



Coalition on the Support of Indigenous Ministries

www.cosim.info

COSIM: Questions & Answers

The Coalition on the Support of Indigenous Ministries is a fellowship of Evangelical organizations with a common interest in the support and development of majority-world ministries. Our mission is to expand the understanding and practice of partnership with indigenous ministries for the advance of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We accomplish our mission through networking and sharing of best practices, with emphasis on partnerships between North American and majority-world missions.

COSIM overview

What is the primary purpose of COSIM?

COSIM is a learning community. It's main purpose and function is learning and networking about the practice of cross-cultural ministry partnerships to advance God's mission of discipling all nations.¹

What does COSIM advocate?

1) COSIM advocates mutuality in partnership.

COSIM member agencies generally are those that support indigenous missions through a partnership method — while recognizing that partnership is more than a one-way street. Financial gifts may help the overall program needs of an indigenous ministry or be more specifically targeted. COSIM member agencies may also offer other resources such as training, capacity building, and technical expertise.

But COSIM members know that healthy partnerships flow in both directions. Majority-world partners bring invaluable and substantial resources to the partnership that are just as substantial as those brought by North American agencies.

At the root is a relationship of mutual trust, a standing together in encouragement and prayer with our brothers and sisters who are usually working against great obstacles in their ministry environment.

2) COSIM advocates fraternity with traditional agencies.

COSIM members affirm their fraternity with missions that send North American missionaries, relief and development missions, and other mission structures and ministries. We desire to learn from one another and work together in the cause of world evangelization, complementing one another in the unique expertise brought by each of us.

Why is COSIM important to the global mission of the Church?

The center of gravity of the church has shifted to the global south.² COSIM refers to this as *the shift*.³ COSIM seeks to be a catalyst to bring together the resources of the churches of the majority world with the resources of the churches in the West. COSIM believes there is enormous untapped potential for advancing world evangelization through cross-cultural partnerships, even though they must be approached with care on both sides.

For effective partnerships, the American "can-do" spirit is not enough; in fact it often hinders healthy partnerships. A common misperception is that partnership is culturally neutral, and that no training is necessary for cross-cultural partnership. In fact, there is so much to learn about engaging in partnership well, that COSIM

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¹ Some leaders from indigenous ministries understandably get the impression from COSIM's name, "Coalition on the Support of Indigenous Ministries," that it is a means to develop support for their ministries, but this is not the case. COSIM is primarily a learning community.

² Andrew Walls, Scottish missiologist, speaks of the "massive southward shift of the center of gravity of the Christian world" from the West and North to the "global south." As quoted in Samuel Escobar: *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003) p. 15

³ See Jenkins, Philip: *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)



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There are few places to go to talk specifically about best practices in partnership with indigenous missions. COSIM meets this need.

COSIM helps:

- **PARTNERSHIP MISSION AGENCIES**, particularly those headquartered in North America, and to some extent, those in the "majority world"
- **TRADITIONAL SENDING AGENCIES** who are wrestling with how to incorporate partnership with indigenous ministries
- **LOCAL CHURCHES** in North America involved in cross-cultural partnerships

has assumed the role of sharing the best paradigms and practices.

The 2008 COSIM conference focuses on the three building blocks for effective partnership: *godly character, cultural intelligence, and organizational competence*. COSIM seeks to help those in the evangelical missions community participate more effectively and strategically in our Lord's Great Commission.

Who is COSIM for?

COSIM members and participants generally have some aspect of their work that **focuses on the support of indigenous missions**, and have personnel that are involved in that aspect.

- *Sole focus agencies*: Some agencies affiliated with COSIM have the assistance of indigenous missions as their sole objective.
- *Indigenous ministries*: Increasingly, more indigenous ministry leaders are becoming aware of the value of COSIM.
- *Partial focus agencies*: Some agencies serve in other ways, but have a department in their organization that concentrates on assisting indigenous missions.
- *Churches*: Growing numbers of local churches are partnering with indigenous missions as a major aspect of their mission program.
- *Young and old; large, small and in between*: Some agencies relating to COSIM are small and young; others are larger and well-established and have been assisting indigenous missions for decades.

How COSIM can help you

How does COSIM help partnership mission agencies?

There are always new agencies springing up that can benefit from partnership agencies that have already "been around the block." Staff members from more experienced partnership agencies are able serve the movement while

also building rapport with colleagues, accessing new resources, gaining new ideas, and even developing new skills relative to the practice of cross-cultural partnership.

Regardless of how long someone has been involved in cross-cultural partnership, there is always more to learn about the complexities of partnering and helping all participants reach their full potential in the kingdom of God. There are few places to go to talk specifically about best practices in partnership with indigenous missions. COSIM meets this need.

How does COSIM serve the local church?

Some local churches begin partnerships with little knowledge or experience of the implications and end up with serious problems that could have been avoided with better information.

Other local churches want to avoid "reinventing the wheel." They realize those in the COSIM community have successfully practiced missionary partnerships for many years and go to them to find support, practical know-how and answers to questions. They see COSIM as an opportunity to learn via informal education, discussion and networking.

