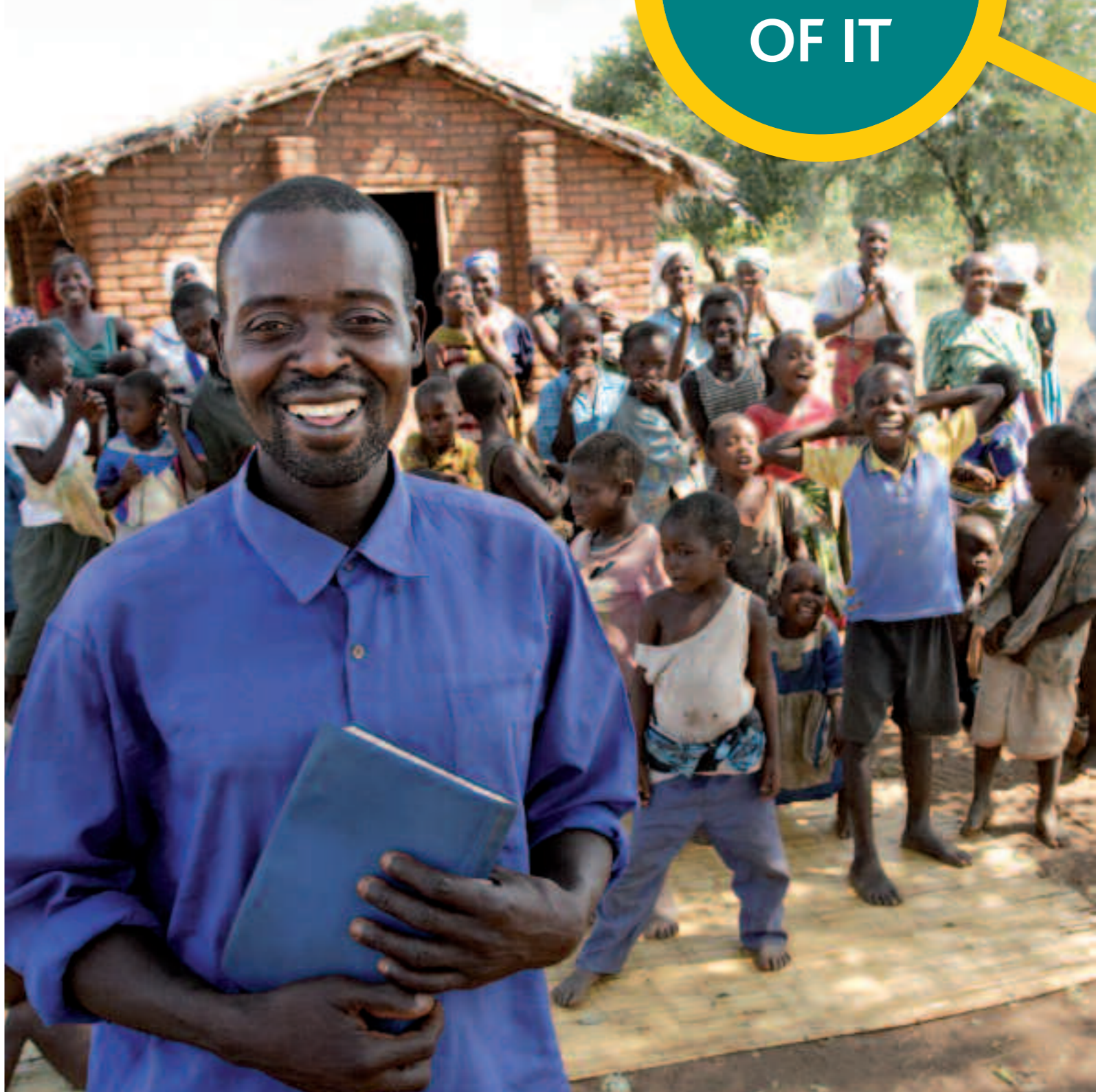




WHY THE CHURCH IS AN ESSENTIAL PARTNER  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE  
WORLD'S POOREST COMMUNITIES

A report from Tearfund



**tearfund**

**www.tearfund.org**  
100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE  
Challenge House, 29 Canal Street, Glasgow G4 0AD  
Tŷ Catherine, Capel Cildwrn, Llangefni, Ynys Môn LL77 7NN  
Rose House, 2 Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast BT9 6FL  
enquiries@tearfund.org 0845 355 8355  
Registered Charity No. 265464 (England and Wales)  
Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland)

**www.tearfund.ie**  
Tearfund Ireland, Ulysses House, 22-24 Foley Street, Dublin 1  
enquiries@tearfund.ie 01 497 5285  
Registered Charity No. CHY 8600

Cover photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund  
Back page photos: Geoff Crawford/Tearfund and Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund  
19271-(0709)

**tearfund**  
BE PART OF A MIRACLE

# IN THE THICK OF IT: why the church is an essential partner for sustainable development in the world's poorest communities

July 2009

Author: Seren Boyd

**Key Tearfund contributors:** Paul Bringham, Keith Ewing, Philippa Newis, Tulo Raistrick

With grateful thanks to Tearfund staff and partners

## Main sources:

African Religious Health Assets Programme	BBC
Community Development Foundation	DFID
Glasgow Churches Action	Global Health Council
Gweini	IMF
Micah Challenge	Oxford Centre for Mission Studies
UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development	United Nations Development Programme
World Bank	World Health Organization

**We are a Christian relief and development agency building a global network of local churches to help eradicate poverty.**

**And so our ten-year vision is to see 50 million people released from material and spiritual poverty through a worldwide network of 100,000 local churches.**

## Media contact:

Katie Harrison  
katie.harrison@tearfund.org  
020 8943 7986  
07949 181414

## www.tearfund.org

100 Church Road, Teddington TW11 8QE  
Challenge House, 29 Canal Street, Glasgow G4 0AD  
Ty Catherine, Capel Cildwrn, Llangefni, Ynys Môn LL77 7NN  
Rose House, 2 Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast BT9 6FL

## www.tearfund.ie

Tearfund Ireland, Ulysses House, 22-24 Foley Street, Dublin 1

© Tearfund 2009

Front cover photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

## ENDORSEMENTS FOR *IN THE THICK OF IT*

'The church is on the frontline of efforts to tackle poverty: it is at the heart of poor communities and shares in their suffering. Pastors and congregations are making a real difference as they roll their sleeves up, get their hands dirty, offer support and bring communities together. In many contexts only the church can reach the poorest in this way. And the church could do so much more. The church as a whole needs to wake up to its God-given mandate and potential to tackle poverty – at home and overseas. *In the thick of it* is an important message for now – and one which I hope governments and donors will heed.'

### THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, DR JOHN SENTAMU

'This report comes at an important moment in our history: we could achieve something significant if we scaled up our efforts and got really serious about achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We must not let this opportunity slip through our fingers. The international community is slowly realising all that the church has been doing to end poverty – but it's time they acknowledged the full story and supported the church in its vital work. The church as an institution has unparalleled presence at the grassroots level, a presence which can meaningfully impact efforts to end poverty. We can achieve more, faster, if we all work together. The simple truth is that we can't afford not to.'

### ARCHBISHOP NJONGO NDUNGANE, PRESIDENT OF AFRICAN MONITOR

'*In the thick of it* presents a compelling account of how the church is enriching contemporary understandings of development and is at the forefront of transforming some of the world's poorest communities. The report reminds us that love of God and neighbour demands social and political action, and it challenges both governments and the church to engage with each other to make this love real.'

### PAUL WOOLLEY, DIRECTOR, THEOS, LONDON, UK

'In many places, Christians constitute the only credible civil society organisations. Wherever they have focused on both the physical and spiritual needs of people, they have succeeded in transforming local communities for the better. This should come as no surprise, given that the church is supposed to be salt and light in society, preventing moral and social decay, and revealing a better, more fulfilling way to live. *In the thick of it* reminds us that sustainable living is not merely an environmental issue but is essentially a relational one, and that sustainable development is not an economic question but one of healthy social, political, economic and personal relationships – of "individuals coming together as a community".'

### DR JOHN HAYWARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JUBILEE CENTRE, CAMBRIDGE, UK

# CONTENTS

Executive summary .....	4
Recommendations .....	6
Introduction: the urgency of now .....	7
1: the church in wide angle .....	8
2: distinctive strengths of the local church .....	12
3: local church on the front line .....	17
HIV .....	17
environmental sustainability .....	19
water, sanitation and hygiene .....	20
advocacy .....	22
gender .....	24
4: developing the local church's potential .....	25
5: why partnership is the way forward .....	27
6: the building blocks of partnership .....	31

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### IN BRIEF

The church is delivering truly sustainable development at the heart of the world's poorest communities – by tackling material and spiritual poverty. In some regions it is the only institution able to do so. That makes the church an essential partner for governments and donors serious about scaling up efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals. It's time they acknowledged that faith and development are inextricably linked in much of the developing world. It's time to translate debate about working with faith groups into active partnership. And it's time for the church in the West to realise fully its role and potential in tackling poverty at home and overseas.

A dramatic untold story is unfolding in some of the poorest places on our planet. Here, at the heart of HIV epidemics, at the epicentre of disasters, the church is bringing transformation to some of the most vulnerable and remote communities on earth – sometimes singlehandedly. Often the church is reaching these places in a way that other institutions do not – and cannot. Its long reach and presence extends even into war zones, refugee camps and mountain hamlets. Crucially, it is tackling poor people's material and spiritual poverty to bring development that is truly sustainable.

We are already past the midpoint in the race towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – and at the current rate of progress we will fail on many counts, particularly in the poorest regions. We need to scale up our efforts and make sure that aid works harder where poverty hurts most.

Governments and international donors say they are serious about the MDGs. So they need to recognise that, in many nations, the church is an essential partner in delivering development that is truly sustainable. Often it provides the basic services which the state should rightfully provide. It's high time governments and donors translated debate about working more closely with faith groups into active partnerships.

A vital first step is acknowledging the scale of the church's involvement. The church is one of the few movements which are both global and local. Through its larger organisational structures, it is robust enough to support

national health services. And its influence is such that it can mobilise hundreds of thousands of people worldwide to lobby on issues such as climate change and international debt relief.

