

Church Mission Society
A public benefit assessment report by the Charity Commission



The Charity Commission

The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. Its aim is to provide the best possible regulation of charities in England and Wales in order to increase charities' effectiveness and public trust and confidence. Most charities must register with the Commission, although some special types of charity do not have to register. There are some 190,000 registered charities in England and Wales. In Scotland the framework is different, and the Commission does not regulate Scottish charities.

The Commission provides a wide range of advice and guidance to charities and their trustees, and can often help with problems. Registered charities with an annual income of over £10,000 must provide annual information to the Commission. The Commission has wide powers to intervene in the affairs of a charity where things have gone wrong.

More information about the Commission together with a range of guidance for charities can be found on our website www.charitycommission.gov.uk, or by contacting Charity Commission Direct:

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The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. In October 2008 we started our public benefit assessment in relation to the Church Mission Society. This is a report of our findings.

Section A: The purpose of this report

This report sets out the Charity Commission's findings from its public benefit assessment for the Church Mission Society ('the charity', also referred to as 'CMS'), registered charity number 220297. You can find further information about what public benefit assessments are, how we carry them out, a glossary of terms and other details on the public benefit pages of our website.

Section B: Key details about the charity

Charity registration details

Church Mission Society, formerly the Church Missionary Society for Africa and The East, has been in existence since 1799. It is governed by a High Court Order dated 21 April 1958 and laws and bye-laws passed in April 1983. The charity was registered in 1963.

Location and operation

The charity is a UK based membership society that exists to further the Christian faith in the UK and internationally on the basis of a commitment to the uniqueness and universal significance of Jesus Christ.

The charity's head office is in Oxford, although its operations are carried out in over 50 countries. The charity engages in diverse and wide-ranging missionary and outreach activities. Work undertaken by the charity includes: contributions to founding the national churches that form what is now known as the Anglican Communion; equipping people for mission work through the provision of training and support; and contributions to education, community health, agriculture and economic development.

All of the work undertaken by the charity is done in the context of their Theological Framework to carry forward, through deeds as well as words, the Society's basic commitment to proclaim the gospel. Specific avenues of work include:

- evangelistic mission in various contexts;
- developing primary healthcare in remote regions of countries without a state health service;
- creating new agricultural products and livelihoods for peasant farmers;
- projects providing education and assistance to people;
- projects with street children;
- community projects in deprived UK cities.

Fees

The charity prioritises working with the poor both in the UK and internationally. The charity makes no charge for the majority of its services.

Opportunities to benefit for those unable to afford the fees

Where charges are made, for example in CMS medical clinics, no-one who is poor is excluded through inability to pay.

People involved in CMS cross-cultural experiences are generally expected to raise the necessary financial support, but CMS will always provide assistance to suitable potential participants for whom this is beyond their means.

Financial position: year ending 31 January 2008

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total
Income	£4,756,000	£2,964,000	£205,000	£7,925,000
Expenditure	£6,572,000	£3,192,000	£14,000	£9,778,000
Net incoming/ (outgoing) resources	£(1,816,000)	£(228,000)	£191,000	£(1,853,000)
Net assets (including pension scheme asset)	£24,246,000	£3,161,000	£3,691,000	£31,098,000
Net assets (excluding pension scheme asset)	£18,842,000	£3,161,000	£3,691,000	£25,694,000

Section C: Is the charity's aim capable of being charitable?

In this section we report on the charity's aim and whether it fits within the list of descriptions of purposes within section 2 (2) of the Charities Act 2006 that are capable of being charitable purposes.

The charity's object* is as follows:

"The Church Mission Society (otherwise known as CMS and heretofore known as the Church Missionary Society) is a community of people in mission obeying the call of God to proclaim the gospel in all places and to gather all peoples into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ."

The Theological Framework of the charity sets out its beliefs and principles. Within the life and activity of CMS, evangelistic mission is practiced in four ways:

- Presence – Christians living amongst God's people.
- Proclamation – sharing the good news of Jesus.
- Practical Ministries – demonstrating the gospel through service and action.
- Power of God – victory over evil, working for justice, peace and reconciliation.

The charity believes that a Christian faith includes a vision for peace and social harmony, and that faith gives meaning and purpose to people's lives and contributes to their well-being. The charity's philosophy is to transmit morals, ethics and values to future generations and create societal bonds and cohesion.

