

The
**CARITAS
PARTNERSHIP**
Guiding Principles



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1. Preamble

We, members of the Caritas Confederation, commit ourselves to building our working relationships on the values and principles enshrined in these **Caritas Partnership Guiding Principles**. We acknowledge that cooperation based on these values is the best way to realise our full potential as a Confederation of Catholic organisations working for solidarity and social justice in the world.

We uphold the common vision expressed in the Caritas Internationalis Strategic Plan:

We want a civilisation of love which reflects the Reign of God, where justice, peace, truth, freedom and solidarity prevail, in which the dignity of the human person made in the image of God is paramount, where dehumanising poverty is no more and the goods of the Earth are shared by all, where the whole of creation is cherished and held in trust for the common good of future generations, where all people, especially the marginalized, oppressed and excluded find hope and are empowered to come to the fullness of their humanity as part of a global community.

2. Working Relationships

We acknowledge that different contexts require different kinds of working relationships that may not always fulfil the criteria for a real partnership. We maintain, nevertheless, that all relationships for a member of the Caritas Confederation should conform to the highest principles of Christian ethics and strive to embody the basic values of partnership.

3. What is Caritas Partnership?

Caritas roots its understanding of partnership in its Catholic faith. Partnership within the Caritas Confederation is an alliance that expresses solidarity between members of local Churches, that recognises all women and men as part of one interdependent global community, and that demonstrates a commitment to social justice and an overriding preferential option for the poor.

Authentic partnership means a long-term commitment to agreed objectives based on shared values, strategies and information. It is characterised by honest feedback and joint planning, accompaniment, transparency and accountability on both sides, and a genuine openness and sensitivity to the other's needs, feelings, expertise, experience and wisdom. It is based on mutual respect, trust and goodwill. Effective partnership brings solidarity among member organisations, other organisations that share our vision, and the communities and people with whom we work. Partnership aims to have a positive impact on the lives of the people we serve.

4. Our Commitment



We acknowledge that different contexts require different kinds of working relationships that may not always fulfil the criteria for a real partnership. We maintain, nevertheless, that all relationships for a member of the Caritas Confederation should conform to the highest principles of Christian ethics and strive to embody the basic values of partnership.

Core Caritas partnership values and principles drawn from the Social Teaching of the Church

Dignity of the human person

We strive to enhance and uphold the dignity of the human person at all times. We are guided by what impact our actions have on the dignity of the human person. We will also ask how the dignity of all persons is realised and expressed in social and economic structures.

Gender equity

Women and men make their own unique contribution to our world, together giving full realisation to that which is fully human. Where there is an imbalance in participation of men and women, we are the poorer in our work and in our relationships. In our Caritas organisations, partnerships and all our work, including decision-making, we commit ourselves to ensuring the full participation of women.

Social justice

The Reign of God is built on justice and love. Caritas activities aim to enhance the empowerment of the poor, and to transform society into a civilisation of love. The Social Teaching of the Church urges us to be promoters and facilitators of solidarity, peace and social justice.

The preferential option for the poor

We have committed ourselves to combating the dehumanising poverty that robs people of their dignity and humanity. We are guided by Christian Scripture to work for the liberation of the oppressed and an equitable sharing of the gifts of the Earth, helping the marginalized be responsible for their own liberation and development. We take up the cause of the poor as our own, putting ourselves alongside them.

Solidarity

The fruits of solidarity are peace, justice and human development. Our mission is to enhance solidarity with the poor, among peoples and communities. Through solidarity we express a firm determination and commitment to the common good. Solidarity is the value binding us together in the common vision of establishing a world where all human beings receive what rightly belongs to them as sons and daughters of God. Solidarity is a value inherent in Church organisations, but also shared by many beyond Church structures. This enables Caritas to be inclusive and truly Catholic by working with those who share this vision if perhaps not its Christian faith basis.

Subsidiarity

The promotion and strengthening of national, diocesan and parish Caritas and returning the rightful ownership of projects and development processes to local communities are part of the Caritas way of working.

How core partnership values influence our Caritas vision and way of working

Integral human development

For Caritas, development is based on a Christian, holistic



understanding of what the human person is, and embraces therefore human, spiritual and economic elements. We strive to develop the whole person, and transform unjust social systems.

Participation

Participation is an expression of human dignity and implies shared responsibility for the human community. Caritas is committed to development processes that prioritise active participation as the foundation of a democratic and inclusive society.

Sustainability and self-sufficiency

We will enhance sustainability and self-sufficiency and consciously reduce unhealthy dependency. Our relations aim at strengthening the autonomy and capacity of one another and strengthening the relationship with our own constituency.

Cooperation to achieve impact

We believe that cooperation built upon partnership values and principles offers the best prospect of having a real impact on the root causes of poverty. Through cooperation, we act with the marginalized in their cry for justice, human rights, freedom and reconciliation, and we work together on long-term commitments.

