



Guidelines for Support in Partnerships

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Introduction

0.1 This document

This document serves as guideline for support for churches and Christian organisation with whom RMB I Verre Naasten engage in partnerships. RMB I Verre Naasten are engaged in worldwide Mission, on behalf of churches in the Netherlands. RMB stands for Regional Mission Boards in the Netherlands, that work on behalf of the associated congregations in the Netherlands, and in cooperation with partner churches and organizations in the mission region. Verre Naasten is the national organisation that supports the mission work of the RMB's. Verre Naasten is a Dutch name meaning 'Distant Neighbours'.

This document functions in coherence with two other key-documents: 1. The document '[General Policy Mission](#)', which describes how mission is comprehended by us and from which perspective the mission work is done. And 2: [the document 'Terms and conditions of PME'](#), which specifies on our way of working and general minimum requirements regarding planning, monitoring and evaluation of its project management for supported projects.

This document is intended for (possible) partners of RMB I Verre Naasten, but also for people directly linked to RMB I Verre Naasten: the governors of the national and Regional Mission Boards, as well as the staff of RMB I Verre Naasten.

The aim of this document is to:

- Inform (possible) partners about our policy concerning cooperation in programmes and projects, that might be supported.
- Facilitate common understanding of the way we work at different levels.
- Facilitate uniformity in our work.

We use the term 'programme' for indicating the framework in which the total set of activities of the partner, supported by RMB I Verre Naasten, takes place. In a longer term partnership we cooperate in a programme to reach certain goals (see further under 0.4). In this document we use the term 'project' for separate (sets of) activities, that have a certain time frame and a specified budget (for which support is agreed upon in project agreements).

0.2 What we do

In this chapter we describe what we do and our general guidelines; and we give information on cooperation programmes, projects and our roles and responsibilities. In the chapters 1 – 5 we add more specified information on fields of activities that might be supported. Important to keep in mind that there should be a direct or indirect link with the proclamation of the gospel in words and deeds. For practical reasons we make a distinction in the activities under five headings.

Before we focus on the aspects concerning support, we first shortly describe the work that RMB I Verre Naasten do. We undertake activities to:

Support partners worldwide

Our mission work is mainly being done by supporting activities of local churches, theological institutes and Christian organizations, in line with the objectives and values of RMB I Verre Naasten. Support can be done in the form of prayer, advice, knowledge, deployment of staff, and/or finances.

Facilitate and stimulate inter-organisational relations and learning

There are various ways to do this, here we mention three:

- Exchange visits is a way to actively interact and build relations and it can be a tool in bridging gaps between partners and helping to understand each other better, thus enhancing cooperation.
- We bring together Christians from different churches and cultural backgrounds for fellowship, trainings, courses or consultations. As churches and Christian organizations, we are given to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage and strengthen each other. Apart from celebrating our fellowship, we can learn from each other's expertise and experience for a) encouragement and inspiration by God's work through other churches/organizations, b) increased effectiveness, and c) improved quality of the work.

- We look for opportunities that lessons learnt and experiences in mission can be used for capacity building and if we can link partners to each other for encouraging and strengthening.

Maintain relations with congregations in the Netherlands

In the congregations of churches in the Netherlands, we share stories from the activities in Christ's worldwide church. With these stories we aim to:

- Raise awareness, thanksgiving, prayer, commitment and financial support for global mission,
- Learn as Dutch Christians from our brothers and sisters worldwide and inspire and encourage Dutch Christians to share their faith.

0.3 General guidelines

In the support of partners we pay attention to the following aspects:

- We view partnerships as cooperation between brothers and sisters, who are not all the same, but we are all equal. We appreciate relational aspects in our contacts as partners.
- We encourage networking with and between several partners, a.o. to avoid one-sided or exclusive partnerships.
- We work in partnerships as much as possible and join existing initiatives of partners, who show 'ownership' for the programmes and/or projects and a responsible involvement, among others in an own financial contribution.
- We value working with an overall conscious and consistent strategy and coherence in programmes and/or projects of partners and want to avoid support of 'ad hoc projects'.
- We strive to enhance desirable developments at two different levels:
 1. At the level of the overall organisation to increase the abilities to carry out core tasks and fulfill its mission effectively, efficiently and responsibly.
 2. At project level regarding sustainable results for the target group so that the current activities and ministries will be able to continue and/or will have a durable positive impact on church members and their wider communities.
- We value participation of various stakeholders in planning and implementation.
- We value cooperation in the local context.
- We value partners that know and understand the local context and take this well in account in their activities.
- Activities should fit in the local context (think of infrastructure, culture, law and rules).
- We value stewardship in using resources (human capital, materials and finances, nature/creation)
- We pay attention to practicing transparency in decision making and use of means as well as accountability.

