# Summary of the Mobilization of Local Faith Communities Learning Hub Meeting

# Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities

7-9 December 2016

Long Room Hub, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

## 7 December – Alastair Ager Public Lecture: “Faith, Secularism and Humanitarian Engagement” (6pm, Irish School of Ecumenics)

The lecture covered the main arguments in [his most recent book](http://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137472137). He gave example of times in which he had experienced the marginalization of faith perspectives in humanitarian action to demonstrate that humanitarianism is broadly secular and that religion has been privatized, marginalized, and instrumentalized across the humanitarian system.

Linda Hogan, Professor of Ecumenics, highlighted that religions also need a self-critical challenge, noting that faith groups often fail to be relevant in the recent economic crisis and are seen to be only responsive to a middle class agenda.

## 8-9 December – Learning Hub Meeting

### Hub Co-Chairs

Catriona Dejean, Tearfund

Christo Greyling, World Vision International

Full attendee list in [Annex 1](#_Annex_1:_List)

Facilitation by Rachel Carnegie, Anglican Alliance

### Thursday, December 8th

**I.  Introductions**

**II.  Review Goals and** [**Theory of Change**](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/theory-change-faith-group-community-mobilization/) **(TOC)**

Members agreed on the proposed Hub goals and the utility of the TOC; which will now be tested through the increased evidence available. The TOC should be a living document that can be updated as new evidence emerges.

#### Goals:

* Increase understanding of the role, capacities, activities and contributions of LFCs to community development and humanitarian needs
* Strengthen empowerment of LFCs as agents of change through increased capacities, resources, and partnerships
* Position LFCs for opportunities relating to trend towards “localization of aid”

**III.  What are the key research questions or hypotheses we currently have regarding the effectiveness of the contribution of LFCs?**

The results of a pre-meeting survey found that questions could be clustered into five main areas:

a) the added value of LFCs,

b) bridging capital (i.e. how LFCs engage with others in the broader community for development goals),

c) monitoring and evaluation (i.e. how we measure and report on LFC mobilization),

d) bonding capital (i.e. building the internal capacity of LFCs), and

e) efficiency and effectiveness (i.e. supporting LFCs to be effective, not just efficient, and how local work can be scaled-up).

The full list of questions can be found in [Annex 2](#_Annex_2:_Summary).

**IV. What do we know now?** [**Setting the scene on the quality of evidence**](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/mobilisation-lfcs-presentation/)

In this section, three main questions on evidence were discussed in small groups:

a) How should these dilemmas / spectrums shape our thinking?

b) What other factors may influence the purpose, focus, and quality of the evidence we generate?

c) Whose evidence is it and what are the ethical considerations we need to consider in the design, collecting and utilization of evidence?

In reporting back to the main group, groups noted that LFCs are well aware of the change they drive, but FBOs need to help collect and triangulate the evidence. Groups also reported that theological reflection and scripture could be used as a source of evidence that was not yet mentioned.

**V. Evidence for contributions of LFCs to community development and humanitarian needs**: **Organisational Case Studies**

The presentation from each organisation can be found at the hyperlinks given.

[Salvation Army – Dean Pallant](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/salvation-army-case-study/)

The Salvation Army’s worldwide reach that means that different and, at times, competing views from those involved can create tensions. To overcome some of these obstacles a unifying framework was created to initiate an ongoing reflective cycle. The [Journey of Renewal](http://accountability.salvationarmy.org/) is the accountability movement within the Salvation Army. The short book (also called *Journey of Renewal*) can be found [here](https://issuu.com/salvationarmyihq/docs/journeyofrenewal).

[Organization of African Instituted Churches – Rev Nicta Lubaale (by video)](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/oaic-livelihoods-program/)

The OAIC works with 30,000 churches and farmers that have few resources. They want to measure nutritional status and have undertaken a journey to understand how best to measure this with the congregations. Congregations have conducted surveys at household level about the types of food eaten to produce a baseline. They are now developing M&E learning systems that are relevant to LFCs, and support groups rather than being extractive.

