

Micah Network Partnership Guidelines



Introduction

Micah Network is a global network of around 300 Christian relief, development and justice organisations and churches from around 74 countries, committed to integral mission. Micah Network's vision is a global evangelical Christian response to the needs of poor and oppressed communities which reflects the mandate given in Micah 6:8:

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.”

As members of a network of evangelical Christian development, relief and advocacy organisations, we relate to one another on the basis of our beliefs¹, shared values² and shared commitment to integral mission³. In responding to the circumstances of poor communities through integral mission, we often choose to work in partnerships. We take partnerships to be:

“mutually beneficial relationships of two or more autonomous bodies who share a common vision and are working towards a common goal” (Canadian Christian Relief & Development Association).

Partnership implies a level of mutuality in those relationships—a sharing of goals, aspirations, and power—that is extraordinarily difficult to achieve and sustain. Nevertheless, practising such partnership is of enormous importance to the Micah Network. The aim of these guidelines is to facilitate partnerships which both honour God, and provide an outstanding vehicle for integral mission.

The purpose of these guidelines is to clarify the types of partnerships and to highlight good practices among both Implementing Partners (IPs) and Supporting Partners (SPs). The relationships between the IPs and SPs are critical to their shared aspirations to respond effectively and compassionately to poor and oppressed communities.

In a rapidly changing world, Partners realize that their roles and positions vary over time and circumstances. At one point a Partner may be an SP involved in various types of partnerships with IPs. At the same time they may be in the position of IP in relationships with one or more SPs. These guidelines offer a framework that should be relevant to all these relationships, irrespective of the location or history of the Partner.

All members of the Micah Network are encouraged to endorse and adopt these guidelines as a framework for their partnership relationships, contextualising them within their own situation and locality.

1. See Micah Network Statement of Beliefs

2. See Partnership Values of the Micah Network

3. See Micah Network Declaration on Integral Mission

The basis of our partnerships

As a network of evangelical Christian development, relief and advocacy organisations, there is much that brings us together. We relate to one another on the basis of our beliefs and our shared commitments to integral mission. We are drawn together into active partnerships around common goals and tasks. We work together with the same hope of seeing new life flourish in poor communities.

In this document we identify principles and practices to guide us as we conduct our partnerships. They are underpinned by values that are integral to our faith—love, grace, truth, humility, accountability, faithfulness, justice, stewardship, trust and unity. We understand that as we apply these values consistently, we will build partnerships that are healthy in themselves and effective in what they achieve. We look to one another and to the Holy Spirit to help us to nurture partnerships that live out these values.

Types of Partnership

The basis of partnerships is that Partners are autonomous organisations with a primary accountability to their own constituencies in their own countries. Being autonomous, Partners vary in the degree in which they share values, goals, methods etc. Therefore, there can be considerable differences in the nature, intensity and level of engagement in the various partnerships. These include shorter-term, project-specific partnerships and longer-term organisational partnerships which include commitments at both project and organisational level. These guidelines focus on longer-term partnerships, but also have substantial relevance to project-specific partnerships.

Partnership Beyond Funding

The Micah Network recognises and affirms the considerable importance of partnerships between its various members—IP to SP, SP to SP, IP to IP—that are independent of any funding relationship. The sharing of knowledge, learning and information is often invaluable. The development of mutual affection and respect and the joining together in earnest and thankful prayer, are some of the richest benefits of authentic Christian fellowship.

Principles and Practices of Good Supporting Partners

In their role as Supporting Partners, the Micah Network members aspire to the following principles and practices:

1. Funding decision making

SPs will ensure clarity of all processes to obtain funding.

How?

- Clearly identify the key entry person/point for decision-making.
- Clearly communicate the necessary processes for decision-making.
- Provide clear time lines following visits as to when responses will be given.

This information will be included as part of the funding agreement.

2. Flow of funds

SPs will ensure the timely provision of funds.

How?

- SPs will match the scheduling of funding decision making to the requirements of IPs' implementation cycles.
- The schedule for funds payments will be included in our agreements.

3. Evaluations

SPs will seek to rationalize evaluations to individual IPs.

How?

- SPs will coordinate evaluation requirements and visits, and will ensure that IPs are fully involved in the design of the Terms of Reference for such visits.

4. Partnership agreements/MOUs

SPs will ensure clarity and completeness of all agreements.

How?

- These will be drafted together with, or in consultation with, IPs.
- Once signed they will remain in place for the term of the agreement, irrespective of leadership or organisational change of either Partner.

5. Organisational development

SPs are committed to better and more appropriate consultancy, training and other organisational development initiatives.

Therefore:

- SPs will select consultants with care and in consultation with IPs. Whenever possible, this will be someone from within the region of the Partner, who is sensitive to the local situation and culture.
- SPs are committed to support the development of leadership and governance structures and practice within the IP's organisation.

