



# Partnership Policy

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# Partnership Policy

**CKU consider North-South partnerships as being the pathway for desired social change as development activities are channeled and fostered through them. Partnerships must express basic values in internal interaction. If we as partners in development do not listen to each other, how can we claim that we, as development practitioners, listen to our constituencies? If we do not share power in our partnerships, how can we claim that we basically undertake participatory projects and processes?**

**Forming more equal, mutual and creative partnerships is an essential part of the path towards a fairer world.**

**This policy aims to strengthen the relationships of members and their partners when it comes to mutual ownership, accountability, participation and equality. CKU's partnership policy is dealing primarily with North-South partnerships, but it is also important that the key principles be applied to partnerships among CKU and member organisations and other partners in the North.**





## Rationale: Why partnership?

Partnerships between Northern and Southern civil society organisations are fundamental to civil society development according to Policy for Danish support to civil society (2014) and CKU's experience. If partnerships are absent, the poor of the Global South will be left to their own governments and authorities alone. Civil society partnerships express global solidarity in a way where it is possible for the involved citizens - in the global North and South - to be part of change processes. And recent evaluations have proved that civil society partnerships can indeed work as pathways for change.

## Use and misuse of the term “partnership”

In the development sector there is no doubt that the word “partnership” has been used and misused. “Partnership” has been taken to mean commercial relationships, very unequal relationships and quite close civil society relationships with both parties having a genuine say. Cynics might then argue that the term “partnership” should not be used anymore as it has lost considerable meaning. CKU wishes to keep the term “partnership” due to fundamental values and also practical experience. The term “partnership” should, however, be used in a more precise manner as the content and meaning of different concrete partnerships might differ significantly due to historical reasons. Furthermore, CKU wishes to describe the good partnership as a vision or an ideal, as something to strive for rather than describing one particular type of relationship.

## History of CKU and Members' Partnerships

Many partnerships in the CKU network have a long history, dating back 100 years or more. Other partnerships with newly established churches and organisations in the South are younger. CKU members and partners are part of the global history of Christianity where, in time, old churches laid the foundations for new churches and accompanied each other as partners. This history has - as have other global histories - partly been one of cultural clashes and of shifting dominance. However, world Christianity has also demonstrated a history of giving dignity and tools to voice rights to those that are dominated. This is important in a globalized world where strong political and economic interests increasingly polarize the haves and have nots.



# Lessons learnt on mutuality and appreciation

## Introduction to mutuality

Research points out that exchange and appreciation is fundamental for all human relationships. Early anthropologists perceived exchange as a fundamental human feature. People can only take part in relationships if they exchange food, goods, words, or (signs of) appreciation - a sense of mutuality. If a person is exclusively indebted or being seen as indebted, this would mean that this person's contributions are absent or that they are

not seen and appreciated. Such a person will be reduced to being a receiver of assistance and lose dignity, and thereby also motivation and responsibility. Appreciation means that the other partner acknowledges one's contribution as valuable for the relationship. Relationships can thus be maintained between people with very different attributes to offer. Partners in any relationship contribute something different to the re-

lationship. In terms of international relationships there could be examples of the Southern partner contributing legitimacy, a will to cooperate and valuable input while the Northern partner provides the financial means, supervision and access to experience from other partners. Professional development related input can come from the South and/or North depending on the circumstances.



## Vision

**CKU's vision of the good partnership based on Christian values:**

**VALUES:** Shared values and a vision of reaching out to the poor and marginalised

**LONG TERM COMMITMENT:** Walk the path together

**MUTUALITY:** Learning from each other and appreciating each others' contributions

**EQUAL INFLUENCE** in strategic decisions. Rights and obligations of partners spelled out

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY** to each other and to constituencies in the North and South





## CKU learning assessment on mutuality in partnerships

The CKU learning assessment found that it is often difficult to identify and track the intangible contributions Northern partners receive from Southern partners, as opposed to the more tangible flow of funds from the North to the South. Nevertheless, CKU member organisations do feel privileged by being involved in international development work. Keywords to describe motivation are ‘to make a difference’ and ‘to strive for a fairer, more equal world’. CKU members are most critical of individualistic and commercial streams in Danish culture. For them to be a part of international development is also to do something meaningful as a counter culture. This counter culture gets its inspiration and life from Southern family and community values. However, this inspiration from South to North should not be isolated to the personal and cultural level. The scope should be widened to include more strategic input to the Northern partner e.g. within organisational development, including relations to members and constituencies, and sharing of knowledge and experience with other (non-faith based) institutions.

