

COMPENDIUM

OF GOOD PRACTICES ON CONDUCTING MEAL IN
PARTNERSHIPS WITH INTERNATIONAL ACTORS
AND LOCAL FAITH ACTORS

JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE ON FAITH AND LOCAL
COMMUNITIES (JLI) MEAL LEARNING HUB



JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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About the JLI MEAL Hub

The JLI Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Hub convened in 2019 to better understand how activities related to MEAL are conducted in international-local partnerships where the local partners are from a faith-inspired organization, from any faith. The JLI MEAL Hub focused on providing a space for learning exchange on current practices in MEAL with and for local faith actors. View the JLI MEAL website to learn more: <https://meal.jliflc.com/about-meal-hub/>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Faith actors in development and humanitarian aid

Faith actors have long been involved in initiatives aimed at improving the wellbeing and health of communities. While much of the international system continues to be characterised by secular approaches,¹ there is an increasing awareness of the contribution of faith communities to development and humanitarian aid, which goes hand in hand with a recognition that international secular approaches are not always suited for engagements with local faith actors.

1.2. The JLI MEAL Hub

While other areas of faith and development/humanitarian aid have received increased attention in recent years, we still know relatively little about Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL), and faith in the sector. A group of members of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI) recognised a need to build on earlier research efforts² to better understand how activities related to MEAL are conducted in international-local partnerships where the local partners are from a faith-inspired organization. Building on existing work on MEAL and faith, the JLI's aim was to explore the topic with faith actors focused on development and humanitarian aid from anywhere in the world and across faiths. This resulted in the establishment of the JLI MEAL Learning Hub in the autumn of 2019.

1.3. Tensions in international-local MEAL partnerships with a faith element

The inclusion of MEAL can, at times, lead to tensions in local-international partnerships. For example, there is often pressure by donors and international partners to add MEAL to partnerships with local faith actors, even though, conventional MEAL activities can sometimes feel like a burden to local faith actors who do not always see the value of collecting data in the ways and on the questions that institutional donors and partners expect.

1.4. Methodology

The MEAL Hub therefore decided to compile good practice examples of local-international partnerships on MEAL in which faith is an aspect. It is the intention that these good practice examples are of use to a broad humanitarian and development audience. The compendium is based on 31 interviews with representatives of secular and faith-based international organisations, local faith actors, and academics. In addition to a discussion of the challenges and opportunities of doing MEAL in international-local partnerships, it showcases the work of 10 organisations across the globe.

1 Olivia Wilkinson (2020): *Secular and Religious Dynamics in Humanitarian Response*. Abingdon; New York: Routledge.

2 Such as by the ACCORD Research Group and the Alliance for Peacebuilding.

1.5. Findings I: Opportunities and challenges of international MEAL practices in partnerships with local faith actors

The compendium first discusses the context in which MEAL in international-local faith partnerships takes place, what challenges organisations working in this area face, and what factors incentivise them to include MEAL in their international-local projects with a faith element.

We found that internal and external drivers to include MEAL in their activities motivate organisations working in international-local faith partnerships, with a mix of both drivers influencing most of them. Initially, the inclusion of MEAL is often required by an international donor or partner, but some organisations see significant value in the MEAL approaches and adopt them even when there are no funding-related requirements. Barriers to incorporating MEAL for local faith actors include a reliance on community funding³ that do not require MEAL, limited resources dedicated to MEAL, and faith/cultural factors such as a belief in divine guidance rather than secular notions of accountability, with some of these applying to both partnerships with and without a faith element.

1.6. Findings II: Diversity of MEAL practices in international-local faith partnerships

The 10 stories of change included in the second part of the compendium highlight the diversity of practice of a range of organisations involved in international-local partnerships with/as local faith actors. Although Western and Christian approaches dominate many contemporary

debates on MEAL and faith, the compendium extends these discussions by including cases of non-Western and non-Christian groups. The stories of change in the compendium illustrate the broad range of different approaches organisations adopt, including practices that go beyond Western MEAL. This part of the compendium raises important questions about participation, ownership, terminology, and the context in which MEAL and faith activities take place. While it discusses the various creative ways in which development and humanitarian organisations do MEAL in international-local faith partnerships, it also shows that not all faith actors see a need for Western MEAL approaches and underscores the specific contexts of securitisation, racism, and Islamophobia that impact minoritized faith actors in particular, such as Western-based Islamic and Buddhist international organisations.

1.7. Aims of the Compendium

This compendium therefore not only shares the diversity of practices in the area of MEAL and faith in international-local partnerships, but also aims to contribute to a normalisation of decolonised approaches in the sector, with a view to unsettling existing power dynamics and helping redefine what is important and who determines it as such within the context of MEAL.

3 Whereby funding is obtained from members of the community rather than other institutions such as international organisations, government agencies, and other organisations.

PART ONE

MEAL AND FAITH IN INTERNATIONAL- LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale for the MEAL and Faith Compendium

Faith actors have long been involved in initiatives aimed at improving the wellbeing and health of communities. While much of the international system continues to be characterised by secular approaches, there is an increasing awareness of the contribution of faith communities to development and humanitarian aid, which goes hand in hand with a recognition that international secular approaches are not always suited for engagements with local faith actors.

While some areas related to faith and development/humanitarian aid are relatively well-researched, we have limited knowledge about Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL), and faith. As a response to this gap in our knowledge on faith-based approaches in the development/humanitarian sector, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI) members founded the JLI MEAL Hub in autumn 2019. Convened by the JLI, the Hub focuses on MEAL in local-international partnerships with a faith element. It includes members from a wide range of secular and faith-based organizations interested in working on topics relevant to MEAL with/as faith actors.

Aware of common challenges related to the inclusion of MEAL in international-local faith partnerships, the MEAL Hub members recognised the need to better understand how activities related to MEAL are conducted in international-local partnerships. MEAL Hub

members further saw the need to generate this knowledge with local partners from a faith-inspired organization from any faith and from anywhere in the world. For example, there is often pressure by donors and international partners to add MEAL to partnerships with local faith communities. However, at times, conventional MEAL activities can feel like a burden to local faith actors who do not always see the value of collecting data in the ways institutional donors and partners expect. The MEAL Hub therefore decided to compile good practice examples to be of use to a broad humanitarian and development audience. The JLI and MEAL Hub members will use the compendium to showcase good practices in faith and MEAL in global and national meetings around the world.

1.2. Target audience

The compendium's target audience includes international (faith-based and secular) organisations, governments, donors, as well as local and national faith actors with an interest in local-international partnerships with a faith and MEAL element. This relatively broad target audience explains the diversity of practices included in this compendium. We recognise that not every story of change will include something new (or even useful) to all actors in the field, but we hope by adopting such a broad approach, we are able to offer new ideas to those who are new to debates about MEAL and faith as well as to colleagues with long-standing experience in the area.

1.3. Definitions

For the purpose of this compendium, we define local faith actors as national and sub-national faith-based (or faith-inspired) NGOs, committees, councils, faith communities, religious leaders, and other such groupings that have, or are interested in having, partnerships with international (secular or faith-based) humanitarian and development actors to implement projects that require a MEAL component. These partnerships include local activities funded by international donors and can have an explicit or implicit faith element, as will be discussed in more detail in section three. Good practices are defined both externally by reports from organizations and donors and internally by discussions among staff about what went well.

1.4. Reflection on the research process

Western-centric and secular approaches tend to dominate international debates about development and humanitarian aid. When faith features in these debates, there is often a focus on Western and/or Christian experiences. This includes a majority of the terms many of us use. Development, humanitarian aid, MEAL, and faith actors are Western terms and concepts that limit how we approach and think about these issues. At times, the terms international actors employ directly contradict how local actors would describe themselves or their activities, as discussed in more detail in section three. When this became apparent during the research process, the JLI research team decided to adapt its original approach and include a focus on practices that go beyond what would

be considered MEAL in Western (and Western-centric) circles. We see this decision as a small attempt to normalise decolonised approaches in the sector to unsettle existing power dynamics and help redefine what is important and who determines it as such. This is but a small step, and we are aware there are still severe limitations to the compendium from a decolonial perspective. We appreciate that much more work is required to develop truly decolonised approaches to MEAL and faith in the sector, but we hope to have made a small contribution to current debates and practices on the topic.

1.5. Outline of the Compendium

The Compendium consists of three parts.

Part I discusses the context of doing research and practical work in the area of MEAL and faith in international-local partnerships. It includes a section on methodology which sheds light on the case selection, data collection, peer review process, and our attempts to move the debate beyond a focus on what is perceived to be conventional Western MEAL. The methodology section is followed by a discussion that contextualises doing MEAL in partnerships involving international actors and local faith communities. In this section, we consider key concepts and how they relate to one another, link them to the experiences of research participants, and explore incentives for and barriers to doing MEAL in international-local faith partnerships.

Part II comprises a selection of 10 stories of change that illustrate the diversity of practices in the area of MEAL in initiatives involving

international and local faith actors. Each story of change provides some detail about the background of the organisation and its activities and then outlines the development of its MEAL approach, as well as details of the data collection, data analysis, evaluation, accountability, and learning. At the end of each story of change, there is a brief summary of lessons learned. Part II concludes the compendium with a summary and discussion of findings. Instead of recommendations for

policy and practice, we have included a list of questions that policymakers and practitioners with an interest in MEAL and faith in local-international partnerships may want to consider when designing, implementing, or assessing approaches in this area.

Lastly, part III, the annex, includes a list of recommended resources, a glossary, a list of research participants, and acknowledgements.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Data collection

The data for this compendium was generated through case study submissions, online/phone interviews, and email consultations. A call for case study submissions was issued in early 2020. The call was disseminated through the JLI MEAL Learning Hub, its members' networks, and the JLI's various channels of communication. The first six submissions were all by Christian faith-based organisations, so the JLI team used a snowball sampling approach to reach out to other organisations in the sector, which led to two more submissions through the online form. In total, over 85 individuals and organisations were contacted. Thirty-one individuals or groups of individuals were interviewed (online or by phone) or consulted via email by the researcher,

with some research participants interviewed twice. The interviews yielded another five stories of change and provided additional information for two online submissions.

2.2. Case selection

The selection of cases for the compendium was broadly informed by the MEAL DPro Guide⁴ description of MEAL good practices:

- **Participation:** Contributions from a diverse range of stakeholders in initiating, defining

⁴ Mike Culligan and Leslie Sherriff (2019): A Guide to the MEAL DPro. <https://www.humentum.org/training/meal-dpro-guide>

parameters, and conducting MEAL, so that local actors feel ownership over MEAL processes

- **Maintaining ethical standards:**

Representation, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, participant safety, only collecting MEAL data relevant to and needed for the project, responsible data usage and data protection

- **Feedback and responsiveness:** Channels for feedback established, ways to close feedback loop, and demonstrate how feedback is informing the project

- **Critical thinking:** Thinking that is open to different opinions and informed by evidence, a commitment to identifying and testing assumptions and biases

- **Adaptation and adaptive management:** Analysing MEAL data promptly and frequently, actively seeking to understand project data, and using evidence to inform decisions and adjustments to project design, planning, and implementation

- **Alignment with standards:** Demonstrate the project is aligned with minimum standards and donor requirements

- **Transparency:** Sharing MEAL information and results with communities, partners, donors, and other stakeholders

- **Building a learning environment:** Encouraging and rewarding learning, encourage asking questions and curiosity, and embedding learning process such as learning questions in meetings

- **Knowledge exchange:** Defining future good practices from learning and sharing that information widely with other organizations to inform sector-wide good practices

In addition to these indicators of good practice, we aimed to cover as broad a range as possible of different faith-based organisations, geographical regions, and MEAL approaches. We made an effort to be as inclusive as possible in our approach, but gaps remain in all of these areas in the compendium. We discuss some of the reasons for this in more detail in the following section and hope that, despite its limitations, this compendium provides a basis for future work on MEAL and faith.

The compendium includes stories of change at different stages of development as well as both descriptions of full MEAL plans and of precise MEAL tools. We hope that this rich mix of approaches provides learning points for a range of organisations that may be at different stages of their MEAL learning journey. The majority of approaches described in the stories of change are qualitative rather than quantitative, which is likely linked to the fact that qualitative approaches are perceived by many to work particularly well with local faith actors (*research participant 11*).

2.3. Beyond Western MEAL

Debates about development and aid in international fora often tend to be dominated by Western (usually secular or Christian) actors.⁵ Discussions about MEAL and faith are no exception in this regard.⁶ This imbalance also became apparent in the early stages of

this project when the majority of case study submissions were from US-based, Christian faith-based organisations. When we realised that some groups, such as the two Buddhist organisations included in the stories of change section of this compendium, practice forms of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning which they would not describe as MEAL, we knew we had to change our approach. We hope that by including cases that go beyond what are considered conventional MEAL practices in the West, we can encourage actors in the sector to see their MEAL work in a different light, rethink their current approaches, and perhaps even challenge MEAL as a formal concept. Not all development and aid actors subscribe to Western MEAL terminology and practices. This raises a question for the sector about whether they must in order to effectively monitor and evaluate their activities and promote accountability and learning. There has been an increased focus on decolonisation in the development and humanitarian sector recently. Part of this focus includes acknowledging the existence and usefulness of different MEAL approaches including those that go beyond what would be considered MEAL in Western or Western-dominated circles. This represents a positive initial step on a path towards decolonised approaches in the area of MEAL and faith.

