Cordaid

BUILDING FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES

Terms of Reference (ToR):

Strategic Partner Mapping

Cordaid Ethiopia | October 2026

1. Background and Rationale

Lasting progress in humanitarian action, development, resilience and systems change is beyond the reach of any one organization working alone. It requires genuine partnerships that combine the knowledge, resources, capabilities and perspectives of many different actors, from local communities to national and international institutions.

In practice, many partnerships in the sector have been shaped by single projects and the donor funding attached to them. While this model has helped deliver results, it often keeps relationships short-term and transactional, leaving little room for building trust, learning together, strengthening institutions or pursuing a shared long-term agenda.

Guided by the Cordaid Partnership & Alliances Policy (2026), Cordaid Ethiopia is building a portfolio of strategic partners: organizations that share Cordaid's commitment to:

- Locally led development
- Humanitarian principles
- Social justice and inclusion
- Community resilience
- Systems strengthening and sustainable development outcomes
- Mutual accountability and learning

Such partnerships go further than individual projects or funding opportunities; they rest on complementarity, trust, shared learning and collective impact. Through the Strategic Partner Mapping and Identification Process, Cordaid Ethiopia will identify, assess and engage organizations with which it can build long-term relationships that advance Cordaid's mission at national, regional and community levels.

2. Purpose of the ToR

This ToR serves two purposes. First, it guides the design, launch and implementation of Cordaid Ethiopia's Strategic Partner Mapping and Identification Process. Second, it informs prospective partners about Cordaid Ethiopia's partnership approach, principles and expectations, and invites them to take part by submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI). It sets out a transparent and structured framework for:

- Identifying and mapping prospective strategic partners
- Assessing strategic alignment and organizational complementarity
- Developing a portfolio of partners for long-term collaboration
- Enabling joint resource mobilization and collective impact
- Formalizing strategic partnerships

3. Objectives

Through this process, Cordaid Ethiopia seeks to:

- **Build a diverse strategic partnership portfolio.** Bring together organizations with the expertise, legitimacy and commitment to advance humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, resilience and systems-change goals.
- **Strengthen locally led development.** Reinforce the leadership, agency and decision-making power of local actors and communities, including organizations that enjoy strong community legitimacy.
- **Facilitate joint resource mobilization.** Nurture long-term relationships through which partners can jointly pursue funding and innovation opportunities.

4. Definition of Strategic Partnership

Cordaid understands a strategic partnership as a long-term, equitable and mutually beneficial relationship between organizations with common goals, values and commitments, which join forces to achieve collective impact through joint action, learning, capacity strengthening, advocacy and resource mobilization.

Unlike a transactional, project-based arrangement, a strategic partnership is grounded in:

- Shared vision and values
- Mutual accountability
- Trust and transparency
- Long-term commitment
- Shared governance and power sharing
- Joint learning and innovation
- Resource complementarity
- Locally led development and institutional strengthening

5. Scope and Types of Partners

Cordaid Ethiopia may engage strategically with different types of actors. The most suitable partnership model will depend on strategic relevance, the operating context and the objectives both parties wish to achieve.

5.1 Civil society organizations (the focus of the Expression of Interest under this ToR)

- Local and national NGOs
- Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)
- Women-led organizations and Women's Rights Organizations (WROs)
- Youth-led and youth-serving organizations
- Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)
- Refugee-led organizations
- Grassroots organizations, social movements and community networks
- Social enterprise organizations

5.2 Other actors

- Government institutions: federal institutions, regional governments, local government structures and public service agencies
- Academic and research institutions: universities, research centres, think tanks and professional associations
- Private sector actors: responsible private-sector organizations, financial institutions and innovation hubs
- Networks and alliances: ACT Alliance members, Caritas organizations, Dutch Relief Alliance members, consortium partners, and national and regional platforms

(Note: The EOI process described in Section 8 is open only to the civil society actors listed in Section 5.1. Engagement with the actors listed in Section 5.2 will take place through separate and appropriate channels, such as alliance and consortium arrangements and government coordination mechanisms, guided by the principles of this ToR where relevant.)