The obstacle to get to that point basically rests on the Northern partner’s willingness to devote enough time to share and learn, and hence make different contributions visible.

Through learning processes, Southern partners mention repeatedly that Northern partners are too busy to take the time to learn and share. As seen from their perspective, Northern partners only take time for planned (business) agendas and thereby deny themselves the chance just to be present and appreciate the good work done. If there is no time to see, listen and experience, there is little opportunity to appreciate the work being done and this can be interpreted as a kind of neglect of Southern contributions. Thereby Southerners point to the essential dimensions of human interaction as an integral part of partnerships - visits are not just a question of getting valid data, visits are also about presence and attention. Proper attention is essential for motivation and again, results.



# CKU's vision of The Good Partnership – five principles

## Principle I: Shared values and a vision of reaching out to the poor and marginalised

The values of CKU's members' partnerships are derived from the Gospel. God's commitment to relationships can be seen first in the Creation story where man and woman are called to be together and to be stewards of the common good. Secondly, the commitment to relationship appears in the Old Testament covenants, where God is walking with his people in the desert and shares their suffering and struggle. In the New Testament, the story of Christ could be seen as expressing the power of God's will to relate to powerless and imperfect people, even to the extent that He wished to share the human condition. The life of Christ showed that life

is about reaching out to those beyond one's immediate surroundings and share the goods and sufferings of life with others farther afield.

### Partnerships should practice what we preach

Biblical models tell us that life is found in partnerships with others. It is emphasized that human relationships need particular attention and focus to thrive and blossom. If given attention, these relationships are able to reach out to poor and marginalised people and make a positive change. Biblical commitment to relationships

should inspire CKU member organisations and their partners and it should also in turn inspire their relationships to the people they serve. For CKU, an ideal partnership is thus a long term relationship between partners founded upon shared values and objectives to improve the lives of poor and marginalised people. An ideal partnership is also about mutual recognition and respect for different values and identities that each party brings to the relationship. It should be acknowledged that in practice such an ideal partnership resembles secular humanist ideals or rights-based ideals (though the sources

of inspiration differ). CKU consider North-South partnerships as being the pathway for desired social change as development activities are channelled and fostered through them. However, these human partnerships are not simply just instrumental. Partnerships must express basic values in internal interaction. If we as partners in development do not listen to each other, how can we claim that we, as development practitioners, listen to our constituencies? If we do not share power in our partnerships, how can we claim that we basically undertake participatory projects and processes?

## Biblical Foundation for Partnership: Commitment to relationships

In the Old Testament God is the Creator of life, inviting humans to protect mother nature and live in justice and peace with other forms of creation. This universal relationship to humans founded in Creation

is a fundamental premise throughout the Bible. The special relationship, the covenant God gave Abraham and Moses, was expressed in a special way that God accompanied his people on their way in the