2.4. Peer review process

The compendium went through a two-step peer review process. The peer review group included three FBO representatives, two academics, two local faith actors, one independent consultant, and a member of JLI, based in Africa, Europe,

and North America. Four of these were members of the JLI MEAL Learning Hub. Peer reviewers first discussed the selection of stories of change in a joint meeting and then provided written comments on the full compendium draft.

5 Raewyn Connell (2014): Using southern theory: Decolonizing social thought in theory, research and application. *Planning Theory*, 13 (2); Uma Kothari (2005): A Radical History of Development Studies: Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies. In: Uma Kothari (ed.), *A Radical History of Development Studies: Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies: Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies*. London: Zed Books; Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012): Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 111 (1): 95–109.

6 While the terms 'Western' and 'Christian' are not synonymous, many Western spaces and actors are dominated by values, norms, and practices that have their origins in Christianity. Often these legacies are not formally recognised and what is de facto based on a specific Christian worldview is instead considered 'neutral.' At the same time, the many ways in which other faith traditions have shaped the West, and Christian faith traditions outside of the West, often go unacknowledged.

3. MEAL, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND LOCAL FAITH ACTORS

Before we present the 10 stories of change that illustrate the diversity of good practices in international-local faith and MEAL, this section considers the context of doing MEAL in international-local faith partnerships, with examples from research participants.⁷ It starts by discussing some of the key terms and concepts underlying such partnerships, links them to the experiences of research participants, and then looks at incentives and barriers to doing MEAL in international-local activities with a faith element.

3.1. International-local partnerships

The compendium focuses on MEAL in projects or partnerships involving international (secular or faith-based) organisations and/or donors and local faith actors. We are particularly interested in activities involving both local and international partners, as it is often in these relationships that tensions arise due to the different parameters within which these two types of actors operate.

For the purpose of the research carried out for this compendium, we define local faith actors as national and sub-national faith-based or faith-inspired NGOs, committees, councils, faith communities, and faith leaders. We consider country offices that are part of regional or international organisations or federations as local faith actors, if they have their own national

governance structure and are run by local staff. Faith actors include both formal and informal initiatives. Some faith actors are simply a type of NGO that bases their action on their faith but are otherwise organised in the same ways as secular actors.

3.2. Work with/as faith actors

What is unique about working with faith actors? While there is a wide range of different faith actors, many of them share some common denominators. Notably, these include accountability to a higher power or faith values, reference to distinctive faith values, a spiritual understanding of success and failure, a belief in the complementary nature of human and supernatural agency, and a focus on spiritual forms of transformation.⁸

However, not all operations of faith-based organisations or local faith actors are specifically faith-oriented. The involvement of faith actors

⁷ For a list of research participants please see the appendix.

⁸ Peter Woodrow, Nick Oatley and Michelle Garred (2017): Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Alliance for Peacebuilding, p. 18-20. <https://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Faith-Matters-A-guide.pdf>.

does not necessarily mean that project activities have an explicit faith element or that there is a strong (if any) focus on spiritual growth. Like many other terms used in the sector, *faith actor* is an inherently Western concept, which “may not be used by members of a given organization or network, since faith principles are often conceptualised as a foundational part of ‘a community’s heritage, culture and broader way of life,’ rather than as a ‘religious’ framework per se.”⁹ In some cases, this disconnect between Western concepts and how local actors see themselves extends to the terms used to describe a specific faith community. For example, one research participant noted that many organisations labelled by others as *Hindu* faith-based organisations do not embrace this label because it does not reflect their organisation’s self-image (*research participant 24*). These conflicting approaches to who is perceived to be a faith actor and what type of faith actor can render partnerships between local initiatives and international actors challenging, as there is a lack of agreement on even basic terminology and concepts.

While working with faith actors in international-local partnerships is seen as desirable by many, there are higher barriers to working with local faith actors for some development/humanitarian actors than for others. For example, several research participants working for Western Islamic faith-based organisations stated that their organisations worked only with a limited number of local faith partners (*research participants 3, 7, 8, 14*), with one respondent explaining this was due to their organisation’s detailed vetting procedures that, at times, hinder such partnerships. Faced with higher scrutiny by governing bodies due to their Islamic faith-based

identity in a climate of securitisation, racism, and Islamophobia, these organisations had to apply particularly strict screening processes, which not all local faith actors passed (*research participant 3*).

3.3. MEAL in international-local faith partnerships

It emerged repeatedly during the course of this research that doing MEAL in international-local faith partnerships is different from similar work without the international-local or the faith element. The diversity of approaches in this area makes it difficult to generalise. Yet, many partnerships of this type display some specific characteristics. An awareness of these can help during the MEAL design and implementation process. One common factor is the need to balance the priorities of international vs. local or secular vs. faith-based actors as well as their potentially conflicting ways of measuring success. In this context, one research participant, whose faith-based organisation uses outcome harvesting in their MEAL work, noted that although the approach was not developed with faith-based communities in mind specifically, based on the organisation’s experience, faith-based partners found the method particularly relatable (*research participant 12*). She felt that this was due to the language used and the focus on relationships, learning, and listening, which many faith actors feel faith communities prioritise more than some secular organisations,

9 Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2015): “Engendering Understandings of Faith-Based Organisations: Intersections between Religion and Gender in Development and Humanitarian Interventions,” in A. Coles, L. Gray, and J. Momsen (eds.): *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Development*, London: Routledge, p. 561.

who can be more results-driven. She also contended that, not unlike other qualitative approaches, outcome harvesting fits well with many faith-based organisations, as it allows for reflection on one's practices, concepts, and values, and the generated data helps faith-based organisations to substantiate their contribution to change. She believed this was particularly important for faith actors whose work is often perceived as intangible by secular actors (a perspective that was supported by *research participant 21*). For example, in interfaith work sometimes just being present in a community makes a change, which can be challenging to document through conventional approaches. This experience mirrors the findings of Woodrow, Oatley and Garred who stated that if faith actors' "unique perspectives are understood and respected, then ideas about effectiveness can be quite compatible with religious values."¹⁰ In fact, the holistic, transformational approach of some faith actors to measuring success may also inspire secular organisations to take more integral approaches to their MEAL work.

3.4. Incentives to do MEAL in international-local faith partnerships

Why do organisations decide to include MEAL in their international-local faith partnerships? Motivations are driven by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, with a mix of both factors motivating most organisations. The process often starts with an international partner or donor having specific MEAL requirements, which may be set as a prerequisite to receive funds or enter a partnership (*research participants 5, 8, 12*). While donor/partner-required MEAL in international-local faith partnerships is often perceived as a

burden by local organisations that may have limited capacity, one research participant contended that setting MEAL standards was particularly important in such partnerships due to safeguarding and compliance risks. In her experience, the root problem was not necessarily MEAL requirements but the fact that these were set without providing adequate training and support (*research participant 19*).

Several of the Western-based Islamic and Buddhist organisations we spoke with mentioned increased securitisation as a motivating factor. Facing higher levels of scrutiny than many Christian and secular organisations, they feel pressure to produce reliable data on their operations (*research participants 3, 7, 8, 25*). However, while this external pressure tends to encourage organisations to adopt detailed vetting, audit, and accounting systems, a lack of capacity often means that systematic MEAL is not practiced.¹¹

External motivations can also turn into internal ones, as noted by one research participant whose organisation was introduced to a new MEAL approach through a donor. This organisation saw significant value in this

10 Peter Woodrow, Nick Oatley and Michelle Garred (2017): Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Alliance for Peacebuilding, p. 18. <https://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Faith-Matters-A-guide.pdf>.

11 At the same time, there may also be a higher risk for non-Christian faith-based organisations in the West that go off-script by trying out particularly creative MEAL approaches. If these methods are not considered to be sufficient, the repercussions for Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu organisations are likely to be significantly severe in the current climate of racism and Islamophobia than for secular or Christian groups.

new method which they rolled out to all their programming (*research participant 12*). Internal motivations for both faith and secular actors include the ability to measure change, compare data, adjust programming, and disseminate findings, as and when considered useful by the organisation itself. An internal motivation specific to faith actors may be the ability to celebrate change with local communities, a practice that some faith actors have adopted as they see it in line with their approach to partnerships.

3.5. Barriers to doing MEAL with/as local faith actors

While there are strong incentives - intrinsic and extrinsic - to integrate MEAL into local-international faith partnerships, some organisations that might in principle see the value in implementing MEAL in their work see themselves faced with significant barriers hindering such work. Most of these apply to the implementation of MEAL in general and not just in work with/as local faith actors.

Some of the local faith actors and international faith-based organisations we interviewed had a long tradition of implementing MEAL (*research participants 23, 30*), with Christian organisations in particular having strong formal procedures in place. However, none of the Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, or Sikh organisations we encountered as part of this research had systematic comprehensive (Western style) MEAL systems in place (*research participants 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 16, 17, 18, 20, 24, 25, 28*). One could conclude that their faith identity hindered the implementation of MEAL. However, secular (and some Christian)

organisations we engaged with reported similar challenges (*research participants 5, 6, 15, 31*), so it is unlikely that the organizations' faith identity was the only or dominant issue.

Some organisations had systematic MEAL procedures in place but did not involve local faith partners in these (*research participants 23, 26*), which raises questions of participation, ownership, and perhaps also capacity.

Key barriers to doing MEAL with/as faith actors included:

Community funding

Organisations that relied on funding from members of their community were much less likely to employ formal MEAL processes (*research participants 8, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20, 24, 25, 26, 28*). While this reliance on community funding is not unique to faith actors, many faith-based organisations have strong community links which allow them to maintain a degree of independence from institutional donors.¹² This included most of the Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu organisations (but also some of the Christian and Jewish organisations) we engaged with as part of this research. Research participants described the relationship between their organisations and the community as one based on trust rather than formal MEAL data (*research participants 13, 20, 26*), with community donors (who might not be aware of more formal MEAL approaches) considering basic information about project activities

12 Stephen Hopgood and Leslie Vinjamuri (2012): Faith in Markets. In: Michael Barnett and Janice Stein (eds.): Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

sufficient (*research participants 7, 24, 26*). Some organisations that receive both community and institutional funding have MEAL in place for their institutionally funded projects but not their community-supported projects (*research participants 8, 12*). Considering that the implementation of systematic MEAL is often initiated by institutional donors in line with their requirements, it is not unlikely that a professionalisation of community donor bases will similarly lead to the wider inclusion of MEAL in community-supported projects (*research participant 7*).

Limited resources

Another key barrier that prevents MEAL being implemented in international-local faith partnerships, as well as in the sector more broadly, is a lack of resources (*research participants 7, 8, 13, 24, 25, 26*). Faced with limited capacities, organisations have a choice between funding more programmatic work or MEAL activities, with many opting for more programming rather than the monitoring and evaluation of existing operations. Humanitarian organisations responding to emergencies, who are, in the words of one participant - “constantly putting out fires around the world” - tend to struggle particularly with making the time to pause and reflect on their approaches (*research participant 13, see also research participant 20*). Other than that, it is mostly small organisations with limited capacity who see the MEAL requirements of international partners as a burden (*research participants 6, 24, 26*). Occupied with being compliant, they do not have the time or resources to apply more sophisticated (let alone creative, out-of-the-box) approaches. This disconnect is one of the central issues of the international-local divide and has created

