Selection, Award Letter Template, and Guidance on Procurement.

These pre-prepared templates and understanding of procedures help Start Fund Nepal to promptly start its decision making and funding processes and spring into action quickly in the event of an emergency.

2. Start Fund Nepal complements existing humanitarian funding mechanisms in Nepal with ability of rapid action and ability to identify and respond to critical gaps in small & medium sized emergencies

Sole focus on filling critical gaps

Emerging critical gap is a crucial consideration in Start Fund Nepal in allocation and project selection decision making. Start Fund Nepal’s standard-format based alert notes, and proposals together clearly articulate about the current and predicted availability of funding for crises response. Critical gap identification includes assessment of presence or potential presence of other actors, imperatives and added value for Start Fund Nepal’s engagement. It not only looks at the government but also at the response of other development and private actors to understand the critical gaps and what clear added value a 45-day Start Fund Nepal intervention will bring (See Box 4).

BOX 4: FLEXIBILITY IN A COLD-WAVE RESPONSE PROJECT

In Rautahat cold wave alert response, the concerned local government requested additional support due to 96 more crisis affected people needing help than the Start Fund Nepal targeted 424. The local government resource was running short. At the request of the partner, Start Fund Nepal quickly approved the change within the same budget limit. The partner made some adjustments and managed to serve 96 more crisis affected people with the same resources filling a critical gap. This not only allowed Start Fund Nepal partner to avoid the oddity of leaving out a small group of beneficiaries in its cluster, but also helped build more rapport with local government.

There was wide agreement among respondents that flexibility is one key cornerstone of Start Fund Nepal. In many instances, Start Fund Nepal’s flexibility have made emergency response more effective, also filling critical gaps which were not or could not be envisaged in proposal (See Box 5).

BOX 5: FLEXIBILITY IN AN EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE PROJECT

The emergency response plan had to be significantly readjusted in Jajarkot earthquake response. The initial plan was to build 238 temporary shelters also using salvaged materials from damaged homes. However, the implementation showed that not all houses were completely destroyed. With the recommendation of local government, only repairs were done to less damaged houses. As a result, only 131 temporary shelters had to be built. The community was happy with the changes because local government and community people both were involved in the change of plan. This demonstrated Start Fund Nepal’s flexibility to adjust project plans based on the changing ground situation and local needs.
Localised approach provides Start Fund Nepal with some unique advantages

Nepal’s humanitarian funding mechanisms comprise diverse stakeholders, including governmental bodies, international donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector.

Start Fund Nepal has been able to fill critical funding gaps in small and medium sized humanitarian emergencies through its purposeful prioritisation on ‘filling critical gaps in small and medium sized humanitarian emergencies’.

This study conducted some top-line assessment of notable humanitarian funding mechanisms in Nepal both from government and non-government side based on KII and available information.

Government funding mechanisms and capacities are inadequate leaving ‘critical gaps’ for non-government actors to fill

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 mandates all three levels of government responsibility of disaster management. The Government of Nepal oversees disaster response and management, utilising government funds like the Prime Minister Emergency Relief Fund and the Central Disaster Management Fund under the federal Home Minister.

Provincial and local governments also have federal treasury provided funds which become part of provincial and local annual plan and budget. Insufficient allocations remain critical issue for effective disaster prevention, response and recovery.

A study conducted in 2020 sampling 28 representative local governments of different sizes and areas found that local and provincial governments lacked significant capacities on disaster risks reduction and management (See Annex 2). The study revealed that almost all local governments had been carrying out disaster management on an ad-hoc basis, including allocation of funds for disaster response and relief. The amount of funds for disaster response and relief was not established based on a needs assessment, but instead on a hoc basis⁴.

The same study found that three levels of government had low or none capacity on ‘technology based early warning system’. Local governments were found to be having ‘low’, provincial government ‘none’, and federal government ‘low’ capacity on hazard monitoring and surveillance’. Even though some progress would have been made since the above 2020 study, KII with emergency response people both from government and non-government side (L/NNGO) indicated that local governments - who normally are at the forefront on responding to small or medium sized emergencies- have significant resource and capacity gaps.

BOX 6: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 mandates all three levels of government responsibility of ‘disaster management’. The constitution envisages strong local government with law and policy making power in their area of authority. Local governments are, thus, an important actor in disaster risk management.

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Disaster management has huge capacity gap challenges. Training and skills enhancement of elected officials, health professionals are needed. We also need more resources and stockpiles.

- Mayor

Local government not having resources is a major challenge.

- Deputy Mayor

There is lack of disaster management training and skilled human resources. Awareness, disaster-based skills, resources and information are needed for additional capacity building.

- Ward Chair

Very little initiatives by government and non-government side on disaster management capacity building is a challenge.

- Information Officer, Local Government

There is lack of resource for disaster risk management at local level. There is also no technical and financial resource support to local governments to prepare periodic disaster risk management plans.

- District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) Chair

There is a question about the capacity of Local Disaster Management Committee (LDMC) and Local Emergency Operation Centre (LEOC) for disaster response and management. They lack tools, equipment and resources for disaster risk management.

- Member, L/NNGO

Resources are more scarce for those local governments which face disasters year round. Local governments, thus, want to use as much resources as possible from other actors in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. This allows local governments to save their scarce resources for disasters later in the year and also for 'recovery' work when many actors who responded immediately would have wound up their operation. However, this also means that most local government emergency response efforts have critical gaps due to inadequate resources. Start Fund Nepal is able to quickly assess and fill some of those critical gaps through its local network, access and ability to do localised assessment.

We have designated a constrained annual lump sum budget for disaster relief. Various types of disasters occur at different times of the year. It is our responsibility to consistently support affected citizens, including for the disasters that occur in the later part of the year. If all funds are exhausted in one incident, there is a risk of upsetting citizens who elect us.

- Mayor/LDMC Chair

Start Fund Nepal’s network strength helps it act swiftly

A scan of notable humanitarian funding mechanisms in Nepal revealed that funding decision of these mechanisms can be made and funds disbursed within 72 hours at the recommendation of the respective agencies’ country team or field office. Such mechanisms also generally intend to fill critical gaps.
Many of such donor fund recipients tend to be international agencies that include UN agencies, Red Cross and INGOs. Many donors channel their funds through some international agencies (like INGO) because they believe that such agencies would have required organisational standards and capacities to effectively manage significant funds and deliver the programmes. These 'intermediate agencies' then fund NGOs for emergency response.

Given the numerous organisations involved in disaster relief efforts, we anticipate leveraging support from their resources to minimise our own expenditure. By preserving our funds, we have engaged in reconstruction efforts.