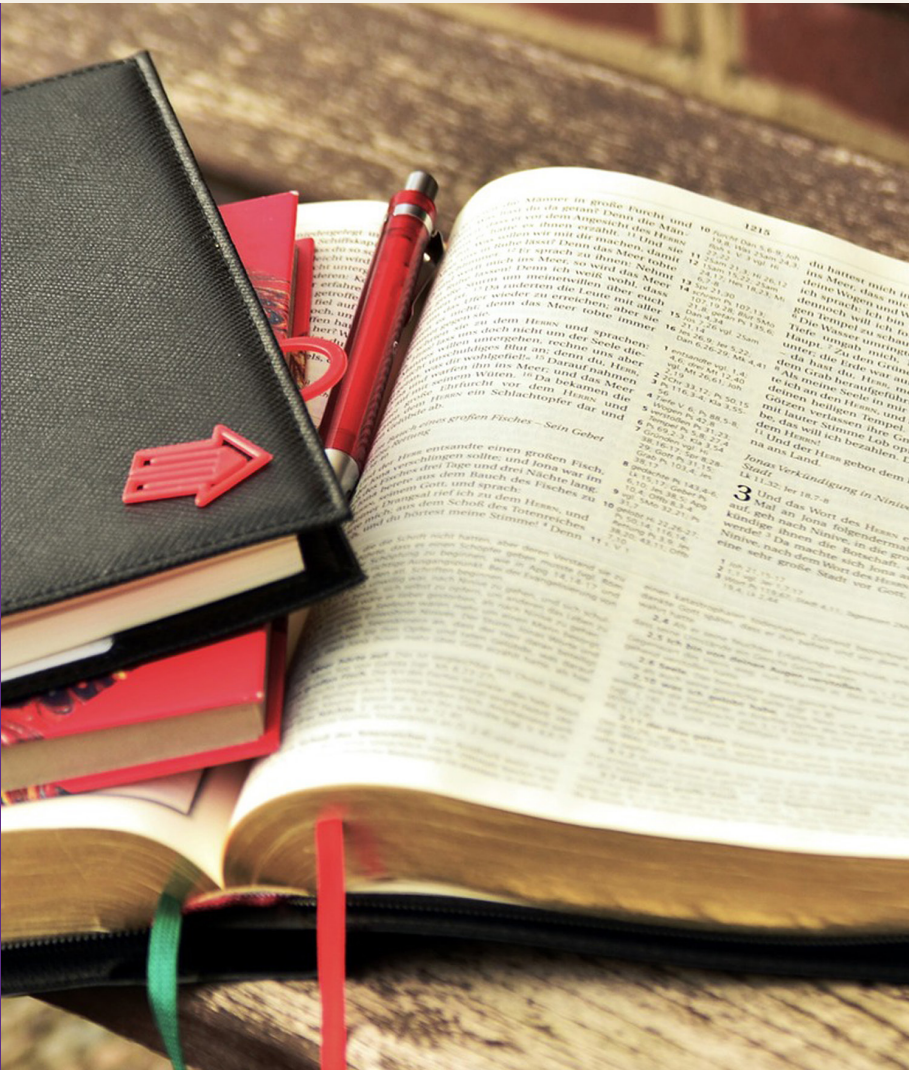
desert, in the day as a cloud, and in the night as a fire to light the path. This accompaniment later found expression in God's temple where heaven and earth met.

## Ultimate commitment to relationship: God as man

In the New Testament the dwelling of God among people is incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth. Due to his willingness to relate to people, God in Jesus gave up his freedom and became man among humans. Thus, the ultimate relation or cov-

enant established by Jesus in his accompaniment was making himself dependant upon people. The church claims that it is still possible to participate in the loving relation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is through the Spirit that people

experience God's presence and it is as a spirit that God promises to be continuously present among people.





## Principle II: Long term partnerships benefit the work we do together

The good partnership involves long term relationships beyond the time frame of a development project, enabling the possibility of living and staying together, following up by e-mail and visits. Throughout the history of Christian based development work, the backbone of the work has been long-term missionaries and development workers committing years to partners and its members and constituencies. However, the pitfalls of dependency must also be taken into

account as they sometimes hinder interdependency. CKU does not think that a continued relationship necessarily generates dependency, but roles and responsibilities must be very clear and adjusted over time. On the other hand, human relationships are developed by working together and taking on various roles and responsibilities. Partnerships amongst CKU members and Southern partners cannot be reduced to singular activities and projects that

the partnerships produce, irrespective of how important and good that work is. The North-South partnerships express respect for others as people and as Christians. In turn, development projects give content, purpose and meaning to the partnerships themselves. In conclusion, partnerships built on trust and joint work over many years can indeed be important vehicles of civil society development.

