

# From Associational Value to Complementary Synergy: Eighteen Years of NGO-University Partnership

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**ABSTRACT:** Since 2000, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame) have collaborated on joint programs while growing their institutional partnership. The relationship started with capacity strengthening of CRS peacebuilding staff and partners by Notre Dame faculty, based on common values enshrined in Catholic social teaching. Over time, the collaboration expanded as staff at each institution developed a better understanding of each other's respective objectives, and experienced increasing mutual benefit. The partnership grew further as both institutions responded to external pressures from donors for universities and NGOs to work more closely together for greater field impact and evidence generation. Lessons learned from the partnership helped to guide both institution's interactions with each other. From the initial task-oriented collaboration (capacity strengthening) that provided the institutions with associational value, CRS and Notre Dame gradually progressed toward deeper phases of partnership including resource transfer, interaction and achieving synergistic value.

**KEYWORDS:** NGO-University partnerships, NGO-university research collaboration, faith-based partnerships, global development partnership management, international partnership

**N**on-governmental organizations (NGOs) increasingly partner with academic institutions to achieve greater impact in their work. Academic institutions need to ensure the relevance of

their research and teaching in the real world, while NGOs are under pressure from donors to generate more rigorous evidence about the results of their work. (Leege and McMillan 2016). Much of this collaboration has been transactional in nature, limited to one-off, project-based collaboration. The twenty-year-long partnership between Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame) is somewhat unique in that it has gone far beyond the ad hoc and transactional, and also predates current day pressures from donors to collaborate. The objective of this case study is to explore what led the two institutions to partner with one another and understand how the partnership evolved and why it has withstood the test of time.

CRS is an international NGO founded in 1943 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). CRS's global headquarters are in Baltimore, Maryland. In 2017, CRS implemented programs in 120 countries around the world serving 137 million beneficiaries.

Notre Dame was founded in 1842 in northern Indiana by the Congregation of the Holy Cross. It currently serves 12,000 graduate and undergraduate students from all 50 states and nearly 90 countries. Notre Dame also maintains global gateways around the world that serve as hubs for international programs.

While it is impossible to document every relationship that affected this partnership, and not all of the specific collaborations fit neatly into discrete partnership phases, the authors hope that the lessons learned may benefit other universities and NGOs as they develop new models for partnerships. Often it can be challenging for organizations with different metrics and goals to find synergistic value. In the case of universities, the knowledge and expertise of world-class faculty may be difficult to connect with global development needs at the field level when faculty need to achieve tenure and publish. Implementing organizations in global development working with communities in the field may not see the value that university research can bring to their programs, which must meet donor timetables and stakeholder needs, some of which may be quite urgent.

When partnership can effectively link the expertise that lies within universities and the work of global development implementers and local communities, there is an opportunity to collaborate on efforts that are more thoughtful, more impactful, and more sustainable in the world. The successes and challenges that Notre Dame and CRS staff, faculty, and students have experienced over many years can serve as useful learning for other organizations. These lessons will hopefully contribute to achieving more synergistic partnerships that help others in the world to use the collective capacity that universities and implementers offer.

Throughout this case study, we will discuss a variety of partnership approaches, institutional and leadership efforts that created value, and common phases of partnership as outlined by Austin and Seitanidi (2012 and 2014) and the North-South Institute (Kindornay, Tissot, and Sheiban 2014). These phases of partnership include:

- **Associational value**—partners enhance their reputation from their association with each other.
- **Transferred resource**—partners benefit from resources transferred in either or both directions. The degree of benefit depends on the value of resources transferred.
- **Interaction value**—partners benefit from increased knowledge, joint problem-solving, increased trust and relational capital that comes through collaboration.
- **Synergistic value**—benefits created derive from the combination of each partner's unique capacities and resources that allows them to achieve objectives that they could not do on their own, leveraging each other's respective core competencies.

The methodology for this case study was largely qualitative, based on a series of internal and external interviews with stakeholders. In addition to the qualitative interviews conducted, internal and external partnership documents were categorized and assessed as part of the literature review, and additional conversations with key informants and the authors' own experience were considered as key stakeholders in the institutional partnership.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on university—NGO collaboration is growing, though still relatively sparse overall. The guiding framework that we use in this study draws from Austin and Seitanidi's work referenced above (2012 and 2014) on the phases of partnership. This framework helps to analyze the growing interaction, both in depth and breadth, between CRS and Notre Dame. Beyond these phases of partnership, it is also important to understand various typologies such as those developed by Roper (2002), including the *expert consultant*, *expert trainer*, *joint learning*, *best practice*, and *theory development models*. Some of these categories fit nicely into the phases from Austin and Seitanidi's work and will be referenced in the various phases explored in this case study.