And yet much of the church's work remains hidden and undocumented. Outside communities where it has a presence, its work at the grassroots is virtually invisible. Tearfund has worked with and through churches from across the denominations for 40 years. We believe that the church's greatest potential lies in local congregations rooted in the local community and culture.

The local church is the poor – its members share in the suffering. As the hub of many communities, it endures even when other community structures collapse, outstaying even the most dogged NGO. And it has vast reserves of motivated volunteers keen to respond to the needs around them.

Crucially, its root-and-branch approach to tackling poverty means it meets poor people's physical needs and offers spiritual support to restore their self-esteem, their dignity, their hope. Tearfund is a signatory to the International Red Cross Code of Conduct, so this is not about proselytising. It is about recognising that people living in poverty are also spiritual beings – and that faith and development are often intricately linked in the developing world.

Tearfund believes that truly sustainable development relies on individuals coming together as a community to find solutions to their problems and shake off

dependency. In many nations the local church is one of the few credible civil society groups capable of making this happen. Christianity's distinctive focus on building relationships and being inclusive is central to this task.

The church is more than capable of professional and effective service delivery and reaching high numbers of beneficiaries (see box right). And, particularly when the whole church network is engaged, it can have a huge impact with limited resources – a significant consideration for donors in the current economic climate.

The church is not, however, just another NGO: its distinctive strengths can make a vital difference in key areas of development at local level. For example:

- **HIV** – in Africa especially, churches' influence and leadership are helping to break down stigma
- **Water and sanitation** – churches bring sanitation and hygiene to areas unreached by the state
- **Environmental sustainability** – churches' long reach is helping even the poorest become less vulnerable to disasters
- **Advocacy** – the church is one of the few agencies able to disseminate information from the grassroots in countries such as Zimbabwe
- **Gender equity** – local churches' deep roots in local culture mean they are often uniquely placed to tackle discrimination

The church at home and abroad needs help to build its capacity and potential, through envisioning, training and, sometimes, confronting its weaknesses. But Tearfund is convinced of the church's potential and committed to this process.

For too long, the church has tended to work in parallel, not in partnership, with state and other secular actors – with little external funding or support. This must change. The church is one of the few institutions that can bridge the gap between the poorest communities and broader development efforts. It is therefore a vital partner in ensuring aid gets to where poverty hits hardest.

Closer collaboration begins with mutual recognition, trust and respect for difference. We hope this report will spur on the debate and galvanise action.

**The Churches Health Association of Zambia provides nearly a third of the nation's healthcare**

**The Kale Heywet Church is helping 100,000 Ethiopians lift themselves out of poverty with self-help groups**

**Ten staff at a Tearfund partner organisation in Zimbabwe have facilitated the training of 3,000 volunteers caring for 78,000 orphans**

**In Wales, 42,000 volunteers from faith groups clock up 80,000 hours' community service a week; 98% of groups are Christian**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments and international donors serious about achieving the MDGs should actively engage in partnership with the church. They should:

- act upon the significant evidence base that faith and development are inextricably linked in much of the developing world, including the importance of ensuring that poor people's practical and spiritual needs are met as part of a truly sustainable model of development
- support governments and civil society to ensure that church-based organisations are included at national level decision-making and policy forums
- harness the unique position of the church-based organisations to ensure people in poor communities have a greater say about decisions that impact their livelihoods and wellbeing
- pioneer a more flexible approach in the requirements made of church-based organisations in return for funding. Partnerships should strengthen, rather than compromise, the distinctive added value of either party
- develop organisation-wide strategies for engaging with the faith groups and support staff to become 'faith-confident' in order to be more effective in their roles
- build on the work of the health sector by exploring closer collaboration between faith groups and secular players in other sectors. The health sector has set a strong and positive precedent with recent research on this theme by the World Health Organisation

The church in the West should recognise its role and potential to help bring root-and-branch transformation to poor communities, both at home and overseas.

It should:

- speak up, through advocacy, for the needs and rights of the poorest communities – recognising its biblical mandate to do so
- make a stronger case for closer collaboration with governments and donors by mapping and scoping the extent of its development work worldwide, especially in sectors other than health. It should explore creative ways to measure its effectiveness in terms that donors and governments can relate to
- take decisive steps to address its own weaknesses, including unhelpful attitudes and beliefs which have sometimes undermined broader development efforts
- strengthen links between the different parts of the global church network, particularly to support the local church in the developing world. Different streams of the church should also be open to learning from each other's experience of working in sustainable development. The same should apply to any collaboration with secular agencies

## INTRODUCTION: THE URGENCY OF NOW

The countdown has begun: we are now past the midpoint in the race to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and time is running out. Some Goals are almost within our grasp – 'economically and technically achievable,' the analysts say. Many others are hopelessly off track.

This is a crucial moment in history. The Goals have captured the political imagination and summoned unprecedented political will to make them a reality. Significant progress has been made in some sectors. But we must accelerate the current rate of progress. Aid is not working as efficiently as it could: current development models are falling short.

We must involve new players in a global partnership to tackle extreme poverty. And chief among these players should be the poorest people, those hardest hit by soaring food prices, climate change and HIV – the very people often overlooked in aid and development planning.

**This report presents an alternative development model – the work of the church, a dramatic untold story which is unfolding across the world. It shows how the church as a whole is redefining poverty and sustainable development – and how the local church particularly is transforming the poorest communities from the inside out.**

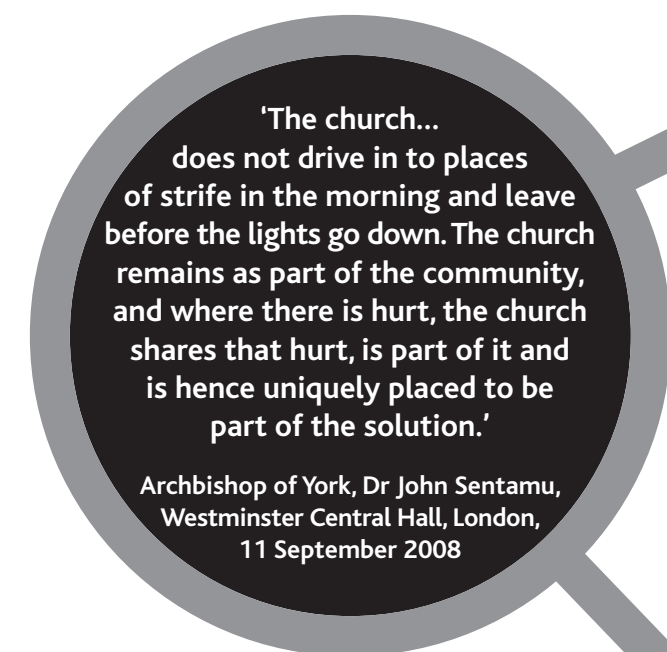
For 40 years now, Tearfund has worked with and through evangelical churches, a vast network which is both local and global. This network extends from international advocacy movements pushing for multi-billion-pound aid packages, through denominational structures covering thousands of churches, to tiny congregations in refugee camps and remote rural hamlets.

The church's work has largely been independent of the state. But now is the time for working in partnership, not in parallel.

In a world where religion is increasingly politicised, donors and policymakers have been wary of engaging with the church and other faith groups. But now, slowly, donors and policymakers are beginning to recognise the huge and distinctive contribution that faith groups can make to development. Tearfund acknowledges the important work of other faith groups (see page 24) but its long experience and expertise lie in working with the church.

In this report, Tearfund sets out the church's credentials as an essential partner for delivering truly sustainable development in country after country. In fact, in many regions, it is the only institution able to do so.

Tearfund urges policymakers and donors to take a fresh look at the current impact of the church and its future potential – and reconsider. Now is the time to translate debate about closer collaboration into active partnership.



**'The church... does not drive in to places of strife in the morning and leave before the lights go down. The church remains as part of the community, and where there is hurt, the church shares that hurt, is part of it and is hence uniquely placed to be part of the solution.'**

**Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu,  
Westminster Central Hall, London,  
11 September 2008**

# 1: THE CHURCH IN WIDE ANGLE

International development forums all agree: to have a greater impact on the poorest communities, we need to make aid work harder, we need to scale up current efforts and we need a more coordinated, cohesive approach. The 'global partnership' embodied in Goal 8 of the MDGs includes a target for involving different players in a collaborative effort – from civil society groups to government institutions. The church, through its larger organisations, is already a major provider of services and social infrastructure in much of the developing world. Its work in education and healthcare at national level is recognised by donors and governments – although it is not more widely known. In fact, the church is involved in almost every aspect of development. Yet much of its work remains hidden.

## Making the MDGs happen

There has been substantial overall progress on the MDGs, and much of the globe will see extreme poverty halved by 2015. But most countries in sub-Saharan Africa will fail to meet most MDGs at current rates of progress and some targets (such as sanitation) will take decades to achieve in the region.<sup>1</sup> There is a huge amount of political credibility riding on achieving the Goals – and significant political will to do so. It is also widely recognised that more could be achieved if current efforts were given greater impetus.

This will take huge injections of additional aid – an extra \$18 billion a year in overseas development aid, according to the UN's MDG Gap Task Force.<sup>2</sup> Wealthy nations will need to honour previous commitments on aid, debt relief, trade and development. Bold talk of 'alignment' and 'partnership' in statements such as the Accra Agenda for Action must translate into effective aid reform. Crucially, aid must get to where it is most needed, to the slums decimated by diarrhoea, the remote villages ravaged by drought. And civil society must be involved in decision-making and actively engaged in development.

Tearfund believes that the church has a crucial role to play in scaling up current efforts and ensuring that aid gets to where it is most needed. Indeed, the church is already a major player in the development sector but most of its work is unrecognised and underfunded. Recognising the scope of the church's current involvement is a crucial first step towards closer collaboration and a more coordinated response to poverty reduction.

