

1.9. INTEGRATING THE LIGHT WHEEL APPROACH INTO CHURCH AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION MEAL

TEARFUND TANZANIA



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



International element

International Evangelical Christian faith-based emergency relief and development organisation



Local faith element

Partnerships with local church and community groups



Project country

Tanzania



Website

<https://www.tearfund.org/>



The organisation and activities

Driven by their Christian faith, Tearfund works in the areas of international development and emergency relief. The organisation aims to end poverty by offering people material and spiritual hope. Many of its local partners are churches whom the organisation supports in working with the communities they serve. Tearfund works in over 50 of the world's poorest countries. In 2019/20, the organisation reached over 1 million people through their disaster response, 2.4 million people through their community development work, and mobilised over 15,000 churches.

Tearfund's work relies heavily on Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM), which aims to empower people to transform their situations holistically using their God-given local resources. This process of mobilisation and transformation is led by church facilitators. In order for the process to be fully operational, however, the church must reach out to and work with their local community. CCM is not a project as such, but a process that leads to attitude, knowledge, and behaviour change based on a mind-set that continues far longer than any training or resource inputs.

MEAL approach and rationale

CCM and MEAL

The CCM approach does not lend itself to traditional MEAL processes. Unlike typical development projects with set inputs and activities, in CCM the church and community mobilise their own resources and decide and lead their own initiatives. This means change is more organic and can be challenging to measure. Yet, the Tearfund team recognised the value in creating a culture of learning and reflection within CCM and holding oneself accountable to ensuring that the process is delivered to a high quality. Any reflective MEAL processes within CCM must be integrated into the process as much as possible, in a way that feels contextually appropriate, easy for participants to engage with, and in a way that truly benefits and improves the outcomes of the process.

The Light Wheel Framework

Tearfund developed the Light Wheel framework in 2013 to better conceptualise, achieve, and measure holistic impact through their work. The tool was developed with the University of Bath, UK, in consultation with local Tearfund staff and partners globally.

The Light Wheel comprises nine different aspects of well-being,¹⁵ which together make up Tearfund's understanding of total well-being. The nine aspects act as indicators, that - when all are positively impacted - contribute towards whole-life transformation. The aspects cover more traditional metrics, such as physical health and material assets, as well as less tangible areas, such as emotional well-being, capabilities, faith, participation, and social connections. This

total well-being perspective is an approach they see as rooted in their Christian values and Biblical texts. The Light Wheel is unique in its consideration of the role of faith in the well-being of an individual or collective. The 'living faith' spoke considers the importance of faith within people's lives, as well as the role of the church in serving its neighbours and relationships between different faith groups.

The Light Wheel toolkit includes a range of participatory self-assessment tools that empower communities to reflect on their own needs, priorities, and vision for the future. The tools (which include focus group discussions, household surveys, and direct observation) are based on a maturity model matrix, which provides a description of what a typical community might look like as transformation takes place in each of the nine aspects of well-being. The FGDs are at the heart of the toolkit, as the community takes the lead in scoring their own strengths, weaknesses, and priorities against the maturity model. This scoring can be repeated at regular intervals to track change over time, and the community scores can be compared with scores given at the household level through the survey.

This process can be used for a range of purposes from holistic envisioning of the future and the mobilisation of local churches, to needs assessments and project planning, monitoring, evaluations, and impact assessments.

15 Including capabilities, emotional and mental health, living faith, material assets and resources, participation and influence, personal relationships, physical health, social connections, and stewardship of the environment.

