**Terms of Reference (ToR)**

# Consultancy for enhancing the capacity of Start Fund Nepal members to use digital CVA in response and anticipatory alerts.

# CARE Nepal

CARE is an international NGO with local staff and community partners in more than 90 countries. We create local solutions to poverty and inequality and seek dignity for everyone every day and during times of crisis. CARE puts women and girls at the centre of everything we do because they have proven to be the best hope for creating lasting change in the world. CARE has been operational in Nepal since 1978 and works in partnerships with government and non-government stakeholders across the spectrum of humanitarian action and long-term development programs.

# START NETWORK

Start Network is made up of more than 90 aid agencies across five continents, ranging from large international organisations to national NGOs. Together, our aim is to transform humanitarian action through innovation, fast funding, early action, and localisation.

We're tackling what we believe 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. Our work focuses on three 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.

The Start Network is at a critical point in its journey. We have grown and diversified our membership over the past 10 years. We are now set to evolve into a decentralised “network of networks” by 2025. We are currently working with five national and regional networks (hubs) in Pakistan, DRC, Guatemala, India and the Pacific. They are developing locally owned ways of anticipating and responding to humanitarian crises. We aim to support the emergence and development of further Hubs in the coming years.  Our ultimate ambition is to devolve leadership, membership, programming and decision making to the hubs, while the UK team transitions to provide services of support.

Start Network is committed to protecting people, particularly children, at-risk adults and affected populations from any harm that may be caused due to their encountering the Start Network as well as responding effectively should any harm occur. We are also committed to safeguarding staff from any forms of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of power as outlined in the Dignity at Work policy.

Start Network embraces diversity, promotes equality of opportunity and eliminates unlawful discrimination. We are an equal opportunities employer and treat every application on merit alone. We particularly welcome applications from disabled, black, indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC), and LGBT+ and non-binary candidates. We offer a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled applicants who meet our essential selection criteria.

# START Fund Nepal (SFN)

Start Fund Nepal is a Start Network programme and is hosted by CARE - Nepal. SFN is a collectively managed financing mechanism, developed in Nepal by international (15 INGOs) Start Network members and partner NGOs (16 LNGOs) based in Nepal with support from the global Start Fund. SFN was launched in June 2021, with the support from the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and its first pilot year ended in March 2022 after which the exposure and coverage of the fund has grown significantly. Its pilot project was completed in March 2022. Phase II of the project started in April 2022 and will conclude in March 2024. Following global guidelines, Start Fund Nepal adheres to a 45-day implementation cycle, ensuring swift decision-making within 72 hours of a crisis alert and initiating primary activities within 7 days. Thus, the fund's primary focus lies in rapid financing and response.

Recently, Start Fund Nepal has expanded its scope with the introduction of the Forecast-based, Warning, Analysis, and Response Network (FOREWARN) within its Crisis Anticipation and Risk Financing Unit. This initiative aims to engage non-member, multi-disciplinary actors in Nepal involved in disaster risk analysis and management, particularly in crisis anticipation and early action. FOREWARN aims to facilitate the quick assembly of experts to forecast disasters and provide support to humanitarian efforts in the vicinity of anticipated crises. Additionally, FOREWARN advocates for the normalization of early action in disaster response protocols.

# CONSULTANCY PURPOSE

Start Fund Nepal is one of the drivers of change in the humanitarian context of Nepal in delivering rapid and localized responses. SFN has also been promoting its Anticipatory Action (AA) agenda by raising anticipatory alerts, disseminating resources, and conducting capacity-building exercises in the related field. However, delivering timely assistance, anticipatorily or even in early response, can be challenging, particularly in deploying relief assistance, identifying affected households, procurement, logistics, and many more. The promotion and usage of digital CVA can improve these challenges due to its scope on rapid deployment capabilities, redundancy checks for participants, and effective platform for data management, limiting human errors.