- DRR Focal Person, Local Government

### TABLE 2: MAPPING OF KEY HUMANITARIAN FUNDING MECHANISMS IN NEPAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Funding Mechanism</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Funding decision-making period</th>
<th>Size of budget</th>
<th>Scope &amp; Area (anticipation, recovery)</th>
<th>Access (who can access funds)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Commission*</td>
<td>European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)</td>
<td>3 to 6 months up to 18 months</td>
<td>Under 72 hours Brussels with the recommendation of the Field Country Team in Kathmandu</td>
<td>€100K to €5M</td>
<td>Relief and Early Recovery</td>
<td>UN, Red cross, and INGOs</td>
<td>Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA) Partners only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*</td>
<td>Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)</td>
<td>3 to 6 months up to 18 months</td>
<td>Under 24 hours Washington with the recommendation of the Field Country Team in Kathmandu</td>
<td>US $100K to $5M</td>
<td>Search and Rescue, Relief and Early Recovery</td>
<td>UN, Red cross, and INGOs</td>
<td>L/NNGO and Governments can access through UN/INGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN**</td>
<td>Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF)</td>
<td>3 to 6 months up to 36 months</td>
<td>Immediate, Under 72 hours Washington with the recommendation of the Field Country Team in Kathmandu</td>
<td>US $25 M</td>
<td>Relief and Early Recovery</td>
<td>UN Agencies only</td>
<td>INGOs/Gov ernment can access through UN Agencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Can be activated even without the government declaring a national emergency or Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance
** Only activated once the government declares a national emergency and/or Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance

Note: the required funding decision making time provided above of other humanitarian financing mechanisms is after such mechanisms’ country office makes a request to their relevant team abroad.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Funding Mechanism</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Funding decision-making period</th>
<th>Size of budget</th>
<th>Scope &amp; Area (Anticipation, recovery)</th>
<th>Access (who can access funds)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Cross International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC)*</td>
<td>Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)</td>
<td>3 to 6 months up to 36 months</td>
<td>Under 24 hours Geneva with the recommendation of the IFRC Country Office in Kathmandu</td>
<td>CHF 1 M</td>
<td>Early Action/Anticipation and Relief</td>
<td>Nepal Red Cross Society and their chapters only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK/Foreign and Common Wealth Development Organisatio n (FCDO)*</td>
<td>START Fund</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Within 72 hours by the Start Fund Nepal members</td>
<td>£200K to 1 M</td>
<td>Emergency Response; including Anticipation</td>
<td>INGO/L/NNGO</td>
<td>Start Fund Nepal Members only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia/Department of Foreign Affairs and trade (DFAT) **</td>
<td>Australian Humanitarian Partnership</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Under 72 hours after recommendation of Australian Embassy Kathmandu</td>
<td>AUD 1 M</td>
<td>Relief and Early Recovery</td>
<td>Australia n I-NGO/LNNGO</td>
<td>Australian Humanitari an Partners and their consortium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Can be activated even without the government declaring a national emergency or Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance

** Only activated once the government declares a national emergency and/or Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance

Note: the required funding decision making time provided above of other humanitarian financing mechanisms is after such mechanisms’ country office makes a request to their relevant team abroad.
Start Fund Nepal appears to be able to complement other humanitarian funding mechanisms because it can act rapidly without a need to wait for a formal declaration of emergency by any level of government. It can start acting on the assessment of emergency through collection and reasonable verification of information through its own formal and informal local channels using its wide network of NGOs and INGOs. Start Fund Nepal can take a decision based on its own local authentication of critical gaps and immediate needs of people and keeps high flexibility if the ground situation changes. This way of working allows Start Fund Nepal to take decisions quickly and move into action avoiding many formal processes which can create time lag.

For example, some donors appear to believe that government’s Jajarkot earthquake response was reasonably well and no critical gaps were there for donor community to engage further in. Multiple Start Fund Nepal partners closer to the ground, however, significantly engaged in Jajarkot earthquake response to fill many critical gaps. This became possible because Start Fund Nepal’s localised approach allowed it to detect critical gaps.

3. Start Fund Nepal interventions enable addressing immediate needs of crisis affected people

Start Fund Nepal places high emphasis on ‘relevance and appropriateness’ of its interventions. This means Start Fund Nepal’s proposal development, assessment and implementation processes highly endeavor to tailor the response to the prioritised needs of the affected people. Start Fund Nepal’s one proposal assessment and selection criteria involves the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>SUB-CRITERIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS</td>
<td>The project saves lives, protects livelihoods, and/or is filling gaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The intervention is based on an assessment and identification of priorities and needs of the affected population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The intervention describes how it will meet the needs of the most vulnerable of those affected by the crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The intervention is technically sound, accountable to beneficiaries, and is based on relevant standards (e.g. SPHERE, CHS) and/or locally agreed cluster guidelines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct crisis affected people’s immediate needs assessment, the NGO (Start Fund Nepal partner) helped in preparing criteria and standards in the presence of elected officials for data collection. The data collection aimed to target the poorest based on the resources available.

-Deputy Mayor
The crises affected and at-risk communities in the 12 FGDs held as a part of this evaluation widely confirmed that relief materials, including clothing, received were culturally suitable. They addressed the needs of different categories of people like pregnant women, post-partum women, children. In some instances, cash voucher coupons also helped people buy contextually relevant materials.

A random sampling of eight projects from the Start Fund Nepal’s Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) reports showed 95.3% affected population saying the Start Fund Nepal support helped meet their immediate needs. Likewise, 98.5% affected population from 12 projects randomly selected said the Start Fund Nepal support were relevant to them and 98.7% of affected population from 11 randomly selected projects said they were satisfied with the support provided.

On occasions, Start Fund Nepal partners have utilised Start Fund Nepal’s flexible approach and worked in a different site than what was in the proposal to fill critical gaps on addressing immediate needs of people. This was done with local government request and adherence to Start Fund Nepal’s required approvals for change. There were examples of Start Fund Nepal partners working with government and other actors to prepare criteria for the selection of neediest crisis affected people.

We worked in a different site than what was in the proposal because the ground situation had evolved and local government asked us to work on a nearby site to fill critical gap.

-Member, L/NNGO

The crises affected and at-risk community feedback in focus group discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant, post-partum women and children received different packages of relief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We had bought goods through cash coupon from local shop so we could purchase culturally appropriate attire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthquake debris had covered and destroyed our physical stuff and food items. In such situation, local government and NGO (Start Fund Nepal partner) provided goods were all very much needed ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two people (from a Start Fund Nepal partner) had come. They asked about and listed down the needs of all affected people by organizing a settlement meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was a discussion at settlement level about immediate needs. The data had reached the Ward office, local government and Start Fund Nepal member organisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Start Fund Nepal’s structured approach has made significant contributions to building L/NNGO capacities

Even though Start Fund Nepal’s typical responses are 45-day long, it adopts long-term partnership approach to support its 'localisation' agenda shaped by its Grand Bargain commitments. Start Fund Nepal adopts quite structured approach to its member capacity building.

