

SSVP



SOCIÉTÉ DE SAINT-VINCENT DE PAUL - CONSEIL GÉNÉRAL

SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL - COUNCIL GENERAL

SOCIEDAD DE SAN VICENTE DE PAÚL - CONSEJO GENERAL

SOCIEDADE DE SÃO VICENTE DE PAULO - CONSELHO GERAL

INTERNATIONAL TWINNING MANUAL

July 2004

Preface

ASSISTANCE BETWEEN CONFERENCES AND COUNCILS: TWINNINGS AND OTHER

Any organisation starts to be a real organisation once it's members gets to know and accept a set of regulations, routes to follow, ways of acting, which makes it flexible and differentiates it from the rest.

Since it's beginning, the Society of Saint Vincent has always wanted to realise it's potential to spread throughout the world into many different nations and cultures for the service of the poorest. Conferences have always tried to assist one another, (for example, those of Paris did so with those of Lyon), by sharing with others their new experiences so they may in turn better serve the poorest and the members.

The rapid growth of the Society soon favoured the transfer of financial resources from wealthy areas to others where the existing Conferences had difficulty coping with natural disasters or human catastrophes. Later, in the 20th century, the Society started to transfer important resources from the Conferences of wealthy countries to those with fewer resources.

However, at the beginning while the aid was punctual, it was limited to any single catastrophe that may have occurred. On later occasions, aid was no longer limited to single disasters and developed into a constant and smooth relationship between the two Conferences or Councils: the donor and the beneficiary. This relationship was not always exempt of tensions and misunderstandings by one part or the other, often because of a lack of relevant rules that regulate the flow of economical resources.

For a long time, the Society has been asking Council General to create some regulations that could guarantee, rationalise and make this type of assistance more flexible between Conferences and/or Councils. On several occasions throughout these last years, we endeavoured to satisfy this aim, but we must admit, without success, until now.

The creation of an international commission, which has been working on this matter for more than a year and with very good results, has managed to write this Draft Manual, after consulting different Councils and members in the world.

I think it is a very good approach and with the co-operation of everyone, we shall be able to provide the Society with some regulations, much sooner than what we initially imagined. I hope that these regulations will finally correspond to the true international organisation that really are the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul and whose daily functioning we aim at improving, in order to better serve the poor and the members.

I encourage all of you to grow deeper into this work and I express my very sincere congratulations to the members of the Commission for the work that has already been done.

José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha
XIVth President General

July 2004

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Glossary of Terms

AGGREGATION AND INSTITUTION

The formal recognition of any Conference (Aggregation) or Council (Institution) by Council General as defined by the Rule of the Society.

CONFERENCE

The basic unit of the Society of St Vincent de Paul as defined by the Rule of the Society.

COUNCIL

Any District, Regional, Diocesan, State or other named Council of the Society. This definition excludes any Superior/Assimilated Council that is specifically named in this manual.

COUNCIL GENERAL

The international “*supreme and democratic organ*” of the Society as defined by the Rule of the Society.

SOCIETY

The Society of St Vincent de Paul as defined by its Rule.

SUPERIOR/ASSIMILATED COUNCIL

The Council that represents a nation or large region as defined by the Rule and known in some countries as the National Council.

TWINNING

Twining is “*The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spur Councils and Conferences to assist others with less resources. The activity between two Conferences, Councils, a fundamental activity of the Society, is the expression of Vincentian fraternity and solidarity.*”

Part 1 - Introduction

1 A TWINNING DEFINED

Conferences and Councils help others in need, both at the national and international levels. This is one of the activities most cherished by the Society. The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spurs Conferences and Councils to assist others with less resources or in particular situations.

This direct link between two Conferences or Councils, consisting of sharing prayers, a profound friendship and material resources, is called twinning. This activity contributes to world peace and to understanding and cultural exchange among peoples.

1 B HISTORY

Council General officially launched the twinning programme in 1954, but this concept of mutual assistance goes back to the beginning of the Society. In 1844, the president of a Conference in Paris spoke of ...

“The spirit of communication that must inhabit all members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul Conferences that have more resources, either in money or in members, must call themselves mother Conferences and dispatch their members to Conferences in need.”
(Excerpts from the Minutes of a Particular Council January 30 1844)

Twinning by which *“each of one of the two parties contributes its best assets”*, (National Council of France) is therefore an old concept born out of the spirituality of the Society based on exchange, solidarity and sharing.