Olivier, Hunt, and Ridde (2016) examine challenges and potential obstacles to successful partnership, *including asymmetrical power relations, divergence in goals and approaches, and lack of recognition of partners' contributions*. Other

risks of intersectoral partnering put forward by Van Huijstee (2007) include *blurring of tasks and responsibilities, legitimacy loss, cultural differences, and insecurity of partnership outcomes*. Strategies to overcome these challenges as proposed by Olivier et al. (2016) include *improving communication among partners, promoting transparency in decision-making, promoting mutual respect and reciprocity within partnerships, and developing trust*. Van Huijstee (2007) adds to this list the *need for clear scoping of the topic for partnership, choice of the right goals and right partners, a respectful open way of working, and trust*.

Another strain of literature examines the role of “religious NGOs” as a “unique hybrid of religious beliefs and socio-political activism” (Berger 2003). This is particularly relevant in the case of the partnership between CRS and Notre Dame given the glue of Catholic social teaching (discussed in Phase I below) that led to the initial interest in collaboration and helped to strengthen the relationship over time. De Figueiredo et al. (2013) explore this in the context of community-based research on school networks in Bolivia. In their case study, the relationship was facilitated by a *common Catholic vision* that included not only commitment to the beneficiaries, but also a *virtue of collaboration*, which implied “the need for each party to get to know each other” and made “organic evolution of projects within the partnership” more likely. Morse and McNamara (2008) also explore this theme through a case study in Nigeria on faith-based partnerships and sustainable development. In this case, between Northern and Southern Catholic NGOs, “there was a *sense of interdependence*, arising from a *shared sense of values and Catholic social teaching*, which allowed partners to work through their stresses and conflicts.”

Green (2017) explores the “NGO-Academia interface” from a practitioner’s perspective and finds that while International Non-governmental organizations (INGOs) offer academics needed presence on the ground, and academia contributes research skills and credibility needed by NGOs, they are in fact sometimes too complementary, working in very separate spheres, thus making collaboration quite challenging. NGOs tend to have a shorter timeline and a more urgent need for results, and more interest in qualitative approaches. Academics, on the other hand, are more oriented toward the long-term, and tend to prefer highly rigorous, quantitative approaches that are required for publication in the top academic journals, rather than more policy-oriented impact sought by NGOs.

Another group of NGO practitioners developed a practical guide (Cornish, Fransman, and Newman 2017) to help organizations with different structures, goals and interest to collaborate. They explore the various tensions that exist between academics and international NGOs, as well as power relations and the different pressures under which both operate. Their conclusions

are remarkably similar to those of Leege and McMillan (2016) regarding the need for transparency of purposes and motivations, and the importance of a value proposition that clearly lays out the capacities and expectations of both partners. This was further detailed in a case study about an institutional partnership between Purdue University and CRS in Leege and Nielsen (2017), which explores the four phases of this partnership, guided by a value proposition and commitment from top leadership, while grounded in actual field collaboration.

This case study both draws on this literature to apply some of these concepts to an analysis of the CRS-Notre Dame partnership's evolution over time, and also contributes its own lessons learned to enhance the growing understanding of NGO-Academic partnerships generally.

#### PHASE I—STRENGTHENING CRS'S PEACEBUILDING CAPACITY (2000–2005)

In 2000, CRS developed its first agency strategy through a bottom-up, consultative process. As part of this process, peacebuilding emerged as a critical new area that would help CRS to operationalize Catholic social teaching in its work. Catholic social teaching refers to a set of papal encyclicals that provide theological guidance for Catholics on social issues, starting with *Rerum Novarum*, on the rights and duties of capital and labor, in 1891.

Known internally as the “justice lens,” this was an effort to ensure that objectives of social justice were fully reflected in CRS programs. CRS based its approach particularly on the Papal Encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), which coined the term *integral human development* as a Catholic approach to alleviating poverty and violence. CRS defines integral human development as the process by which people reach their full potential in an atmosphere of peace, social justice and human dignity. CRS's approach was also heavily influenced by a multi-year process leading up to the strategy during which CRS struggled to find the appropriate way to respond to and perhaps mitigate the effect of genocidal conflict in the Great Lakes region of Africa and the Balkans in the 1990s. Integral human development is also now at the centerpiece of the mission of Notre Dame's new Keough School of Global Affairs established in 2017.

While CRS had decades of on the ground field experience in relief and development, its work had largely been focused on ensuring basic needs and facilitating asset recovery for people affected by disasters, as well as fostering socio-economic development for people in situations of chronic poverty, with little attention to conflict mitigation or the “right relationships” component of Catholic social teaching. CRS leadership began to see peacebuilding as a critical skill for agency staff to learn and integrate more intentionally into all

forms of programming in order to reduce tensions that often led to the outbreak of violent conflict.