6. Duration of partnerships

SPs recognize the value of longevity in Partnerships.

Therefore:

- As far as possible SPs will commit to multi-year funding, for example, in 3 year blocks, subject to an annual review.
- In cases where funding commitments will not continue through to the completion of a funded activity, or are withdrawn for various reasons, SPs will do all they can to provide IPs sufficient warning and lead time to adjust.

7. Visits

SPs are committed to meaningful field visits by their staff.

Therefore:

- SPs will respect the wishes of IPs in respect to the format and timing of field trips.
- SPs will ensure relevant and prompt feedback.

8. Governance

SPs want IPs to contribute to the good governance of the SP organisations.

Therefore:

- While SPs believe that IP staff should not be involved in the SP's Board of Governance because of potential conflict of interest, we recognise the value and importance of including IPs in the SPs' processes of developing vision, strategy and budgeting⁴.
- SPs will aim to involve IPs in SP's organisational self-evaluations.

4. This will be piloted by Tearfund UK in their Partner Panel from September 2005

9. Cultural values

SPs will not impose external cultural values except those recognised in international law and practice.

Therefore:

- SPs will discuss, persuade and debate with IPs regarding the relevance and application of values external to the indigenous cultural context of the IP.

10. Advocacy

SPs recognize the importance of joint involvement in advocacy initiatives to combat poverty and injustice.

Therefore:

- SPs will engage with, enable and support IPs as they raise their voices against the causes of poverty, including those causes which originate in either the IP's or SP's country. The Micah Challenge is an appropriate vehicle for this involvement.
- SPs will also seek to involve IPs in their own campaigns as a means of giving greater authenticity to the message.

11. Environment of trust

The SPs are committed to create an environment of trust in all relationships.

Therefore:

- SPs will strive to maintain an open dialogue so that discussions can take place without fear of prejudicing funding decisions.
- SPs will explore ways in which we can hear and respond to feedback, concerns and grievances.

12. Continuity of relationship

SPs are committed to limiting the disruption caused by staff changes.

Therefore:

- SPs will try to ensure good handovers of institutional memory, history and corporate learning in the event of changes in the case of key interface personnel (e.g. Desk Officers).

13. Communications

SPs recognise the importance of clarity and timeliness of all communications to IPs.

Therefore:

- SPs will provide clarity as to the identity of the key entry person/point for communications, as detailed in the MOU.
- SPs will honour scheduling of all documents as agreed in MOU.
- When appropriate, SPs will inform IPs of any major changes to structures, policies, strategies, staff and systems which have significant effect on IPs.

14. Times of difficulty

As trustees, SPs are required to exercise our responsibilities with great care and commitment to due and just process.

Therefore:

- SPs commit to develop protocols that are transparent, fair and carefully articulated.
- SPs commit to following appropriate and fair processes in times of organisational crisis.

15. Prayer

SPs are committed to pray for other IPs and SPs.

Therefore:

- SPs will share concerns for prayer with both our own supporter base and our IPs.

16. Stewardship

SPs commit to be good and transparent stewards to maximise the resources available to IPs.

Therefore:

- SPs will ensure that our financial reports and accounts are publicly available.

17. Learning

SPs aim to be learning organisations, and we are committed to continually improve practice in order to maximise beneficial impact for the poor.

How?

- SPs will strive to learn from their own failures and mistakes, as well as from the best practices of others.
- SPs will encourage sharing of lessons learned and experiences gained.

18. Integral mission

SPs are committed to integral mission and transformational development.

Therefore:

- SPs will seek to conform to Kingdom values in seeking to achieve tangible results.

19. Effectiveness through collaboration

SPs commit to collaborate with like-minded SPs in order to pursue greater effectiveness.

How?

- Through sharing information and resources, as well as through solidarity and active collaborative initiatives.

20. Christian identity

SPs will maintain their Christian identity.

How?

- SPs will function according to Christian principles, and hire staff committed to these principles wherever possible.

21. Partnerships reviews

SPs recognise the importance of a regular reviewing of partnerships.

Therefore:

- SPs commit to a review of partnership at least every five years.

22. Flexibility and risks

While affirming the importance of firm guidelines and decision-making processes in our various partnership arrangements, SPs also appreciate that IPs can be confronted by changing circumstances and needs. SPs acknowledge IPs' need for flexibility and risk-taking, and understand there is a corresponding need for flexibility on the part of SPs.

Therefore:

- SPs will honour IPs by being open to the possibility of modifying existing partnership arrangements, such as payment schedules, reporting deadlines etc, after satisfactory dialogue and discussion.
- SPs will ensure appropriate internal systems, processes and commitments are in place to facilitate such flexibility.