In Phase I (Alert 1 to 4), only INGOs played 'consortium lead' role for emergency response and NGOs were 'consortium partners' working in INGO leadership. From Alert 5 to 10 also in Phase II, the situation was the same with five INGOs playing 'consortium lead' role for all five-emergency response.

Alert 11 to 20 took place after 10 new L/NNGOs were on-boarded in October 2022 after receiving some capacity building support based on identified gaps in due diligence process. From alerts 11 to 20, five NGOs played 'consortium lead' role with four INGOs working as 'consortium partners' in L/NNGO leadership. INGOs working as 'consortium partners,' provided technical inputs to 'consortium lead' L/NNGO for example, on shelter design, compliance to CHS, SPHERE, financial management; implementation of policies (like safeguarding), high-level coordination, quality assurance and report writing support.

This demonstrates that in the latter part of Phase II, member L/NNGOs acquired leadership capacities and confidence to work as 'consortium lead' having INGOs as 'consortium partners' in those alerts.

Being 'consortium lead' meant L/NNGOs bore overall responsibility of project delivery and accountability to Start Fund Network, including for the work of INGOs in the same consortia.

Tiered qualification approach

Start Fund Nepal partners are categorised into Tier 1, 2, and 3 with Tier 3 being the highest level.

Tier 1: Organizations are those that meet minimum compliance requirements for Start Fund Nepal membership. Organizations in this tier do not currently have direct access to Start Fund Nepal funding, but have access to organizational strengthening and learning platforms.

Tier 2: Organizations are those that have internal procedures to mitigate risks across the nine streams (See Box 4). These organisations have access to Start Fund Nepal's organizational strengthening initiatives and learning platforms but no direct access to Start Fund Nepal funding.

Tier 3: Organizations are those that meet prevailing international compliance requirements and have direct access to Start Fund Nepal funding.

Due diligence assessment as the touchstone for capacity building and funding access

The capacity building process starts with Start Fund Nepal’s due diligence assessment of L/NNGOs for tier allocation, based on nine criteria (called 'Streams') and specific requirements within each criteria (See Box 7).
Other trainings for programmatic capacity building

Start Fund Nepal has organised trainings focused on enhancing the emergency response programmatic quality of its members. Between April to December 2023, Start Fund Nepal organized 16 different trainings to Start Fund Nepal members, with 301 individuals participating. Out of this, 223 (71%) filled in anonymous evaluation surveys. Of these, significant number of participants (86%) found the trainings to be 'very useful' and others (14%) found the trainings to be 'somewhat useful,' with none finding the trainings 'not useful'.

The trainings included wide range of topics such as the SPHERE standards; procurement in emergency; photography, videography and case study design; Q-GIS; safeguarding; financial control, KOBO (data analysis software), etc. Both INGO and L/NNGO members not only participated, but also facilitated sessions in these trainings based on their expertise.

Forty participants from non-member organisations also participated in the Start Fund Nepal provided trainings.

We had an opportunity to enhance organizational governance through different assessments and capacity building opportunities under Start Fund Nepal.

-Member, L/NNGO

Support in organisational development through policy reform

Start Fund Nepal supported four different L/NNGOs in new policy formulation through mentoring support of a local consultant. These included one Tier 1 member and three 'Contingent Tier 3' members. Of these, three L/NNGOs qualified as 'Tier 3' in the reassessment. Start Fund Nepal provided local consultant support to one Tier 1 and two 'contingent Tier 3 L/NNGOs for comprehensive review of their organisational policies. Of these, two L/NNGOs qualified as Tier 3 in the reassessment.

These efforts were not only to help members strengthen L/NNGO organisational systems for Start Fund Nepal emergency response work, but to also support establish members as strong organisations equipped with necessary policies, procedures and skills for 'emergency response efforts' outside Start Fund Nepal also. This approach has been adopted as a part of Start Fund Nepal's 'localisation' agenda.

While all policy reform support has been appreciated, Start Fund Nepal seems to have uniquely contributed for sensitisation on the need of some specific policies like data privacy and security, anti-money laundering and anti-bribery. Many L/NNGOs did not have these policies because these policy formulations need the knowledge of more than one country's legislations. For example, money laundering and bribery would attract the laws of the recipient country (Nepal) as well as the donor country (UK). The importance of having these policies is increasing also because the Social Welfare Council of Nepal, a regulatory body for I/NGOs, is increasingly asking I/NGOs questions related to their institutional safeguards and practices on anti-money laundering.
Individual capacity building through participation in Start Fund Nepal meetings and processes

The member representatives take part in Allocation Committee, Project Selection Committee and Steering Committee meetings. Many members are involved in alert raising, proposal writing, evaluation and learning meetings. These participations have helped L/NNGOs and their representatives gain knowledge and develop deeper understanding of working on different emergency response related processes under high time pressures.

Due to exposure to Start Fund Nepal processes, we have gained confidence that we can approach other donors for emergency response funds. We have acquired greater institutional as well as individual capacities.

- Member, L/NNGO

Due to participation in Start Fund Nepal processes, we have learned about how to write alert notes and proposals that are suitable in high time pressures of emergency response needs.

- Member, L/NNGO

Participation in Allocation Committee and Project Selection Committee has provided individuals in member organisations exposure to steps and processes of fair decision making in emergency response. This includes a need to quickly assess information and evaluate proposals against set criteria in high time pressure situations.

- Member, L/NNGO

5. Start Fund Nepal has effectively contributed to promoting locally led decision-making and direct funding to L/NNGOs as part of its 'localisation' agenda

Start Fund Nepal model replaces traditional 'donor-recipient' model

Start Fund Nepal promotes locally-led and independent decision making through fully delegating alert allocation and project selection decisions to L/NNGO and INGO members. The Start Fund Nepal secretariat and Steering Committee do not have any role in these decisions. The Start Fund Nepal model, thus, removes the conventional 'donor-recipient' relationship because in one instance a member (L/NNGO or INGO) could be involved in allocation and project selection decisions. In this instance the member has the power of a ‘donor’ to allocate funds to a specific member, based on the quality of anonymised proposals. In the next instance, the same member can submit a proposal for Project Selection Committee’s consideration to be the ‘recipient’ of Start Fund Nepal fund.