The University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies offered a unique opportunity to partner with CRS in a way that would build staff capacity and expose them to international peacebuilding experts working from a Catholic perspective. Notre Dame also hoped to gain from this experience, through allowing its faculty and students to interact with practitioners from around the world, who would be available to speak to classes and offer field sites to collaborate with local church partners engaged in peacebuilding work.

### *CRS Agency Strategy (2000)*

A representative from Notre Dame's Kroc Institute participated in CRS's strategy development process to learn more about CRS's nascent interest in peacebuilding, provide subject matter expertise into the development of the final strategy document (which elevated peacebuilding at its highest level), and begin to envision forms of mutually beneficial collaboration. A Memorandum of Understanding was soon signed between the two institutions, covering the first phase of capacity building collaboration. The focus was more one of *associational value*, with some resource transfer as both parties learned more about what each other had to offer and how to collaborate. Prior to this time, CRS had almost no interaction with universities, so it was a very new type of relationship. However, CRS had long worked with local partners in countries around the world, and had developed a set of principles and practices to guide these relationships, which it applied here as well.

### *Summer Institute of Peacebuilding*

In July 2001, Notre Dame hosted the inaugural Summer Institute of Peacebuilding (SIP) which brought together nearly 30 CRS staff and partners from every region of the world to build their capacity, share information, and make connections with U.S. based Catholic peacebuilders and practitioners and partners overseas (CRS 2001). The main product of the SIP, other than the learning and relationships, was a statement of purpose for CRS's work in peacebuilding, along with 10 key principles to guide CRS's work. Based on the mutually agreed value that came out of the SIP and the need for many other CRS staff to benefit in a similar fashion, there was general agreement to organize a follow-on workshop the next year. As more CRS staff began to build their capacity in peacebuilding through interaction with Notre Dame faculty and staff, the relationship started to shift more toward one of "*transferred resource*" with more tangible benefits for both institutions.

The SIP was quickly institutionalized, based on the value it provided for both institutions. Notre Dame hosted five more SIPs before it was moved out to the field after 2006 (Philippines, Burundi, Kenya, Senegal, Egypt, Ecuador, Ghana, etc.) so that more CRS staff and partners could participate. This also allowed for visits to local partners to see actual projects on the ground. Though fewer Notre Dame faculty and staff were able to participate when it was shifted to the field, there was always at least one participant who attended as a subject matter expert.

### *CRS-Kroc Fellows*

In addition to the SIP, Notre Dame also created an opportunity each spring semester for a CRS-Kroc Fellow to come to campus for a period of focused study and research on a topic related to their field work, as a contribution toward CRS's goal of becoming a learning organization. These short sabbaticals by CRS staff and partners on campus were also beneficial to faculty, staff and students of the Kroc Institute in enhancing their knowledge about the practice of promoting justice and peace, and led to valuable documentation about CRS's peacebuilding work in the field.

### *Reflective Peacebuilding Book*

Near the end of this period, CRS and Notre Dame collaborated on a book project funded by the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) called *Reflective Peacebuilding* (Lederach, Neufeldt, and Culbertson 2007). Based largely on CRS's experience with peacebuilding in Southeast Asia (particularly the Philippines), the book documented three years of workshops to bridge theory and practice. The book quickly became a reference widely used by practitioners and recommended by the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Conflict Mitigation and Management (CMM) bureau in its Annual Program Statement (request for proposals).

Looking back over this period, it becomes quite clear that while Notre Dame and CRS's ambitions may have been more limited to associational value and transferred resources, the relationship actually went well beyond this to interaction and synergistic value. The annual SIPs built the capacity of over 200 CRS staff and partners over this period, as well as facilitated interaction with a wider group of faculty, staff and students at Notre Dame. CRS staff and partners who became faculty fellows during this period also contributed to develop a body of scholarship on Catholic peacebuilding. And finally, the publication of the *Reflective Peacebuilding* book enlarged these contributions to the broader field of peacebuilding more generally, even outside of Catholic circles to secular institutions like USIP and USAID.



## PHASE II—FORMALIZING AND DIVERSIFYING THE PARTNERSHIP UNIVERSITY-WIDE (2005–2011)

Another important development that had resulted from CRS's agency strategy process and that contributed to the deepening of the CRS-Notre Dame relationship was the creation of a new division at CRS called U.S. Operations, with a specific focus on building awareness and engagement of U.S. Catholics in CRS's work overseas. Outreach to U.S. Catholic institutions was essential to achieving the objectives of educating Catholics in the United States about the work of CRS, and providing opportunities for the Catholic constituency to become involved in, and provide support for, the work of alleviating poverty and violence for the world's most vulnerable people. Universities, with a rich pool of intellectual talent and engaged youth (often from influential Catholic families and parishes), seeking to further their education, were an obvious partner for this work.