The high costs associated with international digital cash and voucher assistance (CVA) digital platform(s) present a significant barrier for many local humanitarian organizations in Nepal. However, locally developed systems have emerged as key players, proving effective in delivering CVA aid. Nepal's challenging geography, including remote areas with limited connectivity, further complicates the adoption of digital CVA. Despite this, some locally well-known technologies have been delivering their services in crises scenarios nationally and effectively.

CVA is mostly beneficial for the following:

* **Speed and Efficiency:** Digital CVA enables aid organizations to quickly distribute financial aid to affected populations, often faster than traditional methods like distributing physical goods. This speed is crucial in rapidly responding to emergencies and meeting the immediate needs of affected communities.
* **Flexibility:** Digital CVA provides beneficiaries with the flexibility to prioritize their own needs and allocate funds according to their most urgent requirements. This empowers individuals to make choices that best suit their unique circumstances, leading to more effective use of aid resources.
* **Market Stimulus:** By injecting funds directly into local economies through digital CVA, aid organizations can stimulate local markets, thereby supporting recovery efforts and helping communities rebuild their livelihoods.
* **Dignity and Empowerment:** Digital CVA respects the dignity of beneficiaries by providing them with the means to make their own choices and purchases, rather than relying on predefined aid packages. This empowerment fosters a sense of agency and self-reliance among affected populations.
* **Transparency and Accountability:** Digital systems used for CVA often offer enhanced transparency and accountability mechanisms, allowing aid organizations to track fund distribution more effectively and ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most.

The consultancy's objective is to enhance digital CVA capacity among Start Fund Nepal members through a sustained engagement at different capacities throughout 2024. Digital CVA, exemplified by different digital platforms, is essential for quick response and anticipatory action. In the context of Start Fund Nepal also, digital CVA allows for rapid and efficient delivery of aid to vulnerable populations, particularly in remote and disaster-prone areas. Features for targeting, data management, and real-time monitoring, aligns with the goal of facilitating anticipatory action and streamlining humanitarian assistance within Start Fund Nepal. This helps in quick and timely response through transparency & accountability, flexibility, and dignified aid to affected populations while also supporting local economies and fostering empowerment. Therefore, investing in digital CVA capacity is crucial for improving the effectiveness and timeliness of humanitarian response efforts in the SFN community and the wider humanitarian network.

# Objectives:

The goal of this initiative is to support increased use of digital cash and voucher assistance system in Start Fund Nepal's response and anticipatory action by providing access to cost-effective and easy-to-use digital platform for Start Network Nepal members. Additionally, this consultancy also aims to:

The assignment is aimed to achieve following objectives:

1. Members of Start Fund Nepal have access to utilize digital Cash and Voucher Assistance for humanitarian assistance.

2. Members of Start Fund Nepal have capacities to implement digital Cash and Voucher Assistance in response.

3. Start Fund Nepal can monitor project activities in real-time and track participants from any response alert and limit redundancies and bogus participants

**These aims will be achieved through:**

1. Development or customization of digital platform for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) which serves as comprehensive solution for quick decision-making, encompassing response analysis and selection of the most appropriate response modality.
2. Offer a real-time dashboard for monitoring response progress, including a timeline, and enable the generation of both customized and non-customized report(s).
3. The use of tools necessary for rapid response and early actions in Cash and Voucher Assistance modalities
4. Standardization of participants targeting tool with the use of vulnerability indexing
5. Prevent duplication of project participants through participant-tracking from any alerts

**Qualification and Experience**

1. Experience in app development related to digital CVA and its customization is a must.
2. Background in humanitarian aid and anticipatory action along with the delivery of different digital CVA platforms in urban to the most remote areas of the country.
3. Experience in software customization, data management, and troubleshooting along with secure data-hosting.
4. Close connections with humanitarian organizations, ideally within SFN members pool that have experience in responding to humanitarian relief through digital cash.
5. Capable of planning and coordinating project activities, in the timely and effective delivery of the proposed outcomes
6. Experience in conducting technical training for diverse stakeholders, experiences with SFN members are an asset.
7. Familiarity with Nepal's socio-economic and geographical context along with DRR governance and policies in digital CVA is preferred.
8. Effective communication and teamwork abilities, particularly in delivering complex topics in simple formats.
9. Fluency in English and Nepali languages preferred.

