Diversifying Choices
Securing Livelihoods

RESEARCH and DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
2017–2022
WHO WE ARE

Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) is a non-profit making, non-governmental organization established in 1995, registered at the District Administration Office, Kaski (Registration # 217/052/053), and affiliated to the Social Welfare Council, Nepal (Registration # 3394). LI-BIRD is committed to capitalising on local resources, innovations, and institutions for sustainable management of natural resources for improving livelihoods of smallholder farmers.
LI-BIRD continues to work along the research – development continuum, and its commitment to results remains unshakable. LI-BIRD is a pioneer organization in developing and strengthening participatory research methodologies in agro-biodiversity and natural resource management, playing an instrumental role in institutionalising these approaches in the national systems. LI-BIRD’s expertise is increasingly sought by government, UN, and international agencies. The new strategic plan’s focus on investing in knowledge, innovation and solutions, building leaders, and developing new partnerships with both the public and private sectors, speaks loudly to our working philosophy and culture.

LI-BIRD’s new 5-year strategic plan builds on the key lessons learned from the implementation of previous strategies. The new strategy put emphasis on inclusive economic growth for income and employment, and integrates disaster risk management and emergency response in our programmes. The new strategic plan aligns our ambitions with the national priorities, especially Nepal’s 20 Year Agriculture Development Strategy, and international priorities articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this strategy period, we will package key learnings for scaling-up, forge partnerships that can advance LI-BIRD’s learnings through large scale implementation, strengthen institutional governance, and increase work efficiency through systematisation and automation of our systems.
WHAT WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS

Our Vision
LI-BIRD envisions a society where people are resilient, healthy, food secure and live with dignity.

Our Mission
LI-BIRD’s mission is to diversify choices and secure livelihoods of smallholder farmers through innovative approaches to research and development in agriculture, biodiversity and natural resources.

Our Core Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Initiative</th>
<th>We value local knowledge and culture, local initiatives and innovations, and participation of local communities and institutions in all aspects of our work.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>We act consistently with our vision. We are honest, transparent and accountable, and accept responsibility for our collective and individual actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
<td>We believe in conserving biodiversity and improving ecosystem health as assets for reducing vulnerability and building resilient livelihoods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>We believe in investing in human capital, institutions and natural resources to protect the environment for the prosperity of present and future generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>We respect capabilities, opinions, and values of individuals, socially excluded groups, communities, development partners, stakeholders, staff, and our members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>We value diversity in terms of people, ethnicity, culture, social norms, partners, staff, and our members.</td>
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Our Impact Goal

Contribute to reducing poverty by strengthening resilient livelihood systems, improving ecosystem health and services, and ensuring food, nutrition and income security of smallholder farmers, especially women and youths.

Programming Principles

The following programming principles will inform and guide the way we work in all of our programmes:

| Principle 1 | Demonstrate and deliver tangible benefit to target groups |
| Principle 2 | Promote participation of multi-sectoral stakeholders in research and development to generate scalable solutions |
| Principle 3 | Align actions with national priorities to contribute to national food security and sustainable development goals |
| Principle 4 | Generate synergies and leverage resources for achieving cost-effectiveness and impact at scale |
| Principle 5 | Create an enabling environment by empowering communities, institutions and networks |
WHO WE ARE WORKING FOR

Our Impact Group

Our impact group is the population upon which LI-BIRD’s projects and programmes aim to have a positive impact, with long-term commitment. Our impact group is smallholder farmers, especially women and youths, who depend on agriculture, biodiversity and natural resources for their livelihoods. The lasting changes we can bring in their lives will determine the extent of our success.

Our Target Group

Our target group is the sub-set population or sub-groups within the impact group. Programme strategies may need to be focused or tailored specifically to meet the unique needs of the target group. Our strategic actions focus on six sub-groups within the impact group. The unique needs of these sub-groups determine the nature of actions we undertake.