Start Fund Nepal's 'direct funding' model removes a 'layer' of donor also reducing time lag and costs of emergency response

The conventional model in Nepal most often involves international agencies, including INGOs, being the first recipient of donor funds who then fund the NGOs – though in recent years some big donors have started to directly fund NGOs also up to a certain amount. This ‘intermediary role’ often not only creates a time-lag delaying fast emergency response, but also eats up some resources due to intermediary agency costs. Start Fund Nepal model removes the ‘intermediary,’ entirely saving costs of that layer.
Localisation agenda is deepening through greater involvement of L/NNGOs in decision-making

Start Fund Nepal started with 15 INGOs and six L/NNGO members. In October 2022, 10 L/NNGOs were added. Currently Start Fund Nepal has 15 INGOs and 16 L/NNGOs as members. The number and proportion of L/NNGO participation in both Allocation Committee and Project Selection Committee has increased from Phase I to Phase II, with the latest trend in Phase II showing even greater participation of L/NNGOs.

### i) Allocation Committee Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Phase I</th>
<th>Phase II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alert Number</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td>1 2 3 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 3 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of INGO representatives participating</td>
<td>5 3 5 2 2 2 3 4</td>
<td>4 1 1 2 1 1 2 3 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of L/NNGO representatives participating</td>
<td>1 2 0 2 3 3 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 4 3 4 3 3 3 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trend:** Higher participation of INGOs in phase 1 (Alert 1 to 4) and higher participation of L/NNGOs in phase 2 (Alert 5 to 20) through increase in per alert participation of L/NNGO.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Phase I</th>
<th>Phase II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alert Number</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>5 2 2 2 3 2 2 2 2 0 2 1 2 2 0 2 2 4 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L/NNGO</td>
<td>1 2 2 2 1 2 2 2 2 0 2 3 2 2 0 2 2 0 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trend:** Higher participation of INGOs in phase 1 and equal participation of L/NNGOs and INGOs in phase 2 through increase in per alert participation of L/NNGO.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members' Participation in Allocation Committee Meetings</th>
<th>Members' Participation in Project Selection Committee Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the first 10 Alerts, average participation of L/NNGOs per allocation meeting was 1.8, while it was 3.2 for INGOs.</td>
<td>In the first 10 Alerts, average participation of L/NNGOs in Project Selection Committee per alert was 1.6, while it was 2.2 for INGOs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 11 to 20 Alerts, average participation of L/NNGOs per allocation meeting rose to 3.2 and INGOs went down to 1.7.</td>
<td>From 11 to 20 Alerts, average participation of L/NNGOs per project selection rose to 1.8 and INGOs went down to 1.8.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Start Fund Nepal's unique values

Rapid response capacity
Start Fund Nepal's rapid response capacity to reach the at risk and crisis affected people within 10 days of alert raising is unique. This rapid response capacity is achieved from Start Fund Nepal's 'network strength' which includes different components working together. Strict deadline based model, delegated decision making and widely dispersed member organisations who either have access to disaster affected areas or can create such access using their network in short time are some of the contributing factors to achieve such rapid response. Start Fund Nepal partners being able to include other member and non-member organisations in emergency response also helps to achieve rapid response.

Filling critical gaps
In the federalised governance of Nepal, all three levels of government have disaster management mandate. Before making decisions, Start Fund Nepal maps the emergency response activity and plan of local government and other actors, and identifies critical gaps. It then works with local government and others actors to fill those gaps. This helps Start Fund Nepal to clearly add value and also build good rapport with local governments.

Focused on small and medium sized emergencies
Start Fund Nepal has a clear objective to focus on small and medium sized emergencies. Large donors tend to have large funds which are more suitable for large-scale emergencies even though they may also do some work on small and medium sized emergencies.

In a context of most local governments not having significant disaster risk management capacities and resources, Start Fund Nepal has been able to work at local level in coordination with local governments adding values.

Delegated and participatory decision making
Start Fund Nepal's model of members making crucial decisions on alert raising and proposal award, and governance of the Start Fund Nepal through a members-appointed Steering Committee have created value addition in terms of strong local ownership of the network. The same members can work in different Start Fund Nepal processes in different capacities within a system of avoidance of conflict of interest. For example, sometime in project allocation and award decisions, sometimes in bidding proposals to access Start Fund Nepal funding and sometimes as Steering Committee member to provide Start Fund Nepal strategic direction. Localised decision making and direct funding have created greater legitimacy and efficiency for Start Fund Nepal and its partners.

Exclusively tailored design for emergency response
Start Fund Nepal has made a conscious decision to focus on emergency response only and not on other disaster risk management aspects like disaster prevention, recovery and reconstruction (except some 'anticipation' work which can have elements of 'prevention'). This exclusive focus has helped Start Fund Nepal design and implement specialised emergency response or rapid response model with strict deadline-based steps and processes.

Start Fund Nepal's delegated and participatory decision making are unique which other key humanitarian funding mechanisms don't yet have.

-Former member of Steering Committee
Start Fund Nepal has added pre-warning elements, including through weather-based forecasts, to work on ‘anticipation’ in order to make its emergency response activities quicker and more efficient. There are very few organisations - both on the government and non-government side - who have forecast based warning as significant priority.

FOREWARN has helped Start Fund Nepal to be part of the broader ‘anticipatory action’ actors which can help Start Fund Nepal to communicate about its unique model and added values. This can motivate other actors to also promote ‘localisation’ by delegating decision making power to local actors. FOREWARN has made initial contribution with some capacity building efforts within Start Fund Nepal members to establish ‘anticipation’ as a culture of working for emergency response.

Start Fund Nepal is still not widely known and understood
Start Fund Nepal is not well known at the ground level as Start Fund Nepal’s partners interface with communities and other local actors. Most respondents at the local levels had not heard about Start Fund Nepal but did know its partners who were involved in emergency response activities. This is a good thing for a network which espouses ‘localisation’. While many in donor community had heard about Start Fund Nepal, the donors did not necessarily have a correct understanding of its modality and added value. This is not necessarily a ‘weakness’ of Start Fund Nepal because the network is relatively new. This finding has been included here to draw Start Fund Nepal’s attention so that it can have a proper external communication and networking strategy with key humanitarian actors, including government agencies and donors in future.

Start Fund Nepal needs to tell key humanitarian actors and donors about its unique design, localised decision making and impact, which can enhance its chance of tapping ‘in-country’ donor resources. NDRRMA works as the central resource repository of the government on disaster risk reduction and management. Start Fund Nepal is generally known in NDRRMA but not all senior officials are aware about its unique model, achievements, added values and potential contributions.
Start Fund Nepal’s potential to help the broader humanitarian response community understand about critical gaps is underutilised

Start Fund Nepal appears quite ‘internally focused’ because it has to work in ‘high pace’ environment when disasters of its concern happen or anticipated. The information that Start Fund Nepal receives and processes currently (for example, in alert notes and proposals) are solely used by its members for decision making and emergency response initiatives. Start Fund Nepal could support the broader humanitarian response actors to understated the ground situation by processing and providing the information it collects.