In 1991 a “Development Guide” was edited by the French National Council where twinning was defined as *“The creation of a link, a permanent emotional and spiritual relationship between Vincentians here and there which brings them together through the years, to share their worries, joys and Vincentian life”*.

Through all of the Society’s history, this mutual assistance was always encouraged by various Presidents General.

In 2001 the President General Jose Ramon Diaz-Torremocha remarked, *“ It is because we believe we are part of this unique world Conference that we are able to focus our efforts on the country that need them most. Sometimes we will do this by praying, other times by sharing our resources.”*

1 C THE SPIRITUALITY OF TWINNING

In Mark 12:41-44, Jesus tells his disciples to observe the poor widow. *"They gave from their surplus wealth, she gave from what she needed for her own survival..."*. In twinning, Vincentians strive to give selflessly, not just from their surplus funds, but from what they most need..

President General Jose Ramon Diaz Torremocha in 2003 stated that *"we are a worldwide community in which each person shares their resources to meet the needs of others, whatever the needs may be"*.

Friendship is the hallmark of the Society and twinning is a form of our Christian solidarity. Twinning helps a Council or Conference fulfil the universal mission of charity.

The Society is a Christian family whose members share their resources, experiences and support each other in their Vincentian vocation.

1 D ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL TWINNING COORDINATOR

The position of International Twinning Coordinator (ITC) was created in May 2003, and reports to the Council General through the Second General Vice-President of International Structure and General Affairs. The ITC is responsible for:

- Drafting, publication and implementation of the International Twinning Manual and amendments
- Advising Superior/Assimilated Councils about International Twinning
- Promoting and monitoring progress of International Twinning
- Being a contact or 'clearing house' for International Twinning
- Preparation and submission of Annual Reports to Council General
- Maintaining a Master Register of all twinned Conferences and Councils

1 E THIS MANUAL

This Manual outlines the International Twinning policy applicable at all levels of the Society.

It is based on over 50 years of twinning experience stressing the need for practicality, fairness and transparency.

This Manual takes effect from 1 July 2004 and supersedes all other twinning documents published by Council General.

When drafting their own Policies and Procedures, Superior/Assimilated Councils shall strive to make them consistent with this Manual.

No part of this Manual may be amended or otherwise altered without the written permission of Council General.

Part 2 – Vision, Aims and Philosophy

2 A VISION

That all Councils and Conferences be twinned thus creating a unique worldwide community of love and solidarity, dedicated to sharing the necessities of life with as many of Christ's poor as possible.

2 B AIMS

Twinning has three aims:

- To facilitate communication between Councils and Conferences around the world, promoting a spirit of understanding, friendship and solidarity among all Vincentians.
- To help spiritually, morally and materially Councils and Conferences so as to ...
 - continue to alleviate misery and hunger
 - promote social justice throughout the world
 - animate solidarity within the Society worldwide
 - be a witness of Christian charity
- To promote the establishment of new Councils and Conferences by helping them start and expand.

2 C PHILOSOPHY

In the understanding of solidarity, our first obligation within the Society is working within our Rule.

Accordingly, all disbursements of Society funds for overseas aid or development including, projects, disaster relief and relief programmes are to be disbursed through the Society.

It is the responsibility of all Superior/Assimilated Councils to ensure that this policy is observed.

Part 3 – International Twinning Procedures

3 A TWINNING REGIONS

Council General may designate certain giving Superior/Assimilated Councils to be the preferred twin in geographic areas because of the language, proximity, cultural and historical links.

Councils and Conferences who wish to twin outside these arrangements may only do so with the approval of the giving and receiving Superior/Assimilated Councils and after Council General's recommendation.

3 B AUTHORITY OF SUPERIOR/ASSIMILATED COUNCILS

All requests for twinning shall be directed to a Conference's/Council's own Superior/Assimilated Council.

A Council or Conference may only twin internationally with the permission of their Superior/Assimilated Council.

3 C TWINNING COORDINATORS

Every Superior/Assimilated Council involved in International Twinning should appoint a Twinning Coordinator and inform the International Twinning Coordinator as soon as possible of that appointment with contact details.

Whenever possible the Twinning Coordinator should not be the President of the Superior/Assimilated Council.