**Key Deliverables:**

The consultant/s will be expected to deliver the following:

* **Customization of dCVA System:**
  + Improvement of existing dCVA system to make it more user friendly, cost effective and readily available for Start Fund Nepal members
  + Make the software more user-friendly and cost effective by reducing the dependence of users on software service provider
  + Add new features for consolidated information management for data related to household surveys, vulnerability index, markets.
  + Improve project management tools aligned to the requirements of START Fund project management.
* **Collaboration with MEAL Specialist:**
  + Work closely with the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) specialist of SFN to tailor the existing dCVA system for effective data gathering, management, analytics and presentation.
* **Documentation and Training Materials:**
  + Develop user manuals and video tutorials to guide Start Network members in navigating the digital CVA system.
  + Create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for utilizing the digital CVA system, including training modules on data management for SFN members.
* **Use-Case Scenarios and Case Studies:**
  + Develop use-case scenarios and case studies demonstrating the appropriate use of CVA in anticipatory action and rapid response situations.
* **Training Events and Simulations:**
  + Conduct training events, including simulations, for SFN members on effectively utilizing the digital CVA system and integrating it into their existing workflows.
* **Ad-hoc Guidance and Support:**
  + Develop a comprehensive strategy for implementing digital CVA within SFN and its downstream members
  + Provide ad-hoc guidance and support to SFN members on digital CVA when required.
* **Knowledge Sharing:**
  + Share the findings of the consultancy with the wider Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) network, as required, during and after the project timeline.

**Timeline:**

The consultant will submit/execute all the deliverables within period of **15 April to December 15 2024.**

* Contracting to be complete 15 April 2024
* Inception report to be complete by 20 April 2024
* First draft to be delivered by 1 December 2024
* Final report to be delivered by 15 December 2024

**Location and official travel involved.**

The project will both desk-based and may contain short distance travels within the Kathmandu valley. All the travel logistics and costs have to be borne by the consultant/s.

**Line management:**

The program manager of Start Fund Nepal will supervise the work progress along with the CARF technical and MEAL specialist. The consultant will work with SFN members that have expertise in humanitarian CVA distribution.

**Submission of Proposals**

Interested consultancy firms/individuals can submit their financial and technical proposals by 27 March 2024 to [npl.carenepal@care.org](mailto:npl.carenepal@care.org).

**Required Documents**

* Technical proposal along with team member CV and Financial proposals separately.
* CV(s) of the Consultant(s) with full date of birth in DD/MM/YYYY format. The date of birth is required for vetting purpose.
* Copies of- Firm registration certificate, VAT registration certificate, latest tax clearance certificate.
* For firms that are tax exempted by the government, a copy of the tax exemption certificate should be submitted.

If any documents/information is not available or not applicable, the reason(s) must be clarified in the proposal form. CARE Nepal will have the right to disqualify the proposals from the selection process if the proposal submission guideline has not been followed.

The technical (70%) and detailed financial (30%) proposals will be evaluated based on following:

**Technical**

* Understanding and interpretation of the Terms of reference
* Methodology
* Time and activity schedule

**Organizational/Personnel Capacity Statement**

* Relevant experience related to the assignment.
* Team Composition as per ToR.
* Curriculum Vitae with relevant references

**Financial**

The payment will be made on deliverable basis upon mutual agreement.

1. Inception report: 40%
2. After Draft report submission: 40%
3. After Final report submission: 20%

## Start Network culture

* To carry out the responsibilities of the role in line with the Start Network Code of Conduct and with a commitment to safeguarding adults and children.
* A commitment to the Start Network vision, principles, values, and approach.
* The Start Network team is an agile group of individuals who use their experience and skills across the network, so flexibility to work in and with different teams and functions is a part of our culture.