

1.10. QUANTITATIVE HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS LED BY LOCAL FAITH ACTORS

WORLD RELIEF

BURUNDI, DR CONGO, HAITI, MALAWI, RWANDA,
AND SOUTH SUDAN



How this story represents an international-local faith partnership in MEAL



International element

International Evangelical Christian faith-based development and emergency relief organization



Local faith element

Partnerships with local churches



Project country

Burundi, DR Congo, Haiti, Malawi, Rwanda, and South Sudan



Website

<https://worldrelief.org/>



The organisation and project

Founded in 1944, World Relief is an internationally operating Christian development and emergency relief organization with headquarters in the US and operations in 100 countries worldwide. The organisation's work is focused on four main areas: disasters, extreme poverty, violence and oppression, and refugees, immigrants and displaced people. World Relief's mission is to empower local churches to serve the most vulnerable, with a view to transforming communities from the inside out. In 2020, it partnered with over 6000 churches and 95,000

local volunteers in the US and abroad. The approach of World Relief is underpinned by its three main values: being church-centred, holistic, and sustainable.

As part of its collaboration with local churches, World Relief implements outreach group initiatives, which are volunteer-based behaviour change projects in the areas of health and hygiene, economic development, and child development amongst others. The organization started outreach groups in Rwanda in 2014, before launching a multi-country pilot in Burundi, DR Congo, Haiti, Malawi,

and South Sudan in 2018 and expanding the project in Rwanda in the same year. The groups are managed by a local faith partner at the community level to promote church empowerment and increase local ownership. Local churches recruit and train volunteers from amongst their members, with World Relief and church network committees providing guidance throughout the process. The volunteers conduct bi-weekly home visits, which are aimed at raising awareness, increasing household knowledge, encouraging behaviour change, and linking the household with other means of support in the community.

MEAL approach and rationale

Development of a new MEAL plan

Lessons learned from the implementation of the first pilot in 2014 and a review of existing systems of data collection informed the development of a new MEAL plan, which was designed in 2018 in collaboration with World Relief's technical team and its impact systems team.

Data collection and analysis

World Relief relies heavily on its partnerships with local faith actors in most of its interventions. What is unique about World Relief's new MEAL plan is the involvement of the volunteers in both the implementation of the project and in the collection of MEAL data. The MEAL plan includes baseline, mid-term and endline evaluations, in addition to regular monitoring systems. World Relief relies on a simple random sample for its quantitative household survey, blended with Lot Quality Assessment Sampling to allow for comparison across supervision areas. Outreach

group volunteers collect the data, which is then compiled at the local church level and entered into the relevant forms by World Relief field staff. Volunteers collect general data for each household at the beginning of the intervention and then continue to collect monthly data in relation to the progress they have made in reaching out to households, noting indicators of change they have observed. Once data has been entered into the forms, World Relief's impact system team analyses the data in collaboration with the technical team, who also write the report.

Evaluation, accountability and learning

World Relief's impact system staff compile monthly monitoring reports, which are shared with the country team and disseminated to churches and communities on a quarterly basis. The monthly reports inform project implementation and may result in adjustments to project activities or efforts to gain a deeper understanding for why intended behaviour change is not occurring. Evaluation is conducted at the country level as well as a qualitative assessment at the mid-term also including global staff. Findings of the baseline and mid-term evaluations were shared with church leaders and other stakeholders at the community level, with a full report including an analysis of the endline survey planned for 2021. Data is shared with local faith groups (via church leaders) for two reasons. In the case of baseline assessments, the purpose is to create ownership in implementation. The aim is to help church leaders understand challenges in their communities from a data-informed additional perspective and to encourage them to commit to participating in community transformation, knowing that their support of the project is going



to make it more likely to bring about change. Mid-term findings, on the other hand, help assess progress, highlight the contribution of the church and its communities, and allow them to celebrate what they have been able to achieve together. In most countries, seeing the results of their work increased the commitment of local partners to mobilizing community members to embrace change.

Lessons learned

Volunteer involvement in both project implementation and MEAL

The particularity of the Outreach Groups Initiative MEAL approach is that the same volunteers who are involved in community outreach activities also participate in assessing the project's progress. One key advantage of this approach is community ownership for

change, as volunteers are involved in tracking the change that has been brought about by their efforts. Due to their involvement at different stages of the project, volunteers can monitor progress directly and discuss possible adjustments accordingly. At the same time, volunteers benefit from a transfer of monitoring skills at the community level, which is in line with World Relief's mission to empower local churches to work with their communities. Volunteer-based MEAL also offers clear advantages from a cost and data consistency perspective, as project implementation and MEAL data collection are both conducted by the same group of volunteers.

Adaptation of existing approaches for volunteer-based projects

Despite these clear advantages of volunteer-based MEAL approaches, it may be necessary to adapt conventional MEAL plans before they can be implemented with volunteers at the community level. In World Relief's Outreach Group Initiatives work, this had to be done in one of the project countries where literacy levels are quite low. Tools were adapted to use images rather than words. Evaluations may also need to be simplified and their findings disseminated to communities within a shorter time frame following data collection to allow for adjustments. Lastly, there is a risk that volunteers may be tempted to report progress that they are not actually making. Regular supervision and review can help minimize this risk.