Our target groups are:

» Communities in highly food deficit rural areas;
» Women and youths, especially aspirant and returnee migrants;
» Climate-vulnerable and disaster-prone communities;
» Disaster affected individuals and communities;
» Landless and land poor communities; and
» Farmers living in rural-urban interface and road corridor areas.
In this strategy period, LI-BIRD will focus on four strategic programmes (Figure 1). We will work at household, community and sub-watershed, watershed and river basin levels to achieve the impact goal. Our work will be guided by our vision, mission and impact goal, and will embody our programming principles and core values. These four strategic programmes will define the scope of our work and help us maintain our programme focus, rigour and relevance. The implementation of these four strategic programmes will be further augmented by four cross-cutting themes (Figure 1).
## IMPACT GOAL
Contribute to reducing poverty by strengthening resilient livelihood systems, improving ecosystem health and services, and ensuring food, nutrition and income security of smallholder farmers, especially women and youths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Programme</th>
<th>Agricultural Innovations for Food and Nutrition Security</th>
<th>Inclusive Economic Growth for Income and Employment</th>
<th>Community Resilience to Climate Change and Disaster Risks</th>
<th>Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Sustainable Livelihoods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invest in knowledge, innovations and solutions for improving food and nutrition security of smallholder farmers</td>
<td>Transform subsistence agriculture as business opportunities to generate income and local employment</td>
<td>Build adaptive and risk management capacities of vulnerable communities for resilient livelihoods</td>
<td>Empower and mobilise communities, local institutions and networks for up-scaling integrated management of resources at sub-watershed, watershed and river basin levels</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deepen social and policy research for effective policy advocacy and inclusive impact</td>
<td>Mainstream GESI in programmes, workforce and workplace for equitable impact, and for strengthening institutional governance and programme effectiveness</td>
<td>Institutionalise knowledge management and capacity building for wider impact and for strengthening organisational learning</td>
<td>Build institutional capacity for delivering effective emergency response to disaster affected communities</td>
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Figure 1: Strategic programmes and cross-cutting themes
Strategic Programme 1
Agricultural Innovations for Food and Nutrition Security

Objective
To improve the food and nutrition security of our impact group through investment in knowledge, innovations, and solutions.

The remote rural areas of Nepal, especially the mid and far western regions, are characterised by inaccessibility, marginality, and fragility. Recurrent food insecurity is a common phenomenon, and great disparity exists within the region. Women and children are undernourished and are the most vulnerable population. The landless and land poor populations in the Terai face a similar situation. This programme will enhance knowledge, skills, and develop and deliver tailored solutions to improve their food and nutrition security by employing participatory approaches to innovative development.

To achieve this objective, within five years, LI-BIRD will:

» Improve farmers’ access to quality seeds building on its ongoing work on community seed banks, and through partnership with private seed companies and seed producer groups;

» Enhance knowledge and skills of smallholder farmers, particularly women, for sustainable production and consumption of diverse nutritious food;

» Accelerate targeted participatory crop improvement research activities with focus on nutritious and resilient but under-utilised local crop species; and

» Identify and examine early wins and share critical success factors pertaining to scaling-up promising food and nutrition solutions, and support at least three initiatives delivering food and nutrition solutions at scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Food &amp; Nutrition Security Farming Households Reached</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85,000</td>
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Strategic Programme 2
Inclusive Economic Growth for Income and Employment

Objective

To transform subsistence agriculture into business opportunities for generating income and local employment.

The smallholder farmers, especially women and youths, require opportunities for jobs and income for their livelihood and family well-being. Our actions will focus on engaging and mobilising them both in on-farm and off-farm economic development activities, building on experience and capital to enhance their entrepreneurial skills, creating local jobs and income opportunities, and improving access to financial services. The programme will be aligned with the government’s Agriculture Modernisation Programme to leverage resources and maximise programme synergies and impact. The programme will target (but not be limited to) selected road corridors and rural-urban interface areas for sustainable production, marketing and consumption of safe and healthy food.

To achieve this objective, within five years, LI-BIRD will:

» Refine and scale-up the Value Chain Development Fund (VCDF) approach for improving local entrepreneurs’ access to financial services for the establishment of, and to scale up their agricultural and forest-based enterprises;

» Promote market-oriented on-farm production targeting landless and land poor communities to maximise utilisation of private and public waste land for income and local employment;

» Scale-up three to five selected agricultural and forest-based value chains led, financed and managed by private sectors and cooperatives; and

» Build business development and entrepreneurship skills of women and youths, especially aspirant and returnee migrants, on sustainable production and marketing of high value agricultural and forest-based products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Inclusive Economic Growth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Employment/ Jobs</td>
<td>2012-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategic Programme 3

Community Resilience to Climate Change and Disaster Risks

Objective

To build the adaptive capacity of climate vulnerable and disaster prone communities for resilient livelihoods.

Farmers living in the hills, mountains and Terai are vulnerable to the impact of climate change and disaster risks. Working with these communities and our national and international partners, we will work across sectors to reduce risk to the production system, integrate climate resilient technologies and genetic diversity to build their adaptive capacity for managing environmental adversity. LI-BIRD will strengthen the capacity of communities and local institutions to integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management plans into local planning process for accessing and leveraging resources for effective implementation of plans.