**'If you want to deliver the Millennium Development Goals, then in Africa you have no option but to work with and through the churches, as they are the most universal and the most credible civil society organisations.'**

Archbishop of Canterbury,  
Dr Rowan Williams,  
BBC World Service,  
March 2007

## On state business

From missionaries' earliest literacy drives, the church has long been at the forefront of development. Today, in many developing nations, the church has plugged the gap when ailing state administrations are unable to provide basic services. In fact, the weaker government structures are, the stronger the church's involvement tends to be. Often, church-run health clinics are people's only chance of healthcare in rural locations, post-conflict scenarios or areas of political instability.<sup>3</sup> So, in parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the church is one of the few formal institutions to have survived the civil war – and to be able to respond in the current crisis. Although Tearfund believes it is the job of the state, not the church, to provide these services, it recognises that the church will, of necessity, plug this gap for decades to come.

Hard statistical evidence of the extent of the church's response is hard to come by. Mapping and scoping exercises are a relatively recent initiative and tend to focus only on facility-based FBOs (faith-based organisations – not just Christian ones) providing healthcare in Africa.<sup>4</sup> There is, however, broad consensus that faith groups generally provide:

- up to 70 per cent of health services in some African countries<sup>5</sup>
- almost 90 per cent of primary education in Lesotho, 80 per cent in the DR Congo and 70 per cent in Sierra Leone<sup>6</sup>
- drug supply systems which cover on average 43 per cent of the population in ten sub-Saharan African countries<sup>7</sup>

In regions like Southern Africa, where more than 80 per cent of the population consider themselves Christian,<sup>8</sup> Christian organisations can be assumed to make up a high proportion of these faith groups. While the church's development work is more established in Africa, it is also a major player in Latin America and Asia. In India, for example, the Catholic church is the single largest organisational network providing care for people affected by HIV.

## Snapshot: Ethiopia – drug supply logistics

The Ethiopian government has mandated the Kale Heywet Church, a Tearfund partner and large denomination, to provide PPTCT (preventing parent-to-child transmission of HIV) services throughout Addis Ababa. This involves training healthcare providers as well as supplying antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and testing kits to government-owned facilities. By 2007, Kale Heywet was supplying 50 out of 171 PPTCT sites nationally, some in remote areas not reached by state services.



As for documenting the work of the church specifically, again the only statistical evidence available relates to healthcare and specifically to large Christian organisations, usually denominational coordinating bodies representing thousands of churches, or established NGOs operating at national level. So, for example, the Churches Health Association of Zambia, a network of church-owned hospitals and health centres, provides nearly a third of Zambia's healthcare as a whole and half of its rural healthcare.<sup>9</sup> And the Christian Health Association of Lesotho provides 40 per cent of Lesotho's health service through its eight Christian hospitals and 79 health centres.<sup>10</sup> Scoping surveys reveal that church-based organisations are engaged in a wide range of services: from drug supply (see box above) to the training of healthcare workers. Beyond this visible infrastructure, though, the work of the church is less easy to quantify.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank/IMF (2008) Global Monitoring Report. [www.worldbank.org/gmr2008](http://www.worldbank.org/gmr2008)

<sup>2</sup> UN (2008) Delivering on the global partnership for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, The MDG Gap Task Force Report 2008, New York. <http://www.un.org/esa/policy/mdggap/>

<sup>3</sup> ARHAP (2008) The contribution of religious entities to health in sub-Saharan Africa. ARHAP for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. ARHAP, Cape Town.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. FBO coverage is uneven across Africa. For example, West African francophone areas of sub-Saharan Africa have few FBOs; countries in Southern Africa (eg Zambia) have a rich variety. Facilities range from formal facility-based services to small-scale activities involving traditional medicine.

<sup>6</sup> Speech by International Development Minister Shriti Vadera at Education for All event on the Hill, Washington D.C. October 2007. For text go to [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

<sup>7</sup> WHO/Geneva Global (2008) Building from common foundations: the World Health Organization and faith-based organizations in primary healthcare. WHO, Geneva.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, N (2007) DFID, faith and AIDS: a review for the update of Taking action. A desk review for the Faith Working Group of the UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development, London.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.chazhealth.org/>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.health.gov.ls/partners/partners\\_service.php#CHAL](http://www.health.gov.ls/partners/partners_service.php#CHAL)

## Broader focus

While some sectors of the church have remained focused on the spiritual nourishment of their congregations, many others have also been involved in relief and development for decades. In addition to healthcare, church-based organisations have played an important role in education, water and sanitation provision, disaster response and aid distribution. In regions such as southern Sudan, the church has played a major role in delivering education, and the church has led the way in championing literacy – among other rights – for women and girls in countries such as Burkina Faso. Again, however, there is little statistical evidence to chart the scope of this work.

The church has traditionally played to its strength of compassionate care, often with a particular focus on children and the elderly. Today, church organisations are branching out into areas of emerging need and opportunity. In the UK and Ireland, this means engaging with the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers, for example. Overseas, the church at all levels has had to confront the effects of HIV and climate change.

Christian FBOs have often filled gaps in state provision such as support for bereaved people. But they have also been pioneering in social action on behalf of poor people. Sometimes they are the first groups to reach out to the most marginalised communities, such as those isolated by HIV stigma (see page 18). Church-based organisations in the UK and Ireland have been at the forefront of campaigning for government action on international debt relief (through Jubilee 2000 and the Jubilee Debt Campaign) and have been vocal on climate change (as part of Stop Climate Chaos), not to mention the *Make Poverty History* campaign. In fact, their scope is growing fast to keep pace with changing social and political realities. So, in developing nations ravaged by environmental degradation, Christian NGOs are blazing a trail to make development more environmentally sustainable. And in Zimbabwe, the church is at the helm of the pro-democracy struggle, educating voters and lobbying for change, while pastors also roll up their sleeves and hand out maize to keep hunger at bay.

## Chain reaction

A key distinctive of the church is the fact that it is both international and local – a vast network extending from tiny community churches to huge international, interdenominational networks, with a wide range of organisational structures in between. (One of Tearfund's partners, the Kale Heywet Church in Ethiopia, has more than 5,000 churches and more than 5 million individual members.) The scope of the church's response to tackling poverty has exploded as the church itself has begun to wake up to its potential as a network.

Tearfund believes passionately in the potential of this network: our ten-year vision is to see 50 million people released from material and spiritual poverty through a worldwide network of 100,000 local churches, including those in the UK and Ireland. Micah Challenge, which Tearfund helped initiate, is also uniting and mobilising thousands of churches worldwide to push for faster progress on the MDGs. And today a partnership between a US megachurch – Saddleback – and a network of 1,000 local church leaders in Rwanda is rolling out a three-year programme to train 2.5 million Rwandans in combating malaria and rebuilding the peace.

It is not, however, just the sheer number of people it can mobilise that makes the church network so significant. In the context of the MDG gap, the greatest potential of this network lies in its ability to reach deep into local communities through local churches – and to meet people's material and spiritual needs face to face. This is the key distinctive of the church which sets it apart from many other players and makes it such a potentially significant development partner. And so it is to the local church that we now turn our attention.

## FAITH AUDIT IN THE UK AND IRELAND

**Like many faith groups, churches in the UK and Ireland make a huge contribution to social welfare:**

- **The Church of England (2008) contributes more than 23 million hours of voluntary service p.a.**
- **202 churches surveyed in Glasgow (2007) ran an average of six ongoing projects related to social action or social care. Eight churches ran 15 or more.**
- **Faith groups contribute more than £100 million in economic benefits to Wales (2008).**

Sources: BBC; Glasgow Churches Action; Gweini.

Photo: Peter Caton/Tearfund



## 2: DISTINCTIVE STRENGTHS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The church is a worldwide network; one of the few movements that are both global and grassroots. Larger Christian organisations are robust enough to support national health systems. But they are part of a network that extends deep into the hamlets and slums where poverty hits hardest. It is the links that large church-based organisations have to local congregations – and through them to the very heart of development issues – which make the church such a distinctive and significant player. Here, at the grassroots, the local church is offering a radical redefinition of poverty and development, transforming communities from the inside out without huge injections of cash. Local congregations' work is often hidden – and much of its impact is intangible, defying categorisation. If progress on the MDGs is to accelerate, donors and governments cannot afford to overlook the local church's impact and potential.

### Influence and reach

The church network extends into the darkest city slum and the most remote rural areas, beyond the reach of state structures or even an NGO's most robust 4x4. In regions like Southern Africa, the local church is still the hub of village life, the very heart of poor communities. Often the local church is the poor: its members endure famine and live with the effects of HIV like everyone else. So, in north Uganda, where more than 90 per cent of the population have been displaced, the local church is one of the few community structures which still function – even in displacement camps. And in Zimbabwe, the church is given greater freedom than other agencies to distribute aid, particularly in the more remote rural areas.

### Snapshot: Myanmar – rapid response to disaster

When disaster hits, local congregations do not have to 'enter' a community: they are already at the epicentre. When Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in May 2008, one of Tearfund's partners mobilised volunteers through its links with 4,500 churches to provide emergency supplies to tens of thousands of survivors. Its extensive local knowledge and network of churches allowed the organisation to respond effectively in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone and maintain a presence in the long-term recovery. It took weeks for some foreign aid workers to reach the worst-hit areas.

**'It has been estimated that faith communities can reach pretty much every single individual in sub-Saharan Africa in one week, maybe two. This arguably makes them much more in touch with people's daily realities than some of their counterparts in other sectors.'**

**Archbishop Njongo Ndungane,  
President of African Monitor**

Perhaps even more important than the church's geographical reach are its deep roots in people's history and culture. Life revolves around the church building: its teachings shape traditions, attitudes and values. The local church leader and elders are generally viewed as having authority and integrity and are considered worthy of respect and trust. In many communities, especially in rural sub-Saharan Africa, the church is often the only civic group with the credibility (or even ability) to call the community together and mobilise people for action. Being rooted in local history and culture, it is eminently well placed to challenge values and cultural beliefs: in Southern Africa, growing recognition of the value of educating women and girls can largely be attributed to the church. So the church's influence is huge and it is often people's first resort in times of trouble.

### Sustainability

Crucially, the local church is there for the long term, with a promise of sustainable development that not even the most dogged NGO could match. This sustainability is built upon not just the long-term presence of the church but also its ability to engage and involve the whole community – even the most marginalised groups. Community participation and empowerment brings community ownership – which is essential if poverty reduction efforts are to be truly effective.

