

MARIA MADRE COMMITTEE: THE WHY, HOW AND WHAT WE DO (Approved 1/18/17)

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to articulate our overall purpose, the kind of work we have chosen to fund, factors to consider when supporting programs or activities, some principles to guide our decision-making, and a possible process to follow when we want to initiate and/or fund an activity or program. It puts into writing the things we have been doing, with some modifications; it is not in stone.

OUR PURPOSE

- Support the work of our sister parish in building a safe and just community where people live with dignity and self-determination;
- To make a difference in the lives of young people so that they can grow up (first and foremost) and then lead purpose and faith-filled lives;
- To be the loving face of God to all we meet -- here and in El Salvador.

AREAS WE FUND

Education, Youth and Peace-building/Violence Prevention

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE OUR WORK

- **Ownership.** Are Maria Madre and the community in charge and the primary decision-makers? Have they invited us?
- **Act Local.** Can we access and support local talent, resources, merchants and programs?
- **Formation.** Are there opportunities to learn about immigration, global poverty, the role of US in Latin America and gang culture?
- **Faith.** Are there opportunities to act on and strengthen our faith or the faith of others?
- **Advocacy.** Are there opportunities to work toward systemic change here or in El Salvador?
- **Engagement.** Are there opportunities to connect with the broader HT community and connect with other HT ministries?

SUGGESTED WAY TO INTRODUCE NEW ACTIVITIES, PROJECTS OR PROGRAMS

1. **Learn.** Learn about the project: who, what, how, why, for how long, cost, effectiveness. Determine if it aligns with our principles and, if not, how it can be modified to do so.
2. **Dialogue.** Include someone from the program or project in a delegation to learn about the current reality, meet staff, learn about existing programs, learn if there are or about similar programs in the city or country. Discuss desirability of implementation of the program with the pastor and other appropriate parish staff.
3. **Wait.** Wait for Parish Council or staff to approve the project.
4. **Pilot.** "Try out" the program, activity or project, articulating how success will look.
5. **Revisit.** Determine whether to: continue the program as is, change it, scale it up or stop it. If needed, develop a plan for implementation, and ongoing support and evaluation.
6. **Act.** Implement an expanded or revised program.

BACKGROUND: CONTEXT AND ASSUMPTIONS

CONTEXT

All of us want to make a difference in the lives of our friends at Maria Madre. We want to, we need to DO something -- it's how our culture operates and how most of us are built. As such, when we see, hear or learn about a problem faced by our sister parish community, we want to solve it; when we learn about or participate in good or interesting programs within our parish or in our work lives, we want to replicate it in El Salvador. The question is: should we?

SOME ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT COMMUNITY CHANGE

- If Maria Madre and/or the local community doesn't want something, it won't work;
- Supporting local (Salvadoran) programs helps to build the fabric of Salvadoran society and can build local awareness and connections;
- One size does not fit all: if it works in Sri Lanka or Washington, DC, it may not work in El Salvador;
- Change is slow;
- For behaviors and circumstances to change, there must be ongoing, intense action ('dosage') and engagement and ongoing resources;

CONSIDERATIONS

- Prayer -- we are guided by prayer and desire opportunities to strengthen our faith;
- Maximum engagement of HT parish -- we want and need opportunities to increase awareness of and educate the broader parish about our sister parish and their reality;
- Learning about Maria Madre may lead to learning about other issues such as global poverty, the role of the US in Latin American policy and migration due to poverty and violence;
- Authentic leadership and decision-making are important aspects of positive youth development;
- To communicate effectively with our sister parish, it's important to have capacity in the local language.