0.4 Programme outline

Introduction

In general RMB I Verre Naasten cooperates in longer term partnerships; however support in partnerships is temporary. At the start of the cooperation, partners take into account that the support ends after a certain period.

In general, the partnership starts with the so called 'Orientation Phase'. In this phase, the focus is on building the relationship, getting to know each other as organization, and exchanging ideas about possible forms of cooperation. Normally, the orientation phase lasts about three years. If, after the completion of the orientation phase there is a common desire to continue cooperation, a longer-term partnership agreement will be made. The duration of a long-term partnership agreement is 4 years and renewable 4 times if relevant and necessary.

We value faithfulness in the cooperation, but faithfulness does not mean that the cooperation should last forever. Therefore, upon starting the cooperation, all parties included in the agreement are encouraged to work with clear and realistic goals in the given period(s) of agreement. They are encouraged to do their best to work well and finish off what was agreed upon.

During the partnership period we encourage our partners to invest in a broader network, so that other opportunities for cooperation may be established with other organizations.

Partnership periods

We mention in our Terms and Conditions, a period of cooperation that lasts (after the orientation phase) 20 years at most (5 periods of 4 years), of which the last period is the 'Phasing-Out' period. Thus, partnership, including the orientation phase has a maximum duration of 23 years.

Partnership Agreement

For RMB I Verre Naasten, collaboration is more than the sum of Project Agreements. To emphasize this, a Partnership Agreement will be drawn down separately from the Project Agreements.

Start partnership

The partnership will be discussed at the end of the 'orientation phase', together with a scan of the organization (O-scan). In a meeting (work visit) the cooperation as partners will be evaluated. If both parties want to continue the cooperation a partnership agreement will be made for the next period (mostly 4 years).

Partnership evaluation per period

Towards the end of each period with a partnership agreement, an evaluation of the partnership will be carried out in cooperation with the partner. This is a moment of reflection together with the partner on the overall relation and ways of cooperating and communicating. Also it will be discussed what has been achieved during the cooperation. The result of the considerations will be reflected in the if and if yes, how to renew the agreement, keeping in mind the limited overall period a partnership can last. The organisation-scan is also repeated every four year, so that follow-up and developments in the organization can be made visible.

Phasing out

RMB I Verre Naasten will work deliberately towards phasing out of the support at a certain point of time. It is helpful that partners and RMB I Verre Naasten agree on this from the beginning and consciously work towards that end. The last period of the partnership agreement mentions a period of 'phasing out'.

Normally the duration of the 'phasing out' period varies between 2 to 4 years, to avoid a sudden end, which may be harmful to mutual trust, or cause adverse effects on the ongoing local activities. And to facilitate a smooth transition to continue from own and other resources, after the financial support from RMB I Verre Naasten stops.

Keep in contact

Ending the partnership for the cooperation in mission does not mean ending of the relationship. There is always the possibility to agree on a way of keeping contact and meet each other. For example, during network meetings, international conferences, or by asking specific people for training/advice purposes, elsewhere in the networks. RMB I Verre Naasten sees the end of the support in the partnership as the moment where there is sufficiently invested in the partner, and the added value of a more intensive cooperation as sufficiently exploited.

0.5 Roles & Responsibilities

We have a relation as partners in Gods worldwide church, for the purpose of mission, so we engage in activities together and serve each other with our respective knowledge and experience. To enhance effective partnerships, RMB I Verre Naasten takes on several roles and responsibilities.

Roles

To enhance effective partnerships, RMB I Verre Naasten takes on several roles in supporting partners. Here we mention:

Capacity builder

Capacity Building is the role in which we help the partner to focus on its mission, formulate a strategy and be able to implement it. We believe it is important that capacity building pays attention to the different aspects and not limit it to the performance. It involves the internal organization (being, one's identity and ideals), its external linkages (relating) and its programme/project performance (doing) in its specific situation (context). We see capacity building as a process of change, that start with oneself. We see leaders as catalysers and find it important to consider the existing situation (strengths/challenges) and build from there. We strive for organic processes (thinking in small steps (interventions) and gradual strengthening. We can be involved in supporting processes which enables partner organisations to understand the needs for development and deal with those needs; to solve problems and to formulate and reach targets.