### Human capital

The local church cannot boast many tangible assets, beyond its building and the small donations left on a Sunday morning collection plate. If congregations need

funds to respond to local needs, most cannot count on outside help. Yet, one significant asset makes up for the lack of material resources: the vast numbers of willing volunteers it can mobilise, often at a moment's notice. The Christian faith comes with a biblical mandate to help people living in poverty – and defend 'the stranger, the fatherless and the widow'. This translates on the ground into literally millions of volunteers worldwide motivated by their faith to try to make a difference in practical ways, without expecting any payment or reward. A recent audit in Wales found that more than 42,000 volunteers from different faith groups clock up 80,000 hours' community work each week. More than 98 per cent of these faith groups are Christian.<sup>11</sup>

### Snapshot: Ireland – reaching the parts...

Some groups are so closely defined by their faith that only faith-based groups can access them with practical help. In Ireland, the only way agencies responding to HIV can engage with the newly arrived African immigrant community is through African churches. Tearfund partner ACET was encouraged to work with these churches partly by the prompting of secular HIV support agencies which had tried and failed to reach immigrant groups. ACET staff say their clients often raise spiritual issues and expect to approach HIV and related issues from a faith perspective. A recent evaluation of the UK's Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (Faith, cohesion and community development – 2007) noted that some vulnerable sectors in society are only reached through 'single faith organisations'.



Photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

<sup>11</sup> Gweini (2008) Faith in Wales: counting for communities, Evangelical Alliance Wales.





### Snapshot: Burundi – handing on the baton

Tearfund's Disaster Management Team began its work in Burundi in the mid-1990s with emergency food aid to people in Makamba province displaced by civil conflict. Later the team helped communities build food security and tackle malnutrition in the longer term. When Tearfund's team began to plan its withdrawal, it looked for a partner to catch its vision for food security – and the local Pentecostal church stepped up to the plate. Tearfund trained local churches to identify the most vulnerable people in society and introduce a nutritious porridge into their diet. Soon the church set up a seed-multiplication project on land it owned, with a focus on nutritious grain such as maize, groundnut and soya. So when Tearfund's team withdrew from Burundi in 2007, it left behind a sustainable community-based nutrition programme led by the local church.

## The X factor

The most distinctive of all the church's contributions to alleviating poverty is also the hardest to quantify – faith. It's a currency that may be losing value in our increasingly secular Western society – but it is still central to people's mindset in much of the developing world (and in many immigrant communities in the UK and Ireland: see case study on page 13). Faith is a strong motivating factor mobilising people to help others in need in practical ways. It can also be a powerful catalyst which helps people in poverty change their own lives. For Tearfund, this is not about proselytising, but it is about recognising that people living in poverty are also spiritual beings – and that faith and development are intricately linked in much of the developing world.<sup>12</sup>

In cultures where religion is a meaningful part of daily life, faith is intricately linked with people's identity and sense of purpose. Outworking their faith in practical ways brings self-fulfilment for believers who reach out to poor people. Crucially, for those who are suffering, the church recognises that poverty has a spiritual dimension, that poverty lowers self-esteem, robs people of their dignity (see Cambodia case study on page 15). Trauma counsellors working with Tearfund partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo find that spiritual needs are as pressing as physical needs for people who have witnessed brutality and carnage. Contact with people of faith can help bring hope, the prospect that the here and now can change and improve.

Another key aspect of faith, and particularly the Christian faith, is its emphasis on the relational. Friendship, compassionate care and pastoral support are a key expression of Christians' faith. This 'spiritual support' – through prayer, counselling, even just a hug – is vital. This is very true of communities hit by HIV, where stigma often deprives affected families of care and hope – and where a pastor praying with them or giving their dead a decent burial can have a huge impact. Part of Christians' biblical mandate to care for poor people includes building relationships with people marginalised from mainstream society. Positive relationships foster hope and community cohesion – even health (see tinted box on page 16): isolation breeds hopelessness, which leads to community

breakdown and even greater vulnerability. Hope is not unique to the Christian faith. But Christianity is distinctive in its inclusiveness, in its message that God desires a personal relationship with everyone and in its teaching that everyone is equal and equally loved by God – even those whom society deems unlovely.

Hope and self-esteem may be abstract concepts – but they are expressed in concrete and practical ways: health-seeking behaviour; the motivation to build for the future; the willingness to look beyond one's own problems and work for the common good. This can mean the difference between a village of isolated individuals suffering in silence and a community pulling together to help each other out of poverty.<sup>13</sup>

## Redefining effectiveness

Of all the 'comparative advantages' that FBOs have over other players, it is this then that sets them apart: their 'whole-person' approach to development which meets people's spiritual and material needs. In country after country, it is the combination of the church's 'tangible and intangible assets' – in the words of a WHO study – which makes it such a force to be reckoned with.<sup>14</sup> It may even be that the combined impact of these assets is greater than the sum of its parts (see case study on page 16) – though this has yet to be proven empirically. The fact is, however, that over four decades Tearfund and our partners have seen many communities turned around by relatively small practical initiatives and a fresh sense of purpose and hope – even in non-Christian societies (as in the case study on this page).

A recent inquiry by the Carnegie UK Trust found that there is increasing pressure on civil society associations in the UK and Ireland to demonstrate results in terms of 'service delivery, accountability and demands for performance measurement'.<sup>15</sup> Such monitoring is important, yet the impact of intangible assets such as hope is not easily translated into outputs on donors' logframes. This is not a reason to discount these intangibles. Rather, it is a good reason to broaden the debate over what makes development truly 'effective' (see Chapter 6).

### Snapshot: Cambodia – helping communities help themselves

Samlow Chao, near Cambodia's border with Vietnam, used to be a scruffy, litter-filled little place. Its 100-odd families had no pride in their homes and little interest in each other – a typical vestige of the Khmer Rouge era, which robbed people of initiative. But, within two years, Samlow Chao was transformed – with the help of the Wholistic Development Organisation. WDO, a Christian NGO in a mainly Buddhist context, worked closely with the local church, training church members as facilitators. These trainees then helped villagers identify the causes of their problems and come up with solutions. Today, every family in Samlow Chao has their own vegetable garden; every home is neat and tidy. Wells have been built, latrines installed. Litter is collected, green waste composted. The Buddhist village chief says gambling, drunkenness and domestic violence have all tailed off. 'Since [WHO] started to work with the church, there is more caring and less quarrelsome behaviour in the village,' he says. 'We look out for one another. The Christians have helped us to work together and change.'

<sup>12</sup> Tearfund is a signatory to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief. The code states: 'Humanitarian aid will be given according to the need of individuals, families and communities. Notwithstanding the right of Non Governmental Humanitarian Agencies to espouse particular political or religious opinions, we affirm that assistance will not be dependent on the adherence of the recipients to those opinions.' Tearfund was the first UK-based aid agency to receive certification for compliance with the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management.

<sup>13</sup> The subject matter in this section is treated in greater depth in ongoing research, as yet unpublished, which is being conducted by Tearfund consultant Dr David Evans.

<sup>14</sup> ARHAP (2006) *Appreciating assets: the contribution of religion to universal access in Africa*. Report for the World Health Organisation. ARHAP, Cape Town.

<sup>15</sup> Carnegie UK Trust (2007) *The shape of civil society to come*. <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/>

## SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH

FBOs believe people's health and well-being includes a strong spiritual dimension. Yet, this relationship is rarely acknowledged in secular society, except in palliative care. A WHO report (Broadening the horizon, 2001) found that spiritual beliefs were strong protective factors in deterring adolescents from early sexual initiation, substance abuse and depression, as were meaningful relationships with adults at home and in the wider community. The report concludes that boosting protective factors is as vital as reducing risk behaviours in teenage health and development programmes.

**'You are our star players. You are doing wonderful service in the fight against AIDS... HIV-affected people respond to drugs much better when they get care and love.'**

Sujata Rao, director general of India's National AIDS Control Organisation, in an address honouring the work of Indian churches (New Delhi, April 2007)

Source: [www.ekkllesia.co.uk/node/5068](http://www.ekkllesia.co.uk/node/5068)



Photo: Layton Thompson/Tearfund

### Snapshot: Cambodia – rebuilding the whole person

Not so long ago, Chhet and Yin were broken. Poverty had pushed the girls' parents to sell them to 'entrepreneurs' promising good jobs over the border in Thailand. In fact, the teenagers were put to work selling fruit for a pittance – then forced into the sex trade. One year later, Chhet and Yin were brought home by Christian Hope Organisation (CHO) after their parents appealed for help to find them. Today, Chhet and Yin are well on the way to being restored – physically, emotionally and spiritually. CHO has taught the girls to sew, giving them a livelihood. They've had counselling. And they now have a strong faith and have been welcomed into a church. The girls feel accepted and valued, all a far cry from life in Thailand. 'People looked down on us,' says Chhet. 'We had no freedom. We were scared all the time. Now I'm happy, living with my family, getting support. God is blessing me.'

Neither Chhet nor Yin is pictured here.

## 3: LOCAL CHURCH ON THE FRONT LINE

The local church – the very core of the church network – is at the epicentre of the issues afflicting developing nations. Often it is actively engaged on the front line, supporting HIV-affected households or sinking wells in response to climate change – sometimes singlehandedly. Increasingly, too, it is helping communities confront the underlying issues which help feed poverty – from gender discrimination to HIV stigma. Sometimes this means acknowledging the part the church itself has played in reinforcing unhelpful attitudes. Much of the local church has yet to be engaged, but Tearfund believes there is sufficient evidence of its current impact to have faith in its future potential. Most local churches are not capable of high-tech large-scale interventions. But, with relatively few resources, local churches can and do have a life-changing, sustainable impact on their communities' health, well-being and self-sufficiency. This chapter gives an overview of the key development fields in which Tearfund partners are working with local churches.

### HIV

The HIV pandemic – and the complex mix of technical and social issues which surrounds it – has forced the church to reconsider its role completely and, often, venture into uncharted waters. Church volunteers are exhausting themselves nursing the dying and caring for orphans. Pastors are burying people every week, including members of their own congregation. HIV has been a hard testing ground but much of the church has risen to the challenge. This is particularly true of Africa but also increasingly of Asia, as well as the UK and Ireland. Some larger Christian organisations are fully engaged in HIV testing, treatment, counselling and drug supply logistics (see Chapter 1) – and increasingly in prevention, including awareness programmes and preventing parent-to-child-transmission. This work is widely recognised and well regarded, including by the WHO.<sup>16</sup> But most local church responses to HIV are invisible outside their communities.