### *Institutional Memorandum of Understanding*

While there was never a formal division between phase I and II, there was a gradual deepening of the relationship between CRS and Notre Dame that led to the development of a formal MOU between the two institutions (beyond the Kroc Institute in the initial MOU). The formal institutional MOU was signed by the respective Presidents of both institutions, and took effect near the end of this period in 2011. It called for four main types of collaboration: International solidarity study and research (undergraduate and graduate); Capacity building and leadership development; Advocacy campaigns; and Student engagement in CRS programs on campus.

Initially more a statement of partnership, it was later amended in 2014 to include terms related to data and intellectual property, publications, confidentiality, etc. The signing of the MOU sent an official signal to stakeholders in both institutions that the collaboration should expand beyond the Kroc Institute to other parts of the university where both parties could benefit. In fact, this had already effectively started to move forward in multiple directions as detailed below.

### *U.S. Operations Awareness Raising and Formation Program*

In contrast to CRS's Overseas Operations division which focused its university engagement more on research and training, CRS's U.S. Operations programs aim to help students and faculty to understand that the work of CRS is Catholic Social Teaching in action. CRS developed programs that were specifically geared toward universities, including the promotion of fair trade products (i.e.,



coffee and chocolate), student ambassador chapters to organize awareness and formation events about key issues, a fast during Lent, and the Faculty Learning Commons, which served as a complement to the formal academic curriculum to weave CRS issues of concern into the classroom.

A major effort was launched in the run-up to the independence of South Sudan in 2009 with a “Playing for Peace” initiative to advance student advocacy efforts in support of CRS legislative advocacy with the U.S. government and international community. More than 400 Notre Dame students came together for a peace rally, and launched a petition drive in support of the 2005 peace agreements which called for a referendum on independence. An important new relationship that facilitated this engagement was Notre Dame’s Center for Social Concerns, which lent its organizing capacity on campus and student volunteers to CRS for issues of common interest. This helped to grow CRS’s reputation on campus beyond the Kroc Institute where it had largely stayed centered since the early years.

### *Catholic Peacebuilding Network*

During this period, the Kroc Institute and CRS’s Overseas Operations continued to build and innovate on the first five years of their collaboration to create a network of Catholic peacebuilding practitioners, called the Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN). Started in 2004, it eventually expanded into a network of 18 other Catholic universities, episcopal conferences and Catholic organizations, led by the Kroc Institute and CRS. The CPN organized five major international conferences during the 2004–2008 period. Many CRS staff and partners participated in and contributed to these conferences from their field experiences. The product of these conferences was reflected in a major three-year research project on a theology and ethics of Catholic peacebuilding that included 20 scholars and practitioners, resulting in a book on a Catholic approach to peacebuilding (Schreiter, et al., 2010).

### *Strengthening the Catholic Education System in Haiti*

Following the massive earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010, CRS and Notre Dame’s Institute for Educational Initiative’s Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program embarked on a new collaboration that arose due to both institution’s deep commitment to that country and the complementary capacities that each brought together to make more than the sum of the parts. The earthquake devastated much of the infrastructure of the country, particularly around the capital Port-au-Prince. CRS and ACE responded—conducting a thorough stock-taking of the Catholic school system, one of the most extensive in the world in light of the dilapidated state of public schools under a chronically

under-funded and dysfunctional government. The earthquake ironically made it possible to build the Catholic school system back better, and it was necessary to plan strategically in order to do this systematically.

The collaboration started with a survey and GPS mapping of 2,315 Catholic schools throughout Haiti in 2011, using iPod technology and training of Haitian enumerators. It also included an assessment of governance and management capacity and the needs of all 10 dioceses and national Catholic educational organizations; and finally, a detailed facilities evaluation of over 200 Catholic schools destroyed or damaged in the 2010 earthquake. The results of the study (Alliance for Catholic Education and Catholic Relief Services, 2012) attracted attention as an innovative response to the devastation of the earthquake, allowing for rational planning to use the massive resources from the international community for post-earthquake reconstruction. A succession of several projects then began to rebuild facilities as well as improve teacher capacity and curriculum development. Funded initially by private contributions, USAID and several foundations later helped to scale the program to 1,000 schools by 2021, based on promising results from a randomized control trial evaluation in 47 pilot schools (see Phase IV below for more on this.)

One of the key explanatory factors for the success of this collaboration was both institutions' deep commitment to Haiti. Notre Dame's Holy Cross Congregation has had a long presence in the country, similar to CRS's long-term commitment. While ACE was relatively new to international work at the time, they had a strong reputation for capacity strengthening of Catholic schools domestically in the U.S. that they were able to transfer to the Haitian context through CRS's local connections with the Catholic Education Commission of the Haitian Bishops Conference. While Notre Dame might have been tempted to develop its own operational presence for the program, CRS's local infrastructure was able to accommodate implementation of the program, allowing ACE to play more of a technical service provider role, with the same commitment to accompaniment of local partners to strengthen their capacity. This allowed for a complementary role that made most efficient use of resources and each partner's capacity.