We also pay attention to the financial capacity and sustainability of partners. This is mostly done through sharing best practices and lessons learnt and linking partners with others in our network.

We underscore the importance of church members' contributions as the preferred source of income for churches. For NGO's attention can be paid to build up a track record and to grow in fundraising capacities.

Networker

A globally operating Mission Organization has the advantage to oversee developments in the field and have a network of partners. This could also benefit partners. Therefore, we take up the role of networker to connect partners to relevant networks and organizations, if this is in the interest of both stakeholders. RMB I Verre Naasten also enables partners to network by themselves, by granting financial space to explore relevant networks/partners in the own region. This also leads to partner diversification, avoiding overdependency between two partners.

Banker

We collect funds from churches and individual Christians in The Netherlands, from companies and from other sources like schools. These funds are being disbursed in many projects, in various countries all over the world. Granting support is based on project proposal. The coordinator Partners & Programmes has a role in advising RMB I Verre Naasten internally when a proposal is being considered, but final decision on support, is being done by other persons in our organisation.

Responsibilities

Partnership is the framework in which activities are supported and carried out. In the cooperation RMB | Verre Naasten have separate responsibilities. Final responsibility for the why, what and how of what is being done lies with the partner we cooperate with. However, we believe RMB I Verre Naasten also has a co-responsibility as partner to give shape to the work. There is a joined responsibility in using the limited resources well and it is important to take time for planning and regular reviews / evaluations together. This enables us to work consistently towards our mission and avoid the risk of ad hoc projects. How this is done, is determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the organisational capacity of the partner and the wider context. The work is being done in dynamic circumstances, that require regular reflection¹ and action planning for adaptations (required activities and support can shift).

This means that during the cooperation period, RMB I Verre Naasten plays a role in the process of planning of programs. The coordinator will be asking questions, sharing our vision and ideas, suggesting activities or a way of working etc. as it will help to formulate a common call and define areas in which we as partners are able to work together and complement one another. It is the responsibility of our partner to consider all, finalise plans and submit proposals with requests for support. RMB I Verre Naasten then has the responsibility to consider proposals and decide on what can be supported and under what conditions.

Implementation is the responsibility of the partner. In some cases, a specific part can be carried out by a worker of RMB I Verre Naasten or a third party, on request of the partner. The role that is then being expected should be discussed well and agreed upon together. In the case a worker of RMB I Verre Naasten had a role in implementation, the monitoring task at RMB I Verre Naasten will be done by somebody else.

¹ Think of questions like: Where are we now, what do we do and why? Is this still relevant? Is God showing us another way? Are circumstances changed? What should be continued? What added? What being done differently?

1 Strengthening churches

1.1 Introduction and definition of Strengthening Churches

Time, manpower and/or means are purposefully used to develop the church. Strengthening the church requires prayer, effort, time and organizational skills. Like constructing a physical object, building up the church requires an analysis of the existing situation, a clear plan (floor plan), means (building materials), education of and collaboration between workers (construction workers) and regular assessments/evaluations.

Our definition of Strengthening Churches is investing in the functioning of churches, with the goal of building up the church in such a way that she more and more becomes to be the radiant, stainless bride of Christ.

1.2 Possible activities for support

We distinguish several activities that can be supported when it comes to strengthening churches. Here we mention:

Training activities and Capacity Building trajectories

In our view, *training* people and *building* up their personal and organizational *capacities* play an important role in strengthening churches. The body of Christ exist out of people with many giftings and possibilities. In cooperation we focus on capacitating people and organizations. See also chapter 4, Education, for more specific description of what we are able to offer.

Networking

To enhance an open mind, learning and cooperation, we view connection with other churches or Christian organizations as important, especially in the same region. Examples: thematic conferences, courses or meetings to which several partners are invited.

Paid workers

For us a basic principle is that churches take the financial responsibility for their paid workers (pastors, but also for other functions). Temporary support can be offered by RMB | Verre Naasten, for instance by partly paying the salary of a church worker/coordinator who is responsible for church development activities. Such a paid worker is the employee of the church and preferably comes from the regions where the church is based. In some cases, a paid *church worker/coordinator from the Netherlands* can be made available to a church or organization, for a certain period of time. This church worker collaborates with local colleagues and aims at deliberate strengthening of the local capacities.

Church activities

Means for a *specific activity* for the church can also be supported on request, for instance by paying for transportation means, catechism materials, materials to support mission outreach (see Chapter 2) or the construction of church buildings.