Documentation

The SPs present at the consultation also heard and understood concerns raised by IPs regarding the administrative burden imposed on them by the different reporting requirements of SPs and the corresponding documentation. In response to this, the SPs present committed themselves to a joint process to try and develop generic guidelines and templates for proposal writing and reporting, in order to reduce this administrative burden. They committed themselves to a June 30, 2006 deadline for this process. Their intention is to then pilot the new documents.

Principles and Practices of a Good Implementing Partner

In their role as Implementing Partners, the Micah Network members aspire to the following principles and practices:

1. Integral mission

IPs are committed to integral mission and sustainable transformational development.

Therefore:

- IPs will strive to conform to Kingdom values as we work for tangible results through mobilising all local and external resources, and building local capacities.

2. Prayer

IPs are committed to prayer for other IPs and SPs.

Therefore:

- IPs commit to pray for partners and will share concerns for prayer.

3. Celebrating and crying together

IPs are committed to sharing with partners both our successes and failures.

Therefore:

- IPs will communicate our achievements, lessons learned and successes so as to celebrate these with Partners.
- IPs will also communicate our failures, struggles, pains and prayers for forgiveness and repentance.
- IPs will provide avenues (face to face) for dialogue, mutual learning, prayer, celebration and conflict resolution.

4. Organisational Autonomy

IPs will clearly articulate our identity, vision, mission, values, strategies, goals and purposes.

How?

- IPs will produce written documents outlining long-range strategic plans (encompassing vision, mission, purposes or goals).
- IPs have integrity and should be able to stand our ground. We will say 'no' if necessary, and stay truthful to our strategic plans, even if this means rejecting funding opportunities that would require a shift.

5. Governance

IPs should have an effective and functioning Board.

Therefore:

- An IP will ensure there are regular meetings of the Board, that Board decisions will be faithfully recorded in official minutes, and the CEO will be held properly accountable to the Board.
- IPs will make sure that staff policies/employment policies/constitutions or by-laws/MOU/MOA are in place, and that employment policies will include packages that are just/fair, able to attract, motivate, retain and develop staff.
- IPs will ensure that all staff, including key management staff, adhere to organisational policies laid down by the Board.

6. Leadership

IPs will be committed to renew/refresh leadership, and develop young leaders.

How?

- Through conscious planning for succession of leadership, ensuring the development of second generation leaders, and putting in place programs to build their capacity.

7. Christian identity

IPs will ensure that they retain their Christian identity.

How?

- The Core Leadership and the members of the Board will be Christian (unless overruled by local conditions).
- In cases where there is difficulty finding competent professional Christians, IPs may hire professional technical people who are sympathetic to their beliefs, values and ethos.

8. Openness

IPs will do all they can to ensure open and accessible communication and the flow of information between Board, staff and community.

9. Lawfulness

IPs will follow the law of the land.

Therefore:

- IPs shall aim to have legal identity and as much as possible abide by the law of the land, unless this clearly conflicts with Biblical principles.

10. Transparency and accountability

IPs will be accountable and transparent in the use of resources, and as open as possible in their communications to all stakeholders, including beneficiaries.

How?

- IPs will ensure that good systems and structures are in place, that the budget is followed, that best financial practices are adhered to, and an external audit is undertaken annually.
- IPs will provide their Board with clear, systematic and regular reports, that will be forwarded to donors. IPs commit to accurate, timely reports and feedback to SPs based on agreed format of reporting and time schedules.
- Documents reflecting resources (e.g. finance) will be accessible to relevant people concerned, wherever it is appropriate.

11. Networking and collaboration

IPs will avoid duplication and promote efficiency.

How?

- IPs will aim for collaboration and networking with Christians and other like-minded organisations, to avoid duplication of projects and to promote the sharing of resources and solidarity.

12. Monitoring and evaluation

IPs will be committed to regular participatory and collaborative monitoring and evaluation.

How?

- IPs are committed to involvement in the drafting of Terms of Reference for monitoring and evaluation, choice of evaluators, the process of evaluation, and the learning from the outputs of evaluation.
- IPs will be committed to an effective monitoring system.

13. Partnerships reviews

IPs are committed to regular reviews of our partnership, and believe this should be done at least every five years.

14. Authentic partnerships

IPs desire authentic partnerships with SPs.

How?

- By linking up with SPs with whom they have the highest level of compatibility and with whom partnerships can be made that include mutuality in decision-making, funding, capacity building, learning, monitoring and evaluation.

15. Learning

IPs aim to be learning organisations.

Therefore:

- IPs will seek to learn from failures and mistakes as well as from best practices of our own and others.
- IPs will encourage sharing of lessons learned and experiences gained.