Sarvodaya Movement – Dr Vinya Ariyaratne (by video)

Sarvodaya is a national, grassroots organisations based on Buddhist and Ghandian thinking, which underlines the need to share. They want to build evidence not just to convince outside donors, but also to give communities confidence in the sustainability of their work. They have case studies on how Sarvodaya can mobilise grassroots communities quickly. They also work with Buddhist monks, priests, and Imams on interfaith activities to address religious extremism.

[International Care Ministries – Lincoln Lau](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/icm-12-16-presentation/)

ICM worked with a large network of pastors in the Philippines. The pastors are highly trusted which means that their involvement in their programs has lessened the drop out rate among participants. They have used largely quantitative measurements to understand various aspects of their work, including the role of religiosity. They are also using social network analysis to understand the interconnections between those that take part in their programs.

[Anglican Alliance/Mother’s Union – Rachel Carnegie and Robert Dawes](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/mu-case-study/)

Anglican Alliance acts to convene groups to encourage asset-based self-reliance. Mother’s Union, giving a case study from Uganda, has used The Eagle Process to mobilise communities. As the program started quickly, the program was hard to track at times. They wanted to evaluate the program without being too burdensome of participants’ time and resources. They are working with ‘Most Significant Change’ stories as a method that is more compelling to LFCs than questionnaires.

[World Vision / Channels of Hope – Christo Greyling](http://jliflc.com/resources/channels-hope-program-presentation-12-16/)

Channels of Hope helps faith leaders understand social issues in the context of their ministry. Through faith leader workshops and follow-up action groups (CHAT groups) within churches, CoH can change the perspectives of faith leaders and mobilize the resources of LFCs for change. [Several studies](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/channels-hope-level-evidence-brief/) have been completed/are ongoing on the impact of the CoH model. Evidence shows that changes within faith leaders is a clear impact of the CoH trainings, however it is less clear whether this leads to more mobilised communities and the impacts made at large on the issues tackled, such as child protection.

[Tearfund/Qualitative Impact Assessment Protocol](http://jliflc.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Uganda-Case-study_-Tearfund-and-Uni-of-Bath_Dec2016.pptx) ([QUIP](http://qualitysocialimpact.org/)) – Tim Raby and Michelle James

Church mobilization initiatives were evaluated through participatory evaluation processes. The mobilization did not include skills training, but focused on community dialogue. However, it was difficult to gauge attribution for social change to the specific mobilization program. To gain more evidence, Tearfund joined with the University of Bath to use their [QUIP](http://jliflc.com/resources/quip-briefing-paper/) methodology. QUIP uses qualitative impact data to understand and maintain research reliability and validity. Full results will be available soon.

[Samaritan’s Purse – Jodi Blackham](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/sp-ccm-12-16-presentation/)

The church mobilization work of Samaritan’s Purse in Swaziland and Kyrgyzstan showed the need for different models in different places to encourage more of a mentoring approach. A sign of success would be to see a church actively caring for vulnerable people in the community. It has been harder to adapt to Eastern Europe and Central Asia where churches find it more difficult to establish a niche in the community, whereas this is already widely found in Swaziland.

[Islamic Relief Worldwide – Neelam Fida](http://capacity-building.jliflc.com/resources/2016-islamic-relief-presentation/)

Islamic Relief created the Muslim Platform for Sustainable Development to encourage Muslim discourse in achieving sustainable development, allow for sharing of practice and experience, and encourage advocacy towards governments and Muslim communities. They are adapting Channels of Hope methods within an Islamic context. They learned that workshops on sensitive issues need to be approached softly to allow people to see different perspectives, rather than enforcing any one perspective.