### *Microfinance Research in East Africa*

During this period, Notre Dame and CRS also undertook joint research on CRS's savings and internal lending community (SILC) programs in East Africa. CRS was in the process of developing a new approach to program delivery that involved the training and certification of "private service providers" (or PSPs) to provide services to village savings groups for a fee, to replace the traditional subsidized project field agent approach. This change was intended to improve

program sustainability since the PSPs no longer required a continuing subsidy from the project once they were trained, and would continue to provide services and even expand to new communities once project funding had ended. CRS was concerned about the potential for mission drift—PSPs who would gravitate toward wealthier clients who were more capable of paying fees for services.

The donor for the project, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, had high expectations of rigorous evidence to justify their investments. In collaboration with a development economist from Notre Dame, CRS designed a randomized control trial evaluation in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to determine whether there was any difference in poverty outreach between the two approaches and any other differences in program results.

CRS published a set of five research briefs (Ferguson 2012) based on the findings of the study. These briefs were presented to CRS staff globally in a series of webinars, as well as shared with donors such as the Gates Foundation, USAID and other development practitioners to demonstrate the value of the PSP approach. The Notre Dame faculty member also published an article in a peer reviewed journal (Kaboski and Townsend 2011). The collaboration was an early precursor of the future directions of partnership between CRS and Notre Dame, reflecting a growing demand by donors for rigorous evidence of program results, and the complementarity of Notre Dame's expertise with CRS's field needs.

### PHASE III—DEEPENING THE PARTNERSHIP THROUGH STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS (2012–2016)

Phase III of the Notre Dame and CRS partnership can most aptly be characterized as moving toward an *interaction value stage* where the partnership deepened through strategic investments and where intangible benefits were derived due to the process of partners working together. These benefits included more shared knowledge, mechanisms for conflict resolution, and joint problem solving. Through these interactions, Notre Dame and CRS increased mutual trust, built relational capital, shared knowledge, and at times, solved problems jointly. This also required a greater investment of staff time and travel costs on the part of both institutions, time which was not necessarily covered by specific grants.

#### *Leadership Initiatives at Notre Dame*

Time alone does not enable partners to move into an interaction value stage. There must also be other catalysts shifting both organizations toward this stage. In the case of Notre Dame and CRS, key leaders in both organizations helped create optimal circumstances for the partnership to develop into this more advanced stage.

Notre Dame's President had already started to advance research excellence as a core strategic priority by appointing a Vice President for Research in 2007. Under the new Vice President's leadership and vision, Notre Dame began to build new infrastructure in support of research by faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, including competition for external funding. In 2007, the Notre Dame Provost also formed the Strategic Academic Planning Committee (SAPC), a funding initiative to support impactful faculty-led research projects called Strategic Research Initiatives (SRIs).

Between 2007 and 2010, two phases of the SRI process were funded, representing an \$80 million commitment of internal University financial resources to more than 14 research initiatives and centers. The investments were designed to bring new initiatives, talent and facilities to the campus to grow important programs of scholarship and engagement. These included new approaches to a sustainable energy future, unique strategies and diagnostic tools for treating global diseases, and a better understanding of Islam and Roman Catholicism in the modern world.

In 2012 at the culmination of the SRI process, the Notre Dame Initiative for Global Development (NDIGD) was established to be a primary contact point with potential partners and funding agencies for the University to the global development community. NDIGD provided evidence-based research on some of the world's most compelling global development issues and worked to connect this research directly to policy and practice. NDIGD also served the University's institutes, centers, and programs by providing monitoring and evaluation, assessments, training, and strategic planning support for global development programs. NDIGD provided information, advice, and assistance in identifying and obtaining international contract and grant funds from government or private agencies for global development purposes.

NDIGD and the SRIs created new "bridging agents" or "hinge actors" at Notre Dame who would help push the Notre Dame-CRS partnership into the interaction value stage. The hinge actors included new staff who were hired within NDIGD and the SRIs to help bridge the gap between Notre Dame faculty and global development implementers like CRS. Chioda, de la Torre, and Maloney (2013) describe hinge actors as staff who focus on a particular type of knowledge or knowledge product that connects the World Bank with the broader development, academic, and practitioner community.

"Hinges" are individuals with technical expertise who work at the interface of different types of knowledge and hence facilitate the flow of knowledge across communities with different specializations. . . . Some "hinges" may play a role in relatively specialized spaces, for instance, serving as connectors within research-intensive units or practitioner-intensive units.