In addition, through collaboration with organisations based in local communities, or rooted in another faith tradition, we create bonds of shared values and action that validate a vision of an inclusive and just society.

Empowerment

Our goal is to help people develop and realise their full potential so that they can control and effectively use their local resources to meet their own needs.

Through integral human development and empowerment, we want to promote active and powerful local communities with members playing a significant role in civil society. We recognise the important place the local Church has as an actor in civil society.

Local ownership and joint responsibility

We acknowledge one another's autonomy and ownership of own development processes and strategic planning. Each partner makes decisions about its working areas and sets the final agenda for its work. As accompanying partners, we are co-owners and have co-responsibility for the programmes and their results. Having established mutual trust, we invite one another to influence the institutional decision-making and organisational behaviour of our agencies.

5. How We Work Together

We, Caritas member organisations, committed to our vision of partnership, will strive to make manifest these values in the way we work together.

Organisational Caritas partnership values

A learning culture

To enable us to work effectively towards our goals, we want to be dynamic learning organisations, reading the signs of the times, acknowledging the constant need to build up our own capacities and those of the poor. Thus, we can learn with life, respond to new challenges, and remain credible witnesses and actors, striving for the global common good in the contemporary and changing world.



Stewardship and professionalism

We will exercise stewardship of human, financial and natural resources that are entrusted to us for the benefit of the poor and in solidarity with the whole of creation. We commit ourselves to fighting corruption, nepotism, inefficiency and other forms of misuse of resources in an open and transparent way. We acknowledge that stewardship is intrinsic to our practice of partnership and intimately linked to building competency and capacity.

Respect, equality and mutuality

We will build our working relationships on goodwill and dialogue with respect, equality and mutuality permeating all parts of our relationships. We seek understanding about one another's contextual and historical background, constituency, relationships and linkages. We spend time together to learn and value the other's culture and experiences.

Transparency, openness, honesty, accountability and trust

We will build our partnerships on transparency, mutual accountability, openness and honesty, recognising these values as fundamental preconditions for the growth of our relationships. By practising these values, we will also build trust.

Implications of membership of Caritas Internationalis

Autonomy and obligations

Caritas members strive to balance their own autonomy with the obligations that arise from belonging to the Caritas Confederation. This balance is expressed in the working relationships and practices each member

adopts, both to suit their own organisations and partners, and recognising the implications of belonging to a universal network with broader goals. As Caritas Internationalis members in link with the local Church structures, we commit ourselves to:


- developing partnership relationships;
- applying the fundamental values and principles of partnership in our working relationships;
- promoting strategic planning, organisational development and capacity building;
- putting into practice Catholic Social Teaching.

Representation in another country and the integrity of partnership

The presence of a Caritas member in another country may pose challenges to partnership. We are of one mind in our conviction and determination that such representation must enhance Caritas partnership and not diminish it.

Should a Caritas Internationalis member need to establish representation in another country, the presence will be guided by these principles:

- such representation requires agreement with the local Bishops' Conference and consultation with the national Caritas;
- such presence in the country should be based on the vision, mission, values and principles expressed in the Strategic Plan of Caritas Internationalis;
- an open and honest dialogue should be established with the national Caritas aimed at building a sound working relationship based on partnership principles;
- programme involvement in the country should be discussed beforehand with the national Caritas office and, where applicable, with non-church local partners,



ensuring that national social pastoral plans are enhanced and that the activities do not undermine the policy and standing of the local Church.

Within this working framework it is anticipated that:

- representatives would have a thorough knowledge of Caritas partnership values and principles;
- close coordination with national structures and links with sub-regional and regional structures would be established and maintained;
- requests from the local Caritas for capacity building and organisational strengthening would be accommodated wherever possible.

Working with non-Caritas partners

Many Caritas members, while valuing the Caritas family as priority partners, also work with other organisations in this same spirit of partnership. In developing these partnerships, Caritas agencies undertake the following commitments:

- to work with respect for the values and ethos inherent in other organisations;
- to set out to those partners the values and principles underpinning Caritas agencies' vision and approach and indicate clearly any practical implications arising from these.

Conflict resolution

If we are unable to resolve a dispute that negatively affects our working relationships, we will call upon a third party, preferably from within the Caritas Confederation, to help find a mutually acceptable solution. This process will be guided by the Social Teaching of the Church and *the Caritas Partnership Guiding Principles*,

and mediation and arbitration mechanisms that are in accordance with the Caritas Internationalis Statutes and Rules will be used.

6. **Commitment**

We, members of the Caritas Confederation, commit ourselves to integrating these partnership values and principles into all our plans and ways of working to the benefit of the marginalized and oppressed whom we strive to serve.