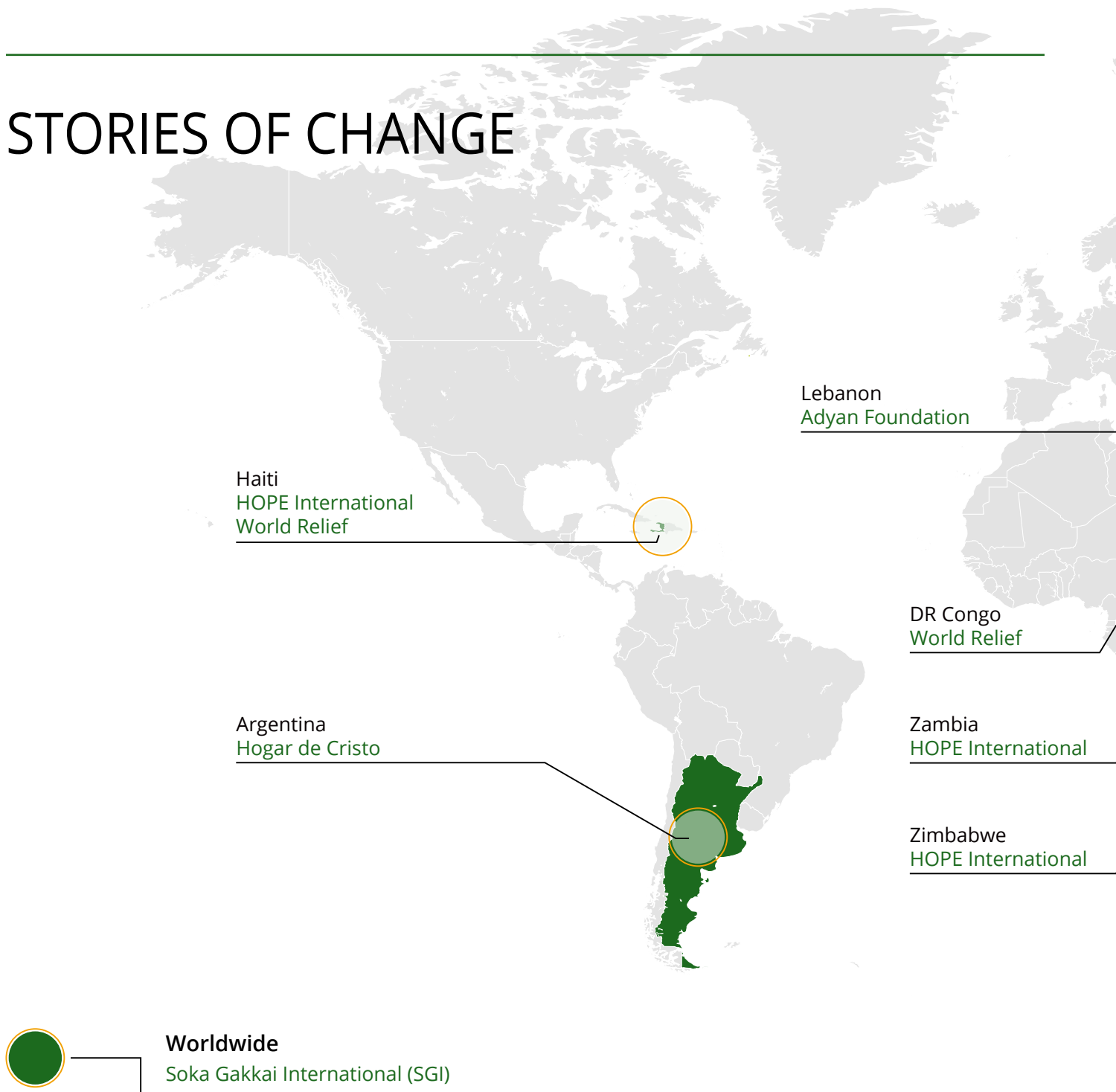
an endless cycle: MEAL requires funding, which organisations are unlikely to secure without MEAL to prove success.

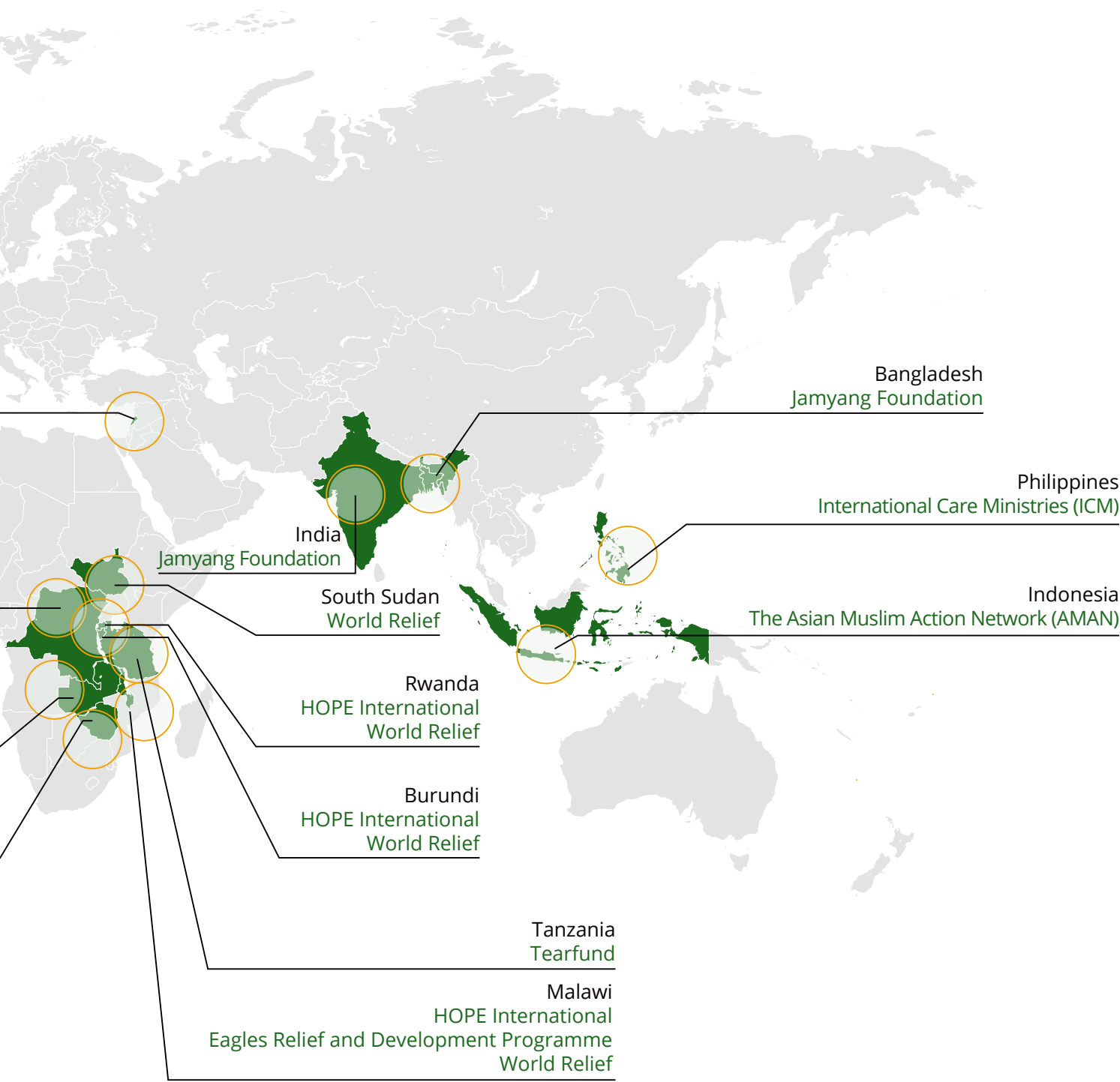
Faith reasons

Faith-related factors were a third barrier to MEAL that emerged from the interviews we conducted as part of this research. Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim research participants alike stressed the central role of compassion, giving, and good intentions (rather than end results) in their faith (*research participants 13, 18, 20, 24, 25, 30*). For example, Muslims are required to give zakah and udhiya. Yet, from a faith perspective, whether or not what is given is distributed correctly is the responsibility of the distributor, not the donor. There is, therefore, less incentive to generate MEAL data which is then reported back to a donor. Other faith-related barriers to MEAL include a focus on internal, spiritual forms of accountability to oneself rather than accountability to external entities, as described with regards to the Buddhist faith by one research participant (*research participant 18*). A Hindu research participant explained that many development organisations in India are run by charismatic leaders, who are considered to have divine inspiration, rendering Western-style MEAL obsolete in the eyes of their followers who trust their leader’s wisdom and integrity (*research participant 24*).

PART TWO

STORIES OF CHANGE





1.1. MEAL AND FAITH IN HIGHLY SECTARIANIZED CONTEXTS

ADYAN FOUNDATION LEBANON



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



International element
International secular donor



Local faith element
Partnerships with local Muslim, Christian, and Druze faith leaders



Project country
Lebanon



Website
<https://adyanfoundation.org/>



The organisation and project

Adyan is a foundation for diversity, solidarity, and human dignity. Registered as an NGO in Lebanon, Adyan works locally, regionally, and internationally for pluralism, inclusive citizenship, community resilience, and spiritual solidarity through home-grown solutions in education, media, policy, and intercultural and interreligious relations. Adyan envisions a world where diversity between individuals and communities is lived as a source of enrichment, generating mutual understanding, creative development, and sustainable peace. The organisation

conducts research and training and is invested in policy work and community engagement. A group of Lebanese individuals from different religious denominations established Adyan in August 2006 against the backdrop of the Israeli war on Lebanon and the historically rooted, internal sectarian conflicts in the country.

Adyan launched the Forum for Religious Social Responsibility (FRSR) in March 2019. The Forum, which is funded by the British Embassy in Lebanon, creates a platform for over 100 influential religious leaders and activists from Sunni, Shia, Christian, and Druze backgrounds.

These actors have been trained in order to increase their skills in promoting messages of diversity and coexistence and against violent extremism. It focuses on capacity-building by empowering its members to assume their role as change-makers in their local communities through the support of community-based initiatives, especially in under-served areas such as Beirut's southern suburbs, Tripoli, the South, and the Beqaa Valley. Members of the Forum also coordinated and ran community service projects to support those in need.

A key element of the project's outreach tools are short film campaigns, which promote positive existential narratives and encourage inter-religious understanding and critical thinking. Other tools and platforms used as part of the project include an online media platform (Taadudiya), articles, trainings, and lectures. To empower religious and influential leaders in the Forum further, and give them greater reach, the members are featured on Taadudiya through films and opinion articles.

MEAL approach and rationale

Development of a MEAL plan

MEAL activities were embedded into the project's design from the very beginning. The MEAL plan incorporates multiple qualitative and quantitative monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools, including quarterly surveys, focus groups, stories of change, and an impact study of the Taadudiya online platform. This variety of MEAL tools allowed the organisation to measure the impact of the project deeply and understand its level of contribution to shifting attitudes towards religious social responsibility and social

cohesion. The MEAL plan was designed by the FRSR Project Manager and supported by the Adyan Development and International Relations (DIR) Department. Following this, the plan was shared with the donor, which provided valuable feedback and suggestions, leading to a finalized plan.

Data collection

Adyan employs different quantitative and qualitative tools to collect data. Data triangulation allows the Adyan team to form an inclusive and reliable understanding of the communities it works with. Quarterly e-surveys measure change in participants' knowledge as a result of an activity, and change in attitude towards current political, religious, and social issues in the Lebanese context. Another tool is focus group discussions, which were recently completed for the current phase of the project. These examined the impact of the Forum and its activities on communities and individuals. The process began with a survey in order to design two sets of focus groups each in six areas of Lebanon: an engaged focus group (with members reached by the Forum's activities) and a control group. Discussions in the focus groups follow the screening of films from Adyan's media campaign, 'We Can Talk About Religion,' and of a video clip depicting a sectarian incident that happened in Lebanon and went viral. Adyan uses this approach to measure the participants' understanding of hate speech and their reaction to negative messages online. The focus groups also aimed to capture changes in attitudes and behaviours.

The design and implementation of the focus groups was informed by Adyan's Guide to Focus Groups, which was further developed using

input from the FRSR project. The document will continue to be updated and is a valuable reference for Adyan's team, partners, and other local NGOs to benefit from.

Adyan also measures change in attitudes and behaviour through community-focused stories of change collected from Forum members during the implementation of community service initiatives, feedback homilies and sermons, and through reactions of community members to social media posts. This element of the data collection process was key in building the capacity of Forum members who showed particular promise (in addition to the

Adyan team itself). The participatory process of collecting stories of change made social change tangible for Forum members (and the Adyan team). This kind of emotional reward is direly needed when working with local faith actors in a highly sectarian country like Lebanon to further inspire social cohesion and religious social responsibility. Lastly, Adyan will measure the offline impact of their online work through an impact study of Taadudiya using both qualitative and quantitative indicators. The data and information will be provided by an external analysis company, and will be analysed by the Adyan team, including the Media Department.



Data analysis

To ensure objectivity and depth, all gathered MEAL data is analysed by more than one team member. Data analysis is based on an interdisciplinary approach that considers all collected data, in addition to findings from other relevant projects run by Adyan. Data is also disaggregated by gender, age, and geographical region in Lebanon wherever possible to ascertain that the project a thorough and inclusive impact of the project. Focus group data is analysed by both the Project Manager and DIR Department.

Accountability and learning

The FRSR Project Manager shares MEAL data with Adyan's CEO, the Development and International Relations (DIR) Department, and the donor to measure the current impact of the project and inform future steps. Because of the fundamental role played by Forum members, findings are also shared with them occasionally to help inform their future activities. The results are not communicated with the project's target communities beyond the Forum members. In 2020, MEAL activities were mainly designed to enhance the project design for the next year in innovative and adaptive ways that respond to the most urgent and direct needs on the ground. This will continue in 2021.

For example, insights from the first focus group informed new strategies and activities in the areas of policy, education, and media (such as collaborations with famous personalities and the use of TV content), which can help enhance the reach of the project. The expansion of Taadudiya's social media campaigns to other countries in the MENA region has also been suggested.

As part of their expanded MEAL plan, Adyan is developing a monitoring and evaluation network of peacebuilding and social cohesion NGOs to share knowledge and identify opportunities for project synergies for the benefit of communities across Lebanon and beyond. Thus, by the end of this phase of the FRSR project in March 2021, lessons will be shared with wider networks of organisations.

Lessons learned**Working on sensitive issues**

The FRSR project aims to empower religious leaders from different religious, cultural, and demographic backgrounds rather than only engaging members of a similar background. Forum members are religious leaders, educators, and influencers from the different sects in Lebanon, including Sunni and Shia Muslims, Christians, and Druze. The wide diversity of Forum members has helped the project reach an increased number of communities from all over Lebanon. Community members who take part in activities, trainings, and lectures organized by Forum members are diverse as well, which makes it challenging to build on their feedback to customize the project's MEAL strategy. For example, when preparing focus groups, the group's perception of the moderator and, particularly whether or not he/she will be perceived as unbiased, and the sensitivities of topics covered needs to be taken into account. This includes taking care to design questions that invite everyone to participate without making anyone feel like their identity is under

attack. Since the organisation wanted people to feel included, the team decided to avoid any particularly sensitive political topics that might deviate focus groups from their main purpose and trigger participants to defend their sects or political affiliations.

