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RELIGION & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Building Partnerships to End Extreme Poverty

Case Study

Strengthening Accountability and Measurement in a Global Faith Based Organisation

Abstract

Since 2013, The Salvation Army working in 126 countries has commenced a process to strengthen capacity in accountability including impact measurement. The aim is to develop a clear, shared understanding of what The Salvation Army is seeking to achieve in all its work around the world, measure and learn on the journey and strengthen a culture of locally owned accountability. This case study focuses on the development of tools for impact measurement which focus on 7 key outcomes. Four are contextual (depending on local factors) and measure safety/security; wellbeing/health; formation/education and service/work. Three are relational and focus on three characteristics of faithful relationships – love, trust and hope. This unifying framework for measurement is being developed and piloted at present as part of a wider accountability movement.

Introduction

The Salvation Army – a Christian church and charity – was founded 150 years ago and now works in 126 countries around the world. Its hierarchical form of governance – based originally on a military model – organises the work into 61 territories, regions and commands reporting into the International Headquarters in London. The Salvation Army seeks to ‘preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination’¹ through its ministry in 15,636 churches (called ‘corps’); 3,000 schools (pre-, primary, secondary); 182 hospitals and health centres; 984 social service centres (for people who are homeless, elderly, orphaned, addicted, etc) and many other community based initiatives.

Throughout its history, The Salvation Army has built partnerships with communities, governments, business and civil society to end poverty in all its forms.

The Salvation Army has always measured progress by reporting statistics. A review of practice in 2013 noted that measurement information was often not reliable, not well used in decision making and greater emphasis on outcomes and impact data was required. However, it noted there is also a strong commitment to appreciate the long term difference that our work makes on people’s lives. People want to understand the wider effects of their work – socially, spiritually, physically, economically and environmentally.

A survey of senior in-country leaders during 2013 also highlighted concerns about Salvation Army accountability systems not being fit-for-purpose. Senior international leadership commissioned a review of accountability practice and approved a parallel initiative to strengthen measurement capacity – supported by The Bridgespan

¹ International Mission Statement of The Salvation Army www.salvationarmy.org

Group based in San Francisco. Accountability and Impact Measurement Reviews were undertaken over a 12 month period reporting in October 2014.

The aim was to develop a clear, shared understanding of what The Salvation Army is seeking to achieve in all its work around the world, and a way to measure progress and strengthen a culture of locally owned accountability. This case study will focus on strengthening capacity to measure the impact of Salvation Army work.²

Steps taken to strengthen accountability and measurement

All parts of The Salvation Army need to track the transformative change in people's lives by measuring the outcomes and impact of our work. Tool to do this must enable people to learn, adapt and improve.

A report from India in 2014 highlighted some of the issues:

Young people an eastern state in India were organised by The Salvation Army to participate in a blood donor programme. The report included a picture showing many young people taking part – but no specific number was reported. The number of pints of blood were not measured (the output); and there was no attempt to measure the outcome or impact of the blood donor programme. Impact Measurement tools would help the young people better appreciate the difference they make.

1. Start with theology

Measurement and accountability is often seen as an imposition by front-line practitioners – yet another requirement of the donors, regulators and/or the internal bureaucracy. Therefore it is important for a faith based organisation to highlight the theological imperatives for why measurement and accountability are critically important.

The following theological convictions provide a firm foundation:

1. The Salvation Army's desire to see the world restored to the perfection God intends.
2. The Salvation Army' commitment to be good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us.
3. The Salvation Army's commitment to quality and integrity in our work and ministry.
4. The Salvation Army's commitment to measurement and ongoing learning being primarily for self-assessment on the journey.
5. The Salvation Army's commitment to a reflective, faith-based way of working (see Faith Based Facilitation www.salvationarmy.org/fbf).

While not everyone who works for or is served by The Salvation Army shares our faith, these foundations are fundamental to the life of the organisation and its way of working.

2. Clarify the purpose of the accountability movement

The purpose of strengthening accountability and specifically the impact measurement initiative is to increase the transformative change The Salvation Army works towards with people and communities through measurement

² Four areas of work were identified to strengthen accountability across The Salvation Army – measurement, finance systems, safeguarding and governance. This case study focuses on measurement but all four “pillars” of the accountability movement are using a

and learning. This will be achieved by improving the quality and effectiveness of Salvation Army programmes around the world by measuring progress towards a shared purpose using a unifying framework for results measurement and learning. The purpose is not merely to keep donors, regulators or supervisors happy, but rather the primary aim is to give practitioners capacity to track progress, learn lessons and adapt as soon as possible.