## Principle III. Mutuality: Learning from each other and appreciating each others' contributions

CKU will work for greater mutuality in partnerships and appreciation of partners' contributions. The inspiration from South to North should not be isolated to the personal and cultural levels. The scope should be widened to include more strategic input to the Northern partner. CKU acknowledges that joint learning is essential to mutuality and this should be made visible by setting learning objectives for the partnership as part of forming such agreements. One useful way of delegating responsibilities in learning could be illustrated as follows: new lessons learnt in development will normally be situated in the South, yet the Northern partner might have better access to information and put these lessons into perspective by networking in the North. There will often be issues of joint interest that could be put on the joint agenda, which both partners can freely share. Setting up separate learning objectives can help lower the risk of branding 'partners' as simply 'colleagues in relation to a particular project' or 'recipient of

funds'. All too often condescending attitudes on both sides can be observed due to their funding relationship.

Learning objectives could include:

- Capacity development of organisations where partners could share experiences.
- Participation: How to keep members and supporters involved in the work?
- New methods in development work: applying new methods and/or including new groups in development work.
- Mobilisation: How to include poor and marginalised people themselves?
- Accountability: How to work with accountability in a broad sense, to live up to organisational values and objectives?
- What is leadership development in a context of Christian values?

- How to use faith as a resource in development work e.g. in organizational development?

*Mutuality in practice:*

CKU acknowledges another need expressed by Southern partners to meet as equals at corresponding levels, e.g. as board member or church leader levels, as far as possible. This might not be possible at every visit, but should be facilitated regularly.

CKU recommends exchanges which respect to cultural and organisational set-up of Northern and Southern partners. It is important that the duty and dignity of being the host changes hands. Southern partners express that they also wish to be part of our reality in the North, and thus that meetings are not always held in the South.

CKU recommends that the duty and dignity of being a host changes hands.



There is an African proverb saying "You do not bite the hand that feeds you". In North-South relationships, this is very well managed from this side.

*Mosi Kisare, Director of EASUN, East African civil society consultants*

## Mutuality is not:

- If the Northern partner is reduced to a funding channel and a controller of financial means and strategic direction without acknowledging the contribution of the Southern partner...
- If the Northern partner, out of bad conscience, does not want to express the wishes of the partnership nor aid its direction....
- If the Southern partner does not stick to expressed timelines despite agreements to do so without informing about the delay....
- If the Southern partner does not want to contribute, in an honest manner, to strategic discussions for fear of not saying what the Northern partner wants to hear...





## Principle IV. The Good Partnership practices equal influence in strategic decisions.

### Rights and obligations of all partners are spelled out

As far as possible, visibility of contributions and equality should be aimed for when making decisions regarding strategies and joint work activities. However, different starting points of the partners need to be taken into account and there needs to be honesty about what level of equality is possible and desirable as seen from both partners' perspectives. There will still remain inequalities in years to come, but these should be addressed and, as far as possible, be challenged. One specific place to begin is to aim for an even playing field i.e. that both parties have the possibility, including vocabulary and tools, to formulate their wishes. It might be that the Southern partner, partly because of its colonial past, might need extra encouragement and possibly also training to get to a clear formulation of their wishes vis-à-vis the Northern partner.

#### *Strategy development of Southern partners*

In particular when it comes to the strategic level, it might be difficult for some

Southern partners to formulate their wishes. Through a CKU learning process in 2009-10, Southern partners expressed a wish to have their own strategy development, enabling them to consolidate their own voice vis-à-vis their Northern partners, obtain more influence on joint strategic choices, and finally to influence donor priorities in the North. CKU supports strategic development of Southern partners. This support can take different forms, through support to short- or long term process consultants or conferences for Southern organisations where experiences are exchanged and strategies developed.

#### *North vis-à-vis South or the back-donor vis-à-vis the partnership?*

Private and public funds (e.g. Danida funds) have attached particular demands on reporting information according to the needs of back-donors. Sometimes these conditions are simply filtered through from North to South and presented as current demands from the donor.