All Superior/Assimilated Councils should have an active committee that is responsible for twinning. Such committees shall keep a register of all twins and other appropriate records.

3 D AGGREGATION & INSTITUTION

All Councils and Conferences involved in twinning must be instituted and aggregated respectively.

3 E SINGLE RECEIVING COUNCIL OR CONFERENCE TWINNING

A Council or Conference in a receiving country can be twinned once unless expressly approved otherwise by Council General. It would be fundamentally unfair for one receiving Council or Conference to have more than one twinning partner while another needy Council or Conference receives no assistance.

3 F MULTIPLE GIVING COUNCIL OR CONFERENCE TWINNING

Because of the large number of Councils or Conferences in need, giving Councils and Conferences are encouraged to adopt more than one twin.

3 G CHANGES OF TWINS

Other than in the case of Retirement of Twins (see 3I below) the receiving Superior/Assimilated Council may not change the receiving Council or Conference without prior consultation and agreement of the giving Superior/Assimilated Council.

3 H COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWINS

Communication must take place between the giving and receiving Councils or Conferences on a regular basis. Communication must be both ways to avoid fears that a twin has gone into abeyance, when no response is received. A Conference/Council must advise its twin when its correspondent has changed or has changed address. Where it is not possible for a Conference to communicate regularly, the appropriate Council should contact their twin at least three times a year.

3 I RETIREMENT OF TWINS

Whenever possible, receiving Conferences/Councils should strive to become self sufficient.

Financial contributions should therefore be for a limited period as determined by the Superior/Assimilated Council of the receiving country.

When, in the opinion of the receiving Superior/Assimilated Council, a Council or Conference has become financially self sufficient, it should retire the material assistance part of their twinning arrangement. Other established fraternal links may continue with the twinning partners.

Such a retirement will then allow the giving Council or Conference an opportunity to adopt a new twin.

3 J SUSPENSION OF TWINNING

When, in the opinion of the giving Superior/Assimilated Council, a receiving Council or Conference has repeatedly failed to comply with the provisions of this Manual, or for some other serious cause, twinning may be suspended.

Such suspension of twinning shall only be as a last resort and after every attempt towards resolving any problems with the receiving Superior/Assimilated Council has occurred.

Any receiving Council/Conference, who wishes to appeal any such suspension, may do so through its Superior/Assimilated Council to the Twinning Coordinator of the giving Superior/Assimilated Council. If the issue is not resolved at this level, the International Twinning Coordinator may arbitrate on the matter.

Local Councils/Conferences are not to suspend a twinning relationship without approval from their Superior/Assimilated Council.

3 K REPORTING

Every Superior/Assimilated Council involved with twinning shall prepare a report on their twinning activities including statistical and financial information by 30 June every year.

One copy of this report will be sent to the Superior/Assimilated Councils they are twinned with and one copy shall be sent to the International Twinning Coordinator.

3 L ROLE OF COUNCIL GENERAL

Council General through the International Twinning Coordinator is available to assist with any enquiries regarding twinning. Any Superior/Assimilated Council's Twinning Coordinator may communicate directly with the International Twinning Coordinator at any time, but their Superior/Assimilated Councils must be kept informed.

Council General will maintain a master register of all twinned Councils and Conferences.

3 M SOCIETY FUNDS FOR SOCIETY WORK

Twinning may occur only between Society Councils and Conferences. Twinning funds may not be given to other organisations or third parties for distribution.

No Vincentian may materially benefit from twinning.

When twinning funds are used to purchase substantial goods or properties, such as hostels or farms etc, such purchases shall be legally certified in the Society's name. When this is not possible, for example due to the laws of a particular country, assets should be held in trust for the Society by the Church.

All receiving Conferences/Councils are responsible to their Superior/Assimilated Councils for the proper distribution and utilisation of twinning funds.

3 N FAIR DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

All Superior/Assimilated Councils whether giving and receiving have a duty to ensure as far as possible that twinning funds are fairly distributed among receiving Councils or Conferences.

3 O FREQUENCY AND AMOUNT OF TWINNING

Both the giving and receiving Superior/Assimilated Councils of the countries concerned, in a spirit of charity, solidarity and dialogue, will determine the amount, type and frequency of twinning assistance given by a Council or Conference.