3. Embed measurement as an essential part of Salvation Army life

Measurement tools can be complicated, highly technical and only useful to experts. The Salvation Army needs to avoid these tools to achieve the aim of strengthening local capacity to track progress, learn lessons and adapt as soon as possible.

Two priorities were identified:

1. The tools must be simple, easy to use and translatable into other languages.
2. Measurement tools must be embedded into Salvation Army accountability processes.³

Two simple tools have been developed.

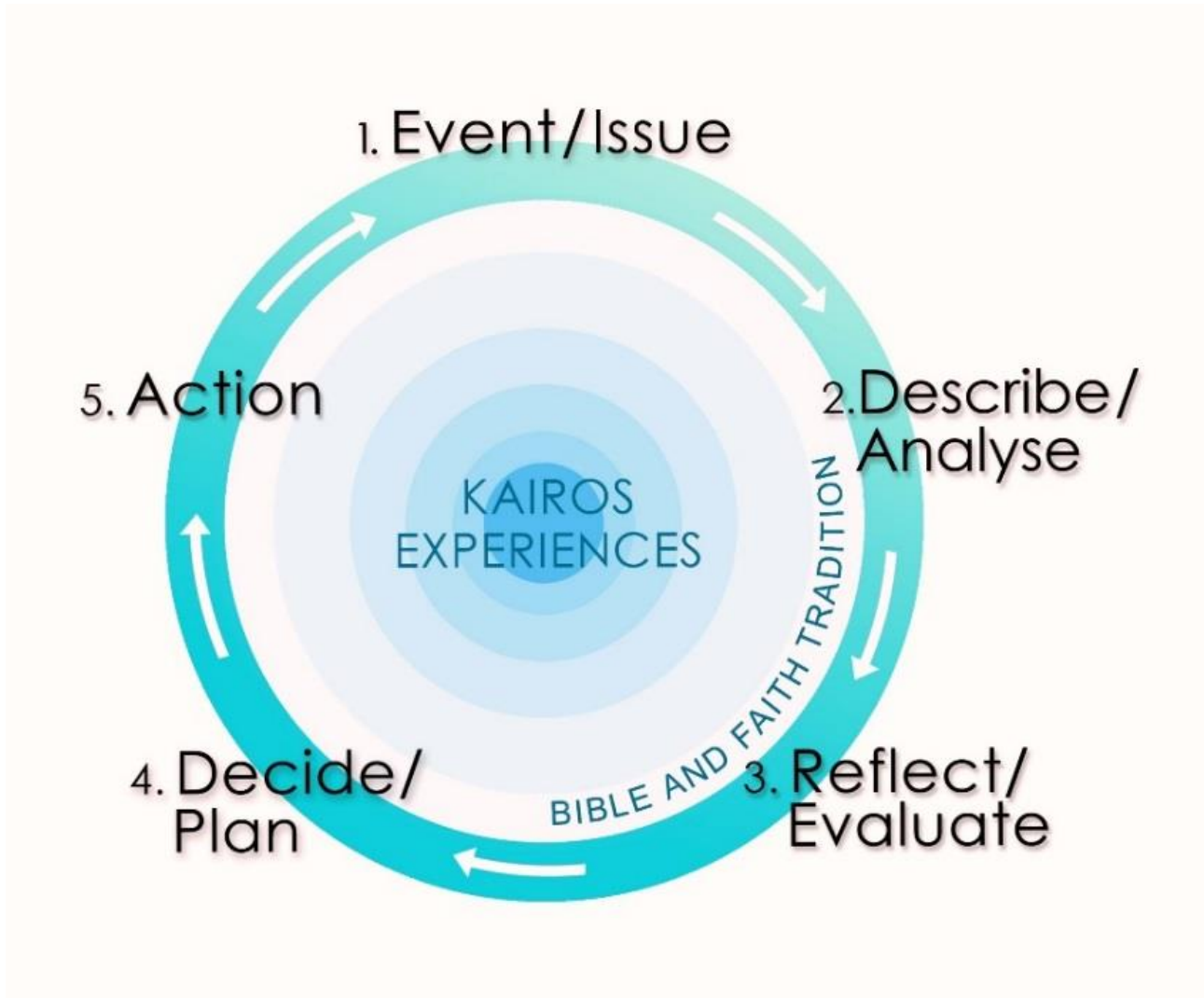
First, a Mission Accountability Framework with six dimensions using the metaphor of a “journey”.⁴ ‘Being on a journey’ is an idea at the heart of Salvation Army life. This is not a new idea. The ‘journey’ metaphor is well used in Christianity – pilgrimage, mission, march, race, campaign, quest, fight, movement and dance.