2 Evangelism

2.1 Introduction and definition of evangelism

Evangelism is one of the core activities of churches. In our partnerships, we are interested to learn about our partners' vision, strategy and practices on evangelism and about lessons learnt in the past period on effectively reaching out to non-believers in their own context, with the Gospel.

Definition: Proclaiming the Gospel with the aim of bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ and guiding them to join the body of Christ in a local fellowship/congregation.

2.2 Possible activities for support

Evangelism activities carried out by church members

Church members are to be the primary carriers of the gospel message. Increasing. Under 1. Strengthening Churches and 4. Education, we elaborate ways to increase missionary understanding of church members. When talking about evangelism through church members, we focus on small scale projects with evangelistic purposes, organized by local church members. Generally speaking, churches should be able to raise own funds and mobilize own people to implement these projects.

In some cases, larger scale activities are being planned, these might need external support. One could think of organizing bible summer camps for youth, sport events, prison work, focus on specific groups in the city, f.e. slum dwellers and people working in construction. The activities are characterized by building longer term relationships and therefor demand longer term commitment of the people involved.

Church Planting

Church planting is a missionary initiative that, in principle, initiates from a church, a church federation or a church organization with the intention to start a church fellowship that eventually will multiply into new church fellowships. This can be implemented by either a church planter (someone who is officially employed by the authority from which the church planting originates and executor and/or leader of the project that should lead to church planting) or by a church planting team (a group of Christians who focuses on planting a church, in cooperation with a church planter or as team).

Regarding support for church planting, one could think of: payment of salaries of the church planter, investments in new buildings, materials for evangelism, etc. But also of: availing coaching, advice and training for church planters and church planting teams.

Evangelism through media

Evangelism through media is focusing on reaching out to larger groups of people with gospel content. Here also follow-up and relationship building is one of the important matters we look for when partners request for support.

Support can be availed for finance investments for movie production, radio broadcasts, initiatives enhancing the follow up of people reached with the content.

Bible materials

Translation of *Bible materials* can be seen as a supporting activity to evangelism. To reach people with the Gospel it is valuable to be able to communicate in local languages (mother tongue).

3 Diaconate

3.1 Introduction and definition of Diaconate

Telling the good news cannot go without being moved in love and caring for the needs in people's lives to whom the glory of God is proclaimed. The good news is announced by the Body of Christ (all members of the body), in its uniqueness and fullness through its words and deeds. We support diaconate to make known the good news of the love of God. For through diaconal activities God's love, mercy and justice become tangible and visible. Churches are called to care for people, in their churches and around them.

The term diaconate can be used in different meanings. For example: mutual material support among believers practiced by churches and its members. Here we use diaconate for activities in the society (the neighbourhoods of the churches), for believers and non-believers, with the aim of showing the love of Christ and building up the Church of Christ, under the responsibility of churches, or through professional Christian organisations.

Diaconal activities contribute towards social, political and economic peace and security for the whole creation of God. Diaconate aims to:

- Alleviate poverty by achieving self-sustainable capacity for those who receive help, so that they may be able to take responsibility and provide for their own need, either in- or outside the church.
- Promote stewardship and servanthood, so that people give of their plenty to supply the needs of vulnerable people.
- Preserving life and a safe environment for the wellbeing of all.

3.2 Possible activities for support

There is a lot of variety in diaconal projects in the above-mentioned sense, very much depending on the local situation. In some countries governments take responsibility for the social wellbeing of their citizens. In some countries there are only very meagre social services or the accessibility for all is a problem. People will look to the church for assistance. In their turn partners may ask us to support projects to provide in these needs.

We mention in general the following possible forms:

Income generating activities

Income generating activities: during a specific period of time, people are being helped for example through microcredit, to improve their living standards and generate sufficient income which results in sending children to school, or to add to the family income as evangelist/pastor, for example.

Sanitation

Awareness raising on *sanitation* (like, personal hygiene, access to clean drinking water, clean environment, fenced areas for cattle) in rural villages or slum areas to increase public health of communities.

Food & Nutrition security

On a bigger scale: programmes for regions enhancing *food and nutrition security*. For example through awareness raising and lobby and advocacy to ensure that existing facilities and programmes are being made use of by the population.

Equipping and training

Equipping and training can be supported, to encourage deacons and the members of congregations to become aware of diaconal functions and their own role in their congregations and their neighbourhoods. Denominations can also be supported in activities to get inspired and develop their own vision on implementation of diaconate in their churches (see also chapter 4).