### Current response

Efforts to map the local church response to HIV are recent and limited in scope. Those statistics that are available can only be indicative – but are impressive nonetheless. A WHO-funded survey of Zambia and Lesotho found about 500 religious organisations engaged with HIV – 350 of them at the local level.<sup>17</sup> More than 20,000 local churches in Zimbabwe run at least one HIV-related programme.<sup>18</sup>

Initial responses have tended to be small-scale and practical, playing to the church's traditional strength – compassionate care:

- Home-based care: in many communities, church volunteers offer practical help and moral support for households affected by HIV, from helping with basic chores and nursing the sick to offering comfort, counsel, friendship and prayer.
- Care of orphans and vulnerable children: in the absence of state support for these children, it falls to the community – and often the church – to provide for them.
- Prevention: pastors can use their influence and standing to tackle stigma and provide a forum to discuss issues such as gender.

As discussed (Chapter 2), one key distinctive that local churches bring to the mix is their focus on holistic care and on building relationships. HIV may affect every household in a community – yet often its effect is to divide and isolate. In this context, home-care church volunteers play a crucial role. Their practical support has a huge impact – but so too does a hug, a prayer. And when volunteers are living with HIV themselves, they embody the hope that it is possible to live positively with the virus. The impact of treating people as individuals with dignity and worth, rather than as medical statistics, is immeasurable – in both senses of the word (see pages 14–15).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> World Health Organisation (2008) Building from common foundations. (See footnote 7 for full reference.)

<sup>17</sup> ARHAP (2006) Appreciating assets. (See footnote 14 for full reference.)

<sup>18</sup> Nussbaum, S (ed) (2005) The contribution of Christian congregations to the battle with HIV/AIDS at the community level. GMI for Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

<sup>19</sup> Compare this with the WHO's definition of 'decent care' on page 17 of WHO (2008) Building from common foundations. (See footnote 7 for full reference.)

### Strategic potential

The work of the church at community level is vital. But too often its volunteers are fire-fighting and near burn-out because they lack resources, training and support – and may be affected by HIV themselves. For the church response to be sustainable, it must be much more strategic. And if wider efforts towards comprehensive prevention and universal access to HIV treatment are to be successful, the local church's potential must not be overlooked.

Tearfund research has identified that the first priority for local church initiatives on HIV prevention should be ending stigma and discrimination.<sup>20</sup> Stigma breeds silence which helps HIV spread; it breeds shame which dissuades people from accessing testing and treatment. Stigma can only thrive in a climate of ignorance and broken relationships. The church, of course, has sometimes been guilty of feeding stigma by portraying HIV as the wages of sexual sin and, at worst, shunning HIV-affected people.

Yet, when the church plays to its strengths, its combined focus on offering hope, shaping attitudes and building bridges – the spiritual and the relational – makes it a key contributor to ending stigma. Church members are extending the hand of friendship and support. Church leaders are proving powerful advocates for change by promoting acceptance and showing true leadership by, for example, taking an HIV test. One of the most effective ways of tackling stigma is involving people living positively with HIV – as witnessed by the huge impact of groups such as INERELA+, the International Network of Religious Leaders living with or personally Affected by HIV and AIDS.

#### Snapshot: India – tackling taboos

In Mumbai, church volunteers trained by Christian NGO Imcares reach out to marginalised communities such as transgender hijras. The hijra community is surrounded by stigma: many are sex workers, many are living with HIV. State services rarely reach the hijras: church volunteers care for them in the home and help them access medical care. Many churches now welcome hijras to their services.

If stigma within the church is tackled, the local church has huge potential in several other niche areas, including enabling access to testing and treatment. Access depends, of course, upon availability, which is still patchy. But too often, even where services are available, take-up is low because of stigma, or lack of information, or simply because people are too poor to travel to clinics. Many local churches are already helping people access health services by, for example, taking them for testing or engaging in advocacy on access to treatment. And some local churches are helping to decentralise healthcare by offering basic services in the community (see Mozambique case study below).

#### Snapshot: Mozambique – care in the community

Antiretrovirals are now available free of charge in Mozambique's Gondola district. But it's still a challenge for people living with HIV to come to health clinics for treatment and to follow ARV regimes at home. That's why Tearfund partner Kubatsirana is training church volunteers in Gondola to tackle stigma and the problem of access in very practical ways. Volunteers first befriend people with HIV and, as well as offering practical help with household chores and spiritual support such as prayer, they get people to clinics to access ARVs. Then volunteers make regular home visits to check drugs are being taken. Volunteers are trained by a specialist doctor and given medical kits that enable them to treat potentially fatal secondary infections in the home setting. With Tearfund's support, Kubatsirana is able to give volunteers a monthly payment-in-kind of food.

The issues of stigma and access to treatment are critically important in the field of preventing parent-to-child transmission of HIV (PPTCT). Larger Christian organisations are key providers of PPTCT services – but often find that take-up is low. HIV testing of both parents is key to PPTCT services: women are twice as susceptible to HIV infection during pregnancy and a newly-infected mother is highly likely to pass on the virus to her unborn child.<sup>21</sup> Yet, stigma and ignorance conspire to keep testing rates for fathers-to-be extremely low. This, however, is one hurdle that the

local church is well placed to tackle. Tearfund recently commissioned a pioneering pilot study in which church-based health facilities in seven African nations involved local churches in 'sensitising' men to the issue of parent-to-child transmission.<sup>22</sup> It is early days and results were mixed. But one partner, Mount Kenya East Hospital, saw testing rates for men rise from 3 to 71 per cent in less than two years – a rise attributed in part to church leaders preaching on fathers' responsibility for their unborn child.

### Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is a prerequisite for poverty reduction. Slowly, the world is waking up to the need to live in a way that recognises and responds to climate change and environmental degradation. So too is the church. Many sectors of the church – particularly in developing nations where the effects of climate change and degradation are already keenly felt – are beginning to respond to their biblical mandate to act. Many others, though, need to be educated, envisioned and trained, probably through the

#### Snapshot: Malawi – taking a lead

Most local churches in rural Malawi have few resources to tackle hunger and drought. But that proved no hurdle when Living Waters, an indigenous church denomination, decided to mobilise congregations to act. Living Waters trained pastors to teach people how to manage their food supplies, dig irrigation channels and grow drought-resistant crops. In Fombe village, Chikwawa district, the church also began a tree-planting programme which dramatically reduced the impact of floods; more recently, the community has been working together to build dykes to prevent flooding. Living Waters churches all over Malawi are now following Fombe's lead and helping the poor. Pastor Cuthbert Gondwe of Living Waters recalls how it all began: 'We were just a few people: no paid staff, no car. We had no money. So we operated on a principle of using what we had. We discovered our strength was that the Living Waters Church is found in every district.'

Photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

wider church network. The local church's response, by contrast, is very much in its infancy – though there are some strong examples of individual responses.

For years now, Tearfund and its partners have been building the resilience of vulnerable communities to a changing environment. Projects range from digging wells in Niger to help nomadic Tuareg adapt to increasing drought<sup>24</sup> to introducing new farming methods in Burkina Faso to make land more productive with changing seasonal patterns.<sup>25</sup> Today, some Tearfund partners are beginning adaptation projects responding specifically to climate change. Others are providing renewable energy technology – which, as well as addressing climate change, can bring development gains for poor communities: for instance, a solar-powered light enables youngsters to study in the evening in homes which do not have electricity. Tearfund is keen to develop the capacity of the local church to help communities work towards environmental sustainability more generally, and is currently exploring the potential of local church distinctives. Christian beliefs about caring for creation and confronting injustice can be a useful narrative to help people engage with environmental issues.



<sup>20</sup> This research is ongoing and as yet unpublished.

<sup>21</sup> The viral load is highest when someone is newly infected.

<sup>22</sup> Downing, R (2008) Focused church-based action for PPTCT. Report for Tearfund.

<sup>23</sup> World Bank/IMF (2008) Global Monitoring Report. (See footnote 1 for full reference.)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.tearfund.org/Climateneu/My+Global+Impact/Niger.htm>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.tearfund.org/Climateneu/My+Global+Impact/Burkina+Faso.htm>

It is in the field of disaster risk reduction (DRR) that Tearfund partners' track record is currently strongest. DRR involves limiting communities' vulnerability to disaster and building their capacity so that damage and disruption are minimised when disaster strikes. The range of projects is vast: from replanting mangroves in storm-lashed coastal areas of Honduras<sup>26</sup> to helping create a radio 'soap opera' featuring DRR storylines in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> There is now growing recognition that the most successful DRR efforts combine the expertise of outside agencies with the local knowledge of vulnerable communities – which is why Tearfund and its partners are increasingly working with and through the local church. While local churches may not have the capacity and resources for technical or specialist responses, they are a natural mediator between outside agencies and even the most remote and vulnerable communities:

- They can provide basic information and early warnings about slow-onset disasters such as famine. The church network can be crucial in conveying information from local to national levels.
- They can help local communities identify root problems and build local ownership of initiatives to solve them.
- Church leaders can be trained to teach people how to manage food supplies and grow drought-resistant crops (see Malawi case study on page 19).
- Once DRR measures such as flood dykes are installed, the local church can oversee ongoing maintenance.
- A crucial complement to work on disaster risk reduction is advocacy that brings changes to national and international policy. The local church can gather evidence of climate change at the grassroots and mobilise its members to speak out (see pages 22-23).

It is early days but some sectors of the church are setting strong precedents. In Malawi, six Tearfund partners, all big organisations representing thousands of local churches, have formed a DRR consortium with funding from DFID: its aim is to make 23,600 vulnerable families more resilient to disaster by 2010, through programmes ranging from food security to disaster early warning systems.<sup>28</sup> All six partners work with church leaders to engage communities in identifying their vulnerabilities and being part of the solution to their problems. And they are

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.tearfund.org/Climatenew/My+Global+Impact/Honduras.htm>  
<sup>27</sup> <http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/Disaster+Risk+Reduction/DRR+Case+studies.htm>  
<sup>28</sup> <http://tilz.tearfund.org/webdocs/Tilz/Topics/DRR/DRR%20Leaflet.pdf>  
<sup>29</sup> Water, advocacy, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are all key components of Tearfund's current *Make Life Flow* campaign.

making sure those grassroots needs are on the national political agenda too. The consortium's programme coordinator Dr David Kamchacha of the Evangelical Alliance of Malawi works closely with government departments: he was invited to be part of the Malawian government delegation to the UN Climate Change Conferences in Bali (2007) and Poland (2008).