For example, some in donor community (particularly large donors) appear to believe that government’s Jajarkot earthquake response was reasonably well and no critical gaps were there for donor community to engage further in. Multiple Start Fund Nepal partners closer to the ground, however, significantly engaged in Jajarkot earthquake response to fill many critical gaps. A reasonable knowledge of such gaps could have helped these donors to channel their sizable resources through their own route to Jajarkot response.

If non-confidential information contained in Start Fund Nepal’s alert notes and proposals could be made available to outside actors (for example in SiTRep format), it could help other actors correctly understand the ground situation. This may also generate their interest to fill those critical gaps which may not be visible when seeing things at ‘macro level’ from Kathmandu.

This can help Start Fund Nepal establish its strong relevance in the humanitarian response community and also help other actors properly understand the Start Fund Nepal model and added value. Currently, the government, UN and Red Cross are the main source of information for humanitarian actors in Nepal. Start Fund Nepal’s access to information through its quick and strong outreach on the ground can help Start Fund Nepal emerge as a useful network that can fill critical gaps of information also. This will need proper planning followed by resourcing of the Start Fund Nepal secretariat.

Not everyone is equally active!

Start Fund Nepal as a network has a high energy level, however, not all members maintain the same energy level. Start Fund Nepal fund is quite small for a few INGO members (small in numbers) to find staff time and efforts away from their sizable disaster risk management portfolio. They were not enthusiastic to access Start Fund Nepal funds because it demands intense work for a period of time to conduct assessments and prepare proposals, which may or may not be awarded. Nevertheless, they were fully committed to stay in Start Fund Nepal as they had high appreciation of its work modality, efforts and impact. These organisations are not fully passive, as they have been participating in other Start Fund Nepal fora like Allocation Committee and Project Selection Committee meetings as well as learning sharing meetings.
There is a need to monitor whether these INGOs' current level of interest can be sustained in the longer term as they will not be accessing Start Fund Nepal funds. There may be ways to sustain their interest designating them as Start Fund Nepal's 'centre of excellence' (or something else that provides recognition of partner excellence). For example, a particular member with robust expertise on 'anti-sexual harassment' policies, processes and implementation could be designated as the Start Fund Nepal's 'centre of excellence' for this theme.

Start Fund Nepal could utilise such partner's particular expertise for training and capacity building of other Start Fund Nepal members. This can provide a good Start Fund Nepal recognition to this particular member. It can help sustain and enhance such partner's interest and participation in Start Fund Nepal in the longer term also. Start Fund Nepal is already utilising expertise of member organisations for various trainings. Going forward, this can be done in a more structured and strategic way formally recognising a member as 'centre of excellence' for particular skills and utilising such skills.

**Governance and management need some attention**

**Governance**

Members appreciated Start Fund Nepal’s staff team particularly their accessibility, flexibility and facilitative work style. The staff team has significant workload and is well connected to its members for support. It has good internal team cohesion. The Steering Committee members have good ownership of and commitments to further develop Start Fund Nepal. The committee is currently engaged in revising its Terms of Reference (ToR) as 10 new members (L/NNGOs) have been added since the existing ToR was drafted.

Start Fund Nepal has evolved further with more experiences and learning to warrant a ToR revision.

The existing ToR envisages providing 'strategic direction' to Start Fund Nepal as the primary function of the Steering Committee. There is no disagreement between the current Steering Committee and the secretariat about the Steering Committee needing to focus at the 'strategic level'. However, there is a need to develop common understanding between the Steering Committee, Start Fund Nepal secretariat and the Start Network (if necessary) about what that means in practice! The common understanding on what the 'strategic domain' involves (and does not involve!) will help both these entities to feel empowered and act on their respective roles with due clarity. While no significant issue has emerged so far, Start Fund Nepal needs to develop such clarity to avoid any potential misunderstanding and conflict as the network undergoes 'growing pains'!

**Management**

Start Fund Nepal's 'rotating secretariat' model is an effective approach to build greater member ownership of the network and therefore is an appropriate arrangement. However, it brings its own challenges because the secretariat needs to adjust to a new system and organisational culture every few years. It is important to formally document the best practices, learnings, and challenges related to the secretariat’s first move from Save the Children to the CARE Nepal office, the current home of the secretariat. This can help future transitions to remain informed by past experiences.
### Finance
#### Indirect Cost Recovery
Start Fund Nepal allows 10% of the project budget as indirect cost recovery to its members. However, individual INGOs have their own policies which may not allow 10%. When such INGOs are consortium lead, the participating members have to follow the consortium lead INGO’s rules. There have been instances of consortium partners not getting 10% or needing to negotiate it with consortium lead INGO. This issue does not have an easy solution because Start Fund Nepal rules cannot supersede individual member rules and individual members are unlikely to change their organisation rule for Start Fund Nepal purpose only. Recognition of this as an issue and a commitment to try to progressively find feasible solutions appears to be the best course of Start Fund Nepal action for now.

Recent trend shows increasing allocation of ICR to L/NNGO by consortium lead member (See Box 8). However, this issue needs some attention so that L/NNGOs are able to get their due share of ICR as provided by Start Fund Nepal policy.

#### BOX 8: ICR SHARING TREND
In the 26 projects, total ICR expenditure is GBP 181,044.27 of which GBP 35,521.11 (19.62) has been received by L/NNGO. Of the five projects awarded in Phase I, the consortium lead agency shared ICR with L/NNGO in only one project. In the 21 projects of Phase II, nine L/NNGO received ICR from the consortium lead agency.

### CONCLUSIONS
Start Fund Nepal’s ability to bring power equilibrium between L/NNGOs and INGOs is a phenomenal development that stands out as a unique Start Fund Nepal element in ‘emergency response.’ Delegation of decision making power to a power-balanced platform provides L/NNGOs a ‘level playing’ field with INGOs. Despite good intentions and commitments of many donors to achieve power equilibrium in Nepal, the funds power of international agencies/INGOs in conventional partnerships tend to often create lopsided power balance towards international agencies/INGOs. Start Fund Nepal’s model of not having a standing ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ with any member able to become ‘donor’ or ‘recipient’ changes the conventional ‘rule of the game’.

A strict ‘deadline based’ model designed exclusively for emergency response with effective use of pre-agreed standards, processes, and instruments has allowed Start Fund Nepal to ensure rapid and early emergency response. Though Start Fund Nepal’s typical emergency response has a standard 45-day (60-day with extension) cycle, Start Fund Nepal’s adoption of longer-term approach through significantly investing on member capacity building has allowed Start Fund Nepal members to emerge as significant humanitarian player at local levels.