Some “hinges” may play a broader role, connecting different knowledge communities—researchers, practitioners, policy makers, project specialists, etc. (Chioda et al. 2013)

### *Leadership Initiatives at CRS*

In 2012, CRS hired a new President, who was the former Dean of the University of Notre Dame Mendoza College of Business. Shortly after assuming her new role, she embarked on a strategic planning process that put strong emphasis on monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL), with the intent of enhancing program impact and influence. Inherent in this approach was the need to develop stronger relationships with universities to serve as a complement to CRS MEAL capacity and generate more rigorous evidence of program results.

CRS initially developed its new university strategy in 2012 through an internal review of its earlier university partnerships. This review, which inventoried collaborations with over 100 different institutions, highlighted the fact that most collaboration was project-based and/or linked to a relationship with a specific researcher, but lacking a strong connection to the larger institution. While the end product of the collaboration was sometimes useful, results were mixed, communication with university partners was often challenging, and objectives were not well aligned with either partner’s long-term objectives for their international programs. This pointed to the need for more of an institutional approach to collaboration—not dissimilar to the approach CRS uses with local partners around the world (Leege and McMillan 2016). Through its extensive operations in many countries over decades, CRS had developed deep relationships with local partners that transcended individual relationships between staff, emphasizing shared vision, mutuality, subsidiarity, respecting differences and transparency among others. These principles are not only relevant overseas, but also with partners in the U.S.

Based on this review, CRS made the decision to create an office of university engagement and research (UER) to oversee the development of relationships with four priority institutional university partners, including Notre Dame. Notre Dame designated NDIGD to be the primary focal point for the UER director.

While there had been specific CRS-Notre Dame projects before in areas such as Peace Studies that achieved the interaction value stage, “hinge actors” at both institutions began to find more opportunities for shared value. Harry Kraemer (2015) describes this new level of partnership as forming strong emotional relationships that are based on the entire value that the organizations offer, not just one person. Organizations work to create win-win scenarios

together. Kraemer highlights that “[t]hese relationships develop over time, with realization and commitment by both partners that there is more value to be realized by working closely together.” Through the combined vision of leadership and the new hinge actors dedicated to advancing the institutional partnership, both organizations began to look more for these win-win scenarios, beyond the ad hoc individual project wins.

One aspect of this new relationship became more joint proposal development. In 2012, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) released a solicitation to fund the Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN), a multidisciplinary research and development effort led by universities working directly to evaluate and strengthen real-world innovations in development. \$140M in funding was competitively procured to universities across the world to apply for these grants. Proposal efforts were led at Notre Dame by newly hired “hinge actors” at the Notre Dame Initiative for Global Development with faculty and other SRIs to bid on the new USAID grant, and CRS was asked to be a partner on the grant. Hinge actors from both organizations were able to develop a strong proposal, which served a signal for the future.

Out of over 400 submissions, the Notre Dame-led proposal placed in the top 17 proposals in the competitive process. While only 7 awards were made in the end by USAID, the University of Notre Dame partnership with CRS was well received. In fact, when the HESN was rebid by USAID in 2018, Notre Dame and CRS partnered with Purdue University, Indiana University, and Makerere University in Uganda to put together the winning proposal for up to \$70,000,000 to help lead USAID support translational research with university partners in developing countries throughout the world.

Hinge actors from both the Notre Dame Initiative for Global Development and the new CRS Office of the UER started to put into place new organizational documents and resources to provide the opportunity for others to engage. The team used accessible online resources to help build new bridges in the partnership through an online Box Folder accessible to both Notre Dame and CRS stakeholders. These documents included:

- Master project list
- List of experts
- MOUs and agreement templates
- Project folders and project materials
- Organizational meeting notes

In addition, a regular semester meeting was set up. Each semester, CRS sends 3–4 representatives to Notre Dame’s campus as part of its efforts to engage priority university partners. Notre Dame faculty find these meetings very valuable to connect with CRS initiatives in the field and to understand how research can help benefit the lives of others around the world. CRS staff also become more aware of the resources available at Notre Dame and faculty research interests.

As part of the CRS Agency Strategy, the UER unit was enhanced and a new staff member hired to focus on knowledge management during the first year of strategy implementation. CRS created a site on its knowledge management platform to post internal documents from staff and to share information the following:

- University Engagement and Research
- Key relationships
- U.S. Global Development Lab information
- Resources and informational documents

This SharePoint based system was later augmented by a Customer Relationship Management system (SalesForce) which provided a more permanent and detailed record of specific project level and institutional engagements. A standard CRS presentation on UER was also developed to serve as a base for visits to universities, CRS field offices, and external meetings. The UER director also moderated a panel on NGO-university engagement at the 2014 InterAction Forum with the University of Notre Dame, Purdue University, and one other NGO. These external communication efforts helped to provide greater visibility to CRS’s approach to UER and inform a wide range of external stakeholders about how they might engage with CRS. New joint efforts began between CRS and other universities.