### Water, sanitation and hygiene

Of all the MDGs, the loudest alarm bells are sounding over the lack of progress on the target for water and sanitation (watsan). This will have a massive effect on other goals such as tackling disease and primary school attendance. The main barrier to progress is a lack of political engagement with the crisis – but there is also a critical need to increase developing nations' human and technical capacity to respond. The church has a long track record in providing water and sanitation, particularly in regions not reached by other agencies. Now the church is scaling up its response and is a significant player with an increasingly integrated response covering water, advocacy, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).<sup>29</sup>

Tearfund, which has been working on water and sanitation through the church for more than 20 years, brought improved watsan to an estimated 3.7 million people between 2000 and 2006. The following Tearfund partners working through local churches give a snapshot of the scale of the church's involvement:

- The Diocese of Niassa has brought hygiene education to thousands of people in north-west Mozambique, where the state has no presence.
- In north-east Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers Church, working through the local church network, has trained people to build and sell water-purifying bio-sand filters – and stimulate demand for them.
- In Brazil, Christian NGO Fale worked with local churches to lobby the government for national guidelines for public policy on environmental sanitation – achieving success in 2008.

### Snapshot: Uganda – water in inaccessible places

For more than 20 years, Kigezi Diocese has been delivering water and sanitation to households in remote mountainous parts of south-west Uganda, several hundred metres above surface- and ground-water supplies. It works closely with church leaders and congregations to promote and demonstrate good hygiene and sanitation by, for example, installing demonstration latrines on church property. Since 2006, 23 women's church volunteer groups have been trained in masonry and are now installing 4,000-litre rainwater-catchment tanks, to benefit the poorest families in particular. Contests, announced through churches, offer prizes for the most hygienic household. Kigezi Diocese is now influential in national policymaking on water. To date, it has provided hygiene education, sanitation and basic water supplies to about 200,000 people, making it the largest organisation addressing WASH issues in the area. It reaches up to 25,000 more people annually.

Photo: Richard Hanson/Tearfund



Sanitation is one area in which the local church, when playing to its strengths, is particularly well placed to make a sustainable difference. At the local level, sanitation is all about education and simple interventions. Too often sanitation projects led by external agencies struggle because they fail to engage and educate communities before installing latrines.<sup>30</sup> The success of any sanitation project depends on behaviour change – people understanding the benefits of better hygiene and sanitation, abandoning traditional practices (such as defecating in the open) and adopting new ones. The local church's ability to engage its community and bring about behaviour change is key:

- The church's authority and influence – through pastors and volunteers – mean it can play a strategic educational role. A well maintained latrine in a church compound can be a strategic catalyst for behaviour change. Churches are also a non-threatening forum for discussion or training.
- Its ability to engage the whole community is crucial. Installing latrines in individual homes is futile unless everyone manages their waste.

- The church's roots in local culture mean it can provide appropriate advice and technologies, sensitive to all sectors of society, including women and people of other faiths.
- The church's long-term presence in the community ensures sustainability – from reinforcing education messages to helping communities maintain facilities.
- Churches are beginning to lobby for better policies and practice at local and national levels, and so have an important role to play in getting watsan onto the political agenda.<sup>31</sup>



Photo: Richard Hampson/Tearfund

<sup>30</sup> For more information, see Tearfund (2007) *The Sanitation Scandal*.  
<sup>31</sup> For more information, see van Hoek and Yardley (2008) *Keeping communities clean: the church's response to improving sanitation and hygiene*, Tearfund.

## Advocacy

Much of the church has been slow to engage in advocacy on behalf of poor communities, often for fear of seeming too 'politicised' or confrontational. But increasingly the church is recognising its potential to help bring about good governance, policy reform and better services for the poor – and its biblical mandate to do so. Today the church as a global network is a key player in campaigning on issues such as climate change and trade justice. Its ability to communicate with and mobilise huge numbers of people has been clear in, for example, the Make Poverty History campaign and Micah Challenge.

Promoting 'active citizenship'<sup>32</sup> is critical to advocacy, envisioning poor communities to identify their needs and then engage proactively with decision-makers. Involving the local church is key to the success of many advocacy campaigns. Pastors, as respected and trusted community leaders, see poverty and injustice up close: they are well placed to help people identify problems (and root causes), to gather first-hand accounts of injustice and encourage people to speak out.

Crucially, the local church can ensure that the voices of even the most marginalised – and most vulnerable – groups are heard. This community-led approach, even if facilitated by a larger Christian NGO, is crucial for issues such as sanitation, a far greater priority for poor communities than for their political representatives. In situations such as Zimbabwe's political crisis or, previously, Sudan's civil war, the local church has been one of the few channels able to disseminate information about what is going on at grassroots level. Thereafter, the church network comes into its own, with its ability to unite local campaigns and get them onto the wider political agenda:

- Church leaders can liaise with policymakers at local and regional level, and use local media to publicise their campaign.
- Pastors can call on higher-level church leaders such as bishops to raise concerns with policymakers, media and the wider church network.
- Larger Christian organisations can train local pastors in advocacy and support church leaders in shaping their policy positions.

And, when campaigning is successful and services in poor communities improve, the church can play a major role in helping governments and others deliver on their commitments through monitoring and evaluation. So, for example, the National Council of Churches in Kenya encourages communities to publish on noticeboards details of how much funding the government gives to local schools – to hold teachers to account for their use of these resources.

Advocacy is central to Tearfund's ten-year vision to raise 50 million people out of poverty. Training, envisioning and building the capacity of our partners – and through them local churches in the UK, Ireland and overseas – is crucial to this end. Where this is happening already, the impact is considerable:

- **Sanitation:** advocacy by churches in Burkina Faso, supported by NGO Accedes, led to hygiene and sanitation becoming a named item in local authority budgets for the first time in 2008. Churches are regular stakeholders in decision-making at regional level now.<sup>33</sup>
- **HIV:** local churches in Zambia's Copperbelt province invited MPs to workshops on HIV, as part of the Micah Challenge. In one district, availability of antiretroviral treatment rose by 43 per cent in just three weeks.<sup>34</sup>
- **Good governance and injustice:** local churches in Zimbabwe have been calling for greater democracy, lobbying for constitutional and legislative reform, as well as educating people about voting rights and responsibilities. Local lobbying has included everything from access to clean water to children's rights.
- **Education:** Emmanuel Hospital Association has helped communities in the remote Andaman Islands lobby the Indian authorities, mobilising churches to help locals identify priority needs in, for example, schooling.

### Snapshot: UK and Ireland – speaking out on the environment

The church has already established itself as a significant voice in campaigning on climate change – and Tearfund has mobilised thousands of Christians to speak out. Recent lobbying was instrumental in bolstering UK legislation on emissions targets through amendments to what is now the Climate Change Act. Tearfund's *My Global Impact* online service urges individuals and churches to reduce their own carbon footprint, underlining the interconnectedness of the global church and our shared responsibility to tackle climate change on behalf of the developing nations suffering its worst effects. Tearfund was the UK's first NGO working in international development to campaign on climate change.

Photo: Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund



<sup>32</sup> A phrase used by Micah Challenge.

<sup>33</sup> For more information, see van Hoek and Yardley (2008) Keeping communities clean: the church's response to improving sanitation and hygiene, Tearfund.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.micahchallenge.org/>

'There's nothing more radical, nothing more revolutionary, nothing more subversive against injustice and oppression than the Bible.'

Archbishop Desmond Tutu,  
Tearfund conference,  
London, 6 September  
2008



## Gender

Women bear a disproportionate share of the poverty burden. Gender discrimination continues to straitjacket women, barring them from basics such as education, healthcare and a fair wage. The legacy of decades of inequality is nowhere more brutally evident than in HIV statistics: in some nations, young women and girls are up to 13 times more likely to have HIV than young men;<sup>35</sup> in other countries married women are more at risk from HIV than their sexually active unmarried peers. Challenging the low status of women and gender-based violence is a key factor in enabling HIV prevention – and in making development generally sustainable. Change must be root-and-branch – from improving female literacy to allowing women greater involvement in community decision-making, particularly on issues relating to women's traditional roles (such as fetching water).

### Snapshot: Burkina Faso – gender bias in church

Christian NGO Vigilance organised workshops for married couples from local churches, addressing traditional attitudes which locked women into servile roles. In one village, the resulting change in men's behaviour was so marked that people outside the church asked to join the programme. Husbands started to involve their wives in decision-making – and involve themselves more in parenting. Several wives said their sex lives improved too...

There is no doubt that the church must accept some of the blame for women's low social status: often it has reinforced gender stereotypes or remained silent on them. Poor theology has led pastors to distort biblical teaching about marriage, men and women. Too often, church hierarchies bar women from positions of leadership or responsibility. The HIV crisis has been a wake-up call to churches which were blind to gender issues. Some remain entrenched in their views. But many pastors are now tackling wrong theology, and are spreading the message that relationships between men and women should be built on equality, not hierarchy. In some cases, local church volunteers are actively confronting inequalities in their community:

- In the Democratic Republic of Congo, HEAL Africa (a Christian NGO) educates different faith groups, and through them the wider community, about women's constitutional right to be free from violence and about recent laws on rape. Faith leaders are trained using religious texts and traditional proverbs. HEAL has helped set up committees (made up of Christian, Muslim and Kimbanguist community members) which address stigma and identify women in need, as well as selecting volunteers (often from churches) for counselling training.<sup>36</sup>
- In Uganda, ACET works with local church volunteers to befriend and educate vulnerable groups such as the boda boda men (motorcycle taxi-drivers) in Kampala about HIV and gender issues.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Statement at the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 26 February to 9 March 2007, UNAIDS, New York.

