

Framework of the Missionary Cooperation Office (Sexennium 2021-2027)

1. Preamble

This document presents the framework of the Missionary Cooperation Office. It aims at enlightening the members of the Order (OCD and OCDS) on what is the *raison d'être* of the Missionary Cooperation Office, its objectives and its strategies to enhance collaboration between the Centre of the Order and the missions on one hand, and between the Order and aid organisations and agencies on the other. It also aims at establishing and strengthening partnership between the Order and funding organisations.

We are aware that the world is changing; new financial challenges, processes and norms are emerging forcing donor organisations and agencies to adjust. Communication and transparency are increasingly becoming compulsory for collaboration and partnership. To be effective and remain relevant in today's world, Carmelite missionaries have to familiarise themselves with the new emerging culture. The Missionary Cooperation Office aims at helping them walk the new path. It targets to build their capacity in order to make positive changes in their relationships with donor organisations on one hand and with the communities they serve on the other.

2. Overview

The Missionary Cooperation Office is the point of reference for pastoral and socio-economic projects in the Order.

2.1. *Its mission*

The mission of the Missionary Cooperation Office within the Order is to advise, support, accompany and assist missionaries in their internal, pastoral and socio-economic projects. It serves as a channel of solidarity within the Order and as a bridge for collaboration and partnership between the Order and funding organisations and agencies. We are convinced that collaboration and partnerships, coupled with transparency, are the key to success in the execution of pastoral and socio-economic projects.

2.2. *Its objectives*

1. To advise, support, accompany and assist missions in their Carmelite, pastoral and socio-economic projects;
2. To be a channel of missionary solidarity within the great Carmelite family;
3. To serve as a bridge of collaboration and partnership between missions and funding agencies;
4. To coordinate financial and logistic supports for concrete pastoral and socio-economic projects in the missions;
5. To ensure, through appropriate mechanisms, the effective administration of funds granted in support of concrete pastoral and socio-development projects.

2.3. *Its values*

Christian love

The basis of the activities of the Missionary Cooperation Office is the Love of God poured into the hearts of all Christian faithful at baptism. This love of God transforms us into the image of Christ, vivifies and sustains the practice of mission. It prepares us for the highest union with Christ, through the Church, His mystical body. It empowers us to love our neighbours as Christ Himself loved us up to death, death on the Cross.

In fulfilling our mission, Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint Therese of Lisieux are our models as they set for our Order the framework for its missionary actions. Saint John of the Cross is our master as he teaches us the self-denial as the basic attitude to adopt in our relationship with God whom we cannot love if we fail to love the neighbour we see.

Prayer

Faithful to the historical roots of our Order, prayer is central to our missionary life, according to the spiritual heritage and the charism of Saint Theresa of Avila. Daily personal and community prayers animates the Carmelite daily work and strengthen the Carmelite missionary spirit and actions. Our daily prayers are a sustenance to all those who join their efforts and generosity to support our missionaries in their daily efforts to reach out to our brothers and sisters in their needs, both spiritual and material.

Service

As a bridge between our missionaries and our partners, the Missionary Cooperation Office fulfils its mission through humble and objective selfless service to brothers and sisters in the missions, helping them meet ever increasing requirements from partners. In the same way, the Office strives to facilitate effective regular exchange of missionary solidarity towards supporting internal, pastoral and socio-development sustainable projects.

Excellence

The Missionary Cooperation Office aspires to a continuous improvement and to being a point of reference for internal, pastoral and socio-development projects for our missions. Selflessness, continuous dedication, sustainable collaboration, solidarity and transparency in the framework of openness, responsibility, accountability and mutual respect are the basis of the Office's effectiveness.

3. Governance and management

The Missionary Cooperation Office follows the formal authority and communication structure of the Order as edited in our constitutions and norms of applications.

The General Definitory serves as a "self-renewing Board of Directors". He appoints the Secretary for the Missionary Cooperation Office and the members of the "project grant Committee" for a tacitly renewable term of three years.