In the charity's 2008 Trustees' Annual Report it states that people are most likely to become disciples of Jesus if Christians "live a Christ-like life amongst them, share the good news of Jesus, demonstrate God's love and prayerfully expect the Spirit's power to transform individuals, communities and whole nations".

The beliefs and practices of the Christian religion are capable of advancing religion for the purposes of charity law, and promoting the morals and ethics of the Christian faith is deemed in law to be capable of impacting upon the public in a beneficial way.

The charity's aim is therefore to advance religion by proclaiming the gospel and to gather all peoples into fellowship. Our assessment found that the charity's operation was fully within this aim.

We concluded that the charity's aim does fall within s2(2)(c) of the descriptions of purposes in the Charities Act 2006 - the advancement of religion - and is capable of being charitable subject to meeting the public benefit requirement.

* set out in clause 1 of the Laws of the Church Mission Society

Section D: Is the charity's aim for the public benefit?

To meet the public benefit requirement, the organisation must meet the two public benefit principles. These are:

Principle 1: There must be an identifiable benefit or benefits

Principle 2: Benefit must be to the public, or section of the public

We looked at the sub-principles within each of these.

- Sections D1 and D2 set out our findings for those relating to principle 1.
- Sections D3 – D6 set out our findings for those relating to principle 2.
- Section D7 sets out our conclusions on whether the organisation meets the public benefit requirement.

Section D1

We looked at the first two sub-principles together:

- **sub-principle 1a - it must be clear what the benefits are**
- **sub-principle 1b - the benefits must be related to the aims**

Relevant benefits

The charity engages in a very wide range of missionary and outreach activities. The charity in its operation of the Theological Framework confirms that the evangelistic mission of the charity is always carried out with the intention that, on an entirely non-coercive and invitational basis, people should become followers of Christ.

Some of the benefits delivered are difficult to quantify and may be viewed as intangible. In assessing public benefit, we take non-quantifiable benefits into consideration, provided it is clear what the benefits are.

Benefits which are clear and identifiable and related to the aim are:

- contributions to founding the church – the charity states that it has taken a significant part in founding about two thirds of the national churches that form what is now known as the Anglican Communion;
- equipping people for mission work by providing training and support for people undertaking the work, whilst bearing witness to the Christian faith;
- contributions to education, community health, agriculture and economic development;
- support of environmental projects; and
- promotion of human rights.

These benefits all relate to the aim and are relevant to these sub-principles.

The charity identified benefits which are less tangible or quantifiable but which arise as a result of the beliefs and practices that are promoted by the charity. These were:

- Contribution towards the development of civil society through imparting positive values, attitudes and skills:

The charity attributes this to the contribution of faith to people's well-being and the subsequent creation of societal bonds and cohesion. It may be difficult to identify clearly all of the benefits which may arise from the CMS carrying out its aim. There are however some clear benefits to civil society resulting from what the charity does in promoting its moral framework. For example:

- mediating in times of civil unrest
- encouraging churches in Britain to play an active part in community development
- encouraging altruism and volunteering
- encouraging people to live with simplicity and a commitment to serve other people
- Providing opportunities for intercultural interchange and international friendship including:
 - participation in the mission work
 - educational resources fostering cultural enrichment and international understanding

Although these are beneficial to the public, it is difficult to quantify the impact of these benefits in the achievement of the aim of the charity. Nevertheless, looking at the totality of benefits, they do involve significant benefits which can be recognised and described and which do relate to the aim.

Political activities

The charity undertakes some political activities in furtherance of its aim. These activities are undertaken as a means of supporting or contributing to the achievement of the charity's aim, and are not an aim in themselves.

We concluded that there are clear, identifiable benefits that are related to the charity's aim, as well as some benefits that are less tangible. The benefits are sufficient for us to conclude that the charity does meet sub-principles 1a and 1b.

Section D2

Sub-principle 1c: Benefits must be balanced against any detriment or harm

We explain in *Charities and Public Benefit* our approach to assessing this sub-principle.

In *The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit* we give examples of what might constitute detriment or harm for charities advancing religion. We also describe the particular circumstances in which proselytising (seeking to convert someone to a faith or religion) can affect public benefit.