This newly created CRS capacity to focus on university collaborations sparked greater interest in collaborating at the highest level with their university partners. This led to a meeting between the Deans Council at Notre Dame and CRS representatives to discuss how CRS and Notre Dame could achieve even higher levels of collaboration based on shared values.

From this meeting and follow-up input from the Deans, a Value Proposition was drafted and approved by executives of both institutions. Value propositions are most often associated with businesses and are meant as statements of how your products serve your clients, making an argument for why your clients should buy from you. However, research suggests less than 10 per cent of companies formally develop value propositions, and leading



companies often find it challenging to develop their own value propositions in their markets (Payne and Frow, 2014).

The Notre Dame and CRS value propositions highlighted the following mutually beneficial characteristics as integral to the partnership:

- Institutional partners to share the values of Catholic Social Teaching
- Research and implementation partners
- Classroom learning and leadership development
- Student engagement in CRS programming on campus
- Advocacy
- Interdisciplinary approaches

With the aim of deepening complementary and mutually reinforcing institutional relationships, the Notre Dame—CRS value proposition outlines areas of benefit for each organization. While the document is not comprehensive of all opportunities, it provides some basic mutual themes of interest that can be used to foster partnership and more interdisciplinary collaboration moving forward.

Another recommendation from the Notre Dame Council of Deans was to find new ways to work with CRS on efforts that had interdisciplinary themes that could bring together the expertise from various colleges at Notre Dame. Subsequently, each visit by CRS to campus focused on an interdisciplinary theme or topic that wove together faculty expertise from across the University. The first interdisciplinary meeting to discuss collaboration on Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, & Accountability (MEAL). A subsequent meeting focused on developing a Peacebuilding Learning Agenda.

By 2017, NDIGD monitoring & evaluations experts and faculty had undertaken evaluation and/or research collaborations with CRS field offices in:

- Benin
- Haiti
- Honduras
- Malawi
- Tanzania

During this period, Notre Dame made the strategic decision to create the first new school on campus in 100 years, the Keough School of Global Affairs, which would help ignite the next phase of partnership for years to come.

In this phase, new efforts by leaders at both CRS and Notre Dame built on the positive work of previous leaders and on *transferred resource* programs that were already in place, such as CRS Rice Bowl—a joint effort between CRS and Notre Dame to engage Notre Dame’s students during Lent to help support CRS’s humanitarian relief programs worldwide. CRS also developed a “student ambassador” training program and in 2012 Notre Dame began collaborating on regional and national ambassador trainings. More rapid responses in coordination with CRS were being created with Notre Dame faculty, students, and centers including the CRS Syria Vigil on Notre Dame’s campus (Lin 2014). Finally, a CRS Advocacy course was co-developed and implemented, drawing on CRS advocacy and issue expertise. While CRS had other university partnerships and Notre Dame had other NGO partnerships, what made this one unique for both institutions was the ability to engage in scholarly research and training through the lens of Catholic social teaching, and use the knowledge generated from this work to educate and build awareness among students and faculty in the U.S.

#### PHASE IV—2017 AND BEYOND

In Phase IV, the overarching partnership began to move toward a more *synergistic value* stage in which benefits arise from collaboration that combines partners’ distinct resources and unique capabilities to accomplish more together than they could have accomplished separately. In this phase, core competencies key to each organization’s success can complement those of the other institution and support common partnership activities and organizational goals. The joint efforts of hinge actors at both organizations, faculty, and students began to culminate in more synergistic ways to provide mutual value in ways that advanced both institution’s objectives to accomplish more than they could on their own. Ultimately, the Global-U.S. connection built through this partnership under the umbrella of Catholic social teaching helped both institutions better achieve their mission.

One of the most significant achievements during this period was in Haiti. Building on the early work that CRS and Notre Dame conducted following the 2010 earthquake which piloted teaching training and an improved curriculum for teaching literacy in primary education, USAID and several foundations awarded Notre Dame and CRS nearly \$14 million in resources to scale up the program to 1,000 schools by 2021, benefiting thousands of students to have a transformational impact on the Haitian education system.

In 2017, Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs, the first new college or school at the University in nearly a century, opened its doors to new Master's degree students. The foundational theme for the Keough School is the idea of Integral Human Development through research, policy and practice; transformative educational programs, and partnerships for global engagement. The Notre Dame Initiative for Global Development (NDIGD) is now an integral unit within Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs spearheading these efforts. NDIGD was endowed and renamed in 2019 as the Pulte Institute for Global Development.

A foundational course within the new Keough School, the Integration Lab, creates new opportunities for students to work in teams with faculty-mentors in multiple disciplines throughout the University. These teams work collaboratively with implementing partners in the field to create thoughtful and high-impact responses to some of the world's most pressing issues and challenges. Notre Dame and CRS together launched the first pilot Integration Lab Project through a combination of expertise and resources all providing synergistic value.