**VI. Reflections and Discussion**

In groups, participants discussed the areas in which good evidence already exists and the areas in which research gaps remain. The full list of reflections generated during the group sessions can be found in [Annex 3.](#_Annex_3:_Strong)

In summary, the groups thought that the main areas of strong evidence are:

* Newly formed and strengthened community **relationships** create positive change.
* There is a **growing amount of** **evidence** LFC work from particular contexts (e.g. Uganda) across a variety of sectors but there is no one best method for collecting evidence.
* Engaging **faith leaders** can create positive and sustained change.
* **Taboo/sensitive issues** can be addressed through the creation of safe spaces and extra care taken in how reflection is initiated.

The main areas of remaining research gaps are:

* Does mobilization help **sustainability**?
* How do **politics and power** shape LFC positions locally, as well as dynamics between LFCs and international FBOs?
* What are LFC experiences of **instrumentalization**?
* How do we **communicate** evidence better – both horizontally and vertically and both from FBOs and from LFCs?
* How do we design **learning methods** for LFCs that understand the role of faith, is not extractive, and generates information that is useful to communities?
* What is the **cost/benefit** of working with LFCs? What is it specifically about LFCs that can enhance impact and, equally, what are examples of weaknesses of LFCs?
* The debate on “added value”: Do we need to prove that something is “added” by faith? Is the faith-based approach distinguished by enhanced goals (understanding of **the integrated person**)?

In discussion, some common themes emerged as key topics for debate.

Types of evidence: a few warned about an emphasis on quantitative data over more anecdotal and narrative expressions of the value of programs. However, others also underlined the need for evidence to be rooted in all areas, underlining that a mixed methods response is the way forward.

Power and politics: some mentioned that political influence should not be forgotten in this discussion. Although LFCs have a specific identity, the communities and the issues at hand can be deeply political and need analysis on these grounds as well as faith alone. Internal critique from within the traditions is encouraged to help understand these power dynamics. This power dynamic also relates to internal reflection for NGOs. As one participant put it, we are in danger of creating change strategies to fix problems that we have not seen our own part in creating.

Conceptions of the “local”: linking to power and politics, some noted that the local must not be idealized, but engaged with in all its complexity. It was also noted that local organisations do not want to be idealized. They can feel frustrated that, as LFCs and small local FBOs, they are dismissed as not professional enough even when they have gone to such effort to learn the language of the donors. In the end, most LFCs self-build capacity rather than relying on external forces. It was also noted that the group as a whole is not diverse in terms of different faiths and Global South representation.

Deepening theological reflection: what is the convening power of theological reflection for social issues? As sacrificial communities, for example, local churches are very different to other types of local organisation. There was a warning however not to instrumentalize theology and to recognise that theologies are deeply contested and have been abused over time.

Instrumentalization: Many expressed hesitation about the instrumentalization of faith in general. There was concern that LFCs were used rather than capacitated, and that encouraging secular organisations to work with LFCs might further this problem.

## Friday, December 9th

**VI. Review and prioritize key research questions for the Learning Hub**

The co-chairs felt there were three main areas of note: monitoring, evaluation, and learning with LFCs; organisational learning; and system wide change. On the basis of these areas, groups formed to discuss an action plan for the Hub at community level, organisational level, and system wide. The overview of this can be found in [Annex 4](#_Annex_4:_Group).

Community level:

* We need to synthesize the diverse methodologies and players through which LFCs do their own thinking and reflection. We need to research **how LFCs learn** and how that learning can be facilitated and motivated.
* What do we know about **the interests of LFCs**? What do they say they need?
* The connection between this Hub and the Evidence Working Group was discussed. The evidence from Hubs like this should be taken back up to the Evidence Working Group.

Organisational level:

* What works and what does not work for **organisational processes** and building and using theories of change?
* How do we make the group more diverse and integrate new members into it? What value would the Hub bring to partners around the world? Topic specific **webinars** could be one way to give value to people worldwide. For example, a webinar on the ICM methodologies could be a great place to start.
* **Use the TOC to synthesize the evidence** we have and see what gaps exist. As there has already been evidence presented, an initial action could be to synthesize and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of these projects, rather than a traditional scoping report.