Any such decision must preserve equity in the receiving country. The desire is that in any one receiving country, the maximum number of Councils and Conferences are twinned and receive similar funding. However, if a greater need exists in a specific place, then dissimilar funding may be appropriate but only with the agreement of both the giving and receiving Superior/Assimilated Councils.

Frequency of funding for regular twinning may be monthly or quarterly.

3 P TYPES OF TWINNING

Type of twinning is either regular twinning or single projects.

Single projects need to demonstrate to the giving Superior/Assimilated Council that they are sustainable for the life of the project and whenever possible, will eventually become self sufficient.

Project also require the approval of the receiving Superior/Assimilated Council before commencing.

See flow charts in Appendices A and B for details.

Non financial twinning may also be entered into. A twinning relationship based on the exchange of correspondence and linkage by prayer is also encouraged.

The Spiritual aspect of twinning should be recognized by each twin praying for it's twin at their meetings and by offering a special mass for it's twin on their twin's feast day.

3 Q TWINNING TROUGH SUPERIOR/ASSIMILATED COUNCILS

All contributions to Councils and Conferences should be forwarded through the Superior/Assimilated Councils in order to ensure security and accountability.

All funds transfers should be to a Twinning bank account of the receiving Superior/Assimilated Council and whenever possible completed electronically. Such accounts shall have at least three signatories.

Variations to this procedure shall only be with the explicit approval of both the giving and receiving Superior/Assimilated Councils.

In extraordinary cases, for example where a Superior/Assimilated Council is not operating, Council General may authorise alternative arrangements for the timely assistance of those in need.

3 R RECEIPT OF FUNDS RECEIVED

When funds are given, the receiving Superior/Assimilated Council shall give evidence of receipt of the contributions to the giving Superior/Assimilated Council.

This receipt will state how the funds were delivered to the intended receiving Councils or Conferences, or explain why the funds were not delivered to that/those Councils or Conferences.

The giving Superior/Assimilated Council should have a procedure to inform in a timely manner Councils/Conferences that their funds have been received by twinning partners.

3 S USE OF FUNDS

A receiving Superior/Assimilated Council may not use any part of any contribution for it's own use such as handling or administrative charges. If any such claim of funds is to be made, it requires the prior consultation and agreement with the giving Superior/Assimilated Council.

Those receiving twinning assistance should have a clear understanding that the contributions from their twinning brothers and sisters are not intended to cover all financial needs, but are to supplement their own efforts.

3 T INTERNAL TWINNING

When there is scope for Conferences under the same Superior/Assimilated Council to assist each other, they should be encouraged to do so. While this Manual may be used to guide such Internal Twinning, the ultimate governance and operation of these arrangements lies with their own Superior/Assimilated Councils.

3 U FLOW CHARTS and AMENDMENTS

Two flow charts are attached as Appendices A and B.

Appendix A outlines the main functions of a normal twinning cycle.

Appendix B outlines the main functions of a project.

Council General may, from time to time based on experience and best practice, publish further flow charts or other amendments to this Manual. Suggestions for improvement to future editions of this Manual may be forwarded to the International Twinning Coordinator.

Part 4 - Partnerships

4 A TWINNING and VINPAZ

Twinning is an activity that can be managed by the Society in a twinned country.

VINPAZ deals with special projects or situations that cannot be managed by the Society in that country.

**This Manual does not deal with VINPAZ as it is separate from Twinning.
All enquires on VINPAZ matters should be directed to the VINPAZ Coordinator.
For VinPaz activities, see the VinPaz Manual.**

Funds given for twinning may not be diverted to VINPAZ projects and vice versa.

4 B GROWTH OF THE SOCIETY

The growth of the Society and the formation of its members is the responsibility of the Superior/Assimilated Councils in that country.

However, the growth of the Society can be supported and enhanced through the twinning relationship between countries.

4 C COUNCIL TO COUNCIL PARTNERSHIPS

All Councils need resources for the effective operation and administration of the Society in their countries.

When Superior/Assimilated Councils have twins, these Councils should consider having a partnership with the relevant Superior/Assimilated Council in that country.

Such Council to Council partnerships can provide funds that will assist in the formation, training and other administrative needs in that country.

4 D COUNTRY TO COUNTRY CONTACTS

Twinned Superior/Assimilated Councils are encouraged to meet periodically in each other's country.