The 'project grant committee' is made of the Missionary Cooperation Secretary and two definitors and/or any other members appointed by the General Definitory. It regularly meets to approve or disapprove project proposals beyond the Secretary's mandate.

The Missionary Cooperation Office is funded by contributions from the different circumscriptions of the Order. The General Definitory determines, in agreement with major Superiors, the amount each circumscription contributes yearly. To build the sense of self-denial and Carmelite solidarity in the Order, all the circumscriptions of the Order, Carmelite monasteries and OCDS communities alike, are invited to contribute to the mission funds of the Order.

The Secretary manages the funds of the Missionary Cooperation Office in cooperation with the General Bursar, according to the mission and objectives of the office. Twice a year, he presents detailed accounts to the General and to the General Definitory. However, any time of the year, Fr General or the Definitory can ask the Secretary to present a financial report of the Office. During the meetings of the 'project grant committee' the Secretary presents the overview of the Office's finance to allow the committee take decisions based on full knowledge of the actual state of the Office's funds.

4. Working strategy: collaboration, support and formation

Because missionaries are the ones witnessing practically to the Carmelite charism to the people of God whom the Order serves through their daily dedication, they are the ones who know better the context they are working in and the needs it requires. They are the ones who can present better their needs for support. Communication with missions that present their needs helps the Office grasp the necessity, urgency and appropriateness of requests to respond objectively and adequately. Lack of communication would make this impossible and therefore fail the Office in its mission.

In various cases whereby the Office serves as a bridge, especially between our missions and funding organisations, the openness of missionaries for collaboration through constant communication is vital. Moreover, evaluations and documented transparent reporting are fundamental for trust.

Project proposals should originate from community consultations and thus be results of the participation of each member of the community. Proceeding this way has the advantage of allowing each member of the community to take ownership of the project and guarantees its sustainability. Consequently, the Missionary Cooperation Office is there to support community projects with the collaboration of all members of the community. It cannot therefore, imagine or invent projects in order to write project proposals in place of the applicants themselves. However, the office can advise applicants who so wish, on what is needed and how to proceed, before presenting projects to Donors.

Some agencies, before evaluating project proposals presented to them, require a written commitment (recommendation) from the Superior General. Since to recommend a project is:

- to ensure the Donor that one knows the project in all its components;
- to declare to agree with it;
- to commit oneself to ensure its implementation;
- to commit oneself to pay back the funds allocated to it, if necessary;

For these reasons, any project proposal to be presented to organizations or aid agencies that require a written commitment (recommendation) from the General Superior should be prepared in consultation and collaboration with the Secretary for Missionary Cooperation Office. If necessary, he will visit the project's site to inquire about its real situation and make appropriate proposals if necessary. Recommendations from local ecclesiastical authorities can only be requested after the project has been approved by the General Superior who then will give his recommendation to the agency concerned.

The Office aims, among other things, to accompany missionaries properly do things, especially regarding project management and partnership with donor organisations. Capacity building is one of its dearest strategies in assisting and accompanying the missions. For this reason, the

Office encourages all the applicants to follow its directives. The philosophy behind this strategy is to get all the applicants confreres familiarised with conditions and processes from most of donor organisations. The aim is to enhance abilities to join and compete in today's development culture that expects some standards for cooperation and partnerships. Any inattention in this strategy, whatsoever the reason might be, will not be helpful for our missionaries. It is time to start building a new culture: a culture of transparency in collaboration; in short a culture of 'standards to be observed'.

5. Funding

Aware of the fact that the lack of funding is the greatest concern of the Office in charge of the missions, the Avila (May 2015) General Chapter's participants, decided that "***The General Definitory will establish a fund to help the missions, which will be administered by the Secretary for the missions, which will give a yearly account. Each Circumscription will every year contribute an amount determined by the General Definitory in agreement with their major Superiors.***" (*It is time to walk. Documents of 91st O.C.D. General Chapter. Avila, 2-24 May 2015*).

