



United States Catholic Mission Association  
Resolution on Building Effective Covenant Relationships

2012 Resolution

Building Effective Covenant Relationships

**PREAMBLE:**

Among U.S. Catholic mission groups a growing trend continues to be the phenomenon known as “twinning” or “partnership”, and which we will refer to as a “Covenant Relationship”. Along with a “preferential option for the poor” these mission groups, whether lay organizations, religious communities, dioceses, parishes or schools, strive to affirm genuine mutuality. For both parties of the covenant relationship, translating into action their desire to reach out to others in mutuality can be challenging, especially at the outset. Avoidable mistakes often occur, however, because one or both parties are unaware that valid tools are available to guide them in their mission endeavors. Through USCMA support of the following resolution many mistakes can be avoided.

**RESOLUTION:**

**Be it resolved that the United States Catholic Mission Association acknowledges, appreciates and endorses the use of the document produced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services entitled *Parish Partnership Manual*. Focused on building a covenant relationship, this document brings to the forefront and clarifies many of the best practices to guide both US mission groups and their international partners toward a mutually beneficial and sustainable relationship. It is based on solid Catholic Social Teachings and Traditions leading to solidarity, mutuality, transparency and subsidiarity.**

Link to the *Parish Partnership Manual*: <http://uspartners.crs.org/downloads/haiti/manual-for-partnerships.pdf>.

**RATIONALE:**

Although primarily focused on parishes and dioceses, the *Parish Partnership Manual* is easily adapted to the needs of other mission-conscious entities such as religious congregations and societies, schools and lay organizations seeking to enter into a mutually beneficial covenanted relationship. Past experience has shown that some relationships have soured and produced negative results due to inadequate preparation, poor execution, deficient formation, and fractured follow up. Flawed understanding of cultural context can lead to damaging results and may carry harmful effects for generations. The proposed *Parish Partnership Manual*:

- Supports the principles of sound stewardship
- Promotes and works within the guidelines approved for local communities and dioceses
- Encourages covenant relationships that promote mutuality and equality over “giver and receiver”
- Advocates development not dependency
- Urges the development of relationship first and then sharing finances
- Benefits the community and not the individual
- Advances sustainability over time
- Preserves a balance of power
- Respects the cultural context of both countries
- Sets reasonable goals of funding and maintains financial transparency
- Addresses root causes of poverty

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS:**

- Urge congregational and diocesan mission office personnel who are focused on “relationship building” to become familiar with the manual and consider adopting its principles
- Establish through USCMA a team of consultants to advance partnership development and assist with accountability and evaluation
- Work with consultants to develop a video or webinar which highlights the key elements and spirituality of “covenant relationships” in relation to mission
- Draft a “study guide” which promotes a clear understanding of “covenant relationship” and underscores that all mission activity presumes and nurtures mutuality between the persons involved