To achieve this objective, within five years, LI-BIRD will:

» Work with local communities, and national and international partners to accelerate research activities to broaden technological base for managing climate change/environmental adversity;
» Refine and scale-up champion climate-resilient technologies, practices and approaches to build adaptive capacity of climate-vulnerable and disaster-prone communities;
» Strengthen the capacity of communities and local institutions to integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management plans into the local planning process for leveraging resources required for effective implementation of plans;

» Develop methodology for integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk management plans and implementation modality in new federal structure, and
» Test, validate and promote cost effective and efficient water management technologies for increasing water productivity.

Milestone

Community Resilience to Climate Change
Local financing for local adaptation
Resources leveraged by the communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Leveraged (NPR)</th>
<th>2012-2016</th>
<th>2017-2022</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39,000,000</td>
<td>80,000,000</td>
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</table>
Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Sustainable Livelihoods

Objective

To empower and mobilise communities, local institutions and networks for up-scaling integrated management of biodiversity and ecosystem services at sub-watershed, watershed and river basin levels for sustainable livelihoods.

Agricultural and forest biodiversity, and ecosystem services are the basis for sustainable food systems, livelihoods, and building community resilience. The unprecedented loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystem services are threatening rural livelihoods and environment. This programme will empower and mobilise communities, local institutions and networks for up-scaling integrated management of biodiversity, ecosystem services and natural resources in selected sub-watersheds, watersheds and river basins that are of national importance and that provide goods and services to local inhabitants.

To achieve this objective, within five years, LI-BIRD will:

» Identify and establish three to five sub-watersheds, watersheds or river basins that are of national importance for long-term research and development programming;

» Empower communities, local institutions and networks for up-scaling integrated management and use of agricultural and forest biodiversity and ecosystem services in selected sub-watersheds, watersheds or river basins;

» Consolidate learning on agro-biodiversity management and payment for ecosystem service mechanisms and replicate in selected sub-watersheds, watersheds or river basins; and

» Demonstrate the benefit of ecological agriculture for food, nutrition and income security of smallholder farmers by identifying and testing scalable ecological agriculture technologies and practices at sub-watershed, watershed or river basin level.

Milestone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services</th>
<th>2012–2016</th>
<th>2017–2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment &amp; Mobilization of Local Institutions &amp; Networks</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

In this strategy period, LI-BIRD has prioritised four cross-cutting themes as an integral part of the overall programmes. Each of these themes is expected to enrich the analyses, design and implementation of our four strategic programmes, including organisational policies.
Cross-Cutting Theme 1
Social and Policy Research

Objective

To deepen social and policy research for the development of targeted programmes, and to provide effective policy feedback for inclusive impact.

Nepali society is highly heterogeneous in terms of demography, ethnicity, culture and socio-economic conditions. Understanding the needs, constraints and opportunities of our impact group, especially the disadvantaged and socially excluded groups, is a prerequisite for developing targeted programmes and providing effective policy feedback for inclusive growth and impact. In this strategy period, we will strengthen and deepen our social and policy research, and work more closely with government policy makers and law makers, especially women parliamentarians, to advocate for positive change.

To achieve this objective, within five years, LI-BIRD will:

» Identify opportunities, issues and challenges for active engagement of women and youths in agriculture, forestry and natural resource sectors, and utilise the key findings to strengthen programme quality;
» Build the capacity of staff to enhance their knowledge and skills on existing and emerging social and policy research methods and tools;
» Contribute to national and international policy discourse on existing and emerging issues notably biodiversity, seed systems, and climate change by piloting, generating and sharing innovative ground evidence; and
» Institutionalise ex-post evaluation of successful approaches, models, technologies and practices within LI-BIRD to generate evidence to provide effective policy feedback and strengthen organisational learning.
Cross-Cutting Theme 2  
**Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)**

**Objective**

To mainstream GESI in programmes, the workforce and workplace for equitable impact, strengthening institutional governance and programme quality.

Gender inequality and social exclusion is common in rural Nepal. Addressing inequality and exclusion is a prerequisite for designing and delivering quality research and development programmes. In this strategy period, we will make concerted effort to mainstream GESI in our programmes, workforce and workplace to improve programme quality and to strengthen institutional governance. The application of GESI tools, notably gender sensitive budgeting, fund flow analysis and additional tools, will be identified and piloted for mainstreaming across our programmes.