<sup>36</sup> <http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/HIV+and+AIDS/Mexico+Conference.htm>

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

## 4: DEVELOPING THE LOCAL CHURCH'S POTENTIAL

The local church has many distinctive strengths – but its full potential cannot be tapped until its weaknesses are addressed. Tearfund's involvement with church-based organisations over 40 years means it is well aware of these fault lines. But we believe strongly that these hurdles can be overcome. The weaknesses of the local church will be best tackled by larger church organisations which share their values and vision. This will only be possible if links across the church network are strengthened. We at Tearfund are committed to making this happen: the greater the capacity of the local church, the greater the potential of the church as a whole to scale up its development work.

### Limitations and weaknesses

Working within the local church's limitations and tackling its weaknesses are key to releasing its latent potential. One major limitation – which is also one of its distinctive strengths – is its reliance on volunteers who, though highly motivated, are usually limited in the skills and time they can offer. So most local churches are incapable of specialist technical responses. Its weaknesses, though, are not beyond redemption:

#### - *Blinkered vision, poor theology*

Many churches are still blind to their biblical mandate to bring both practical and spiritual support to people in need. Too many remain as 'holy huddles' unconnected to their communities. Some pastors have limited themselves to commenting on society's ills rather than rolling up their sleeves and getting to grips with their causes. Others have been paternalistic in their approach to welfare, dispensing handouts but not engaging with their communities. The church has often stayed silent on issues such as materialism and sex. And it has at times endorsed gender discrimination and fed stigma which contributes to the spread of HIV.

Churches need envisioning about their role and potential to engage dynamically with their community's problems, bringing practical and spiritual support. They need to recognise their potential as a catalyst to help individuals come together as a community to tackle poverty. To this end, they should model acceptance and inclusivity.

#### - *Low capacity*

Most church members have limited skills and resources: most are poor and uneducated and often their pastor is too. Even when they are envisioned to serve their community, churches can be limited to fire-fighting, reacting to need and lacking the capacity to tackle root causes.

Church leaders and laity need help to boost their capacity through targeted training to address specific needs more strategically.

**'The challenge to all of us in the church of the 21st century is to put aside our past differences and share what we've learnt about development. The only way we can tackle global poverty effectively is by working together.'**

Reuben Coulter, Chief Executive,  
Tearfund Ireland

## 5: WHY PARTNERSHIP IS THE WAY FORWARD

### Mutual benefits

All these weaknesses can be addressed by strengthening the links between local churches and larger Christian organisations, be they denominational structures or NGOs. Among the strengths that larger church-based organisations bring to the partnership are: sectoral experience and expertise in specific areas of development and in implementing projects; staff dedicated to development; and the ability to relate to donors and handle funding. Local churches do not need vast amounts of extra cash: they rarely have the infrastructure and systems to use large amounts of funding effectively and accountably. Local churches do, however, need mobilising, educating and training. Once envisioned and equipped, local churches can make a small amount of seed funding go a very long way (see page 32).

The benefits from partnership between local churches and larger Christian organisations are mutual. While local churches become better able to respond to their community's needs, wider poverty reduction programmes can benefit hugely from links to the grassroots. For example, one church in Soroti, Uganda, had its members trained in HIV counselling by an NGO and now offers this service free in people's homes; testing rates at health clinics are rising now clients do not have to pay for pre-test counselling. The success of national and international advocacy campaigns such as Micah Challenge depends greatly on information and evidence provided by churches at the grassroots. In the context of HIV, local churches are well placed to help identify gaps in service provision or give feedback on the social impact of HIV which can inform policy.

The success of Tearfund's ten-year vision (see inside front cover) depends very much on equipping the local church through its Christian partners. Tearfund works with larger church-based organisations in many countries to help local churches engage dynamically with their communities (see case study below). Similarly, we envision and equip many local churches in the UK and Ireland for social action through our Church, community and change programme. Our new *Just People?* course, developed in partnership with Livability as part of Community Mission Partnership, envisions churches to engage actively with poverty and injustice at home and abroad.

### Snapshot: Uganda – shaking up the church to shake off dependency

Until recently, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) in Uganda found their development efforts were often frustrated by an attitude of dependency which pervaded poor communities – and some churches. Then PAG began a process which has turned member churches in four districts inside out. With training from Tearfund, PAG now envisions church leaders about tackling poverty; pastors then share the vision with congregations; church members talk with community leaders about how to address local problems starting with resources available locally. By working together and involving everyone, communities in Soroti district have been able to pool resources – and access help from local government and NGOs. For example, parents in one village have clubbed together to provide land for a school. People are improving food security with new cassava varieties and farming methods – and accessing government grants for beehives. One group has begun a tree-planting project to lessen the environmental impact of charcoal-burning. People are looking out for one another as never before.



Photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

If the development community is serious about scaling up its response to global poverty and attaining the MDGs, there is an urgent need for closer collaboration between all the different actors – governments, donors, faith-based organisations (FBOs) and civil society groups. Donors and policymakers are increasingly convinced about the important role of the church in development and are already taking steps towards more meaningful engagement. We at Tearfund believe that development efforts could have better outcomes and greater impact if players worked together more cohesively. Otherwise, these efforts will not be as productive as they might be.

### Positive vibes

The current political climate in the UK and Ireland bodes well for the prospect of greater engagement between the church and other agencies. The UK government has shown itself increasingly open to dialogue with faith groups, particularly in the post-9/11 era with its focus on community cohesion. The Irish government recognised the important role of FBOs in the Ireland Aid Review 2002, which stated that 'the historical roots of Ireland's Aid programme lie in the remarkable work which has been carried out over many years by Irish missionaries'.<sup>38</sup> In 2008, Mísean Cara, which supports missionaries' overseas development work, was allocated €20 million.

There are some signs that dialogue is translating into partnership – initiatives such as the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) and Labour's Believing in a better Britain consultation with faith groups. The Glasgow Charter, signed by ten Christian denominations, the city council and the Scottish Parliament, committed signatories to 'a new era of partnership between churches and the City Council in planning and caring for Glasgow and all its people'.<sup>39</sup> In Wales, some 500 faith communities take part in government regeneration activities and/or are strongly involved in their local Community Strategy.<sup>40</sup> Even so, a recent FCCBF report found that some local authorities still suspect the faith sector of discriminatory attitudes; some FBOs feel a need to hide their faith identity when applying for government funds.<sup>41</sup>

### Snapshot: UK – building bridges

The Springfield Project at St Christopher's Church in Moseley has a strong track record of offering facilities and support services to its community, one of the most deprived and multicultural areas of Birmingham. That's why the city council approached the project about working in partnership to develop a children's centre on its site, as part of the Sure Start programme. Today, the project has a purpose-built centre offering extended services for children and families – from day care to benefits advice. It works closely with the statutory and voluntary sectors, including Jobcentre Plus and local schools, receiving many referrals. The venture has helped the church live out its passion to build bridges between different social and cultural groups – and provided the council with a gateway into a diverse community and some hard-to-reach groups.

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/partners\\_missionary.asp](http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/partners_missionary.asp)

<sup>39</sup> Glasgow Churches Action (2007) *The salt of the earth*. [www.glasgowchurchesaction.org](http://www.glasgowchurchesaction.org)

<sup>40</sup> Gweini (2008) *Faith in Wales: counting for communities*, Evangelical Alliance Wales.

<sup>41</sup> Community Development Foundation (2007) *Faith, cohesion and community development*. [http://www.cdf.org.uk/SITE/UPLOAD/DOCUMENT/FCCBF\\_Summary-final\\_lo-res.pdf](http://www.cdf.org.uk/SITE/UPLOAD/DOCUMENT/FCCBF_Summary-final_lo-res.pdf)

## Poles apart

Overseas, the extent to which partnership exists varies hugely according to the context. Research has tended to focus on the health sector and has covered FBOs generally. In some strongly Christian nations in Central and Southern Africa, there is close, effective collaboration between governments and faith-based health networks. The Christian Health Association of Zambia, for example, has a contractual arrangement with the government for providing a comprehensive healthcare strategy in some areas where its members' hospitals are the only facilities. Christian health associations in several other African nations have formal agreements with national governments and specific service agreements at district level; most also take part in national health planning and policy development.<sup>42</sup> But in West African nations such as Mali, where there are fewer FBOs, collaboration is less common.<sup>43</sup>

The picture is rather different at civil society level. Here collaboration between the church and other agencies is often weak, and tends to weaken further the closer to the grassroots a church organisation is working. In the health sector, informal 'non-facility-based services' are all but invisible to public sector players – and sometimes even to larger Christian organisations. The same is true of church-based organisations working with orphans and vulnerable children in the thick of HIV epidemics, for example. Recent research by the African Religious Health Assets Programme (ARHAP) for the Gates Foundation found a lack of coordination and collaboration between FBOs and secular agencies – with some serious consequences.<sup>44</sup> So FBOs:

- tend to work in parallel, not in partnership, with other agencies. Efforts may be duplicated, creating 'priority gaps' in service
- tend to have to compete with other players for staff etc
- are not always involved in national planning or policymaking or represented on coordinating bodies
- tend to be independently – and inadequately – funded



Photo: Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund

### Snapshot: Ethiopia – the self-help revolution

Kale Heywet Church works with city churches to help poor communities help themselves. Two members of each church are employed to identify the poorest homes in their locality. These households are divided into self-help groups, each with its own church worker to give training and advice. Groups pool their resources in a savings fund and add to it through small-scale fundraising (eg: knitting). They then take small repayable loans from the fund to set up their own businesses (eg: teashops). Many now have better incomes – and new friends. Across Ethiopia, there are now about 300 church-linked self-help groups benefiting about 31,000 people directly. The total number of Kale Heywet self-help groups – including those set up without the help of local churches – now stands at 1,000 nationwide, benefiting more than 100,000 people.

## Together stronger?

For the church – and faith groups generally – a new era of partnership is not simply an ideal: it is an urgent necessity. Many church-based organisations are under incredible strain, operating with scant resources in trying circumstances. Many say they are at 'breaking point' in trying to care for orphans and vulnerable children singlehandedly.<sup>45</sup> Most church-based organisations in the health sector rely heavily on external funding, which is inadequate.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, many are seriously understaffed and haemorrhaging their best personnel to state health facilities.<sup>47</sup> At local level, church projects' reliance on already exhausted volunteers is of serious concern – their capacity and long-term sustainability are badly compromised. Closer collaboration must include more funding for FBOs – a case Tearfund has made elsewhere.<sup>48</sup> For the church, this means increasing funding to the larger church-based organisations so they can scale up their efforts – and build the capacity of the local church.

