

CBM “Pipelining” Policy

At CBM we encourage and promote a culture of generosity. As Canadians, we have been blessed with access to wealth in a way that most of the world’s Christians could not aspire to or imagine. Nevertheless, financial resources and our charitable disposition in Canada are not always simple responses to our partners’ complex needs.

The increased volume of international travel has created a need for education on the problems caused by this type of funding, known as “pipelining.” While long-term missionaries eventually see the problems pipelining causes, short-term volunteers often do not get the same opportunity.

As a rule, CBM discourages donors who feel compelled to directly fund projects of our international partners. We also do not facilitate the transfer of any funds for projects to our partners unless it is for CBM approved projects.

These types of donor requests usually come from an immediate desire to help with a situation about which they have seen or heard. Recent examples of such projects include:

- paying an Indonesian pastor’s salary for several months
- paying for material to finish the floor of a church in Kenya
- providing an LCD projector for a seminary in Latin America
- buying a digital camera for an evangelist in Bolivia
- building a hospice in Africa

While such projects are all interesting and probably useful, they create complex problems for our global partners. Often these problems aren’t readily apparent to the donor at the time.

Problems with donor churches:

1) Churches and individuals often cannot understand why mission organizations do not encourage supporting the project that the donor wants to support when they see a need. It is often interpreted as a need for control and unnecessary bureaucracy or an unwillingness to help. However, the reality is that as time passes and problems arise, the organization is often left with the responsibility to salvage a project, which was begun with more emotion than vision, foresight and mutuality. Generally, organizations spend more resources trying to fix these kinds of projects rather than entering into healthy projects in an honest long-term partnership with a local partner.

2) Pipelining keeps a paternalistic attitude alive in churches and individuals in North America as requests are allowed to come to them by people who have not learned of the insidious problems caused by it. They are led to believe that they

have helped the poor by just giving them something – even something that may not have been asked for.

Problems with our partners:

1) Jealousies among nationals, unhealthy dependency and inappropriate use of power can only be avoided if a mission organization has clear guidelines on how its partners, personnel and volunteers may approach churches for funding. The local partner (not individuals or other groups) must present requests for funding. The partner should understand and be part of creating a policy which is applied consistently.

2) When a church or individual is contacted directly with a funding request by an individual or a group which is not the mission organization's local partner, the context of the ministry and the country is not understood enough to make an informed decision. Individuals or groups can raise money for projects which are interesting, but which may not be in the best interest of the local community. Having a donor-driven project creates a paternalistic type of ministry where the national church does not take responsibility for its own ministry. This not only creates financial dependency, but also drains the receiving group of spiritual vitality.

3) The mission organization is often sidestepped in order for the beneficiary to go directly to the donor with requests. This allows them to raise support for projects or items which have already been rejected, or are likely to be rejected by the organization because the request is inappropriate or does not align with the strategies of the organization and its local partner.

4) Giving to a specific request which has not been agreed upon by the whole community (which is the partner in the case of an international alliance) is misusing power. Donors must understand that giving to specific requests, which have not gone through the proper channels, creates power imbalances which, in turn, undermine ministry.

5) Mission organizations must teach that ministry is about sharing all kinds of resources. They must also recognize that when financially rich partners are allowed to use their financial resources in a way that allows them to do the greater share of the decision-making, they are misusing power. Voting for a specific project with money undermines the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. Pipelining involves holding onto power. It does not allow for mutual understanding of the best way to do ministry. It also encourages nationals to seek money and power in ways which may be underhanded or not in the best interest of the church or community.

How to decide what is appropriate generosity

When requested to transit a direct donation to an overseas project through CBM we consider the issue in light on a number of questions and issues which reflect what we believe to be good (or best) mission practices. Here are some of the factors we take into consideration:

1. CBM has a Partner in the location where the project is proposed.
2. The Partner has requested the project.
3. The Partner can provide project management and oversight of the project.
4. The project directly links with CBM field staff ministry.
5. Project fits CBM strategies:
 - Grassroots Leadership Development
 - Sustainable Community Development
 - Joint Pioneer Outreach
 - Global Discipleship
6. Once complete, the project is sustainable by the partner without outside assistance.
7. The project provides for the donor's growth in global discipleship.
8. CBM has a history of ministry with the partner.
9. The donor is a member in good standing of a convention/union church.
10. CBM has funded projects like this in the past as Mission Awareness Projects (MAPS).

A better way forward

While we encourage such generosity we also believe that giving needs to be sustainable and directed. Otherwise, it can lead to poor missiological practices. We diligently work in mutuality with our partners to determine the greatest areas of need within their community and how we can best support them.