6. Areas of Collaboration

A strategic partnership may involve one or more of the following areas of collaboration:

- **Programme design and delivery:** joint needs assessment, co-design of interventions, joint implementation, humanitarian response and systems-strengthening initiatives
- **Resource mobilization:** joint proposal development, consortium building, strategic fundraising and donor engagement
- **Capacity strengthening:** organizational development, technical assistance, peer learning and leadership development
- **Research and innovation:** evidence generation, piloting innovative approaches, operational learning and knowledge management
- **Advocacy and influence:** policy dialogue, joint and collective advocacy, and systems-change initiatives
- **Community engagement:** community and social accountability mechanisms, citizen participation and locally driven solutions

7. Guiding Principles, Selection Criteria and Partnership Commitments

Cordaid Ethiopia is looking for partners whose mission and values closely match its own, and intends to work with them as co-owners of impact in programme design, delivery, learning and influence. The principles of the Cordaid Partnership & Alliances Policy (2026) shape both how partners are selected and how partnerships are managed. These principles are reflected in the criteria below.

7.1 Shared vision, values and strategic alignment

Partners should show that their work is aligned with Cordaid's mission, values and strategic priorities, and that they are willing to collaborate over the long term and contribute to shared strategic objectives that go beyond individual projects.

7.2 Institutional capacity and governance

Partners are expected to have sound structures, leadership and governance that enable accountable programme delivery, supported by functional systems for programme management, financial management, procurement, safeguarding, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL). Cordaid acknowledges that organizations are at different stages of development. Where capacity gaps are identified, they will be addressed through mutual capacity strengthening (see Section 7.7) rather than treated as an automatic barrier to partnership.

7.3 Technical expertise and sectoral relevance

Partners should bring technical expertise or relevant experience, consistent with their mandate, in areas that advance humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, resilience and systems-change objectives. Emerging organizations that offer strong contextual knowledge, community engagement and innovative approaches are equally encouraged to apply.

7.4 Community legitimacy, geographic presence and contextual access

Cordaid Ethiopia places high value on community trust, local knowledge and the ability to work effectively in complex settings. A strong presence in Cordaid Ethiopia's focus areas, including hard-to-reach and underserved locations, will be an important consideration; however, organizations working in other areas are also welcome to express their interest.

7.5 Equitable partnership, shared power and mutual accountability

Partners should be willing to engage in joint planning, shared decision-making, open dialogue and reciprocal accountability for agreed results, within a relationship grounded in trust and mutual respect.

7.6 Safeguarding, integrity, compliance and risk management

Partners must show a clear commitment to safeguarding, accountability to affected populations, ethical conduct and minimum compliance standards, including financial integrity, transparency and sound risk management. Operational, financial, safeguarding, security and reputational risks will be identified and managed jointly.

7.7 Mutual capacity strengthening

Cordaid sees partnership as a two-way process. Partners are expected to be open to institutional strengthening, peer learning and joint investment in systems and capabilities over time, while also sharing their own expertise with Cordaid and other partners.

7.8 Mutual commitments

Cordaid Ethiopia commits to:

- Promote equitable partnerships based on shared decision-making, transparency and mutual accountability.
- Ensure that partners' perspectives and expertise shape joint planning and programme design.
- Invest in mutual capacity strengthening and organizational development.

- Address risks, challenges and adjustments to the partnership through fair and transparent processes.

Partners commit to:

- Actively contribute to shared objectives through leadership, technical expertise and community engagement.
- Uphold safeguarding, compliance and accountability standards.
- Take part in mutual due diligence and information sharing to support balanced and effective partnerships.

8. Partner Identification, Engagement and Portfolio Development Process

Cordaid Ethiopia invites the civil society organizations described in Section 5.1 to express their interest in becoming strategic partners. Applicants are asked to complete the Partner Organization Profile Form, which gives Cordaid an initial picture of the organization and its potential fit with Cordaid's mission and areas of work. The form has five sections: (1) General Information; (2) Organizational Overview; (3) Areas of Operation; (4) Institutional Policies, Procedures and Systems (self-assessment); and (5) Strategic Positioning and Partnerships. Completing the form is not a formal due diligence assessment.

The supporting documents listed in Annex 1 must accompany the form and can be uploaded through it as a single combined PDF file. Questions about the form may be sent by email to compliance-partnership-et@cordaid.org. Applicants are requested not to share confidential or sensitive personal data beyond the contact information required.

8.1 Application Procedure

Eligible organizations, as described in Section 5.1, may submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) by completing the Partner Organization Profile Form and attaching the supporting documents listed in Annex 1.