Recommended resources

Victoria Canavor (2006): From Proposal to Presentation: The Focus Group Process at NDI. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. <https://jliflc.com/resources/focus-group-process-ndi/>

1.2. AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF WOMEN IN INTERFAITH SETTINGS

THE ASIAN MUSLIM ACTION NETWORK (AMAN) INDONESIA



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



International element

Internationally operating German Protestant faith-based donor organisation



Local faith element

Coordination by national Islamic faith inspired organisation, partnerships with Muslim and Christian local faith actors



Project country

Indonesia



Website

<https://amanindonesia.org/>



The organisation and project

The Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) is an Indonesian interfaith organization that has been working in the areas of peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian aid for 20 years. AMAN believes in the values of truth, justice, compassion, freedom, and equality as embodied in Islam. Its vision is to build understanding and solidarity among Muslims and other faith communities in Asia, with a view to working towards empowerment, women's rights, human rights, gender equality, justice, and peace. The organisation aims to achieve this through an

Islamic approach to contemporary societal challenges, inspired by the values and principles of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Islamic tradition.

From October 2017 to September 2020, AMAN implemented a project aimed at promoting gender justice from within an Islamic framework. The project 'Amplifying the voices of interfaith women groups - asserting the values of gender justice, peace and tolerance in nation-building' was run in six provinces of Indonesia (Jakarta, West Java, East Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta and Central Sulawesi). The German Protestant faith-based organisation, Bread for the World,

who AMAN has been working with since 2009 funded the project. The project took a bottom-up, grassroots approach to promoting the role of women, youth, and minority groups in peacebuilding by encouraging change on the individual, relational, structural, and cultural level respectively. It supported women in exercising leadership roles in their communities, helping prevent violence against women, and mobilising the community to promote gender justice, peace, and tolerance. AMAN's work with female ulemas, as part of the project, is based on a strategic decision of affirmative action to include women. The female ulemas act as multipliers, utilising their networks and their role as teachers and educators, and providing scholarly input on Islamic scriptures.

MEAL approach and rationale

AMAN has a designated Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DME) Manager who oversees the organisation's MEAL work, which is informed by three principles.

1. First, a Result Mapping approach permits the measurement of the four levels of change the project aims to bring about (individual, relational, cultural, structural) and maps inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the programme intervention on these four levels.

2. Second, AMAN's MEAL measures are based on a participatory approach. The process of planning, assessment, information-sharing, observation, and analysis involves the programme management team, beneficiaries, religious leaders, local government, local partners, and local faith actors, such as local

churches or Muslim faith-based organisations. The process is characterised by collaboration, problem-solving orientation, creative forms of knowledge generation, and the use of multiple methods. AMAN adopts this participatory approach in order to determine the root causes of core issues, the needs and aims of various stakeholders, and how buy-in can be ensured. Engagement with government and civil society groups is crucial from a sustainability perspective. AMAN will not be able to run the project infinitely, so long-term success is more likely to be achieved with support from existing agencies and networks. Since AMAN is not a religious organisation itself, the inclusion of religious scholars helps to frame issues such as Islam, gender justice, democracy, and peacebuilding.

3. Third, the organisation's MEAL approach is informed by Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is based on the assumption that questions and dialogue about power, success, values, hopes, and dreams are all transformative. AI appreciates every effort made by the various parties and recognises change made at the slightest level and scope. It recognises that every person can be a peace agent, mediator, negotiator, leader, and stresses that every small piece of a chain is important. AMAN's role in this process is not to solve problems, but to facilitate the process and connect project participants with others on a local, national, regional, and international level. The organisation relies heavily on affirmative action and appreciative approaches to help empower the women it works with, who are marginalised by the patriarchal society they live in.

Participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation, and dissemination

The Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation process at AMAN is kicked off by a consultation with the project target groups in the form of a strategic planning forum. In the case of this project, the forum was attended by women-led interfaith grassroots organisations, female clerics, youth groups, civil society organisations networks, representatives of ministries and government institutions, and other subject matter experts. The aim of this forum was to determine the framework of the project, agree on indicators for success based on existing baseline data,

and help inform the development of the MEAL plan. It helps to communicate project aims and activities to relevant stakeholders and ensures buy-in.

Once the project had started, AMAN conducted semester monitoring with 10 staff members and 20 stakeholders. AMAN consulted with these participants in focus group discussions and interviews every six months. Stakeholders included male and female community leaders, male and female religious leaders, local and national government officials and teachers, amongst others. Data collection took place in



selected communities, which were selected based on programme context, strategy, and their achievement of programme aims. At times, it was necessary to take gender dynamics into account during the data collection process. Examples include when some female respondents were hesitant to share intimate details about their lives with the male DME Manager or when female focus group members felt more comfortable sharing their views directly with the MEAL team. Adjustments to the MEAL process to take gender dynamics into account were in line with the project's overall objective to amplify the voices of local women. The generated data was analysed and compiled into 6-monthly project progress reports, which were then circulated to donors and project beneficiaries.

Moreover, AMAN conducted a mid-process and final evaluations, focusing on the five DAC-OECD criteria relevance, efficiency, effectivity, impact, and sustainability. The mid-term evaluation included presentations by AMAN staff and target group beneficiaries on achievements, lessons learned, effectiveness, and project impact. The final evaluation, which was conducted by an external evaluator, also included an institutional analysis of AMAN's strengths and weaknesses.

Another key milestone for the AMAN MEAL process is the organisation's Annual Meeting, which is used to report on progress, challenges, and good practices. It allows stakeholders and experts to provide input, gives policymakers and practitioners an opportunity to receive practice-based recommendations, and helps AMAN consolidate their MEAL data. At the Annual Meeting, project participants give presentations, which are complemented with input by

academics and religious scholars, who link the participants' experiences to wider debates. The discussions at the Annual Meeting then feed into AMAN's Annual Report. Consequently, this report does not simply provide the organisation's perspective, but also includes input from key partners. In addition to these annual meetings, the organisation holds a conference every three to four years, which is aimed at sharing learning and strengthening AMAN's international networks.

Lessons learned

Comprehensive and participatory approaches

Comprehensive, participatory approaches that are integrated from the planning to the implementation, evaluation, and knowledge-sharing phases of a project allow beneficiaries' needs to be taken into account, broad coalitions to be built, capacities to be shared, and learning to be promoted. They help with the sustainability of project activities, as strengthened local capacity can rely on existing networks.

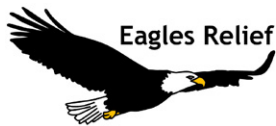
Gender dynamics during affirmative action projects

Working with marginalised groups, such as female ulemas and women's organisations can be used as a form of strategic affirmative action to help amplify the voices of women and other minoritised groups. Such an approach can help ensure the views of marginalised groups are taken into account, while simultaneously building their capacity. Existing gender dynamics may need to be taken into account during MEAL processes

when working on projects with an affirmative action focus. For example, in the case of this project, there was a need to take gender dynamics into account during data collection phases, such as when female focus group participants did not feel confident enough to voice their views in public, or when interviewees felt uncomfortable sharing intimate project-relevant information with a male DME Manager.

1.3. FROM STAFF-BASED TO COMMUNITY-FOCUSED MEAL

EAGLES RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME MALAWI



Eagles Relief and Development Programme

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



International element
International Christian donor



Local faith element
National faith-based Christian organisation, partnerships with local churches



Project country
Malawi



Website
<http://www.eaglesmalawi.org/>



The organisation and activities

Living Waters Church established Eagles Relief and Development Programme in Malawi following a devastating famine in 2002. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with the majority of the population living below the international extreme poverty line of \$1.90 a day. Most of the population depends on agriculture and food security remains a major issue despite some progress being made in recent years.

The work of Eagles focuses on three main areas: having enough food, helping the vulnerable,

and caring for the environment. Eagles aims to help tackle hunger and find long-term solutions to food insecurity, so that communities can become self-reliant, prosperous, and healthy. Eagles believes that long-term solutions are most likely to succeed when local communities take ownership of change and work towards lifting themselves out of poverty. The organisation therefore works with local church partners to achieve that as part of a Community and Church Mobilisation Process (CCMP).

Eagles mobilises, trains, and supports churches of all denominations across the country to help

them work with their communities, identify local needs and resources, and bring about change. Eagles sees poverty as both a material and a spiritual issue, as when people become dependent on others for their survival, it often affects their self-esteem. Eagles therefore approach poverty alleviation as a complex issue necessitating holistic transformation.

The organisation has five field offices across Malawi and a head office in Blantyre (southern Malawi).

MEAL approach and rationale

Development of a new MEAL plan

Eagles' MEAL plan was reviewed in 2019. The review took place following feedback from communities who felt that current MEAL approaches were not working for them, as they were perceived to be overly complex and designed with the Eagles-donor interface in mind. The Eagles team therefore decided to find a different system that could be fully owned by churches and communities, while meeting donors' data needs by finding synergies with MEAL approaches that are valuable and relevant in communities' lives. A pilot of the new community-led MEAL approach, which was developed with the support of an external consultant on the basis of the organisation's Theory of Change, was scheduled for later in 2020 and 2021 due to delays caused by COVID-19. It was developed through a participatory process. If a particular piece of information was not valuable for the community, Eagles either removed it from the MEAL plan or thought of a way to measure it so that it would become beneficial.

Data collection and analysis

Eagles' experience shows that participatory approaches can often generate more reliable data, as participants are more likely to answer honestly in a focus group with fellow community members or in a creative activity where they see no right answers, than in a survey with a donor. Data collection in the new MEAL plan is focused on outputs, intermediate outcomes, and overall outcomes.

Data on outputs is collected through a self-reflection checklist that pastors complete quarterly during training, to enable them to share their learning with other pastors. Intermediate outcomes are documented once a year through the 'Picture of Participation' tool, which is attended by church leaders, community leaders, and a representative group of members. Attendees are selected by the community and must include both individuals who are church members and others who are not. The 'Picture of Participation' tool measures the extent to which different stakeholders are committed to and engaging with the process. Information is then fed back through a community meeting.

Lastly, overall outcomes are monitored through 'Stories of Significant Change.' This process is facilitated by the local pastor or Eagles' staff at an annual Community Celebration held by local leaders to celebrate their successes. The whole community is encouraged to attend (with deliberate effort to involve those often left out), and divided into men, women, and youth to select stories. Evidence is triangulated to increase its reliability. For example, photos are taken to illustrate each of the selected Significant Stories of Change. Communities first analyse the data for themselves, using participatory tools



to identify what is going well, what challenges are a barrier to progress, and how they can be overcome. This is usually done in more detail by local church pastors and social action committees, too. Data is then also analysed by Eagles' staff, who compare targets to actual results.

Accountability and learning

The evidence generated through the MEAL tools affects decision-making at all levels. Results are used first by churches and communities for their own action learning. The process equips communities to engage with local government and many have done so. For example, some community members meet with the government to hold them accountable for projects within the area. Others have shared the results of their participatory analysis, the work they are already doing, and advocate for better services.

Moreover, Eagles communicates with national church leadership and donors through meetings,

reports, church conferences, social media, and a quarterly newsletter.

Lessons learned

Adapting tools and terminologies

When specific approaches do not resonate with local communities, it may be necessary to adapt both the tools and the terminology used. For example, the organisation turned a survey to gather output data into a 'Pastor's Self-Reflection' that enables pastors to analyse their own experience, successes and challenges, and share their learning with other pastors. To the organisation, this is not just a matter of playing with language, but rather a recognition of the power of language to establish a mindset of ownership.

Responding to resistance

Whilst there is immense benefit in community-led MEAL plans, the process can be slower and messier than traditional approaches. This can lead to resistance by staff who may prefer traditional approaches, which they perceive to be easier, quicker, and more predictable. It is therefore vital to generate buy-in among staff at the level of the principles behind the MEAL plan, and ideally get staff involved in designing the system. Eagles had planned to do this in a participatory way whereby staff first brainstorm challenges of the old system and where it disconnects with the organisation's vision and mission, and then edit a draft MEAL plan in response. However, the coronavirus pandemic has disrupted these plans for the time being.

1.4. WHEN QUALITATIVE APPROACHES WORK BEST

HOGAR DE CRISTO ARGENTINA



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



International element

International research collaboration between Argentinian Catholic university, British university, and local Catholic NGO network



Local faith element

Evaluation of a programme run by local Catholic NGO network that provides an integral response to problematic drug consumption



Project country
Argentina



Website
<http://hogardecristo.org.ar/>



The organisation and activities

Hogar de Cristo (Home of Christ) is an Argentinian Catholic faith-based federation of 190 neighbourhood centres that provide an integral response to drug addiction. It started with three neighbourhood centres created by Catholic priests in Buenos Aires' informal settlements in 2008. The federation is not centrally managed but takes a localised approach by incorporating organisations that already work in vulnerable neighbourhoods and decide to adopt the federation's methods. Hogar de Cristo receives financial support from the national drug prevention and assistance agency,

and some of its associated organisations, which include the CAF Development Bank of Latin America and Caritas Argentina, amongst others. Its neighbourhood centres offer meals and showers, group meetings, therapy sessions, recreational and artistic activities, training programmes, and childcare. Hogar de Cristo also has farms which serve as additional spaces for inclusion and recovery as well as homes to support the reintegration process.