For governments and international donors, the church is an essential partner for sustainable development for all the reasons set out previously (and on page 30). Faced with the prospect of global recession, it is a compelling fact that local churches can make a little funding go a long way in helping communities shake off dependency. When pastors and congregations are fully trained and envisioned, they can make funds go even further (see Malawi case study page 19). A Tearfund partner in Zimbabwe which employs just ten staff has helped train more than 3,000 volunteers who now care for 78,000 orphans.

Tearfund believes that effective partnership – where each partner plays to its strengths and brings its own distinctives to the mix – has the potential to do more than just extend coverage. We believe that development players can achieve far more by working together than they can apart. Medium- to long-term goals may be reached more quickly, health outcomes improved; money can be made to go further and reach previously unreached groups (below). In public management-speak, the aim is 'maximising assets'. Our partners' experiences of multisectoral collaboration to date certainly support this theory.

### Snapshot: Peru – pooling expertise

After the Shining Path's reign of terror, Peru established a Commission of Truth and Reconciliation to help rebuild the peace. To carry out the commission's recommendations, the government disbursed large amounts of funding to local authorities but many were unprepared for such responsibilities. Peace and Hope, a large Christian NGO, helped local officials strengthen their planning processes and shared its long experience of working with the rural communities worst affected by political violence. It also helped build the capacity of civil society groups so they could engage more effectively with local government. Funding was conditional on local people being involved in deciding how money should be spent – a process in which Peace and Hope played a key role. So communities previously overlooked by the state benefited from education, healthcare and agriculture projects – and felt 'compensated' for their suffering

<sup>42</sup> WHO (2008) Building from common foundations. (See footnote 7 for full reference.)

<sup>43</sup> ARHAP (2008) The contribution of religious entities to health in sub-Saharan Africa. (See note 3.)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. ARHAP's findings referred to FBOs generally but by inference they apply to the church too.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> WHO (2008) Building from common foundations. (See footnote 7 for full reference.)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Also, ARHAP (2008) The contribution of religious entities to health in sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>48</sup> Cf: Tearfund (2006) Working together: challenges and opportunities for international development agencies and the church in the response to AIDS in Africa. Also, Tearfund (2006) Faith Untapped.



## 6. THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF PARTNERSHIP

Tearfund believes that there are significant opportunities for greater collaboration between FBOs, civil society groups, governments and donors – with huge potential benefits for the poorest communities worldwide. There are, however, some major challenges to overcome too. This will take a radical overhaul of structures, approaches and attitudes. All sides need to be willing to change and to confront the barriers which currently stand in the way of closer collaboration. Mutual understanding and trust will be the necessary foundations on which partnership is built. This chapter does not purport to set out a framework for action but aims to galvanise the debate as we begin the countdown to the MDG deadline.

### Common ground

Recognising what FBOs, governments and donors already have in common is a crucial next step after understanding each other's distinctive strengths. We are, after all, united in a common aim: eradicating poverty sustainably. We all also recognise the need to extend our reach to the grassroots and, increasingly, the need to work together on this. Crucially, many of our core values overlap. The biblical call to 'love thy neighbour' cuts across religious and cultural barriers. The emerging concept of 'decent care' is an important framework for any debate about closer collaboration on healthcare and HIV. Decent care's focus on the experience of 'the patient', drawing on spiritual traditions such as dignity and integrity, resonates with the underlying tenets of church-based healthcare, according to the WHO.<sup>49</sup>

### Self-awareness and flexibility

As discussed, the church needs to acknowledge and address the fact that some of its more conservative beliefs have been a hindrance to wider poverty reduction efforts. For example, the church has sometimes frustrated HIV prevention work by refusing to promote condoms. It also needs to strengthen its own case for collaboration by undertaking further scoping and mapping exercises (such as those undertaken by ARHAP in the health sector) to prove that it is already a significant player in other development fields. Capacity limitations mean that church-based organisations generally do not have a strong track record in reporting or monitoring and evaluation – a significant bar to accessing the very funding which might boost their

capacity in this area. Tearfund and bodies such as the WHO advocate a more creative and flexible approach in the demands that governments and donors make of FBOs in return for funding – one which does not compromise their distinctive strengths, such as volunteerism.<sup>50</sup>

### Systems and structures

Collaboration between the church, state and secular actors will be outworked in different ways in different contexts. However it develops, new mechanisms and structures will be needed to facilitate partnership. Crucially, it will mean giving networks of local churches a place at the table in national decision-making and policy forums generally. Specifically, it will mean church representation on national bodies coordinating responses in specific fields, such as HIV. Actors such as the WHO could play a crucial intermediary role in building these partnerships.<sup>51</sup> There is also a need for:

- clarity and coordination of national policy, e.g. approaches such as the Three Ones principles which coordinate HIV responses nationally<sup>52</sup>
- greater regional coordination, eg through regional agencies providing technical and administrative support to locally based initiatives<sup>53</sup>
- coordinating mechanisms which allow people at district and local levels to feed into national decision-making through, for example, networks of local churches
- funding mechanisms that will give networks of local churches – and other civil society agencies – better access to funding streams

<sup>49</sup> WHO (2008) Building from common foundations. (See footnote 7 for full reference). See also ARHAP (2008) The potential and perils of partnership: Christian religious entities and collaborative stakeholders responding to HIV and AIDS in Kenya, Malawi and the DRC. For Tearfund/UNAIDS.

<sup>50</sup> WHO (2008) Building from common foundations. (See footnote 7 for full reference.)

<sup>51</sup> The WHO itself acknowledges this. See WHO (2008) Building from common foundations.

<sup>52</sup> For more, visit <http://www.unaids.org/en/CountryResponses/MakingTheMoneyWork/ThreeOnes>

<sup>53</sup> ARHAP (2008) The contribution of religious entities to health in sub-Saharan Africa. (See note 3.)

## MAKING THE CASE FOR CLOSER COLLABORATION

Donors and policymakers increasingly recognise the role that civil society can play in tackling poverty – by empowering and engaging communities. The church has already proved its suitability for this role. In 'donor-speak', the church offers huge 'added value' in terms of the criteria which donors and governments might consider when assessing prospective partners:

**TRUST:** The church's long-standing involvement in community means it is widely trusted – often more than other institutions. So poor people often choose church-run health clinics over other available options, perceiving them to be better. In a 2008 Gallup poll,<sup>1</sup> the regional mean for public confidence in religious bodies across 31 sub-Saharan African countries was 82 per cent, far higher than figures for public confidence in government. If the church is involved in multisectoral programmes, it lends its credibility and accountability to projects of which communities might otherwise be suspicious.<sup>2</sup>

**ACCESS:** The church is able to bridge the gap between even the poorest, most marginalised groups and broader development efforts.

**COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY:** Local church responses come from within the community and so reflect

community values and priorities. They are more likely to be owned by local people and therefore to be more sustainable. What's more, they often continue long after any formal funding arrangement ends: church volunteers are moved to respond regardless of resources. The church's root-and-branch approach – tackling people's spiritual and material needs – is key to making development truly sustainable.

**GREAT VALUE FOR MONEY:** Church responses offer a great return on relatively small investments. They rely heavily on highly motivated volunteers. Church projects are usually dependent on local resources, which are usually meagre. Yet their impact is often disproportionately large (see page 26).

**REPLICABILITY:** Church networks provide a unique opportunity to replicate simple but effective projects because of their links with many local churches (see Ethiopia case study on page 28). Envisioning and training – rather than huge investments – are what it will take to see projects mushrooming across the network.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** While some sectors of the church still have to prove their financial accountability, many larger church-based organisations are proving themselves capable of strong governance and financial accountability. Unicef research has found FBOs' financial systems to be 'as well organised as those of larger NGOs'.<sup>3</sup>

**WILLINGNESS TO SCALE UP:** Surveys of church responses find that local churches want to do more to meet local needs.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gallup.com/poll/107287/Few-Urban-Congolese-Confidence-Institutions.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> A recent US government publication cites public trust as one of many strengths of faith-based community organisations: US Dept of Health and Social Services (2008) Partnering with faith-based and community organizations.

<sup>3</sup> Foster (2004) Study of the response by faith-based organisations to orphans and vulnerable children. World Conference of Religions for Peace/United Nations Children's Fund.

<sup>4</sup> For example: ARHAP (2006) Appreciating assets. (See footnote 14.)

**'Development can make the mistake of valuing only the things it can measure empirically. The church's version of sustainable development involves things you can't measure – hope, love, self-esteem. How do you measure love on a logframe?'**

**Paul Brigham,  
Tearfund's UK Director**

### **Understanding and trust**

A constant refrain of studies looking at the potential for closer collaboration between governments, donors and FBOs is the call for mutual trust.<sup>54</sup> Donors are encouraged to be more 'faith literate', to acknowledge the central role of faith in development in many nations. Intangibles in the list of church distinctives such as compassion and hope do not fit with traditional impact indicators. Secular organisations suspect the church of trying to reshape liberal societies around their particular values: the church is wary of any engagement which might try to turn it into a secular NGO.

We all need to make greater efforts to understand the distinctive assets and perspectives which each of us brings to the table – and be willing and open to learn from each other. Reconciling different definitions of effectiveness is a case in point. Understandably, donors tend to rate development responses according to their cost-effectiveness and measurable impact. The church's definition of effectiveness, by contrast, is bound up with concepts of personal and social transformation (see Chapter 2) and so tends to be much wider, embracing a longer timeframe. There is a lively debate to be had about what makes development truly effective and sustainable. Mutual respect of difference is a good starting point and a prerequisite for mutual understanding. Mutual understanding in turn builds trust – which is the cornerstone of any meaningful partnership.

<sup>54</sup> Recent research for Tearfund by ARHAP (see footnote 49) found that trust between 'government and Christian religious entities' was key in Kenya, where multisectoral collaboration is relatively strong and well established. [http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za/downloads/TFUNAIDS\\_full\\_June2008.pdf](http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za/downloads/TFUNAIDS_full_June2008.pdf)