What is innovative is the attempt to develop one accountability framework for use at every level in every part of The Salvation Army. This is an ambitious idea. Can the same Mission Accountability Framework be relevant in the highlands of Papua New Guinea as for social services professionals in The Netherlands? This is possible people address a common set of questions. Of course, the answers to the questions will vary depending on the local context.

Answering the questions is not easy but using a reflective process such as Faith-Based Facilitation is helpful. (Visit www.salvationarmy.org/fbf for more information on how to build deeper relationships using Faith-Based Facilitation).

³ This was a controversial conclusion with some arguing that self-assessment measurement tools should be kept separate from accountability. The latter was perceived by some as a negative “policing” function whereas impact measurement was seen as an enabling empowering resource. However, it was decided to bring them together as a means of changing negative perceptions around accountability.

⁴ Stahlke, Les and Loughlin, Jennifer, ‘Governance Matters – Relational Model of Governance, Leadership and Management’, Edmonton, Canada, 2003 was influential in the development of the Mission Accountability Framework

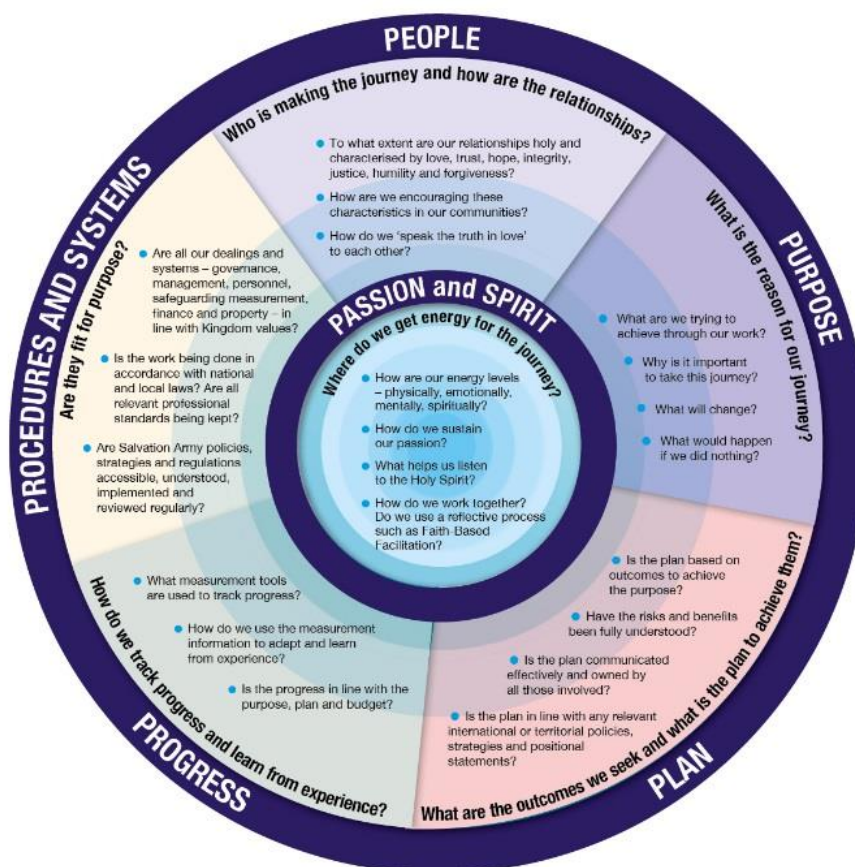


The second tool developed is a Unifying Framework for Measurement to assist in the plan and progress dimensions. (More details on pages 6-9).

4. Strengthening measurement requires attention to wider accountability issues

Measurement is not an end in itself. People measure to understand their progress towards the purpose which they are seeking to achieve. Equally, accountability is not an end in itself. Accountability tools are needed to help people account for their progress, the quality of their plans, the way they travel, resources invested and the systems used.

Six dimensions of accountability are included in The Salvation Army's Mission Accountability Framework.



4.1 People – “Who is making the journey and how are their relationships?”

The Salvation Army exists – by God’s grace – to help people enjoy life in all its fullness. Therefore, central to a Salvation Army measurement framework are people and their relationships.

The Salvation Army promotes a holistic and theologically informed anthropology of the human person. People are made in the image of God – and therefore human life must be valued equally, respected completely and appreciated holistically as “body-soul-for-relationships”.⁵

Relationships are therefore prioritised and central in both the Unifying Framework for Measurement and the Mission Accountability Framework. Therefore the first accountability dimension addresses the “people” question: “Who is making the journey and how are their relationships?”