The guiding principles of Hogar de Cristo are to 'welcome life as it comes,' to create a community, and to appreciate the uniqueness of each person and their path to recovery. The federation seeks

to provide an integral response in situations of social vulnerability and the problematic consumption of drugs, with a focus not just on the addiction itself, but also on underlying and related social problems, such as social exclusion, unemployment, precarious housing, violence, and health inequalities. The response of Hogar de Cristo is based on the Catholic faith and deeply rooted within local communities. Those working for the organisation have a social or religious vocation, which is reflected in how they view themselves and the people they work with, whom they do not simply want to 'help' but consider as brothers and sisters they want to enter into communion with.

Impact evaluation approach and rationale

Development of impact evaluation

The evaluation was part of a research collaboration between the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina and the University of Bath (UK). A researcher from the University of Bath contributed to the development of the theoretical framework of the project, which was based on Catholic social teaching and the experience of Hogar de Cristo. Her colleague from the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina received training as a lead evaluator for the QuIP (Qualitative Impact Protocol) approach, which was developed by a professor of economics at the University of Bath. The researcher in Argentina, leading the evaluation in Buenos Aires, also provided the connection to Hogar de Cristo, which she had first come into contact with 10 years ago. While organisations usually contract services to carry out impact evaluations following the QuIP approach, in the case of this project, the researchers contacted

Hogar de Cristo due to their academic interest in the topic. The partnership between Hogar de Cristo and the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina includes an agreement that allows the university to share its research findings in the form of academic papers.

Due to the nature of the project, as an academic-practitioner collaboration with a faith element, translation between academic and practitioner terminologies, as well as between secular and faith-based concepts was constantly required. Hogar de Cristo was actively involved in the design phase of the project, which lasted four months. As QuIP evaluations use a theory of change to inform the coding process, the researchers started by creating a theory of change for Hogar de Cristo in a collaborative, participatory process. The evaluator conducted interviews with 18 people in the organisation (including the priests who had started the organisation and people working in the neighbourhood centres), in addition to observing activities at the neighbourhood centres, analysing relevant documents, and speaking with programme participants and government officials. The evaluator then developed separate theory of change modules for each of the impact dimensions, as they emerged from the interviews. Initial results were discussed with people working in the community centres prior to the main data collection phase.

Data collection

The evaluation aimed to gain a greater understanding of how Hogar de Cristo contributes to the human development and social inclusion of socially vulnerable people with drug addictions based on participants' narratives. It tried to capture the multidimensionality of the

organisation's work, by measuring its impact not just on abstinence or other indicators of drug consumption, but on multiple life dimensions, including satisfaction of basic needs, health, relationships, legal situation, education, and work. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions in the Hogar de Cristo neighbourhood centres in Buenos Aires. Using semi-structured questionnaires, participants were asked what they believed to be the most important changes in different areas of their lives, covering the six dimensions identified in the theory of change, and their perceptions of the drivers of those changes. While interviews

helped capture personal stories of change, the focus groups provided insight on how Hogar de Cristo's work compares with other forms of treatment and on changes in relationships in the neighbourhood. The QULP approach is designed to be a transparent method that provides a strict protocol for data collection and analysis. The method notably tries to avoid confirmation bias (whereby participants may feel bound to only relate positive information or attribute change to the organization being evaluated) through blindfolding. The researchers could not apply double blindfolding so that neither participants nor evaluators are aware of the purpose of



the interviews. Rather, they adopted single blindfolding meaning interview participants were not aware that the purpose of the interviews was to evaluate the organisation.

Data analysis

The QulP approach includes precise methods for coding data, whereby evaluators write up responses and then code them, identifying causal changes by starting with the final outcome and looking for drivers of change. Following that, evaluators analyse to what extent the change is attributed to the work of the organisation - which could be explicit or implicit - or due to other factors. The theory of change is central to the coding process. For example, if the organisation was not explicitly mentioned in the interview, but the driver of change was included in the theory of change, this is coded as implicit attribution.

All data was analysed by the research team. Hogar de Cristo participated in the interpretation of the qualitative results and the identification of lessons learned and public policy implications. The research team held three online workshops to discuss the results, which helped them to interpret the results and obtain additional insights. The QulP approach aggregates the results of the coding process and presents the results in tables and causal map diagrams. For the purpose of this evaluation, the research team used the QulP protocols to analyse the coded data and present the aggregated data in tables. However, their evaluation report includes a more in-depth and traditional qualitative analysis of the participant narratives and made extensive use of exact quotes, so as to describe in greater detail the diverse pathways to recovery and the connections across dimensions,

and to allow people to hear the voices of the programme participants. From this experience, the team came to the conclusion that qualitative approaches are particularly valuable for the evaluation of social interventions that respond to complex or sensitive problems in populations experiencing multiple deprivations.

Accountability and learning

The team of evaluators published one academic journal article on the project's theoretical framework in 2019 (prior to the data collection phase). The article outlines Hogar Cristo's approach and how the evaluation was conceptualised. More academic papers are planned. The team has also compiled a final report which will be shared with the organisation and the wider public. While the findings of the evaluation could not be shared with the interview participants due to the coronavirus pandemic, the team is currently considering the organisation of an outdoor event to discuss the findings with programme participants.

Lessons learned

Qualitative approaches

One key point of learning from the project is that credible impact evidence can be obtained using qualitative data, and can be especially useful for understanding complex issues, which would have been otherwise difficult to capture through purely quantitative tools.

Qualitative studies are often more in line with the beliefs of faith-based organisations which may be reluctant to adopt purely quantitative approaches out of a concern about reducing people and their rich, unique experiences to numbers.

Language matters

Language matters in academic-practitioner and faith-secular partnerships. For Hogar de Cristo, it was imperative that the academics they partnered with for the purpose of the evaluation understood their method, which is reflected in the language used. For example, this included not calling participants “beneficiaries” but rather people accompanied by the neighbourhood centres. Working in such partnerships requires sensitivity to these nuances and a willingness to act as a bridge-builder between different sub-cultures.

Recommended resources

Bath Social and Development Research Ltd.

<https://bathsdr.org/>

J. Copestake, M. Morsink, and F. Remnant (2019): Attributing development impact. Practical Action Publishing. Individual book chapters can be at this link: <https://bathsdr.org/about-the-quip/quip-casebook-attributing-development-impact/#:~:text=Attributing%20Development%20Impact%20is%20based,we%20learned%20from%20each%20project>

Severine Deneulin and Ann Mitchell (2019): Spirituality and impact evaluation design: The case of an addiction recovery faith-based organisation in Argentina. HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies, Vol. 75, No. 4. <https://hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/5482>

Una evaluación de impacto integral de los centros barriales del Hogar de Cristo. <http://uca.edu.ar/es/facultad-de-ciencias-economicas/una-evaluacion-de-impacto-integral-de-los-centros-barriales-del-hogar-de-cristo>

1.5. LISTENING AS MINISTRY

HOPE INTERNATIONAL

BURUNDI, HAITI, MALAWI, RWANDA,
ZAMBIA, ZIMBABWE



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



International element

International non-denominational Christian faith-based poverty alleviation organisation



Local faith element

Involvement of local church partners



Project country

Burundi, Haiti, Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe



Website

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



The organisation and activities

HOPE International is an internationally operating Christian faith-based poverty alleviation organisation. HOPE provides biblically based training, savings services, and microfinance loans that aim to restore dignity and break the cycle of poverty. The organisation has its roots in an US American church initiative, which saw a group of people travel to Ukraine beginning in 1997, transporting containers of food, clothing, and medical supplies to the city of Zaporozhye. The organisers revisited their approach of providing free supplies after

realising they were unintentionally depressing local industry and initiative. Following a phase of research and reflection, the organisation's founder integrated economic development approaches into their work, which was a little-known poverty alleviation strategy at the time. Early observations and internal evaluations showed this approach was effective, and HOPE began expanding its operations to a total of 16 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

One of the main models through which HOPE operates is through saving groups. In 2019,

HOPE International and its church partners served and supported more than 41,000 savings groups, with a total of over 700,000 members, across 10 countries. In this model, HOPE International establishes locally registered NGOs that are led by a locally hired team. National offices partner with churches in the country to lead and promote savings groups as a local church ministry. Local church volunteers are the linchpin of the ministry for the church-based savings groups, as they give their time to guide, train, disciple, and monitor savings groups.

MEAL approach and rationale

Development of a new MEAL tool

Across the HOPE network, over 5,700 volunteers support the ministry. Understanding what motivates these volunteers is therefore critical in considering the sustainability and longevity of the organisation's local work. HOPE International's office in Rwanda developed the earliest version of a volunteer engagement survey in 2015. After they shared the results, HOPE and its partners developed an action plan to make improvements to the ministry, which increased the volunteer's engagement and motivation. Seeing the benefit of this locally designed process, HOPE's central office saw the opportunity to support its ongoing use and to expand it to partners in other countries in the network. Since 2018, the organisation has implemented a volunteer engagement survey in six savings group programs across the network. In each country where the survey was administered, a baseline set of questions was reviewed by local staff and partners, contextualized, and translated. HOPE's Listening, Monitoring & Evaluation (LM&E) team also

worked with local partners to develop tailored questions addressing their most pressing areas of interest.

MEAL approach

Faith and faith integration played a key role in this work. HOPE considers LM&E as part of the ministry, not just an evaluation of the ministry. This means valuing relationships with partner staff, pastors, and volunteers in addition to valuing the information being gathered. HOPE seeks to listen in a way that honours those they are listening to and deepens relationships. This includes a relational approach, demonstrating care through the ministry of presence, and carefully looking at the type of questions and amount of time being asked of participants. HOPE recognizes part of honouring those they are listening to is ensuring their 'ask' is appropriate both in content and time. Integrating faith when conducting MEAL with local faith actors also means starting with the hypothesis that the faith of participants both impacts and is impacted by the work. Practically this means MEAL approaches seek to understand the two-way relationship between faith and outcomes.

Data collection and analysis

In consideration of the value of volunteers' time during the surveying and to minimize the cost of data collection, surveys were administered during one of the previously scheduled monthly mentoring meetings with volunteers, which are hosted and led by the church partner staff. These meetings, which are a time to train, equip, and encourage volunteers, acted as a logical touch point for local HOPE staff to administer the survey. Because the savings groups are a church ministry, not a HOPE program, HOPE's

staff are viewed as trusted external partners to the church's ministry. This allows local HOPE staff to administer the survey while maintaining impartiality, limiting bias, and avoiding suspicion of outsiders due to existing relational connections. HOPE and its partners considered reasonable representation when determining a sample of monthly mentoring meetings to attend, where volunteers were given a paper version of the survey, after ensuring informed consent. The paper survey responses were gathered and entered into an Excel template by a local staff member. A local staff member translated qualitative responses into English in

the same template. Multiple choice responses were analysed in Excel, and qualitative findings were analysed using emergent coding in Excel.

Accountability and learning

Surveys completed in six countries (Burundi, Haiti, Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe) in the HOPE International network that gathered feedback from 1,068 volunteers provided fresh insight into the experience of volunteers. HOPE learned that faith is a key motivation to volunteer, and opportunities to preach and grow spiritually are key drivers of enjoyment in the ministry. For example, in Rwanda, 75%



of surveyed volunteers shared they decided to volunteer in response to a calling from God, or to serve God or the church. In Malawi, 56% of volunteers shared that what they enjoyed most was preaching the Gospel or growing spiritually.

The team summarised results into reports, which were progressively shared with different audiences and updated based on discussion and feedback. For example, in Burundi, the local HOPE team engaged church partner staff in a meeting to review findings. The team used participatory methods to facilitate discussions of findings and asking staff what resonated, surprised, encouraged, or challenged them. They also discussed opportunities to refine the process in the future. After identifying key themes, and developing an action plan the team shared them with volunteers in their monthly mentoring meetings. Following review with local staff and partners, HOPE Central Service staff reviewed the findings. The findings brought the realities of volunteers to the forefront, and the data has informed new initiatives, grant proposals, donor communication, and industry discussions. Finally, the survey itself was shared with other programs in the network to be adapted and administered locally.

Pandemic adjustments

HOPE paused existing listening, monitoring, and evaluation activities at the beginning of the pandemic to focus on the most relevant questions during this time and adapt the means of gathering information, both of which shifted significantly in light of COVID-19. With most field visits cancelled, HOPE designed an entirely new monitoring system. Rather than hiring third-party enumerators for independent listening, HOPE leveraged existing relationships with staff

and volunteers engaged in the savings group ministry and used listening as an opportunity to reinforce and deepen relationships. Details for the monitoring system were determined in partnership between program leaders, local staff, and the listening, monitoring, and evaluation team. This included sampling considerations, translation, and any adaptations or additions to core questions.