These visits will help develop a deeper understanding of a country's needs and foster solidarity with its twin.

Any member of the Society, who wishes to visit their twin, must have the prior approval of both Superior/Assimilated Councils concerned.

4 E DISASTER RELIEF

When a disaster occurs in a country, their giving twins and Council General should work together to respond.

If funds donated to Council General are not distributed to the nominated Disaster within six months of the receipt of the funds by Council General, the funds, or the remaining balance thereof, must be returned to the donor's Superior/Assimilated Council within 30 days of the six month deadline.

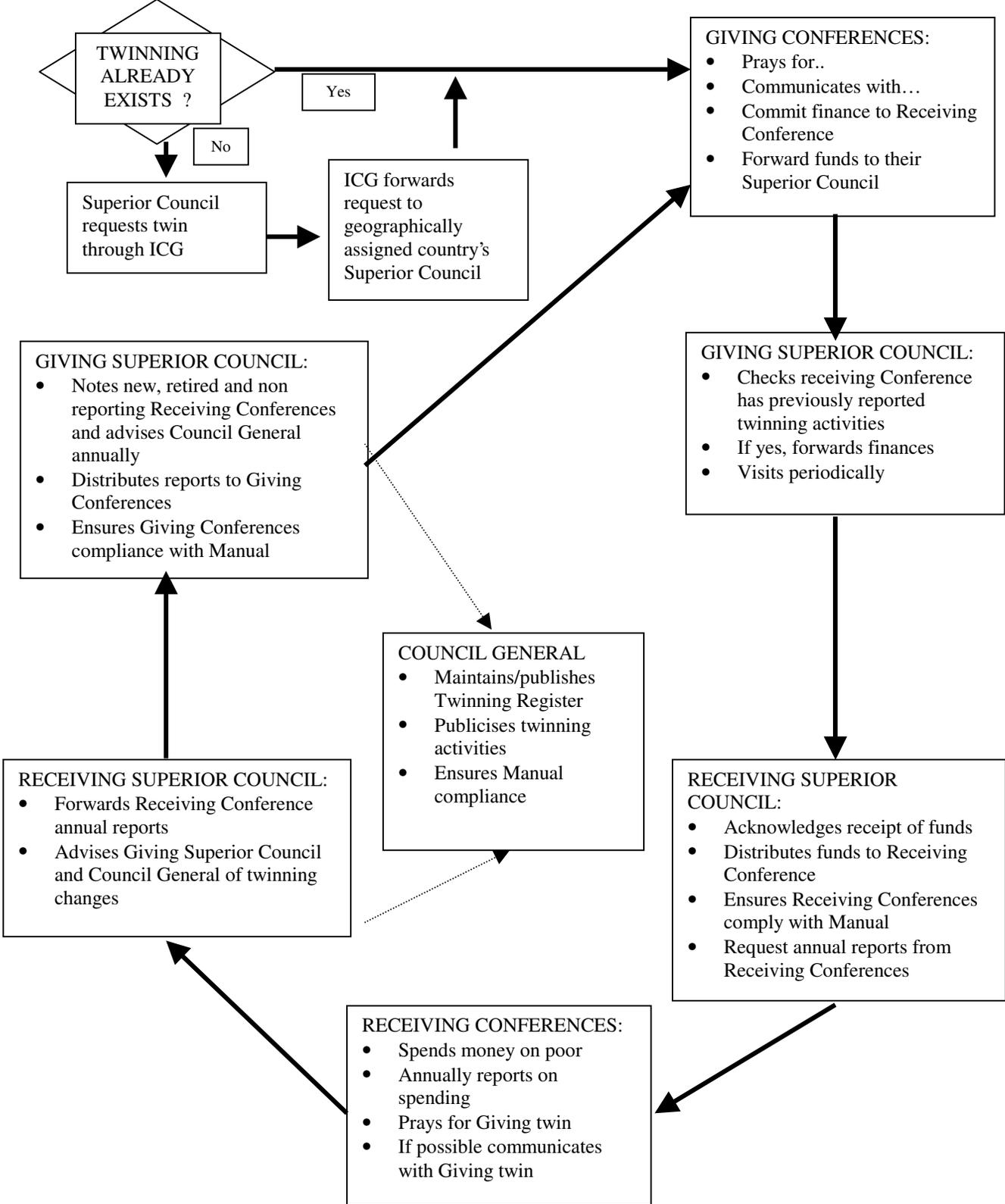
Where non-twinning countries wish to respond to a disaster in another country, they must advise Council General of the support provided.