**To achieve this objective, within five years, LI-BIRD will:**

- Identify, test and promote gender-friendly agricultural tools, technologies and approaches to reduce women’s workload and drudgery;
- Pilot and Institutionalise GESI responsive programme planning, budgeting, and tracking fund flow;
- Enforce affirmative action to increase women’s representation and participation in LI-BIRD’s management and governing body, and ensure that women and members from disadvantaged groups are attracted and retained; and
- Engage government policy makers and law makers, especially women parliamentarians, to advocate for, and bring GESI friendly changes in national agriculture, biodiversity, climate change, and natural resource management policies and plans.
Cross-Cutting Theme 3
Knowledge Management and Capacity Building

Objective

To institutionalise knowledge management and capacity building for wider impact and strengthening organisational learning.

Knowledge management and capacity building is one of the critical elements of successful change and the ability to manage change itself. Over the past 21 years, LI-BIRD has accumulated huge amounts of knowledge that is generally not fully utilised, but has the potential to improve our organisational learning and performance. In this strategy period, LI-BIRD will seek to re-utilise that knowledge and create additional useful knowledge, making it available to those who can use it to positively influence their organisational learning and performance. We will also make a concerted effort to improve our database system and automate our management information system for learning purposes.

To achieve this objective, within five years, LI-BIRD will:

- Establish a fully functional, automated global database and management information system that supports project review, planning, reporting, evaluation and new programme development;
- Produce women and youth focused knowledge products;
- Institutionalise and diversify the Tailor Made Training (TMT) courses as a means for sharing knowledge and building capacity of staff, partners and interested stakeholders; and
- Institutionalise a system of providing technical support to a range of interested stakeholders.
Cross-Cutting Theme 4

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Objective

To build institutional capacity for delivering effective emergency response to disaster affected communities.

LI-BIRD works with communities living across various geographic regions that are vulnerable to different natural disasters, and their ability to recover from shocks is generally low. Disaster affected communities require rapid emergency response to protect their lives and restore livelihoods. LI-BIRD will respond to disasters, both during and after, through a phased approach helping disaster affected individuals and communities to rebuild their family farming and restore livelihoods. In this strategy period, building on the valuable experience gained from the 2015 earthquake response, LI-BIRD will strengthen its institutional emergency response capability by forging partnerships with selected humanitarian organizations, and by mainstreaming emergency preparedness and response plans in its programmes.

To achieve this objective, within five years, LI-BIRD will:

» Identify and establish partnerships with selected humanitarian organizations to build staff and partners’ capacity, and to respond to emergencies effectively;
» Develop an emergency preparedness and response plan, and roll-out the plan at all levels of the organization;
» Integrate emergency preparedness and the response plan in ongoing and new programmes; and
» Establish and manage an Emergency Response Fund (ERF) for rapid emergency response.

Phased Approach to Rebuilding Family Farming, Livelihoods and Resilience

Phase 1: Livelihood Provisioning

Relief based interventions or activities that provide food, shelter, water, medical, and other essential life saving needs for households immediately after the disaster.

Phase 2: Livelihood Protection

Interventions/activities that prevent further deterioration of household productive assets and replacing or rebuilding productive assets.

Phase 3: Livelihood Promotion

Interventions that improve the resilience so that food and other basic needs can be met on a sustained basis by the household.
KEY AGENDA FOR ACTION

Achieving LI-BIRD’s goal and strategic objectives requires collective action, commitment and teamwork. LI-BIRD will take action in five significant areas to ensure that LI-BIRD is best positioned to make its mark.
1. Strengthen institutional governance

Building on past success, the institutional governance will be further strengthened. A time-bound corrective action plan will be developed, implemented and monitored in key identified areas where improvements are needed. Current policies will be reviewed and improved, and new policies will be developed where necessary.

**Within five years, LI-BIRD will undertake the following key actions:**

- Strengthen its internal control system, especially internal audit management, and automate accounts/finance, procurement, and human resources databases to improve work efficiency;
- Build capacity of staff and partners on internal control; and
- Develop new policies (notably governance, common cost, and conflict of interest), update current policies (notably LI-BIRD’s constitution, finance, procurement, and human resources), and enforce implementation.

2. Continue to be the partner of choice for greater impact

Partnerships and networks are critical to pursue research and development work and to generate impact. LI-BIRD’s technical expertise is increasingly sought by various stakeholders, including government agencies, UN agencies, national and international NGOs and the private sector. Capitalising on our growing partnership base, we will broaden our collaboration that generates ideas, integrate/exchange expertise, and leverage resources.