Pandemic data collection and analysis

HOPE uses existing ministry structures to understand the realities on the ground, and that did not change during the pandemic. What did change was the use of telephones to gather information rather than in-person meetings. Sampling considerations varied by program, taking into account the logistical challenges of limited in-person gatherings and, at times, limited signal for phone calls. Local staff and church partners analysed quantitative data using dashboards automatically populated and updated in Microsoft Forms. Local staff were trained to segment findings via further analysis in Excel, and staff at the head office analysed this information at a network-level to track trends over time, document key findings, and respond.

Pandemic accountability and learning

Results were first reviewed by local program teams, and then shared with regional and network leaders of the savings group ministry. Local teams shared results with church partners to inform responses locally. Results were also shared externally with supporters, and sector networks. Through these listening exercises, the HOPE International team learned that a large majority of savings groups continued meeting throughout the pandemic, many adapting to abide by social distancing guidelines. In



response, HOPE developed and rolled out a toolkit to help groups adhere to best practices for social distancing and hygiene during the pandemic.

Lessons learned

Learning from pandemic listening

Through the pandemic listening process, ministry leaders were equipped as listeners to gather systematic feedback, the church was equipped with a better understanding of the lived realities of groups in light of the pandemic, and HOPE staff were equipped with information to use to respond. Through Microsoft Forms, the feedback loop for entering findings and accessing summary graphs was instant. In addition, deeper analysis of both quantitative and qualitative feedback provided rich insight. These factors

led to listening more quickly and on a larger scale than ever before within the savings group ministry. Program leaders shared how this turnaround time led to a deeper sense of connection and real-time awareness. Challenges included standardisation across diverse contexts and balancing the desire for streamlined training and analysis while honouring different realities.

Impartiality

Many of the suggested best practices for conducting MEAL recommend finding impartial enumerators or evaluators to gather information. While this is important, it can often lead organisations to undervalue what can be learned when those with the closest relationships are engaged in listening. Depending on the questions being studied or researched, engaging those with trusted relationships may be more cost effective and provide for a better overall experience without sacrificing the quality of learning. In both examples above, the importance of impartiality and trust were considered together when determining who should be engaged in gathering the information.

1.6. REPRESENTATIVE LONG-TERM COMMUNITY PHONE SURVEYS

INTERNATIONAL CARE MINISTRIES (ICM) PHILIPPINES



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



International element
International Christian faith-based poverty alleviation organisation



Local faith element
Partnerships with local pastors



Project country
Philippines



Website
<https://www.caremin.com/>



The organisation and project

International Care Ministries (ICM) is a Christian faith-based organisation that operates mostly in the Philippines. Aimed at tackling ultra-poverty, ICM was founded in 1992 and received funding and strategic direction from philanthropists in Hong Kong. Today, the organisation has offices in the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the US. ICM is primarily a development organisation. Its core strategic programme, 'Transform,' aims to alleviate poverty by focusing on values, health, livelihood, and education. Transform is implemented in partnership between ICM and

local pastors. A key part of the programme are weekly classes that bring together the poorest families in a community. ICM had been running the same programme for more than 10 years when the coronavirus pandemic brought the weekly classes to a halt. Faced with the unprecedented situation in the early months of the pandemic, ICM decided to temporarily focus more on reactionary, relief-focused work. Decisions needed to be made about what actions the organisations should take, and how they should help. When food security was identified as a possible major need, ICM, which had warehouses with food stores, decided to give

away as much as possible of this stock, if food insecurity indeed turned out to be a concern.

MEAL approach and rationale

ICM values both research and MEAL and aims for its operations to be data driven. The organisation uses multiple monitoring points, data sets, and usually surveys around 40,000 households a year, with a team of six full-time researchers spending six months of the year undertaking field-based surveying. However, the spread of the coronavirus cut off the organisation's usual data streams in February and March 2020, which effectively shut down the organisation's conventional MEAL operations. ICM saw a need for reliable data coming from the communities they work with, so they set up a representative sentinel project with the aim of getting an immediate sense of community needs and regular up-to-date information during the crisis. The project was rolled out to over 600 people in June 2020, following a 3-week pilot involving ICM staff, and remained ongoing in November of 2020. ICM's core programme relies on their partnership with local faith actors, so the organisation decided that 250 of the 600 sentinels should be recruited from amongst these pastors. Another 250 participants were saving group members¹³ who were representative of the organisation's main beneficiaries, and the remaining 100 sentinels were staff members from amongst the ICM team. The team made weekly calls to the sentinels from the last week of June 2020. In October, this was changed to monthly calls. Sentinels were asked about whether they were receiving any government aid, how many meals they were eating daily, and about the situation in their communities. Every third week of the month, the ICM team would do a longer

survey on the other impacts the pandemic was having on their respondents, focusing on income, employment status, church attendance, savings groups activities, education, and the transmission of the virus.

Data analysis and dissemination of findings

The team sent out a weekly summary report after every survey round with basic statistics about each of the questions to the ICM operations team, with a view to validating results and checking if survey findings were aligned with the operations team's insights from their work with communities. This close collaboration with the operations team turned out to be particularly beneficial. It allowed the operations team to adapt the work they did on the ground. It also provided the MEAL team with an opportunity to correct their data based on the input from the operations team and follow-up calls with the sentinels. Initially, the team's data analysis was geared towards an internal audience, with dissemination taking the form of summary reports and statistics. However, the team later tailored their approach by starting to prepare papers aimed at a wider audience, comparing their findings to evidence generated by other organisations in the Philippines, including census data to be able to make policy recommendations. ICM's strategy team then started collaborating with the government, to provide them with insights on relevant parts of their findings, such as on education. Internally, findings of the surveys were used to reallocate resources to support affected

13 ICM helps communities set up savings groups as part of their projects. These are self-governed financial security groups, which receive support in the form of advice (and sometimes grants) from ICM. ICM sees elected saving group leaders once a month at the trainings facilitated by the organisation. ICM-supported saving groups are not allowed to be headed by local faith actors, to avoid conflict of interest and access issues.



communities, including the pastors ICM works with (who often found themselves in food insecurity during the early months of the pandemic) and to start new projects. Additionally, there was a feedback loop leading back to the pastors who were updated about the findings of the survey and action taken in their communities. In some cases, the pastors would help ICM get clearance from the local authorities for food distribution.

Lessons learned

Faith engagement in a crisis

Working with faith leaders provided the ICM MEAL team with insights into the situation on the ground, which they would otherwise have struggled to collate. Local faith leaders continued to meet members of their communities during the intense early months of the pandemic. Their understanding of what ICM beneficiaries were experiencing during that time was therefore broader and deeper when

compared with secular community leaders, such as the heads of the saving groups, whose access to communities was restricted. The MEAL team felt that surveying during a crisis made the respondents more enthusiastic about the project, as they saw the immediate need of getting data about communities that ICM would not have any direct access to without the help of the pastors. Moreover, the team believed that the identity of ICM as a faith-based organisation was significant in collecting good quality data. For example, enumerators were reminded at the start of the project that they were representatives of a faith-based organisation, and that the project was not simply about getting data, but also about the relationship with the pastors with a view to giving hope and establishing community.

Value of long-term relationships

Due to the long and intense nature of the survey project (which in the early weeks of the pandemic entailed 600 weekly calls lasting between 30 minutes and an hour), some of ICM's enumerators established strong relationships with their interviewees. In the past, pastors had occasionally been sceptical of the survey work of the ICM MEAL team because they did not see the immediate benefit. This time however, the MEAL team had the impression that the long-term nature of the survey made the pastors feel like the organisation had a genuine interest in how they and their communities were doing, which made them see the value of the survey. The strong relationship between the pastors and the enumerators also had a positive impact on the interviewees' candour.

1.7. COVERING MEAL BASICS UNDER CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

JAMYANG FOUNDATION INDIA AND BANGLADESH



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



International element

International Buddhist faith-based organisation specialising in women's and girls' education



Local faith element

Partnerships with local Buddhist nuns; education programmes, including secular and faith elements, aimed at local Buddhist women and girls



Project country

India and Bangladesh



Website

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



The organisation and activities

The Jamyang Foundation is a Buddhist faith-based organisation, which is directed from the US and runs programmes in India and Bangladesh. The foundation supports innovative education projects for indigenous girls and women in some of the most in need and remote parts of the world, including the Indian Himalayas and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. The projects foster women's learning potential by combining general education for the modern world with traditional Buddhist wisdom and practice.

Students in the Jamyang Foundation programs study languages, math, health and hygiene, social studies, environmental awareness, and Buddhist philosophy and meditation. After completing their studies, the students have the opportunity to go onto higher education and eventually work as teachers, health care workers, community workers, and mentors to others. The programs also help preserve and revive Buddhist cultures in areas where they are threatened by consumerism, cultural encroachment, and economic hardship.

Students from diverse nationalities and ethnic

backgrounds—Tibet, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Mongolia—have benefitted from the programs by developing community development skills, a strong sense of cultural enrichment, and empowerment. There are currently 12 Jamyang Foundation study programs in the Himalayas. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, Jamyang Foundation has founded three primary schools for girls from indigenous communities. Two pioneering projects in India and one school in Bangladesh are now self-sufficient, fulfilling Jamyang Foundation's mission of empowering women and creating sustainable communities run by women themselves.

MEAL rationale

According to the director of the Jamyang Foundation, there are two broad traditions with regards to MEAL within Buddhist communities.

1. The first does not see any need for formal MEAL, not even in its most basic forms. In many Buddhist-majority countries, donations are given to monasteries, monks, and nuns, as acts of good will. Donations are considered a gift from the heart, and neither donors nor recipients would consider issuing or asking for a receipt. Giving in itself is seen as an act of generosity, with no need to have or keep any record of this donation. Some even believe that giving a receipt turns what is supposed to be a selfless act into a business-like transaction and would be surprised if one even asked for a record of donations to be kept. In some contexts, nuns and monks are not expected to thank a donor for donating, such as in some faith communities in Thailand where it is believed that saying thank you erases the good karma of one's donation. Many devout Buddhists

in South East Asia therefore donate without 'any expectation of reward or recognition', as phrased in a widespread expression. Even if one does not subscribe to this perspective, asking for receipts or accounts to be kept can raise issues around trust, with people feeling that their integrity is in question.

2. On the other hand, some Buddhist groups support record-keeping and external, more formal forms of accountability. In some cases, this is rooted in local practice, such as in those Buddhist-dominated countries where the names of donors for a temple or monastery are included on a wall or plaque on the premises. Moreover, there is a habit of giving receipts in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which may have emerged during exile in India. Since the beginning of the exile, more than 400 new monasteries were built in India, which came with a considerable cost and was therefore dependent on the generosity of Tibetan lay people and foreign donors who may find the custom of handing over funds without any written record disagreeable. Moreover, many foreign donations were coordinated by NGOs who are subject to financial regulations in their home countries. Western-based Buddhist organisations in particular have been faced with considerably higher levels of scrutiny than their Christian or secular counterparts. This experience is shared by many Islamic faith-based organisations, as outlined in the first part of this compendium. MEAL may also be supported by those concerned about increasing levels of corruption, including in the Buddhist world. A lack of systems and procedures aimed at documenting financial income and expenses and supported by regular checks, poses a significant risk in this context. The potential ramifications of

corruption amongst faith actors are significant, as it can lead to individuals feeling alienated from faith communities or even question faith as such. According to this point of view, there are no faith barriers to more formalised forms of MEAL. On the contrary, advocates of this approach believe that the integration of MEAL into operations is in line with the ethical principle that money should be used for the purpose it was intended, and that it is supported by the prohibition of lying and cheating in Buddhist teachings.

MEAL approach

MEAL challenges

The Jamyang Foundation has faced significant challenges in its attempts to incorporate MEAL systems into its operations. Most of these are related to the geographical, cultural, and political environment the organisation operates in. Access to the foundation's projects has been a key issue. The organisation's projects in India are located in very remote locations, which are inaccessible for six months of the year due to weather conditions and a lack of telecommunications. In other areas, projects



are hardly accessible to those outside of these areas due to the tense security situation. Six-monthly reporting, which is required by some funders, is simply not possible under these circumstances. Another challenge is the multilingual environment the nuns work in. In the foundation's projects in India, they use Hindi, English, and Tibetan, including in their accounting books, which can be a source of confusion for those who are not proficient in these languages. Moreover, until recently, bank accounts were not common in the region where the nuns are working. Money exchange relied on in-person transactions, including for sizable amounts. The organisation is now trying to get a bank system to work in order to rely on bank transfers rather than individuals distributing funds in person. As a very small, self-funded grassroots organisation, the foundation does not have any paid staff to do more advanced formalised MEAL work nor any local staff members who are proficient in English. The organisation recognises that this puts them at a disadvantage of securing international funding, as they do not have the capacity to fulfil most institutional donors' MEAL requirements.