Start Fund Nepal’s ‘tiered approach’ to capacity building with Tier 3 L/NNGOs able to directly access Start Fund Nepal funds has placed them at par with INGOs. This has resulted in many L/NNGOs working as ‘consortium lead’ with INGOs playing ‘consortium partner’ role supporting the lead L/NNGO.
This also helps to break the prevalent inherent perception of NGOs generally not having ‘up to the mark’ organisational systems and processes like INGOs.

The strong localisation element has provided Start Fund Nepal with robust local legitimacy, credibility and operational efficiency, however, Start Fund Nepal appears to be too ‘inward focus’ with an overworked secretariat trying to support a large network with its own dynamics and exigencies. Start Fund Nepal appears yet to develop strong horizontal relationships, particularly with in-country donors and some key humanitarian players, in terms of communicating about its distinct features and strong comparative advantages. While it is understandable, because Start Fund Nepal has been in an evolutionary stage with just over two and half years in operation, it needs to invest in strategic leadership capacity, relationship building and strategic communications in future.

The overall funds that Start Fund Nepal has managed so far appears small for a grand network covering all key geographical, political and administrative regions of the country, involving 15 INGOs, and 16 L/NNGOs. Start Fund Nepal has evolved and reached a stage to clearly articulate its future course, with an ambition to grow its investments and impact.

In future, Start Fund Nepal needs to be not only ‘inward focused’ ensuring it is creating impact, deepening localisation and achieving quality efficiency, but to be ‘outward looking’ to talk about its distinction, achievements and ability to provide value for funds.

While doing so, it needs to strategise so that it is not - and is seen as not - competing with its own constituency of members to tap the same resources. For this reason, it makes reasonable sense to explore Start Fund Nepal’s international fund-raising prospects also, alongside a carefully orchestrated in-country approach.

Start Fund Nepal’s one key added value is ‘filling critical gaps in small and medium sized emergencies’. In future, Start Fund Nepal can focus on larger scale emergencies also, but the focus should remain on filling critical gaps through small and medium sized response in such large emergencies.

While further developing, Start Fund Nepal should not be ‘too ambitious’ to be aflush with funds, because a network needs to evolve taking its own time and course through evolution in participation, relationships and managing dynamics. Start Fund Nepal, thus needs to find a good balance between being ambitious and realistic, without remaining ‘too small’ compared to its network strength, resource tapping potential and ability to create impact at scale. It should, however, also not strive to be ‘too big too soon’ injecting a lot of funds which can affect its rhythm of development, particularly its approach of evolving the network through a fine balance between making rapid and early response, filling critical gaps, localised decision making and long-term partner capacity building.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consider making Start Fund Nepal model and achievements more known to humanitarian actors in Nepal
This can help other actors see that fully delegated decision making with power equilibrium between L/NNGOs and INGOs is possible. This can promote 'localisation' efforts by other donors also, including those who have committed to the Grand Bargain commitments and/or those who may have interest in 'localisation' agenda. This will need greater relationships building, networking and strategic communications.

2. Empower and enable the secretariat for networking and strategic communications
The secretariat should be empowered and enabled to provide strategic leadership being 'extrovert,' building relationships and engaging in strategic communications with key humanitarian actors, networks and donors. This can help those humanitarian actors, including key donors, have appropriate understanding of Start Fund Nepal's distinction to other networks. Such networking should be followed up by efforts to tap donor resources. This needs a carefully calibrated strategy so that Start Fund Nepal is not- and seen to be not- competing with its constituent members to tap the same donor resources. For this reason, Start Fund Nepal should also explore resources abroad. FOREWARN can be one of the avenues for such networking and strategic communications with a need to find other avenues also.

3. Consider working with small and medium sized responses in large emergencies also
Due to capacity and resource constraints of government and inadequacy of donor support, large scale emergencies will have critical gaps. Start Fund Nepal relevance will, thus, be there. Start Fund Nepal should consider engaging in larger emergencies also, maintaining its focus and specialisation on small and medium sized responses and emerging gaps. Start Fund Nepal should document and reflect on the experience of such work and chart out the future course.

4. Consider designating Centres of Excellence
Start Fund Nepal should hold formal and informal discussions with some member INGOs who may not be interested to access Start Fund Nepal funds, though they remain interested to be part of Start Fund Nepal. Consider designating these INGOs as 'centre of excellence' (or something else recognising their specific expertise) based on their specific areas of expertise. Start Fund Nepal can provide these INGOs with responsibility to continuously build Start Fund Nepal L/NNGO member capacities in specialised areas. This can help sustain those INGO’s strong interest in and contributions to Start Fund Nepal in the longer term. Designating 'centre of excellence' need not remain confined to only those INGOs who are not keen to access Start Fund Nepal funds. Other INGOs and L/NNGOs can also be designated as 'centre of excellence'.
5. Further develop FOREWARN and promote the 'anticipation' culture
Anticipatory Action remains a hugely underdeveloped field in Nepal. Modern technology-based anticipation remains scarce. Investments should be made to further develop FOREWARN, to equip the network with modern forecasting technologies and to promote the 'anticipation' culture in both government and non-government arenas. Start Fund Nepal’s effort of promoting weather forecasting analysis seems to have yielded some initial results but there still needs significant more capacity, including for technological use, to establish an 'anticipation culture' both on government and non-government sides.

6. Adopt incremental and careful approach to any Start Fund Nepal expansion effort
Start Fund Nepal should focus on consolidating the network and achievements to look for a new phase funding through an 'evolutionary approach'. The network should maintain its 'learning by doing' approach preserving its distinct features/added values. Any effort of Start Fund Nepal’s expansion should adopt ‘an incremental approach’ without opening up its membership to too many new organisations- whether INGO or L/NNGO. Consideration should be given before admitting a new member so that the current good cohesion and frictionless relationships between L/NNGOs and INGOs is not affected. The current balance of 16 L/NNGOs and 15 INGOs looks reasonable. Start Fund Nepal should not assume that bringing in new L/NNGOs will make Start Fund Nepal even more 'localised'. This does not mean that more L/NNGOs should not be added. Inclusion of any new member must bring either strategic value or operational expertise that Start Fund Nepal currently does not have.

Start Fund Nepal could consider roping-in any new member with specialised skills to have an 'in-house' capacity to fill some capacity gaps. For example, a new member with psycho-social counselling in post-disaster context expertise could be invited to join the network who could work on other members' capacity building.

7. Bring full clarity and understanding on strategic and operational activities
The Start Fund Nepal Steering Committee should be supported to finalise its ToR revision. The revision should bring full clarity between the Steering Committee and Start Fund Nepal secretariat about what constitutes 'strategic' and 'operational', with the Steering Committee enabled and supported to focus on the strategic side.