Still other churches are very advanced in their cross-cultural partnerships and want to contribute to the "conversation." They know their expertise can help others and want to keep learning themselves.

How does COSIM help traditional mission agencies that send Westerners cross-culturally?

Many traditional agencies are wrestling with how to integrate partnership missions into their ministry. Some are feeling pressure in varying directions from globalization, supporting churches, missionaries on the field, and the growth of the church in the global south. These factors often result in financial stresses and need for reassessment.

COSIM helps traditional agencies navigate uncharted waters by providing a



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forum for discussion and the learning of best partnership practices. Some COSIM member agencies have been pioneering partnerships with indigenous missions for over 60 years.

COSIM: catalyst for a manifold return

COSIM seeks to promote best practices of partnership and communicate these through its annual conference and by placing relevant resources on the COSIM web site. By sharing insights and learning from one another, COSIM hopes that the huge investments being made in partnership missions will have a better chance of having a lasting, manifold return for the kingdom of God.

COSIM history and global trends

How was COSIM formed?

In 1996 Chuck Bennett, then the CEO of Partners International, saw the groundswell of interest in assisting indigenous ministries. He felt that those involved—some with many years of experience and others just emerging—would benefit from getting to know each other and sharing best practices. A planning group was formed consisting of Chuck, John Bennett (Overseas Council), Bernie May (The Seed Company of Wycliffe Bible Translators), Ken Gill (Billy Graham Center), Lewis Abbott (Ambassadors for Christ International), and Daniel Rickett (Partners International).

The first consultation was held at the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton in October 1996. The planning team expected

about 30 organizations, but more than 100 representatives from 52 organizations attended. COSIM has continued to hold a yearly consultation since then and, throughout the year, advocates best practices in partnership with indigenous missions.

The 2005 COSIM conference in Orlando began the current sequence of major conferences with keynote speakers and scheduled workshops.

What global trends have converged to create a need for COSIM?

- 1) Globalization
- 2) Non-Western missionary movement
- 3) Short-term missions movement (STM)

1) Globalization: Globalization has had a huge impact on the practice of world missions.⁴ It is marked by the widespread use of digital technology and the Internet, low-cost international travel, dramatically lower cost for global communications, the growth of global markets, and financial interdependence. While globalization offers many benefits that have accrued to Christian world missions, there are also aspects of globalization, which, when used uncritically, can undermine the growth and mission of the church.⁵

2) Non-Western missionary movement: The chart below⁶ compares and projects the growth of the number of non-Western evangelicals relative to Western evangelicals from 1960 to 2020. This growth is in part a testimony to the success of missionaries sent from Western nations to Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as to the receptivity of the gospel among harvest

⁴ See Friedman, Thomas: *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005)

⁵ See Guinness, Os: "Mission modernity: seven checkpoints on mission in the modern world," from Sampson, Samuel, Sugden, eds: *Faith and Modernity* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1992), p. 322-325. This article was originally presented at Lausanne II in Manila (1989) and remains an incisive commentary on this issue. While Guinness does not use the word 'globalization,' his article on modernity is completely suitable and appropriate to this subject.

⁶ Myers, Bryant: *Exploring World Mission: Context & Challenges* (Monrovia, CA: World Vision International, 2003) p. 53. Based on information from *Operation World* by Johnstone & Mandryk (Paternoster, 2001).



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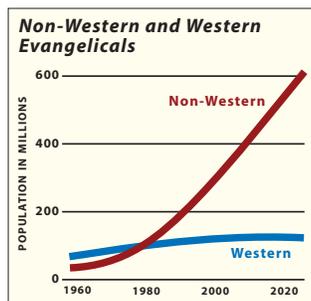
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nations. It also gives witness to the transforming power of the Word of God when translated into the heart language of any people group.⁷ The Lord has raised up countless new churches and Christian mission structures in hidden or obscure communities all over the world.



3) Short-term missions movement (STM): The dramatic growth of short-term missions in recent years represents both amplified opportunity and amplified threat. It is estimated that some 1.5 to 2 million laypersons from North America visit the mission field every year. Whether the human and financial resources being expended are making a long-term difference is questioned by many.

One non-Western Christian leader speaks of such mission trips as the “elephant dancing with the mouse.”⁸ More often than not, “the mouse gets hurt.” Others point to the many accomplishments of STMs on the field and renewed enthusiasm for missions for the Western returnees. Care must be taken that STMs and cross-cultural partnerships do not foster another form of colonialism.⁹

COSIM leadership / organization

Is COSIM a separate organization?

No. COSIM is not incorporated as a 501(c)(3) agency. It is a voluntary association of persons, churches and agencies with a keen interest on partnering with indigenous ministries. That’s why COSIM is called a “coalition.” It has no permanent office and no paid staff.

Who is in charge of COSIM and how do you get things done?

An all-volunteer resource team plans COSIM conferences and makes decisions on behalf of the ministry. The chairman exercises some administrative responsibility. All communications are made through email and telephone, and team meetings are conducted via conference phone calls.

Special questions about the COSIM conference

Is the COSIM conference a venue for finding support for indigenous ministries?