4.2 Purpose – “What is the reason for the journey?”

Without a clear purpose it is impossible to plan, measure and learn. Each Salvation Army unit and every Salvationist needs to be clear about the purpose of their journey by being able to explain what it will look like when they get there. To be good stewards of the resources we have – people, spiritual, financial – we must be clear about the purpose of the journey. To be held accountable, the following questions will be helpful: Why is it important to take this journey? What will change because of this journey? What would happen if we did nothing?

⁵ See Pallant, Dean “Keeping Faith in Faith Based Organizations – a practical theology of Salvation Army health ministry” 2012, Wipf & Stock, for a fuller account of the nature of the human person as body-soul-for-relationships.

It is appreciated that discussing purpose is a complex task. Many non-profits and FBOs find it challenging to articulate their purpose.

4.3 Passion and Spirit – “Where do we get energy for the journey?”

At the heart of Salvation Army work is our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit which helps us as we journey through life. We could not do what we do without God. While many non-Christians come with us on the journey and are attracted to our purpose, they like the way we appreciate the value of people, they identify with our plans and they want to track and learn as we progress. But at the centre of all The Salvation Army does, and is, must be Holy Spirit-given **passion**.

Jesus taught that our greatest priority should be to love God with all of our being and love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22: 36-40). This is the life of discipleship and is the ultimate source of passion for people. To sustain our passion (and have sufficient energy for the journey) The Salvation Army believes people need to participate in a life of faith and worship.

The impact measurement tools that are developed by The Salvation Army must include passion and spirit. We are not the same as secular NGOs or government agencies – our purpose is different. Therefore we measure different outcomes and impacts. Our impact measurement tools must include passion and spiritual measures.

4.4 Plan – “What is the plan to achieve the purpose and the outcomes we seek?”

Every part of The Salvation Army needs a plan that they own and is relevant to their context and developed in the local community. The plans will vary depending on the local context and the available resources. The plan should measure outcomes, and ultimately attempt to measure impact.

To help measure the outcomes a “Unifying Framework for Measurement” has been developed and gives us a new language. This framework provides an overarching explanation of how The Salvation Army will measure the transformative impact we seek. We want to be able to explain the change we are making. The outcomes we seek need to be built into the plans we make.

After much research and consultation, we think it is possible to measure all Salvation Army work in seven outcomes set out in the Unifying Framework for Measurement – four contextual and three relational. Not every programme or activity needs to measure all seven outcomes. People should decide which outcomes are relevant in their context.

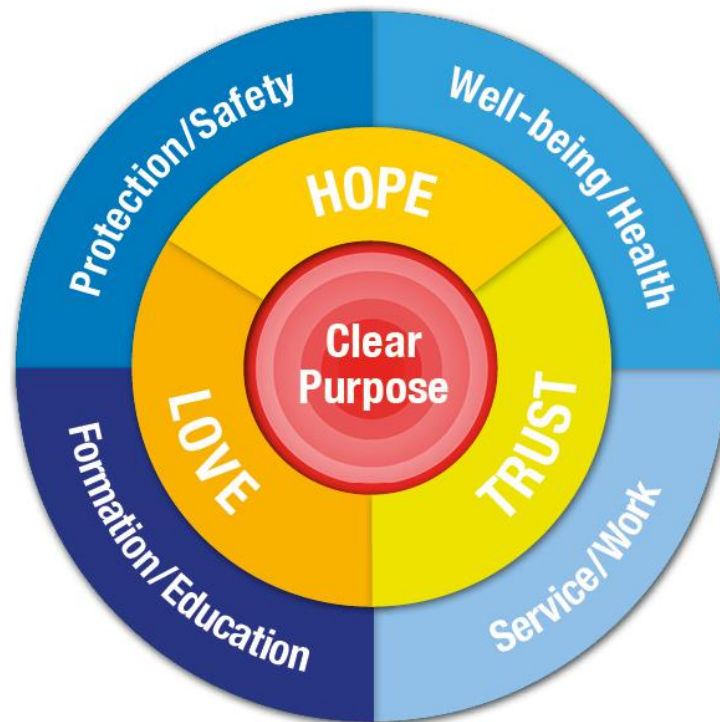
Two lens measurement: relational and contextual outcomes

The Unifying Framework for Measurement uses two lens to more fully appreciate the impact being made in the lives of people. The Salvation Army works in 126 countries and appreciates local differences. However, every part of the world is God’s creation and there are common **relational outcomes** that can characterise every relationship everywhere.