Lobby & advocacy

Churches can play a role as a voice and advocate, being an organised player in the civil society. Support is possible for activities that enhance awareness of churches of this role, to draw attention to social problems and injustice. And/or to work on channelling designated government resources (e.g. in poverty reduction schemes) to local communities.

4 Education

4.1 Introduction and definition of education

Education is a broad field. It is an important part of churches' activities and in general a powerful means to build capacity and development. It is about building up awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Education contribute for example to:

- Advancement of the Church and the Christian community.
- Strengthening and growth in Christian identity and witness.
- Livelihood improvement through work and income so that people can better support themselves, their families and communities.
- Finding appropriate solutions for (theological) education for (church) leaders.
- Strengthening of the institutional capacity of partners.

4.2 Possible activities for support

In this field there is variety in projects eligible for support, depending on the local situation. In general, we distinguish four categories:

Schooling (primary and secondary and higher education)

In most countries governments take responsibility for formal education of its citizens. In some countries there are gaps in the offered services, or there is a wish for additional activities (f.e. in the field of strengthening Christian identity). Think of: pre-schooling, homework classes, reading and arithmetic help, equipping parents committees or school management, school library, facilities, educational tools). Through supporting Christian education, churches have the possibility to help children/youth of all faiths to get acquainted to Christian norms and values through examples given by Christian staff & students, and through that: become aware of the existence of Jesus Christ and His meaning to this world.

In some cases higher education can be supported, if there is a clear link with strengthening churches/missionary work.

Theological education

In our view good *theological education* of church leaders who can serve churches contributes to mission. There are many options to contribute to good theological education. Think of: scholarships, facilities, (guest)lecturers, processes for accreditation, for policy/design of the curriculum, developing sound management, or promoting self-sufficiency.

Non-formal education/training

The area in which *non-formal education* operates is wide. We mention here:

Life skills (Abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (social skills, being able to use the possibilities to join the labour market, literacy)

Christian leadership skills: educating, formation and training of competent and reliable staff and ministry workers (Sunday school, elders, deacons etc.) so that the church of Christ may be strengthened.

Technical, business, organisational and management skills

Capacity Building Trajectories for churches

Capacity building trajectories can help partners to reflect on their primary calling and task in mission. These trajectories can take shape in different forms, depending on the starting situation of the church. Mostly such processes take a couple of years in which several encounters take place, to make sure learnt lessons are being processed. In between these encounters, coaching is being offered for guidance while implementing.

Other capacity building activities

Under the area of education we also include slightly different activities that contribute to for broadening one's view, inspiration, exchange and encouragement. Think of participating in conferences and network meetings.

5 Emergency aid

5.1 Introduction and definition of emergency aid

Although we mainly focus on structural long term involvement in partnerships to help partners/their target groups to become resilient, RMB | Verre Naasten can support emergency aid activities in certain cases. When our partners are able to effectively reach out to those in emergency situations, we might support their emergency aid initiatives.

An emergency situation exists when circumstances deteriorate unexpectedly and rapidly due to a certain crisis. we distinguish different types of emergency situations:

- Natural disasters
- Violent conflicts
- Epidemics
- Other crises: Some countries or regions are located in a precarious and deteriorating political, economic or social situation. The difficulties in these countries can be aggravated by weak, emerging or disintegrating state institutions. Sometimes emergency aid can be necessary in those situations.

Emergency aid is mainly *short-term orientated*: help is offered during an acute emergency situation. In actual practice it is hard to say where emergency aid ceases and other forms of aid start/continue, especially in situations of long-term vulnerability.

Because emergency situations may arise unexpectedly and circumstances often change rapidly, emergency aid requires *rapid decision-making*.

We define Emergency aid as "The help and action aimed at saving human lives, the relief of suffering and the preservation and protection of human dignity in emergency situations."

5.2 Possible activities for support

Generally speaking, we are not the first stakeholder to support emergency aid.

Emergency aid requires specific expertise to be executed in a responsible way. From a logistical point of view, offering emergency aid is often a large and complex operation. Expert staff, a strong local network, use of a lot of equipment and a large budget are often needed for effective emergency aid. We have neither the expertise nor the necessary means to our disposal, while other Christian organizations are specialized in offering emergency aid.

We might support partners in an emergency situation with small scale *financial support* to help the affected in their area survive the emergency situation they are facing through short term projects for shelter, basic needs, medicines etc. This support is mainly provided to people groups in the direct area of operation of the partner.

For effective emergency aid, linking the partner to other professional (relief) organizations working in the affected area, is also an option.