**Within five years, LI-BIRD will undertake the following key actions:**

- Broaden its partnership base by including the public and private sectors and emerging funders;
- Work with multiple sectors to generate new ideas, building synergies and strengthening LI-BIRD’s implementation capabilities; and
- Leverage 20-25 percent additional resources from public and private partners and beneficiaries to supplement donor funds.
3. Strengthen programme quality and service delivery

LI-BIRD will focus its programming where the greatest opportunities for impact exist in relation to its impact group and strategic programmes. LI-BIRD will continue to plan responsibly and find efficiencies as it advances implementation of its strategic programmes. LI-BIRD will remain prudent with resources and agile in its process, maximising the use of resources for delivering quality services.

As an integral part of strengthening its programme quality and service delivery, within five years, LI-BIRD will undertake the following key actions:

» Realign current Western, Central and Eastern Cluster Coordination mechanisms with the new federal governance system and institutionalise the mechanisms to promote decentralised programme management, cross-fertilise learning, generate programme synergies, and leverage resources both within and between clusters;
» Promote a multi-sectoral joint field monitoring system in the form of travelling seminars involving key policy makers, development partners, and other key stakeholders, for wider sharing and learning; and
» Develop and implement a comprehensive system, process, and procedures for effective project start-up and exit.

4. Invest in leadership and human resource development

LI-BIRD’s work effectiveness and efficiency is closely linked to the competencies and expertise of its human resources. The development of new generation leadership is important to sustain and strengthen organisational performance. In this strategy period, LI-BIRD will invest strategically in the professional development of its human resources and mobilise talents to achieve its goal. LI-BIRD will increase its focus on building leadership skills of emerging leaders in the execution and management of priorities as set out in this strategy.

Within five years, LI-BIRD will undertake the following key actions:

» Identify potential staff whose leadership merits special investment, and support them through grants for higher studies and Tailored Made Training (TMT) courses;
» Ensure that LI-BIRD staff make significant contributions in their field, emerging as experts and leaders, and take accountability and ownership of decisions;
» Strengthen the adaptive succession management plan, and undertake corrective actions in staff hiring, orientation, capacity building, and retention of women staff and emerging leaders; and
» Take affirmative action to ensure that at least 40 percent of LI-BIRD’s workforce is women, and three or more key positions are held or led by women leaders, and that at least 36 percent of LI-BIRD’s Executive Board members are women.
5. Align programme operations structure and service delivery mechanisms with the new federal governance system

Currently, Nepal is in the process of restructuring the state and transitioning to a new federal governance system. This restructuring process is expected to promote decentralisation of structures and devolution of authority and resources, with increased resources available to local government for local development. As the context in which we work will continue to evolve these changes will have a number of implications in terms of how we work, especially during the transition period, and our relevance and effectiveness will depend on our ability to learn and adapt.

During the transition period, LI-BIRD will undertake the following actions (but not limited to):

» Orient staff and partners about the role, responsibility and function of local federal government, and the potential opportunities and challenges for partnerships in delivering services;

» Work closely with local government to support the transition process, and learn about how research and development activities may be planned, resourced and implemented under the new federal governance system, and

» Align LI-BIRD’s current programme operations structure, service delivery mechanisms and policies/guidelines with the new federal governance system.

ACHIEVING SUCCESS:
TRANSLATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN INTO ACTION

Successful implementation of this strategic plan will depend on LI-BIRD’s ability to learn, adapt and change. As the context in which LI-BIRD works continues to change, and as experience working towards the strategic objectives is accumulated, LI-BIRD will remain flexible.

In order to translate the strategic plan into action, LI-BIRD will:

» Develop a time-bound detailed implementation plan for each of the strategic programmes, cross-cutting themes and key agenda for action, and allocate adequate resources to effectively implement them;

» Socialise/roll-out the strategy and action plan with staff, the Executive Board, members, partners and other key stakeholders;

» Strengthen field monitoring of its programmes, and periodically discuss the implementation of the various elements of the strategic plan, especially implementation progress and challenges, with the Executive Board, partners, and other key stakeholders, and adjust course as necessary, and

» Plan for, and conduct periodic programme audit, mid and final evaluation of the strategic plan, in order to make necessary adjustments resulting from a changing operating environment, and to inform the next strategic planning cycle respectively.