To measure the change in people’s relationships, The Salvation Army is attempting to measure three relational outcomes – hope, trust and love. The challenge is in the various ways these characteristics are defined. The Salvation Army’s perspective is grounded in faith in Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The result of

faith can be evidenced by increased hope, trust and love in people's attitudes, relationships and actions. These are three of the characteristics evident when people experience "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10).

The measurement framework is developed on the basis that everyone can seek the outcomes of hope, trust and love in all relationships. Hope, love and trust are the first three relational outcomes The Salvation Army have started to develop measurement tools but admit that this is not easy.



The Bridgespan Group worked with The Salvation Army to develop one tool to measure relational outcomes but it was not possible to find any "off the shelf" tools to measure hope, love and trust adequately capturing the richness of the Christian understanding of these characteristics. More work is needed in this area.

While relationships are very important, there are other outcomes that must be measured and these vary significantly depending on the local context. The Salvation Army's Unifying Framework identifies four major categories of outcomes in the lives of people seeking life in all its fullness: Protection/ Safety, Well-being /Health, Formation /Education, and Service/ Work. A specific community being served by The Salvation Army might be seeking some, all, or none of these in the lives of people.

Work has started to define and describe the characteristics of the seven outcomes in the Unifying Framework for Measurement. The following two slides summarise the descriptions of the outcomes:

Four Outcomes – people in their context



Safety/Protection : Children and adults are free from abuse, discrimination, hunger, homelessness, and fear and find sanctuary and security in their lives. *Isaiah 40:31 “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint”.*



Well-being/Health: Children and adults live well. This includes physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being seeking a life that is in harmony with God, with each other and all creation. *John 10:10 “I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full”*



Service/Work: Wherever children and adults are – at home, school, field, factory, office, church or community – their time, talents and abilities are used in work and service. *John 9:4-5 “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me.”*



Formation/Education: Children and adults develop into compassionate people of integrity and character with the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve their full God-given potential. *Mark 8:34 “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”*

Relational Outcomes

“We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(1 Thess 1:3)

For example:



Faith & Trust

Faith in God is the foundation of trust. Trust binds us in relationship with God and others as we seek transformation in our lives and communities. (John 15:9)

*Completeness
Acceptance
Self-worth
Transparency
Honesty*



Hope

God is our source of hope for the future. This hope gives us strength, energy, inspiration, and joy for the journey. (Romans 8:24, Romans 5:5, Acts 26:6)

*Persistence
Courage
Resilience
Faithful
struggle
Inner strength*



Love

Love is a gift from God. This love can be the foundation of all relationships, restoration, reconciliation, and redemption. (Proverbs 3:5, Corinthians 13)

*Compassion
Acceptance
Forgiveness
Graciousness
Humility*

Thirty-two contextual tools have also been developed and these align with each of the desired outcomes identified within Safety/Protection; Well-being/Health; Service/Work; and Formation/Education.

4.5 Progress – “How do we track progress and learn from experience?”

As people who journey towards the purpose, we need to track progress in implementing the plan, by reviewing statistics, measuring outcomes and learning from experience. By strengthening impact measurement will seek to improve the quality of our work and our capacity to be accountable.

The Unifying Framework for Measurement needs to be tested and piloted. Further theological resources need to be developed to ensure a rich Christian understanding of outcomes such as love, hope and faith as well as the four contextual outcomes that God seeks for all his people.

The value this added measure will bring to The Salvation Army enabling everyone involved to have information not just about the number of activities and programmes but also to understand whether the outcomes and the impact are happening as a result of the effort.

4.6 Procedures and Systems – Are they fit for purpose?

The sixth dimension in the Mission Accountability Framework checks that every process and system is fit for purpose. The Salvation Army must have systems for the 21st century journey that are fit for purpose. This includes systems such as governance, management, personnel, safeguarding, measurement, finance and property. They are regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for God’s purpose and are support on the journey.

Next Steps

1. Developing tools through partnerships

The two frameworks for measurement and accountability are being rolled out across The Salvation Army. Further work is needed in developing tools that measure the seven outcomes (three relational and four contextual). The Salvation Army is interested in working with partners (governments, donors, Civil Society, other faith groups, academics) who are interested in this relational/people focused approach to measurement and accountability.

2. Pilot and roll out “communities of practice” for learning

An important way to strengthen measurement across The Salvation Army will be to learn from each other. The intention is to encourage knowledge sharing between corps and centres, between divisions and across territories. Creating a culture of learning will be critically important in all aspects of Salvation Army life for greater accountability. Therefore, a key outcome will be the creation of “communities of practice” where people facing similar contexts can share experience and strengthen the Army’s work with people and communities to strengthen impact.

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