CKU recommends that in case of project/programme funding, the attached conditions should be clarified from the beginning, as this will make it easier to see which demands are from the back donor and which come from the Northern partner organisation. Anecdotally, private donors would like to use popular images of children for publications, whereas public donors such as Danida will demand reports and LFA formats. Any external donor conditions/demands attached to the funds should be clear and divided amongst the North and South. The aim is to make clear that by collaborating Northern and Southern partners are both dealing with back donor demands yet fulfilling different roles (rather than the Northern partner simply becoming a long arm of the back donor and Southern partner becoming the delivery section). If joint dependency on donor funds is clear, then the dignity of both partners is easier to guard and the mutuality and contributions in the partnership vis-a-vis external stakeholders will be clearer.

#### *What happens when we disagree later on?*

During the learning assessment in 2009-10 it was identified that a challenge to the current CKU partnerships was that there was no procedure to manage disagreement between partners. There is a need, first, to acknowledge that disagreements are a part of life in mutual partnerships, and second, suggest a procedure on how to solve those. At best there should be identified a third party whom both partners trust and someone who will be able to mediate. The existence of such a procedure could help partners avoid fearing that their very relationship is at stake in case of disagreements and enable proper handling of them. As there have been a few unfortunate examples of partnerships breaking down, it is worthwhile to give some thought on how to deal with disagreements – and to do so while the partnership is forwardlooking and enthusiastic. CKU recommends the existence of a procedure for conflict resolution and mediation as a part of partnership agreements.



# Principle V: Accountability and Transparency

*The added value of civil society partnerships - reflection, method development and advocacy:*

The added value of civil society organisations in the North and South has often been interpreted as technical knowledge often believed to be transferred by the Northern partner to the Southern partner. Added value should, however, be understood in broader terms. The added value of civil society partnerships rests on on-going reflection, method development and advocacy. Civil society partners can share experience and engage in dialogue regarding governance structures. As seen and voiced from Southern partners, Northern partners have an important role as advocates for the Southern partner’s vis-à-vis Northern donors. Southern partners expect that their Northern partners raise their concerns vis-a-vis Northern decision-makers regarding issues of global injustice e.g. access to markets, debt burdens etc. Hence, real life stories in the South can become faces i.e. powerful manifestations crucial to advocacy in the North. The added value of Civil Society organisations is their direct work for positive change and access to constituencies of poor and marginalised people - combined with possessing tools to act as their advocates.

CKU recommends that Northern and Southern partners reflect thoroughly on their added value and how their respective civil society roles can increase joint learning.



## *Legitimacy, accountability and transparency:*

Fundamental to these added values are the partners’ legitimacy, accountability and transparency. Northern as well as Southern partners will need to document their legitimacy and accountability, as they already need to document transparency regarding financial transactions. In CKU’s view, accountability is more than a technical term. Accountability could be defined as: ‘the process by which an NGO holds itself openly responsible for what it believes, what it does and what it does not do in a way which shows it involving all concerned parties and actively responding to what it learns’. (Slim 2002). CKU thus take accountability to be the overall approach of a civil society organisation to involve constituencies and to learning, but also to include more concrete parameters.

Few organisations are strong on every parameter, but all organisations should be strong on some:

- Having a legal status,
- Being representative of many members or a large constituency,
- Having democratic structures in place,
- Embracing a participatory approach to the work, giving poor and marginalised people a say,
- Being able to listen to criticism and incorporate learning,
- A history of service for the poor and marginalised,

## *Transparency*

Transparency is understood as openness in internal procedures, decisions and accounting. Tanzanian partners of Danish civil society organisations at the Danish-East

Africa Dialogue November 2009 pointed to the need of good governance and transparency in the South as an area to be improved. Transparency in the North could be improved as well, as few Southern partners have access to their Northern partners’ accounts, annual report etc. More insight into Northern partners’ priorities and policies will enable Southern partners to influence them. CKU intends to promote transparency, aiming at the very least to grant individual Southern partners full access to files, narratives, as well as accounts they benefit from.