Partnerships of the Lutheran Church of Australia
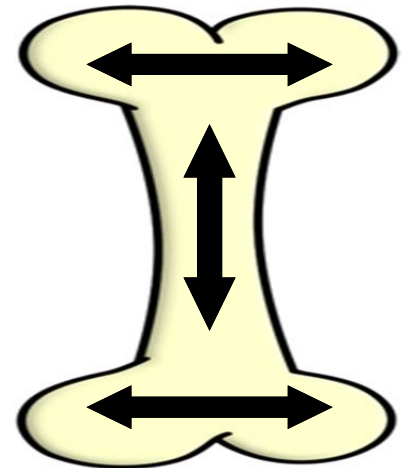
LCA International Mission
Australian Lutheran World Service
Lutheran Education Australia

All people are invited into partnership with God's son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). Christians are called into partnership with each other as disciples of Jesus Christ. Christians are called as partners in the gospel (Philippians 1:5) to love and serve all people.

The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) values partnerships between its own agencies and with parties overseas to conduct its mission and ministry within and beyond Australia. The LCA values gospel centred and holistic ministry. Holistic ministry involves both the verbal proclamation of the gospel and the physical response to human need. We recognise that holistic mission points to Jesus through both the proclaimed word and action in serving. As partners of the LCA work together and work with partners overseas we achieve holistic ministry.

The LCA recognises that an understanding of partnership between people in its various agencies and with people from its overseas partners is essential for its ministry and mission. Each party has its own special contribution to make and each can be energised by others.

The diagram seeks to describe the dynamics of partnership within the LCA, within overseas partners, and between the two. Strong partnerships within Australia (bottom), strong partnerships within the overseas partners (top) and strong partnerships between Australia and the overseas partners (centre) are essential to the success of the partnership. If Australian parties are not working in partnership (or the overseas parties are not working in partnership), then confusion or disappointment can occur and the partnerships may not be sustainable.

For the sake of this document, 'party' refers to any official or unofficial body involved in the partnership. This can include, but is not limited to, congregations, school groups, independent organisations and arms of the church.

Partnerships will be characterised by:
- mutual benefit
- shared vision
- quality
- sustainability
- two-way communication
- intentional inclusion
- understanding of common goals and clear expectations
- a clear, long term strategy
- interpersonal and cultural sharing
- evaluative stages

What does this mean?

Mutual benefit
Each person within a partnership has something to contribute and no party should ever be made to feel that they have nothing to offer.   Partnerships are not restricted to financial support, so regardless of wealth, all partners have much to contribute.

Shared Vision
All parties involved need to come to an understanding of the vision of the partnership. This should be developed after careful consultation, much discussion and a sharing of short and long terms goals for the partnership.

Quality
All parties aim to ensure their work is of the highest quality, and recognise that this can be achieved through sharing and learning practices from each other.

Sustainability
All parties hold to the principle of working with, rather than for, communities, and not simply being providers of welfare. This requires a long-term commitment to ensure the work carried out and the partnerships involved are as sustainable as possible.

Two-way communication
In order for a partnership to be most effective, there must be avenues for open and honest communication between people. This communication must take into account any cultural differences that are present. It also must take into account the 'power' – either real or perceived – that someone from a wealthy nation may hold over people from developing countries. Effective communication between partners develops trusting relationships where partners are able to share what they really think.

Intentional inclusion
All parties are to intentionally include all stakeholders impacted by the partnership in decision making, goal setting and planning.

Understanding of common goals and clear expectations
Clearly established common goals and expectations should be developed at the start of any partnership so that all parties involved know what to expect. This can be in the form of a partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. If this is not intentional, then assumptions can be made and disappoints may arise.

A clear, long-term strategy
Any partnership should be developed with long-term thinking in mind. A long-term strategy needs to be considered at the beginning of the partnership, however, this long-term strategy will most likely develop and change over time. It is essential that both sides of the partnership are happy with the changes made to a strategy.

Interpersonal and cultural sharing
Any partnership, in country or between countries, needs to develop interpersonal understanding and have opportunity for cultural sharing. Regular face-to-face visits between people are ideal. However media provides a range of different options for regular communication.

Regular evaluative stages
All partnerships, in country and with overseas partners, need to be regularly and effectively evaluated to ensure the intent of the work is being progressed. The evaluation process is developed through a process of open and honest communication where input from the parties involved in the partnership has been considered.

It is essential that all parties, within Australia and overseas, work towards making the partnership as effective as possible.

Within Australia
Overseas mission and service arms of the LCA include, but are not restricted to, Australian Lutheran World Service and LCA International Mission. Congregations, groups or schools who have independently developed partnerships with overseas churches or parties are encouraged to inform the LCA departments involved in overseas mission or service and to uphold the principles of effective partnership as described in this document. The LCA, through genuine cooperation and collaboration, within and between congregations and groups, seeks to optimise opportunities for mission and service with overseas churches and countries in a shared, united approach.