CRS also approached Notre Dame with an idea to create a Peacebuilding Governance, and Gender Learning Agenda. This came from the recognition of the challenges that CRS field programs face in learning and applying best practices in integrated programing. In order to assist CRS in this effort, one of the regular Notre Dame-CRS campus meetings in April 2016 focused on exploring ways in which Notre Dame faculty and students could assist CRS in the development and implementation of the peacebuilding learning agenda. The vision for the collaboration drew on the complementary capacities of Notre Dame's hinge actors, in particular monitoring and evaluations specialists from NDIGD, working together with faculty and students from the Keough School of Global Affairs and Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies with subject matter expertise.

The concept of a learning agenda fits nicely into the space of NGO-University collaboration. Grounded in a thorough literature review, it poses a series of focused research questions under a limited set of themes, developed through an iterative process of feedback from field staff implementing programs on the ground, in comparison with existing evidence gaps in the literature (Sharrock, Gottret, and Andretta 2015). As such, learning agendas are not isolated one-off research collaborations, but rather serve as a strategic roadmap to guide research efforts over the longer-term, spanning multiple programs and widely diverse geographies. The research products are therefore more likely to contribute to scholarship broadly rather than simply serving the purposes of an isolated

project. In this way, learning can serve the needs of multiple audiences, and undergird long-term collaboration between NGOs and universities.

One Notre Dame faculty member involved with the Learning Agenda collaborated on CRS's new book on Interreligious Action for Peace (Bolton 2017), and, subsequently became a Carnegie Fellow working on "Religion, Gender and the Practice of Peacebuilding and Development," through collaboration with CRS programs in Mindanao and Malindi. Her research will focus on two interreligious programs facilitated by CRS together with local partners. In Mindanao, where land disputes among Muslims, Christians and indigenous groups have fueled violent conflict for decades, CRS trains religious and municipal leaders in conflict resolution skills and reconciliation practices. In Malindi, part of Kenya's coastal region, CRS brings together religious and government leaders to intervene against child marriages.

New approaches to classroom learning and leadership were developed jointly. Both partners began to envision more opportunities to connect the classroom to the realities found in CRS international humanitarian work and their expertise and presence in over 100 countries around the world. One to four-week online education courses for students were developed based on CRS's field work. For example, faculty have used the CRS Faculty Learning course materials on topics such as peacebuilding (co-developed jointly with Notre Dame faculty), fair and ethical trade, labor and sex trafficking, climate change and food security over the past several years. Notre Dame students benefited from this type of learning and collaboration with CRS. Through the CRS partnership, Notre Dame faculty are able to connect their research with practice to help their students learn. University students today often have a strong desire to learn more than theory, and they want to understand how to apply theories in the real world.

The goal with these efforts and others moving forward is to create synergy, combining, existing knowledge and experience to create a new asset that serves the objectives of both institutions and even contributes to scholarship more generally. Both partners envision working together to design interdisciplinary approaches to address global challenges and to work collectively on research and implementation partnerships that promote integral human development. Although some value propositions are specific to a discipline, Notre Dame and CRS also anticipate working together on larger-scale collaborations where synergies exist between disciplines.

In this model, challenges within projects are handled collaboratively, leaning on the years of built up trust/partnership between both organizations. Candid conversations regarding synergistic value and expectations from both sides are discussed and understood.

The goal moving forward is to work toward integrating the Values Propositions, emphasizing analytical research, monitoring and evaluation, and interdisciplinary education that is critical to CRS program implementation and local capacity strengthening worldwide. It is anticipated that more collaborative opportunities will be unearthed, working on interdisciplinary learning agendas with students that contribute to CRS's field work, the scale-up of larger efforts to impact others in the world, and the impact that CRS and Notre Dame can have together on other partners worldwide.

## CONCLUSION

From an initial ad hoc collaboration focused on associational value and transferred resources, CRS and Notre Dame developed a long-term partnership, spanning four distinct phases of development, and eventually engaging multiple sets of actors within each institution to achieve greater interaction and synergistic value. Much of the growth in the partnership was organic in nature, building on CRS's long experience of partnership with local institutions around the world, through repeated interaction that grew trust and understanding between actors at multiple levels in the two institutions. Leadership in both institutions also played a critical role in elevating the importance of the partnership, creating structures and investing unrestricted resources to hire staff to facilitate interaction and collaboration.

Continued growth in the partnership also required that both institutions perceive value in the interaction. It was perhaps necessary but insufficient for the two institutions simply to share a similar philosophical grounding in Catholic social teaching. While this may have facilitated the initial connection, it was ultimately the knowledge and experience that each party brought to the table that created value, and attracted funding from donors to implement programs jointly. Through the unique nature of this partnership, both institutions succeeded in fulfilling their mutual objectives to promote integral human development and human flourishing more effectively than they could on their own.

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