No. COSIM is for learning, gaining new skills, networking, fellowship, working and exploring together to pursue solutions relative to cross-cultural ministry partnerships.

Will COSIM provide a letter of invitation to a non-Western leader in order for him or her to obtain a visa to enter the United States?

No. COSIM is not credentialed to provide such services.

⁷ See Sanneh, Lamin: *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) p. 10–11

⁸ See Adeney, Miriam: “When the Elephant Dances, the Mouse May Die” (*Short-Term Missions Today*, 2003-2004 Issue) p. 86–89

⁹ See Livermore, David: *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 2006).



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Healthy cross-cultural
partnerships
contribute to
two intertwined,
God-glorifying
biblical mandates:
the practical unity
of the body of Christ,
and the completion
of our Lord's
Great Commission.

Are scholarships available to attend COSIM conferences?

No, with some exception for COSIM conference speakers in special circumstances.

COSIM and money

What do the annual dues pay for?

The members of the COSIM Resource Team exercise their God-given gifts and talents to organize conferences, write articles for publication, and design and write announcements and promotional copy without charge. Annual dues provide funds for operation of the COSIM web site, communication expenses (phone calls and postage), printing and promotion (such as advertising in *EMQ*), and other operating expenses for planning the next conference.

Where are COSIM funds held?

COSIM funds have always been held in, and COSIM bills are paid out of, a separate account at Partners International, Spokane, Washington. Gifts to Partners International designated for COSIM are tax deductible. Conference registration fees might be deductible as an expense of your ministry, but are not considered donations.

COSIM membership

What does COSIM membership mean?

- 1) You recognize *the shift*.
- 2) You are committed to learning.
- 3) You are contributing to a movement.
- 4) You are committed to unity.

1) You recognize *the shift*. Being a COSIM member means *sending a signal* that you and your agency or church acknowledge and are wrestling with the profound historic *sea change* or *shift* that has taken place in the world Christian movement:

- You recognize that the center of gravity of the church has shifted from the West to the Global South (Africa, Asia and Latin

America). The Global South is also sometimes referred to as the *majority world*, highlighting the fact that these countries are indeed the majority of humankind.

- Accordingly, you embrace the principle that the Western church and the majority world church *can* and *must* work together in healthy cross-cultural partnerships to pursue two intertwined, God-glorifying biblical mandates: the practical unity of the body of Christ, and the completion of our Lord's Great Commission.
- You have the intent, therefore, to reflect this shift in your ministries.

2) You are committed to learning.

You and your agency or church understand that it is a complex world and that developing healthy and fruitful cross-cultural partnerships is challenging.

- You commit to attend COSIM's annual conference at least every other year.
- You realize that careless partnerships can create unhealthy dependency and other negative, yet unintended, consequences. You commit to growing and learning so your partnerships will facilitate lasting growth and health in the body of Christ, believing that it is possible to partner with the global church in ways that will build the kingdom of God.

3) You are contributing to a movement.

You understand that strategic communications are necessary to spread the COSIM message. The evangelical community in North America is largely unaware of COSIM. You can help spread the news by word of mouth. COSIM also communicates through email, printed pieces, and a website. It has also placed advertisements in publications such as *EMQ* and *Mission Frontiers*. Your annual fee, which presently is \$100, supports regular and effective communications.

4) You are committed to unity.

You understand that many *within* the church are watching—along with many

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."
 —John 17:20-24 (ESV)

who are *outside* of the church—to see how well the exceedingly diverse communities of the global church can effectively work together.

- *In relation to the church, you work in a cooperative rather than antagonistic way—* so Christ's hope and vision of unity from John 17:21 can be more fully realized. You relate in a manner of respect and dignity with other mission agencies and churches which are engaged in global missions, even those which might approach the task in different ways.
- *In relation to the world, you practice partnership as a biblical apologetic.* Jesus prayed, "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Accordingly, your practice of healthy cross-cultural partnership is a vivid witness to the world of the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.

In a world marked by sectarian violence, ethnic strife, and enormous inequities, this witness of unity offers a compelling confirmation to those *within* the church and a compelling hope to those *without*—that Jesus Christ is Lord.

What are other benefits of COSIM membership?

- 1) COSIM members receive a discount for attending the COSIM conference. This year the discount is \$10 per member-participant.
- 2) COSIM members have the privilege of using the "COSIM Member" logo. Members can use the logo in their

communications, signaling to their constituents that they are committed to healthy cross-cultural partnerships in the global church. A set of COSIM logo files will be supplied to every member.



Going forward with COSIM

As a COSIM member you can participate by praying, funding, and volunteering.

- **Praying:** "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). Your prayers on behalf of COSIM and its leaders will help them hear the voice of the Lord and discern God's will, learn and work together effectively, and, move forward obediently for the glory of God among the nations. Only when COSIM is backed by prayer can it make a real difference in the world Christian movement.
- **Funding:** Your membership dues and conference attendance are primary ways to provide for COSIM's funding.
- **Volunteering:** There are many ways to serve the Lord by helping COSIM. COSIM needs people for such services as: webmaster, writing case histories and articles, networking, and advocacy. Everyone has their unique gifts to exercise and story to tell.



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