8. Consider preparing a periodic 'Start Fund Nepal strategic direction' document to deepen Start Fund Nepal's institutionalisation
As Start Fund Nepal enters a new phase, it needs to focus on various dimensions of development, also discussed in this evaluation. It can consider developing a periodic (for instance, three to five years), Start Fund Nepal Strategic Direction Document that provides answers to key questions related with Start Fund Nepal’s future. It could be about criteria/reasons of induction of new members, fund raising (in-country and overseas), 'centre of excellence,' FOREWARN development, governance and management development, promotion of 'localisation' outside Start Fund Nepal, etc. The document can be a short one that provides 'direction of travel' to Start Fund Nepal answering some key questions, also maintaining space for creativity, experimentations and 'learning by doing' approach.
9. Document the secretariat transition learning
Start Fund Nepal should formally document the first secretariat transition experience so that future transitions are informed by past experience. The documentation should also look at smooth induction of Start Fund Nepal's team into a new organisational system, culture and hierarchy.

10. Generate 'learning of the learnings'
Start Fund Nepal should consolidate the 'learning of learnings' from its 20 different emergency response learning and annual learning events. The consolidated learning should scan whether any patterns can be detected pointing to particular strength or weakness in Start Fund Nepal's design and operational approaches. Such detection can provide feedback on whether Start Fund Nepal's (or Start Network) design and operational approach need some adjustments or refinements.

11. Weigh-in whether Start Fund Nepal's ground information can be promoted outside Start Fund Nepal also
Start Fund Nepal’s relevance, visibility and network can possibly receive huge boost if the non-confidential information that Start Fund Nepal gathers during 'alert raising ' and in proposals can be shared as some kind of 'SitRep' to humanitarian actors outside Start Fund Nepal also. Start Fund Nepal’s information could be unique due to its access to the ground and its speed of collating information from different sources. Start Fund Nepal could also produce, share and disseminate some 'policy debriefs' post its emergency response activity. It can, for example, describe about what worked well, any critical gap in response, any gender gap issues, key learnings, any other issue that could be of relevance to local government, NDRRMA, and other humanitarian actors.

Start Fund Nepal secretariat will need additional capacity to quickly package the information and make such information available for other actors also. Any such effort should be done without any negative impact on Start Fund Nepal’s current alert raising, award and implementation efficiencies. Thus, pros and cons of theseis, including capacity needs, sensitivity and usefulness, should be weighed in before any decision is made.

12. Consider preparing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for different disasters
Start Fund Nepal should consider preparing SOP for different types of disasters like earthquake, landslide, flood. The SOPs can help Start Fund Nepal partners to make specialized interventions based on these operating procedures, also incorporating necessary flexibility.

13. Monitor and discuss ICR allocation
Start Fund Nepal should closely monitor the ICR allocation from 'consortium lead' to consortium partner agencies. Start Fund Nepal should encourage those ‘consortium lead’ agencies whose organisational rules do not allow 10% ICR provision to consortium partners to find creative solutions. Start Fund Nepal should consider a discussion on what can be done about this in the Start Fund Nepal Steering Committee.
CASE STUDY

Dengue and lifesaving aid: A story of support

After her husband left for Qatar to work, Shantimaya Rai, from Sankhuwasabha district, relocated to Khairanitar in Dharan Sub-metropolitan with her eight-year-old son. Khairanitar, situated along the Seuti river, is home to 142 households primarily inhabited by indigenous communities. Three months into their relocation, reports of fever outbreaks began circulating in the village, affecting Shantimaya and her family.

Water was scarce so households relied on water collection practices, including storing water in open containers and drums. These practices created breeding grounds for mosquitoes, leading to the proliferation of mosquito larvae, particularly during rainy season.

Shantimaya recounts her story: ‘The households in the settlement began experiencing symptoms of fever and chills, including myself. I suffered from appetite loss, nausea, and leg cramps, making it hard to consume food. I feared I might never reunite with my husband until realizing these were signs of Dengue. My son endured similar distress’.

"We in the community were told that relief was coming soon. The relief arrived with supplies including a swing, thermo-gun, water bottles, mosquito repellent, white towel, glucose, and other essentials to combat Dengue. The Dengue Management Kit was provided by an organization (Start Fund Nepal partner). We feel grateful for the assistance and are also thankful to Ward chairman who organized for relief materials and essentials from the organization to arrive in time".

![Image of Shantimaya Rai and Dengue Management Kit](image-url)
CASE STUDY

Disaster response: Cold wave, Rautahat, Madhesh Province

In Gaur municipality, Somaria Devi Majhi, a resident of ultra-poor Musahar village, faces unique challenges as a single woman. Widowed at a young age, she raised her two daughters by working as a daily-wage earner. Following her daughters’ marriages, she now lives alone, relying on her daughters and sons-in-law for support who themselves are very poor. With no land or assets, she has little financial security. Her only income is the government-provided senior citizens’ monthly allowance of NPR 4,000 (app US $ 30), supplemented by her sons-in-law’s occasional support.

The region faces harsh winter with annual droughts, causing financial losses and health issues, especially for the elderly. Those financially strained, struggling to mitigate the harsh effects of extreme temperatures, find themselves particularly vulnerable. To combat the cold, locals resort to burning plastic, papers, clothes, and discarded footwear. Somaria Devi’s living conditions are dire, with a small hut for shelter having minimal amenities. Lack of proper bedding and warm clothing has contributed to her health problems. Local governments were unable to provide support to a swathe of population if cold wave struck, because many settlements were very poor and unable to cope themselves. Very poor groups like the Musahar community were highly vulnerable to an impending cold wave.

Start Fund Nepal had done an anticipation of cold wave and a member, Mandavi, was prepared to act. As the winter graph scaled up and cold wave was about to strike, Mandavi intervened. The organization had done a thorough assessment of needs also taking stock of what other actors were planning to do. Somaria Devi received a kit of essential items such as a thermos, a hot bag, a shawl, sweaters for her grandchildren, and winter clothing, totaling NPR 8000 (about US $ 60) in value. Additionally, she received NPR. 4300 (app US $ 33) in cash, enabling her to purchase food staples and fresh vegetables.
Chheukala Sarki, a 45-year-old inhabitant of Palanta Village Ward No. 1 Kasalgaira, was assisted by KIRDARC Nepal, a Start Fund Nepal project implementer, in establishing and operating a retail store in July 2024 as a proactive measure against an expected food shortage. She was chosen due to possessing fundamental skills such as basic mathematics and the ability to calculate profit margins on goods. Previously, the 45 households in Kasalgaira had to walk for about an hour to purchase essential items. With Chheukala Sarki’s retail shop, this travel time was reduced to just five minutes.