CMS recognises the potential risk of detriment or harm arising from certain activities such as:

- in places where governments object to Christian mission, including where it might be illegal; and
- in relation to staff and those engaged in mission work.

The charity seeks converts to the Christian religion in furthering its aim. However, it does so on an entirely non-coercive and invitational basis. The charity does not expect anything in return for its services.

Taking these factors into account, and based on the approach set out in our published guidance, we found no evidence or indication of detriment or harm in relation to this charity.

We concluded that there was nothing under sub-principle 1c that would affect the assessment of public benefit in this case.

Section D3

Sub-principle 2a: The beneficiaries must be appropriate to the aims

The charity's aim is to proclaim the gospel in all places and to gather all peoples into fellowship. The charity aims to send mission workers throughout the world to all peoples. Beneficiaries are the public generally and no-one is excluded on the basis of their faith.

We concluded that the beneficiaries are appropriate to the aim and that this sub-principle is met.

Section D4

Sub-principle 2b: Where benefit is to a section of the public, the opportunity to benefit must not be unreasonably restricted

In this section we consider geographical and other restrictions. In section D5 we consider restrictions arising as a result of the fees charged.

Geographical restrictions

There is no express geographical restriction in the stated object applied to the opportunity to benefit.

Religious restrictions

The governing document does not contain any religious restrictions on who may benefit, nor are any restrictions applied in practice.

Membership restrictions

There are no membership restrictions in the stated object applied to the opportunity to benefit.

We concluded that the opportunity to benefit is not unreasonably restricted by geographical or other factors outlined above and that the charity does meet sub-principle 2b in relation to restrictions other than fees.

Section D5

We considered the following related sub-principles together:

- **sub-principle 2b (the opportunity to benefit must not be unreasonably restricted by ability to pay any fees charged); and**
- **sub-principle 2c (people in poverty must not be excluded from the opportunity to benefit)**

Taken together, these sub-principles mean that the charity must be able to show that there is sufficient opportunity to benefit in a material way that is related to the charity's aim for those who cannot afford the fees, including those in poverty.

We describe in section C of *Public Benefit and Fee-charging* the principal factors derived from case law which we use to assess this.

Our assessment of these sub-principles looked at whether the level at which fees are set has the effect of preventing people who are unable to pay the fees from benefiting from the services or facilities.

The work of the charity is principally among poor people both in the UK and internationally. Poor people are not excluded from the opportunity of receiving benefits offered through CMS work. Where charges are made, for example in CMS medical clinics, no-one who is poor is excluded through inability to pay.

People involved in CMS cross-cultural experiences are generally expected to raise the necessary financial support, but CMS will always provide assistance to suitable potential participants for whom this is beyond their means.

The benefits provided by the charity are available to all, particularly those in poverty, and for the most part are not subject to any charge or fee. Where fees or charges do apply, the opportunity to benefit is not restricted to those who are able to pay.

We concluded that, taking into account what is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances of this charity, it does provide sufficient opportunity to benefit in a material way for those who cannot afford the fees and that the charity does therefore fully meet sub-principles 2b (in relation to fees) and 2c.

Section D6

Principle 2d: Any private benefits must be incidental

We looked at the potential for private benefit arising from the charity carrying out its aim.

The charity supports business development programmes in furtherance of its aim and this can give rise to some private benefit. The charity's focus in doing so is to create job opportunities for the disadvantaged and to promote social responsibility, and ethical business practice. It supports programmes which focus on provision and trading in food, clothing, shelter, education and healthcare.

It is clear that any benefits to individuals which might arise from this work are incidental to the charity's main aim of proclaiming the Christian gospel by works of practical Christianity to relieve need and by fostering an ethical business environment for the wider public benefit.

We concluded that private benefits are incidental and that this sub-principle is met.

Section D7

Conclusion: Is the public benefit requirement met?

We concluded that all of the above sub-principles are fulfilled and that the public benefit requirement is met.

Section E: Overall conclusions and required or recommended actions

We concluded that the Church Mission Society is a charity and is operating for the public benefit.

There are no required or recommended actions for the trustees to take.



This publication can also be accessed at the Charity Commission's website: www.charitycommission.gov.uk

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