Applications must be submitted electronically through Cordaid's online platform, using the link below:

https://katie-ee.cordaid.org/x/uQNXd4Zs

Applicants should make sure that all required information and supporting documents are complete before submitting. Incomplete applications may not be considered in the review.

All information received will be treated as confidential and used only to assess suitability for strategic partnership, in line with Cordaid's data protection and information management requirements.

8.2 Submission Deadline

Expressions of Interest must be submitted no later than **30 November 2026 at 11:59 PM East Africa Time (EAT).**

Submissions received after this deadline will not be considered in the current assessment cycle. Cordaid Ethiopia may, however, keep late submissions in its partner database for future partner mapping and portfolio expansion exercises.

9. Implementation Roadmap and Selection Process

The Strategic Partner Mapping and Identification Process will be carried out in six stages:

Stage 1: Partner Mapping, Outreach and Expression of Interest (EOI)

Cordaid Ethiopia will carry out a structured mapping of organizations working in sectors and geographic areas relevant to its strategic priorities, alongside an open call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) to ensure broad participation and equal opportunity. In the spirit of mutual due diligence, information about Cordaid Ethiopia is available through this link so that organizations can assess their strategic fit before applying.

Stage 2: Screening and Strategic Alignment Assessment

Applications will be screened against the criteria set out in Section 7, including strategic alignment, technical expertise and comparative advantage, community legitimacy, geographic presence, institutional capacity, governance and organizational track record. Organizations showing the strongest alignment with Cordaid Ethiopia's partnership objectives will be shortlisted for further engagement. All applicants will be informed of the outcome of the review, and feedback will be provided where feasible.

Stage 3: Partnership Dialogue and Complementarity Analysis

Shortlisted organizations will be invited to structured discussions to explore shared values, strategic priorities, expectations and opportunities for collaboration. At this stage, Cordaid and each prospective partner will also examine how their resources complement each other, including technical expertise, human resources, networks, knowledge, community engagement, advocacy influence, and potential areas for joint action and resource mobilization.

Stage 4: Mutual Due Diligence and Organizational Assessment

Cordaid and each shortlisted organization will jointly carry out a comprehensive review covering governance and leadership, financial and operational systems, safeguarding practices, compliance requirements, programme management capacity, risk management, reputation and partnership readiness. Standardized tools and scoring methods will be used to identify strengths, risks, areas of strategic fit and priorities for mutual capacity strengthening.

Stage 5: Portfolio Selection and Approval

Drawing on the assessment findings, and considering strategic relevance, resource complementarity, technical strengths, community legitimacy, risk profile and potential for long-term collaboration, Cordaid Ethiopia will decide which organizations to include in its Strategic Partner Portfolio and will obtain the required internal approvals.

Stage 6: Partnership Formalization and Portfolio Management

Selected organizations will sign a Strategic Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), developed through a consultative process, that sets out shared objectives, partnership principles, governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities, mutual commitments, capacity-strengthening priorities and ways of working together. Organizations that successfully complete the assessment but are not immediately selected for formal partnership will be kept in Cordaid Ethiopia's Strategic Partner

Database and may be considered for future partnership opportunities, consortium initiatives and joint resource mobilization. Their profiles and assessment information will be updated periodically as new opportunities arise.

10. Expected Outcome

Through this process, Cordaid Ethiopia will build and maintain a diverse, inclusive and strategically aligned portfolio of partner organizations able to contribute to humanitarian, development, resilience and systems-strengthening objectives. Working through long-term, mutually accountable partnerships, Cordaid and its partners will increase their collective impact, strengthen locally led development, promote institutional learning and contribute to sustainable outcomes for the communities they serve.

Annex 1: Required Supporting Documents

The following documents must be submitted together with the Partner Organization Profile Form. When uploading through the form, please combine them into a single PDF file.

1. **Legal registration:** valid registration certificate or equivalent document from the relevant government authority.
2. **Governance documents:** constitution or by-laws, list of governing body members and organizational chart.
3. **Financial statements:** external audit reports and financial statements for the past three fiscal years. If no audit was conducted, please explain the reason in the form.
4. **Policies and procedures:** Finance and Accounting; Human Resources; Procurement and Logistics; Safety and Security; ICT and Data Protection; Project Cycle Management; Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL); Code of Conduct; Integrity; Safeguarding; and Complaints and Feedback Mechanism.
5. **Track record:** evidence of recent donor-funded projects (up to 10), such as award letters or final reports.