The shop has provided Chheukala with some income to stave off food insecurity of her family. It has also saved the hardships of essential goods shopping for 45 local households, allowing their time for other work. Children from local Sri Dhalpura Aadharbhum School can buy school materials like paper and pen from Chheukala’s retail shop instead of their parents needing to walk for an hour. Due to her dedication to the shop, she managed to achieve a profit of NPR 100,000 (just over US $ 750) in a year which is not a small sum given the acute local poverty situation. The income helped Chheukala’s family to get necessary food security.
Sunita Singh, a resident of Ward No. 14 in Banke village, Aathbiskot Municipality, found herself in a dire situation following the November 03, 2023 earthquake. With six members in her family, including a son, daughter, elderly mother-in-law, brother-in-law, and husband, she faced the collapse of her home and the loss of all stored grains and essentials. This left the family with no food or shelter, struggling to survive amidst the disaster.

The earthquake not only destroyed their home but also exacerbated the malnutrition issues faced by Sunita’s four-month old son and four-year old daughter. With limited resources and no nutritious food available, the family faced immense challenges in meeting their basic needs. Additionally, the trauma of losing neighbors in the earthquake and constant aftershocks added to their distress, especially concerning the safety of the children.

The arrival of representatives from the RRN Nepal, a Start Fund Nepal partner, on the third day of the earthquake brought a ray of hope to Sunita’s family and other affected families. Relief materials, including essential food items like wheat flour, potatoes, soybeans, and a package of nutritious supplements, were distributed immediately. This support significantly alleviated their immediate concerns about food scarcity and the health of the children, providing essential nutrients and relief during such a critical time.
CASE STUDY

Empowering local response: SOSEC’s journey with Start Fund Nepal

We were highly impressed by Start Fund Nepal’s emphasis on localisation right from the start and were enthusiastic about becoming a member. Considering SOSEC’s active presence in Karnali province, we grasped the chance to apply for Start Fund Nepal membership in response to its call. Our involvement in various districts of Karnali province, coupled with our institutional development, led us to meet the institutional due diligence criteria, thereby granting us a member status.

Based on our organisational status against due diligence criteria, we were classified in Contingent Tier 3 category in the initial assessment. After becoming a member, we received various capacity development support including training and policy reforms. These opportunities deepened our understanding of Start Fund Nepal requirements and operational modality. It also helped us realise about the need of many policies like safeguarding, anti-bribery for sound organisational development. We revised existing policies and made new ones also improving our institutional practices. All these propelled us to a full Tier 3 status in the subsequent due diligence assessment.

Attaining Tier 3 status provided us with the opportunity to lead projects, notably responding to the recent Jajarkot earthquake. We feel that SOSEC effectively supported crisis affected people and at risk communities collaborating with other actors to provide humanitarian assistance. Our local access and network supported by institutional capacities gained helped us to meet all Start Fund Nepal deadlines and other requirements. Additionally, our participation in FOREWARN meetings has been quite valuable to us. Our engagements in FOREWARN have provided us with greater insights into significance and methods of disaster preparedness, resource management, stakeholder cooperation, and timely responses.

Start Fund Nepal’s streamlined process ensured swift funds transfer directly to our account enabling us to mobilise resources and provide timely aid to crisis affected people within seven days of grant award decision. This was a pleasant experience for us, as we had not experienced such a swift funds disbursement while working with some other donors. Start Fund Nepal’s unique mixed model of INGOs and L/NNGO membership helps NGOs and INGOs to build on each other’s strengths. This innovative approach, supported by swift decision-making and equal participation opportunities among all members – both NGOs and INGOs, create positive relationships. The organisational gains made, network experience and higher confidence have prepared us to be able to respond to larger scale emergencies also.
CASE STUDY

SFN holding high value in disaster response in Nepal

NTAG is a Start Fund Nepal member NGO working specifically in the field of nutrition health benefitting children, adolescents, and women of Nepal. It works in all 77 districts of Nepal. NTAG had in the past worked in emergency response through its health related expertise. When NTAG worked in the past with government agencies and other actors, support to crises affected people and communities used to arrive not on time. After joining Start Fund Nepal, we have provided assistance to the crisis affected people much more quickly than in the past. Start Fund Nepal’s work is exemplary because a project needs to be completed within 45 days. The support we provide to the needy are catering to the immediate needs of crisis affected people. We are contributing through an important cross-cutting issue like nutrition in the field of emergency response.

NTAG was categorised in Tier 1 during the initial due diligence process. Start Fund Nepal assisted us in the necessary revisions of eight organisational policies. We also received various capacity building trainings. These trainings have helped to enhance human resources capacity of the organisation which is a great achievement for us. In the December 2023 due diligence reassessment, we were categorised in Tier 3. When we were in Tier 1, we had to support the emergency response working together with consortium lead INGO or L/NNGO. Having reached Tier 3, we can now lead projects. This is a very big institutional achievement for us.

The usual practice here is for INGOs to lead but in Start Fund Nepal, L/NNGOs are also leading projects, with INGOs supporting. This is due to Start Fund Nepal’s emphasis on localisation. It was difficult to get the ICR from consortium lead INGOs in the past, but now, it is increasingly becoming easier for L/NNGOs to receive ICR when leading projects. INGO members are becoming increasingly flexible to provide ICR.

After the establishment and practice of FOREWARN, disaster forecasting has become easier than in the past. FOREWARN has helped us to develop some institutional capacity on anticipation. It has helped us to do necessary preparation for potential risks and to take joint initiative through collaboration between different actors, and collective decision making for emergency response.

It is necessary to practice and institutionalise, localisation more, the main priority of Start Fund Nepal, to consolidate localised response to future emergency responses.
## Annex 1: List of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Morang</th>
<th>Sunsari</th>
<th>Rautahat</th>
<th>Sindhupalchowk</th>
<th>Gorkha</th>
<th>Rukum West</th>
<th>Kalikot</th>
<th>Federal Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Non-Member NGOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

|               | 4 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 41 |

**Total FGDs**

2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 12

**Total Case Studies**

1 | 1 | 1 | 4

## Annex 2: Indicative capacity of three levels of government (based on a 2020 study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Capacity of Local Government</th>
<th>Capacity of Provincial Government</th>
<th>Capacity of Federal Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy, legal and Regulatory system</td>
<td>In progress/progress</td>
<td>In process</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional structures</td>
<td>Not presented (?)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Operating Procedures</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment and mapping</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction Initiatives</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Based Early Warning System</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard monitoring and surveillance</td>
<td>Low (including access to forecast)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics for Humanitarian Assistance</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>In process</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>