System wide:

* The international system interacts with the organisational and community levels as well. The question is how to support points of interaction to **strategically identify examples from the organisational and local to bring to the global**.
* What is the best approach to **operationalizing accompaniment**? Different models are currently used: 1) intervention (equipping communities to deliver); 2) church mobilization and theories of change; 3) Channels of Hope (church mobilization *and* some more theological reflection); 4) equipping and mobilizing the community through political organizing; 5) leaving people alone.

## VII. Next steps for the Mobilization of LFCs Learning Hub

* **Synthesize** the evidence presented already, using the TOC as a framework, as an initial step before deciding whether to proceed with a full scoping report.
* The idea of **accompaniment** came out as a common idea for the process of engaging and partnering with LFCs without instrumentalizing.
* Bring in diverse voices, potentially through virtual meetings and **webinars** or alternative locations. Those working on church mobilization meet a few times a year anyway, which can act as an additional forum. We should also **map other stakeholders** out there so we know who else to bring into the discussions.

#### October 2017 International Forum on Localising Humanitarian Response – The Role of Religion

* Can we bring together a panel session from this Hub?
* The Philippines could be a key example with evidence from “Pastors in Disasters” (ICM and Tearfund), World Evangelical Alliance, and ADRA.

Acknowledgments

Very many thanks to all those who participated in the meeting. We greatly appreciated the spirit of collaboration and sharing among all. Particular thanks go to the co-chairs and facilitator, Christo, Catriona, and Rachel, for leading the sessions and encouraging such a productive learning environment.

Many thanks to Linda Hogan and Siobhan Garrigan, as well as all those at the Irish School of Ecumenics and Loyola Institute, who helped organise and publicize the events. Thanks to the staff of the Long Room Hub in TCD where the main meeting was held.

## Contact

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# Annex 1: List of attendees

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| **Name** | **Organization/University** |
| Alastair Ager | Queen Margaret University/ Columbia University |
| Alexandra Gossens | Soka Gakkai International (SGI) (via WebEx) |
| Catriona Dejean | Tearfund |
| Christo Greyling | World Vision International (WVI) |
| David Boan | Wheaton College |
| Dean Pallant | Salvation Army |
| Dong Jin Kim | Trinity College Dublin (TCD) |
| Isobel Owen | Anglican Alliance |
| Jean Duff | Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLI) |
| Jo Sadgrove | USPG |
| Jodi Blackham | Samaritan's Purse |
| Jude Lal Fernando | TCD |
| Katie Kraft | WVI |
| Kelly Scott | Catholic Relief Services |
| Lincoln Lau | International Care Ministries (ICM) |
| Linda Hogan | TCD |
| Lydia Powell | Tearfund |
| Michelle James | University of Bath |
| Neelam Fida | Islamic Relief Worldwide |
| Nicta Lubaale | Organization of African Instituted Churches (via WebEx) |
| Nobuyuki Asai | SGI (via WebEx) |
| Olivia Wilkinson | TCD |
| Rachel Carnegie | Anglican Alliance |
| Reiseal Ni Cheilleachair | Trócaire |
| Rob Dawes | Mothers Union |
| Stacy Nam | JLI (via WebEx) |
| Tim Raby | Tearfund Uganda |
| Vinya Ariyaratne | Sarvodaya (via WebEx) |

# Annex 2: Summary of Research Questions from Pre-meeting Survey

35 different questions were received. Some broad thematic areas were common among the questions submitted and the questions have been grouped accordingly, although it should be noted that many questions are relevant across themes. The themes and questions are summarised below as a guide. The full lists of questions can be found on the next page.

## The specific role/added value of faith (FBOs, faith leaders, LFCs, faith and spirituality)

The most questions were submitted in this area. Respondents were interested in the specific position of faith in development. Questions covered evidence for the role or added value of faith leaders and actors, examples of faith actors influencing government and policy, evidence of the role of faith, values, and spirituality in development, and contributions of LFCs to more holistic development.