The General Chapter held in Rome from 30th August to 14th September 2021 reconfirms the decision and states: "***The Secretariat for Missionary Cooperation is to administer a missionary aid fund under the guidance of the General Definitory and to give a yearly account. Each Circumscription will contribute each year with a quota determined by the General Definitory itself, in agreement with the respective major superiors.***" (*Let us walk together, lord! Documents of the 92nd ocd General Chapter, Rome, 30 August – 14 September 2021*)

This fund is a regular and effective expression of solidarity within the Order. It is the main source of funding of the Missionary Cooperation Office. Thus, all the circumscriptions of the Order are invited to comply with the decision by sending their contributions each year.

In short, the source of funding for the Missionary Cooperation Office is mainly the solidarity of the various circumscriptions of the Order in form of annual contributions or free donations.

6. Some internal guidelines

The Missionary Cooperation Office adopts a twofold didactic approach: assisting and accompanying missionaries with love and great attention to make them feel at home with the Centre of the Order; at the same time, ensuring that they comply with the requirements in force for more effective collaboration with partner organisations. Hence, the Office's guidelines for grants aim at familiarising the applicants with ordinary principles applied by aid agencies.

1. Any financial support sought for from the Centre of the Order (Missionary Cooperation Office) should be formally applied for.
2. The Missionary Cooperation Office advises and accompanies missionaries in project management. It supports small internal projects to which it can avail very limited grants. These are basically, projects designed to meet specific internal needs. They must be part of the essential support needed in the mission and be a response to the direct needs of the confreres (in the Province, Vice-province, Commissariat, Vicariate, Delegation or applicant communities) in their efforts to better attend to the people they serve. These projects are mainly small with an economic investment, which, in most cases should remain below 10,000 euros.

3. For social and pastoral projects, the Office provides advice, supports and assists applicants by directing their project proposals to partner organisations that may finance them.
4. Internal Carmelite missionary project grants worth below or equal 4,000 euros can be approved by the Office's Secretary who informs the "project grant committee" at its meeting time. Projects above this amount are presented to the committee for its approval. However, for any extreme urgent need in the missions that requires an immediate attention and decision, the Secretary will consult the Definitior in Charge of the Missions and then present the case to Father General to follow his directives. He informs the 'project grant committee' when it meets.
5. In the "project grant committee" meeting, the Secretary of the Missionary Cooperation Office will present all the project applications presented to the Office for the approval of the committee; explains the decisions taken for those within his mandate and/or directed by Fr General.
6. Objective and didactic criteria will be applied to all applications without exception. If needed, more communication with the applicant missionary to comply with the criteria will be engaged. Any failure to comply with the criteria will disqualify the application.
7. Grant applications are addressed to our Father General (who forwards them to the Office) or directly to the Missionary Cooperation Office.
8. For which project can financial assistance be requested from the Centre of the Order (Missionary Cooperation Office)?
 - Activities in favour of Discalced Carmelite communities, if meant to support the Carmelite life within the Order,
 - Construction or repair of buildings for community use of the friars
 - Carmelite formation
 - Any other needs judged necessary for the life and mission of the friars.
9. What is not eligible? The Centre of the Order (Missionary Cooperation Office) will not directly provide funds for :
 - Strictly socio-development project;
 - Strictly pastoral activities, such as the building of churches or oratories, or other parish activities;
 - Construction of schools and hospitals or purchase of transport means for schools and hospitals;
 - Mere charity activities carried by friars;
 - Expenses carried out before the approval of the application, whatsoever may be the reasons and nature of the project.
10. Projects for which the Centre of the Order cannot provide financial assistance, the Missionary Cooperation Office can provide technical assistance and accompany applicants friars in their search for partner organisations that can fund them. The applicant is asked to be collaborative and transparent.

7. Conclusion

The Missionary Cooperation Office believes that, to be efficient and remain relevant in the management of pastoral and social projects, Discalced Carmelite Friars must familiarise ourselves with the new procedures and norms that are emerging in the world today. It is a new

culture we need to acquire. In collaboration and transparency, the Missionary Cooperation Office aims at accompanying all the friars who are ready on this path. It aims at building their capacity for positive changes in their relationships with aid agencies. The Missionary Cooperation Office supports this strategy with an awareness-raising and training program in the missions that will express the needs.