Using the Light Wheel for CCM MEAL

Tearfund found that the Light Wheel's nine aspects of well-being can be used as a consistent facilitation lens within the CCM process, to give the church and community members practical examples and inspiration for how to bring about holistic transformation. This helps to expand holistic thinking and ensure outcomes relate to all nine spokes. Intentional reflection on the nine aspects of well-being and the maturity model can also help to instil a deeper culture of reflection, monitoring, and celebration throughout the CCM process. In this way, MEAL becomes an integrated and organic part of CCM. Rather

than being an additional exercise, the primary focus is for the nine aspects of well-being to be seen as part of the CCM process and be used in a way that primarily benefits the participants and the holistic outcomes of CCM. Tearfund is monitoring how this integration of the Light Wheel and CCM is generating information that is both locally owned by the CCM groups, but also available for Tearfund's local church partners and country offices to learn from.

Development of a new MEAL plan

In 2019, Tearfund Tanzania started exploring the potential for the Light Wheel to be used



specifically in their Church and Community Mobilisation work, with a pilot taking place in Mwanza. The new CCM MEAL plan in Tanzania was designed by a group of local partner staff (from a range of church denominations) who met with Tearfund staff members for a two-week participatory workshop. The workshop involved exploring and contextualising the aspects of well-being in the Tanzanian context, and designing a MEAL plan to integrate the Light Wheel framework and maturity model into the CCM process.

Data collection and analysis

The new MEAL plan is coming into effect with all new CCM groups in Tanzania, with each new group first conducting a baseline analysis using the Light Wheel maturity model focus group discussion process, accompanied by a simple household survey based around key Light Wheel indicators for each of the nine aspects. This means that the data is gathered at a communal and a more personal level. The sample for each of the community baselines uses purposive sampling, so a smaller sample size can be used but different categories of people are represented, including the voices of more marginalised people. Staff members from Tearfund's partners (at the church diocese level), who attended the initiation and design workshop are conducting the baselines. In order to share learning across partner organisations, the staff from each partner are paired with a colleague from a different partner organisation. Doing so allows different data collection teams to visit project sites from outside of their own organisation and deepen the connections formed between the workshop participants. The idea is to create a network of Light Wheel practitioners who are able to support each other

across partners, at both the country level and wider across the southern African region. A selection of the partner staff is conducting the data analysis. These staff were part of the data collection process and have been trained by the Tearfund Tanzania Monitoring and Evaluation Officer.

Accountability and learning

Tearfund Tanzania is still in the early stages of data collection and analysis. However, internal webinars have taken place to share the learning from the process with other countries where Tearfund operates. As a result, Tearfund offices in other countries in West Africa and Latin America are now following similar journeys to contextualise and embed Light Wheel in their work.

Lessons learned

Encouraging holistic thinking

Tools such as the Light Wheel can help encourage holistic thinking about project outcomes and impact in line with faith actors of Christian and other beliefs. Tearfund has found that a Light Wheel-informed MEAL approach helps participants to think more deeply and practically about the desired outcomes of CCM, to better attribute change to specific interventions, and identify priorities of future activities. It also helps CCM facilitators to be strategic in the integration of different technical trainings to help improve outcomes in certain aspects of well-being. The integration of the Light Wheel approach with CCM encourages local ownership of MEAL processes, while still producing data that is useful for Tearfund's country offices

and partners. It enables a localised and contextualised approach, whilst also providing a common framework to talk about the outcomes and drivers of holistic change at a regional and organisational level.

Adaptation to local needs

Light Wheel tools resonate best when contextualised and simplified for use with local partners and communities. The approach should ideally be used in a localised and longitudinal manner, tracking change over the mid-long term. It empowers CCM participants to own the reflection process and feed data back into their locally led initiatives. The information that Tearfund and partners receive is an added benefit, not the primary aim of the process, in order to make sure MEAL is less extractive or burdensome on local communities. Future work will aim to explore how to make the tool better adapted for use in oral cultures, as well exploring application to Tearfund's humanitarian work in fragile states.

Recommended resources

Tearfund: Light Wheel toolkit and introductory guide. <https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/tools-and-guides/the-light-wheel>

Tearfund: A short video introducing the Light Wheel. <https://vimeo.com/441130961/531da6a048>