## Bridging Capital

This was the second most popular area. Respondents wanted to know more about how faith actors interacted with others in their communities. Questions covered LFC interaction with those of other faiths, local authorities, and development outcomes in the wider community.

## Efficiency and Effectiveness

This was the third most popular area. Questions that covered efficiency and effectiveness were broadly concerned with the ways in which LFCs can be supported to be effective, not just efficient, and how local work can be scaled-up.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

This was the fourth most popular area. Respondents wanted to know how best to measure and evaluate LFC work, as well as disseminate findings. Questions covered effective measurement tools, how to evaluate without disempowering, more responsive evaluation mechanisms, and making evaluation dissemination impactful.

## Bonding Capital

This was the final main area. Respondents were interested in how best to support the working of actors within their own faith communities, with questions concerning how to mobilise churches and how to build more loosely affiliated communities.

# The Grouped Questions

## The specific role/added value of faith (FBOs, faith leaders, LFCs, faith and spirituality)

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| * How can working with Faith Leaders and other Faith Actors increase outcomes towards SDGs? |
| * What is the value-adding element that faith communities bring to achieving development outcomes? |
| * What are some concrete examples of when local faith groups have successfully influenced government and policy? What factors led to their success? |
| * What evidence is there of the values that underpin LFC and FBO activities? |
| * What is it that faith and spirituality contribute to the sustainability of the development process? |
| * How are local faith communities contributing to sustainability and holistic well being of local communities through their approaches and ability to mobilise the community? |
| * Is there something about faith and spirituality that lends itself to bringing about a better quality of life, the material circumstances being equal? * Given the position of FBOs, are they more able (compared to other CBOs) to recognize and identify instances of structural poverty and injustices? (i.e. Are they better able, through their unique lens, to identify the needs of their communities, including the root causes of issues)? * To what degree are faith-based organizations helping tackle the issue of supernatural powers that seem to be so crucial to engage with in many different development contexts? * What is a difference in terms of how faith functions between developed countries and developing countries, and, between cities and rural areas? |

## Bridging Capital

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| * How does the community deal with people who have a different faith? Is there a good example of collaborating with or involving those people? |
| * Do LFCs possess the appropriate balance of "bonding" social capital (i.e. within the LFC) and "bridging" social capital (i.e. between the LFC and the wider community) |
| * How does the local authority deal with faith? |
| * What lessons can be drawn from local faith groups around how to successfully enhance inter-religious social cohesion and stability in communities in areas where 2 or more religions are practiced? |
| * What role do local faith communities have in changing wider social norms and negative policies and practices which contribute to people remaining in poverty? What is the evidence of how locally mobilised, managed and driven faith initiatives are seeing positive change to negative social norms, practices and policies? |
| * What is the relationship between a mobilized church and its community? * What are the most significant barriers you see that keep LFCs from contributing to the following in their communities? (a) Improvements in overall quality of life; (b) A safer and more nurturing context for community members; (c) Personal change for the people with whom they work; and (d) Transformed relationships * How do organisations define coordination and cooperation? * How can local faith communities best engage in complex issues (such as child protection or social cohesion) in a manner that increases protective attitudes, draws upon and informs their religious perspectives, and is sustainable? |

## Efficiency and Effectiveness

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| * How could we improve aid effectiveness? |
| * Do we need to be mindful of LFCs being asked to act purely as efficient service providers responding to others' agendas, thus disregarding their more holistic (even sacred) role? |
| * How can they be supported to be more effective in this? |
| * Are there particular factors that support them to be effective? |
| * Locally owned, global change, can we achieve the paradox? |
| * What evidence is there of scale-up of initiative to large-scale intervention? * How do you fund transformation? |