The Society should work with other relief agencies to ensure aid is being used as effectively as possible.

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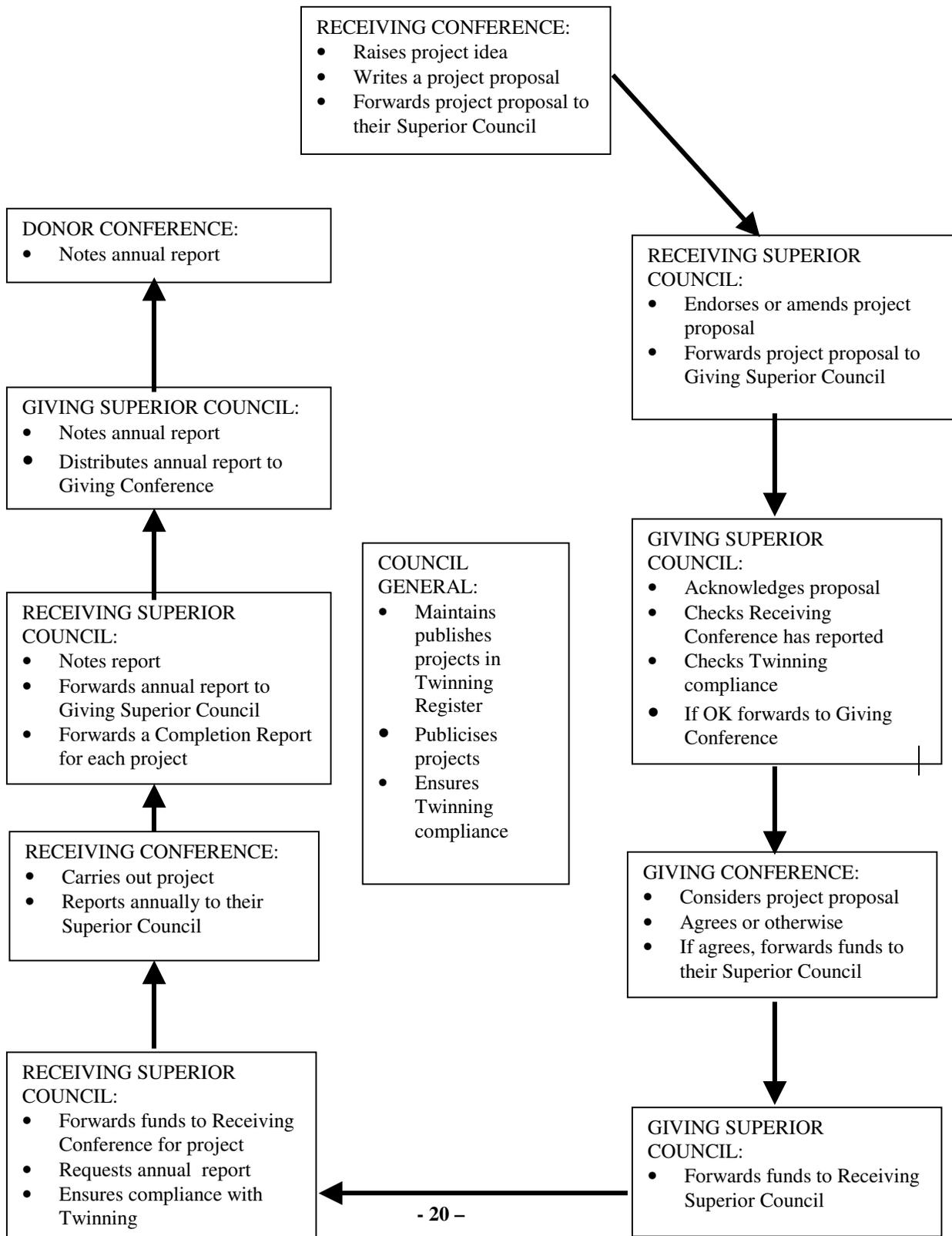
SSVP TWINNING CYCLE – Appendix A

Indicating main functions only



SSVP PROJECT CYCLE – Appendix B

Indicating main functions only



Manual ends

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