MEAL practices

One of the first MEAL practices the director of the Jamyang Foundation introduced to the nuns in the Himalayas was to keep accounts. This included discussing how in the Buddhist tradition, if money has been donated for a particular purpose, it should be used for that purpose. Once that process started, the director checked the accounts during her annual visits to the project, which are aimed to monitor activities and progress made. The monitoring was of an integrated nature and included a focus on faith practices. For example, the

consumption of alcohol is forbidden in the Buddhist tradition. When the accounts revealed the nuns had purchased alcohol as a hospitality gift to road inspectors visiting the area, as is customary in the region, the director suggested offering them biscuits, lunch, or a photo of the Buddha instead. The Jamyang Foundation runs a volunteer programme, which allows volunteers from a range of faith backgrounds to stay with the nuns and support them in their activities. When the director was not able to visit the nuns every year, she relied on reporting from the volunteers instead. This created a degree of tension, as some of the nuns felt uncomfortable being monitored by the volunteers. Mindful of the need to maintain standards, the director did not stop the practice altogether, but decided not to reveal the names of the people who reported back to her. At one point, the director had also asked the volunteers to check the accounting; however, this proved impractical due to the language barrier, so she continued to check the accounting books when she visited. Once a year, the Foundation issues a newsletter with reports from the volunteers who share their experiences and any issues they encountered.



Lessons learned

Diversity of practice within one faith tradition

Most faith communities and their practices are characterized by a degree of diversity. This includes their attitude towards MEAL. While some schools of thought represented within a faith community may be sceptical about even the most basic forms of MEAL, others may be supportive. It is important to be aware of this diversity when working with local faith actors and faith-based organisations.

Disconnect between large donors and the grassroots

Implementing MEAL is often particularly challenging for small grassroots organisations due to a lack of resources. Institutional donors tend to have strict MEAL requirements, which

many small organisations cannot fulfil. The disconnect between large donors and the grassroots can put smaller organisations with localised knowledge and on-the-ground experience (but insufficient MEAL capacity) at a disadvantage, as it prevents them from accessing institutional funding.

Higher scrutiny of minoritized organisations

The environment many minoritized groups operate in, such as Buddhist and Islamic faith-based organisations in the West, creates a distinct set of challenges for these groups. Due to increased scrutiny and pressure by government authorities to prove compliance and due diligence (often to higher standards than non-minoritised groups), some groups see MEAL as a necessary but often complicated means of ensuring accountability.

MEAL, accountability, and faith education

MEAL can be used as a means of accountability and a tool for faith education when monitoring and evaluation reveal practices that contradict faith teachings. At the same time, emphasising that principles such as integrity and accountability underpin the MEAL process, while also being rooted in faith values, can help reinforce an understanding that MEAL and faith are compatible.

1.8. BEYOND WESTERN MEAL FRAMEWORKS

SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL (SGI) WORLDWIDE



Soka Gakkai International

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



International element

International Buddhist faith-based network working on peace, culture, and education



Local faith element

Network consisting of local Buddhist community groups



Project country

Worldwide



Website

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



The organisation and activities

Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is an international Buddhist network, originating in Japan, with 12 million members in 192 states and territories. The organisation's headquarters are located in Japan, where SGI's predecessor organisation was founded in 1930. Educators Makiguchi and Toda were the founding presidents and the organisation initially focused on educational reform. The organisation has since developed into a worldwide movement promoting the betterment of society through individual inner transformation. In its current

form, SGI was founded in 1975 by the current international leader, Ikeda, to bring together members from across the globe. SGI members follow the philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism. The organisation used to have close connections with Buddhist monks, and now operates independently as a Buddhist lay network. Each international SGI organisation is organised independently. As part of their faith practice, SGI members across the globe regularly hold local meetings of between 10 and 30 members, who gather at members' homes and in community centres to chant, study, and share experiences of transformation with one another.

Beyond members' daily practices and local meetings, SGI has established itself as an international organisation working in the fields of peace, culture, and education, with a focus on nuclear disarmament, human rights education, sustainable development, and humanitarian relief. The organisation has affiliated schools, universities, and cultural associations based on broad Buddhist values such as respect for the dignity of life. It organises events, publishes books, raises awareness about critical issues such as nuclear disarmament, runs advocacy campaigns in Geneva and New York, and is involved in emergency response following natural disasters, such as tsunamis, earthquakes, and floods. In Japan, SGI is involved in national politics and has close relations with the Komei Party. This is not the case, however, in other parts of the world where the organisation operates. SGI is funded through community contributions and does not receive funding from any other donors.

MEAL approach and rationale

A process of learning outside of/beyond Western MEAL frameworks

SGI and its members embrace an ongoing process of learning and empowerment, which is supported by daily practice and the sharing of experiences through regular local meetings as well as the SGI magazines and websites. As a network for empowerment and education, the emphasis on learning within SGI is strong. The organisation does not frame these activities as MEAL, nor do they engage with Western MEAL methodologies. Instead, they draw on the rich repertoire of their Buddhist faith.

Buddhist concepts of accountability

The concept of individual responsibility and accountability to oneself and one's environment are central to the approach of SGI. The focus is on taking the right action or materialising one's Buddha nature. Indicators of what is being achieved externally are important but so is one's inner state and growth. This notion of individual responsibility is closely linked to a belief in human revolution or inner change, which describes the process by which a person learns, develops, and becomes more compassionate and less self-centred. Often, this results in an increase in contributions to society. In line with their Buddhist faith, SGI stresses spiritual development as much as other forms of development, as they believe that outward efforts are futile without internal transformation. Underlying this approach is the concept of the oneness of life and its environment, according to which there are no clear boundaries between individuals, families, communities, and nations, who are all part of the one life, and therefore interconnected and interdependent. Causing positive change anywhere will therefore cause positive effects everywhere, with the root cause of all problems being of a deeper, spiritual nature.

Sharing of experiences

Learning is shared through two main channels: the sharing of experiences in the local SGI meetings and the SGI magazines.¹⁴ Experiences are stories of change (with a focus on the personal change a person went through), which highlight that inner change of the individual is manifested through outer change. Examples range from people dealing with personal

14 Some experiences can also be found on the SGI website.

insecurities, overcoming drug addiction, finding their true purpose in life, or working with the most vulnerable. Most experiences follow the same structure by outlining the problem, the process (consisting of faith and practice in the form of chants or meditation and the study of the scriptures - the three tenets of Buddhism), and the outcome. Experiences are seen as a manifestation of the transformational power of faith and practice; sharing them aims to encourage others to also focus on change. Experiences are primarily shared in meetings of between 10 and 30 SGI members at members' homes and in community centres. The meetings usually start with chants and recitation of scriptures, followed by the sharing of experiences and open discussion. Members put a lot of effort into preparing to share their experiences, which are often written up and then read to the members of the congregation, but they are also often shared spontaneously. Moreover, most large country branches of SGI have their own newsletters and magazines where some experiences are published. The UK branch of SGI, for example, publishes several experiences in each edition of their monthly magazine *Art of Living*, taking up around three pages per experience, with a photo of the person at the heart of the described change. A collection of experiences can also be found on the Soka Gakkai (global) website.

The organisation's activities to promote peace, sustainability, human rights, and humanitarian relief are also shared in its publications and online resources so that their members can learn about these issues and gain a global picture of what SGI contributes. In this way, the organisation demonstrates a sense of accountability to its members.

Lessons learned

Beyond MEAL

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning come in many forms. Formalised Western approaches are by no means the only tools available to organisations with an interest in monitoring and evaluating their activities and sharing lessons learned. Buddhist organisations such as the SGI have developed methods that stem from their faith tradition and focus on the priorities of the group. SGI's reliance on community funding (rather than funding from institutional donors) grants them the independence to decide which forms of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning are of relevance to their members, the organisation, and their work. The motivation to incorporate them into their work is internal and not driven by external requirements. The organisation does not refer to these activities as MEAL but frames them within a terminology stemming from their faith.

Recommended resources

Joan Anderson: Buddhist Values, Action for Sustainability and the Earth Charter. <http://www.iop.or.jp/Documents/1424/Anderson.pdf>

Personal experiences on the Soka Gakkai (global) webpage: <https://www.sokaglobal.org/practicing-buddhism/personal-experiences.html>

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>

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.

2. CONCLUSION

2.1. Summary of findings

Despite an increasing interest in the roles of faith actors in development and humanitarian aid, we still know relatively little about MEAL and faith. This compendium has aimed to help the evidence base in this area by focusing on the good practices in MEAL in partnerships between local faith communities and international actors.

It has discussed what is specific about local-international faith partnerships, what incentives exist to include MEAL in such partnerships, and what barriers organizations with an interest in MEAL face in this context. We have seen that MEAL is often introduced into local-international initiatives due to requirements of an international partner, and that most organisations are motivated to adopt formal MEAL approaches due to a mix of internal and external factors. Key barriers to include MEAL in work with/as local faith actors include a reliance on community funding, limited resources, and - in some cases - faith reasons. The compendium has also highlighted the particular challenges minoritised groups, such as Islamic and Buddhist organisations based in the West, face in their work.

The research process underlying the work on this compendium has highlighted a need to extend debates about MEAL by including a focus on non-Western forms of accountability and learning. While there is some evidence and collections of good practice as well as toolkits on faith and MEAL, many of these have been developed within

Western frameworks. However, not all faith actors in development and humanitarian aid practice Western forms of MEAL and not all see a need to change that, as they have developed other forms of accountability, learning, and the sharing of experiences that are in line with their faith tradition. The Soka Gakkai International case illustrates this.

We hope that this compendium provides inspiration on how to better integrate MEAL into international-local faith partnerships, that it helps challenge the dominance of what is considered to be conventional Western MEAL and highlights the value of alternative approaches.

2.2. Limitations and scope for future research

Like many organisations in the sector, the JLI, too, has intensified its debates about anti-racism and decolonisation in recent months. We welcome the new contribution this compendium makes to debates on decolonisation, development, and faith, while also recognising the limitations of our work in this area. The research carried out as part of the work on this compendium raises important questions about who sets standards for what is considered adequate monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning, who can do MEAL, who has an interest in implementing MEAL and why, and who can learn from whom. At the same time, our work on this topic is still framed in Western-centric terms, as highlighted in the section on

key terms and concepts, and it remains to be seen how the JLI and its member organisations can continue to develop their contribution towards decolonial practices in the area of MEAL and faith specifically and development/humanitarian work and faith more broadly. We would hope future research and practical work in the sector will focus on these central issues. JLI endeavours to be an active contributor to these efforts by producing, facilitating, and sharing further research and evidence that contributes to disrupting Western-centric narratives on how to understand development/humanitarian work and faith. One particular area of interest in this context would be to explore how different actors in the sector conceptualise decoloniality when it comes to MEAL and faith, as there is significant diversity which ranges from the use of participatory methods within frameworks that otherwise remain Western-centric and/or secular concepts, attempts to bring Western and/or secular approaches and Eastern/Southern and/or faith-based ways of thinking about accountability and effectiveness more consistently into conversation, to an outright rejection of Western and/or secular approaches.

Moreover, follow-up research on MEAL and faith could aim to include a broader range of faith traditions, geographical areas, and methodological approaches, or focus on donors to gauge their interest in and support of innovative MEAL approaches within Western and/or secular frameworks as well as non-Western and/or faith-based approaches.

2.3. Questions for policy/practice

Rather than including recommendations for policymakers and practitioners, we have

decided to share a list of questions that might be useful for anyone thinking about developing (new or existing) MEAL and faith approaches in international-local partnerships. This section includes questions that are likely to be of interest to international actors, local faith actors, or both. The list is by no means exhaustive but might spur some initial thoughts to facilitate thinking through international-local MEAL partnerships with a faith element. We hope by providing a list of questions rather than recommendations, we can help counter checklist approaches for the factors that enable processes of change. While a list of recommendations will never be complete, questions encourage consistent, ongoing reflexivity.

- Whose interests are served in the MEAL process? Is the data useful to all partners for ongoing learning and development of their activities, or is it just something they have to collect because it is useful to a faraway partner?
- Are our MEAL approaches suited to work with/as local faith actors?
- Do they overburden our partners? Have partners been asked what methods they use to learn about their work? Have we listened to, reflected on, and acted upon their responses?
- Is the data we generate meaningful and useful to all project partners? Have we collaborated with all project partners throughout the project cycle on what questions/learning they might like to gain from the M&E process?

- Are approaches adapted to work with different types of (secular and faith) actors?
 - Do they take faith, geographic, historical, political, socioeconomic, and cultural context into account?
 - Are we aware of potential risks, especially to partners on the ground?
 - Does the language we use reflect that?
 - Does the terminology we use reflect the self-image of all partners? How do we know this?
 - How do we collaborate with different partners and stakeholders? Are they involved throughout all processes and at all stages of the partnership/project activities?
 - What are the dynamics of relationships within the partnership? Are there ways to create more collaborative and equitable partnerships?
 - Do partners have the capacity to deliver what MEAL data we ask of them?
 - Is there a language barrier? How can we try and overcome this?
 - Has a capacity-sharing element been integrated into our approaches? Does the learning go both ways? Are there areas where we might expand this element? Who decides where there are gaps in capacity? How does this learning change our practice?
 - How do we promote participation but prevent bias?
- Who owns processes and data?
 - Are we taking gender, faith, race, ethnicity, class, and other intersectional factors sufficiently into account? If so, how? How could we further take these factors into account?
 - Does the MEAL approach allow for constructive criticism towards the donor and/or international partner, or only towards the local implementers?
 - What (if any) is the relationship between an instrumentalization of local faith actors and the MEAL expectations that are extended to local faith actors?