## Monitoring and Evaluation

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| * What are the most effective measurement tools for monitoring the impact that LFCs have on those they interact with? |
| * Evaluating without disempowering? |
| * What should we actually be measuring? What changes, and in and between whom? |
| * How could we develop responsive evaluation mechanisms? |
| * How can dissemination of evaluation findings produce social change in its own right? Should we be placing higher emphasis on sharing evaluation findings with donors, partners and recipients and what could the impact be? |

## Bonding Capital

* What change do faith-based communities want to see in relation to their faith?
* What are the mechanisms for supporting and building the capacity of 'loosely formed' LFCs?
* What are the characteristics of a fully or successfully mobilized church, including theological, social, contextual and organizational elements?
* What is known about the necessary strategies or changes needed to move a less mobilized church into becoming a more mobilized church?

# Annex 3: Strong Evidence and Remaining Research Gaps

Groups thought there was good evidence in the following areas:

* Changed relationships reduces poverty
* Relationships/social capital is built through mobilization that leads to positive change
* There is no one best method for collecting evidence
* There has been an increased use of qualitative evidence
* Change in religiosity and religious transformations is possible
* There are various levels of evidence on the impact of agencies in the community
* There is a growing amount of evidence from Christian contexts (particularly Uganda) on long-term development through LFCs
* FBOs do get the job done and create changes in attitudes
* Sensitization of faith leaders can change HIV-related stigma
* Engaging faith leaders leads to positive and sustained change both for the individual and community
* Starting with stories of the impact of harmful practices can lead to self-critical evaluation of the interpretation of religious tenets
* Safe spaces can be created to address difficult/taboo issues
* Processes are sustainable when external input stops
* There is evidence of change in health and livelihoods though religious intervention
* Religious actors deliver mobilization of churches and LFCs
* Getting evidence is hard work

They thought that these research gaps remained:

* Are mobilized organisations more sustainable?
* Is church mobilization more sustainable because it encourages local ownership?
* What are the models for effective collaboration between LFCs and FBOs (relating to power dynamics)?
* Processes are not inclusive and there is evidence of gender inequality and continuation of stigmatization of the excluded
* Ethics: consent and knowledge production
* Need to improve translation processes from research
* Post-intervention sustainability
* Research results demonstrating impact of LFCs in fragile and humanitarian contexts
* How do FBOs/LFCs engage with power structures?
* How does faith share the humanitarian discourse?
* How do LFCs engage with political power (is this theologically legitimate)?
* What do we know about LFCs experience and perceptions around instrumentalization?
* Are FBOs really better equipped to work with LFCs and faith leaders?
* How do we get over the barrier of the “added value” of FBOs question?
* What is the added value of being a faith community?
* What is lacking in traditional evaluation tools to capture faith-based change interventions?
* What are the key elements of an LFC that relate to impact?
* Is there a cost/benefit to engaging LFCs?
* What tools are available from the SDGs for LFCs and evaluating church mobilization?
* What approaches can we take to design M&E systems that generate information that is useful to communities?
* We need to assist LFCs to articulate the knowledge they have and communicate this horizontally and vertically
* How do we understand the link between faith, values, and motivation (both within an organisation and externally)?
* Is the faith-based approach distinguished by enhanced goals (understanding of the integrated person)?
* How accurate is long-term recall?
* How much do we need attribution? Can we educate the donors on this?
* What are the characteristics of bad faith interventions?
* What information gives local communities confidence?

Other comments

* Localization of aid? But is already localised
* FBOs should challenge structural injustice
* Are we focused on seeing changes in community of just sustaining the church-community mobilization process?
* Making religion into a few indicators feels wrong. Complexity
* Whose evidence is it?
* Using existing sectoral evidence rather than having to measure it again ourselves
* More sharing of resources and materials and learning?
* We shouldn’t have to provide evidence for things already established
* Is secular system so broken that engaging with FBOs is destructive
* Need to work carefully with faith groups and not break them – balance with donor expectations

# Annex 4: Group Work towards an Action Plan