PART THREE

ANNEX

1. RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1.1. On MEAL in the development/ humanitarian sector

Mike Culligan and Leslie Sherriff (2019): A Guide to the MEAL DPro

URL: <https://www.humentum.org/training/meal-dpro-guide>

Brief summary: The Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning Guide (A Guide to the MEAL DPro) provides an introductory, independent exploration of MEAL within the context of the development and relief sector. The MEAL DPro initiative is designed for and by leaders in the international relief and development sector. It is intended for an audience that includes project managers, entry-level MEAL specialist, and development and relief sector professionals who intend to establish a shared culture of MEAL in their programs, students, and consultants.

Clara Hagens, Dominique Morel, Alex Causton, and Christina Way (2012): Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation.

URL: <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/guidance-monitoring-and-evaluation>

Brief summary: This handbook provides guidance for the design and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. The standards in this handbook provide practical quality-control considerations specific to individual components of an M&E system. This handbook is for programming staff at all levels, including M&E staff, field staff, project managers and program officers. It highlights each role

in multiple steps. The guidance is intended to be dynamic and to engage staff members in the required critical thinking to design and implement an M&E system.

Bryony Norman (2012): Monitoring and Accountability Practices for Remotely Managed Projects Implemented in Volatile Operating Environments: A Research Study Detailing the Key Issues and Responding Good Practices.

URL: <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/monitoring-and-accountability-practices-for-remotely-managed-projects-implemented-in-volatile-operating-environments/>

Brief summary: This report highlights how critical it is for organisational personnel, from programme management right through to local staff, to fully engage with the principles of remote monitoring and accountability and with the planning and preparation that is required to support their successful implementation. The good practice sections of this report also highlight examples of beneficiaries and communities themselves engaging in the planning, design and implementation of projects, and monitoring and accountability practices. These sections also consider practical ways of ensuring this in remotely managed settings.

Oxfam: A Quick Guide to Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning in Fragile Contexts

URL: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/297134/ml-www-meal-fragile-contexts-190713-en.pdf>

Brief summary: Without an effective MEAL

system we would be unable to track progress, make adjustments, discover unplanned effects of programmes, or judge the impact that we have made on the lives of those with whom we are working. A MEAL system also helps us to be accountable to our stakeholders through information sharing and developing a complaints or feedback mechanism which can help to guide programme implementation. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, it is important to establish a MEAL system that takes into account the particular constraints and complexities of the programme.

Tearfund: Roots 5 – Project Cycle Management

URL: https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/roots/project_cycle_management/

Brief summary: This comprehensive guide explains what good project cycle management looks like and gives practical tools and examples for people doing relief and development work. It follows the different phases in the project cycle: understanding the situation, project design, approval and governance, preparation, implementation and monitoring, evaluation, and closing the project. You can use the guide as a reference point for specific issues, or as a general training manual in project cycle management.

1.2. On MEAL and faith in general

Sally Cupitt (2019): Evaluation: A Matter of Faith?

URL: <https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2019/03/11/evaluation-a-matter-of-faith/>

Brief summary: The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has undertaken a number of faith-based evaluation projects over the last few decades across a range of Christian and Muslim communities. What has the team

learnt? Is faith work distinctive? What are the differences and similarities of faith and secular organisations? Should evaluators be insiders or outsiders? And how can we share learning from evaluations?

David Steele and Ricardo Wilson-Grau (2016): Supernatural Belief and the Evaluation of Faith-based Peacebuilding.

URL: <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/publication/supernatural-belief-evaluation-faith-based-peacebuilding/>

Brief summary: There is little research on the professional evaluation of faith-based peacebuilding, despite the existence of a variety of efforts over centuries to promote peace within many faith traditions. Therefore, this briefing paper first addresses pertinent concepts and principles related to belief in the supernatural that, to varying degrees, influence all faith-based actors. Secondly, it addresses the application of these conceptions to evaluation practice. This will inform guidance for peacebuilders and evaluators, both religious and secular, working in faith-based contexts, which we refer to synonymously as “faith-based peacebuilding” or “religious peacebuilding.”

1.3. On MEAL and specific faiths

Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs (2019): A Discussion with Joan Anderson, International Office of Public Information, Soka Gakkai.

URL: <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-joan-anderson-international-office-of-public-information-soka-gakkai>

Brief Summary: This discussion, which took

place on November 5, 2009 between Michael Bodakowski and Joan Anderson, focuses on the work and philosophy that informs SGI's rather unique approach and role in different societies and its central focus on peace. The fundamental flaw with development programs, Anderson argues, is that they improve tangible situations without improving the morale and confidence of the people in that situation. Without addressing the latter, monetary and infrastructure changes will see very little impact.

Séverine Deneulin and Ann Mitchell (2019): Spirituality and Impact Evaluation Design: The Case of an Addiction Recovery Faith-Based Organisation in Argentina.

URL: <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/5482/13094>

Brief summary: A growing line of research focuses on how to integrate the faith dimension into the evaluation of social programmes and on quantifying the effects of faith. The objective of this article is to propose a framework for integrating a spiritual dimension into the design and practice of impact evaluation by using the concept of integral human development. This framework is then applied to the design of an impact evaluation of a faith-based programme that accompanies people with drug and alcohol addictions in Argentina.

Kathryn Dinh, Heather Worth, and Bridget Haire (2019): Buddhist Evaluation: Applying a Buddhist World View to the Most Significant Change Technique.

URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1356389019841654?icid=int.sj-abstract.citing-articles.3>

Brief summary: In this article, we suggest an applied approach to culturally responsive evaluation by first analysing the ontologies

and epistemologies underpinning Buddhism and the Most Significant Change technique, a participatory method for monitoring and evaluation that involves the collection of stories of significant change. We then identify where these converge and diverge. Finally, we suggest practical ways in which the Most Significant Change technique could be adapted to enhance its compatibility with a Buddhist world view.

Kathryn Dinh, Heather Worth, Bridget Haire, and Khuat Thu Hong (2019): Confucian Evaluation: Reframing Contribution Analysis Using a Confucian Lens

URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1098214018813008>

Brief summary: We reframe contribution analysis using a Confucian lens as Confucianism represents a value system that is still integral to the way societies operate in several East and Southeast Asian countries today. First, we unpack the theory behind contribution analysis and how it is applied by Western evaluators then compare this with aspects of Confucianism. We then examine how the application of contribution analysis might be modified to take into account a Confucian worldview. Finally, we discuss how, in a world of globalized, complex societies, this approach could be used by evaluators to adapt evaluation methods to be congruent with the worldviews in the local context where an evaluation is occurring.

Arezoo Ebrahimi, Zabihollah Khanjarkhani and Zekrollah Morovati (2011): Islamic Perspectives about Evaluation Criteria and Its Educational Implications.

URL: <http://jlsb.science-line.com/attachments/article/11/JLSB-2011-A4,%2018-23.pdf>

Brief summary: Every system is based on a series of values, and all acts in a system

are based on values. Due to the importance of justice and respect for human rights, the evaluation of values has a special place in Islam. This study first discusses the importance of evaluation in Islam. It then goes through characteristics of evaluation from the point of view of Islam, considering the Holy Qur'an and Islamic narratives on evaluation criterion in Islam. The conclusion discusses implications for educational systems.

B. Gibb, S. Babyack, D. Stephens, K. Kelleher, D. Hoger, C. Vale, G. Peersman (2019): Putting Ethical Principles into Practice. A Protocol to Support Ethical Evaluation Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Settings.
URL: https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/BetterEval_IndEval_Ethical_Protocol_v1_Aug2019_0.pdf

Brief summary: This document lays out a set of principles organised under six key themes or domains which, together, represent a holistic approach to ethical M&E practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings. The document also specifies common barriers to ethical practice that were identified by evaluators and communities and will be further explored over time.

Rick James (2020): Revitalising a Social Movement through a Global Theory of Change.
URL: <https://www.intrac.org/resources/praxis-series-paper-no-11-revitalising-a-social-movement-through-a-global-theory-of-change/>
Brief summary: This praxis paper focuses on the Mothers' Union (MU), an international Christian organisation. Founded in 1876, MU aims to support families around the world. Between 2017 and 2019, MU undertook a major, global Theory of Change process with a radically

participatory approach. Its designers named the process Mothers' Union Listening, Observing and Acting (MULOA). The paper explores how this process shows that it is possible to "listen at scale" and achieve major positive organisational change by taking a genuinely participative approach.

J. LaFrance and R. Nichols (2008): Reframing Evaluation: Defining an Indigenous Evaluation Framework.

URL: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-10284-001>

Brief summary: The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) has undertaken a comprehensive effort to develop an "Indigenous Framework for Evaluation" that synthesizes Indigenous ways of knowing and Western evaluation practice. To ground the framework, AIHEC engaged in an extensive consultation process that included conducting a number of focus groups in major regions of the United States. This article summarizes the focus group discussions and describes how the framework developed uses the key principles of Indigenous ways of knowing and four core values common to tribal communities.

Craig Russon (2008): An Eastern Paradigm of Evaluation.

URL: https://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/download/183/203

Brief summary: This article compares and contrasts an Eastern paradigm of evaluation to the rationalistic and naturalistic paradigms using the five basic axioms that Guba and Lincoln used in their 1982 article "Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry." Following the comparison, this author offers some suggestions for methodological practices

that one who subscribes to such a paradigm might follow.

Craig Russon and Karen Russon (2010): The Use of Kōans for Insight Evaluation Approach Training.

URL: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.862.2811&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Brief summary: Since publishing a trilogy of articles relating Eastern mysticism to evaluation, the authors have received many inquiries about training. The article explains one promising new method under development—adapting the Zen practice of kōans for evaluation training. The authors believe that kōans can be used as a poetic technology for recalibrating evaluation practitioners' attitudes and actions about evaluation.

Craig Russon and Karen Russon (2010): How the I Ching or Book of Changes can Inform Western Notions of Theory of Change.

URL: https://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/252/246

Brief summary: This article deals with a methodological issue. Specifically, it explores how ancient Chinese philosophy might influence the way in which modern day evaluators think about theories of change. The authors believe that using the diagrams of the I Ching, as a theory of change template, offers modern day evaluators with a number of advantages, such as greater sustainability. The authors believe that organic theories of change also encourage evaluators to think about contribution from many factors instead of attribution of a few factors.

Craig Russon and Karen Russon (2014): Impact Evaluation Based on Buddhist Principles.

URL: https://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/download/400/392/

Brief summary: The authors examine the basic causal statements from the approach to impact evaluation commonly used by The World Bank and from Buddhist philosophy. Second, they examine the statistical assumptions on which impact evaluation is often based and propose alternative Buddhist principles. Lastly, they speculate what impact evaluation might look like using the alternative principles that were identified.

1.4. MEAL and faith toolkits and guides

Allchurches Trust: Project Evaluation Tools

URL: <https://cuf.org.uk/resources/allchurches-trust-project-evaluation-tools>

Brief summary: In partnership with Allchurches Trust, the Church Urban Fund Research and Policy team have developed an Impact and Evaluation Toolkit for churches, small Christian charities, and Christian funders. This simple, easy-to-use toolkit is designed to help people think about the impact they want their project to have, to consider realistic ways to assess their impact, to select the right evaluation tools for their project, and to reflect on and use the information that they gather in fruitful ways. The package includes a planning tool, a reporting tool, and accompanying guidance.

Tearfund: The Light Wheel: The Learning and Impact Guide to Holistic Transformation

URL: https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/impact_and_effectiveness/the_light_wheel/

Brief summary: At Tearfund, our goal is to bring about 'whole-life transformation' in the individuals whom we serve in the world's

poorest communities. We want to see ‘thriving and flourishing individuals and communities’: we pursue ‘holistic development.’ Through our work, we aim for change in every aspect of a person or community’s well-being – including both spiritual and physical aspects. The Light Wheel was developed by Tearfund’s Impact and Effectiveness team, influenced by the University of Bath’s work on well-being and other external evidence. It provides a framework – or underlying set of principles – which form our definition of whole-life transformation.

Tearfund: Umoja Church and Community Initiative Guides (particularly sections on Monitoring and Evaluation).

URL: <https://learn.tearfund.org/en/themes/church/umoja/>

Brief summary: Umoja, which means ‘togetherness’ in Swahili, is an exciting and transformational church and community initiative. It helps church leaders, and their congregations work together with the local community to bring about positive change for the whole community. Umoja helps local churches and communities build on the resources and skills they already have. It is a process that inspires and equips local people with a vision for determining their own future with their own resources.

Peter Woodrow, Nick Oatley, and Michelle Garred (2017): Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Inter-Religious Action for Peacebuilding.

URL: <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/publication/faith-matters-guide-design-monitoring-evaluation-inter-religious-action-peacebuilding/>

Brief summary: The Guide outlines the decisions

and stages involved in setting up a monitoring process and undertaking an evaluation for inter-religious action for peacebuilding. It adapts and supplements secular evaluation principles and practices to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of inter-religious actions are sensitive to and respectful of faith traditions, values, practices, and priorities and motivations—and that they capture adequately the important spiritual dimensions of the work.

1.5. Decolonising MEAL

Aid Re-Imagined (2019): It’s Time to Decolonise Project Management in the Aid Sector.

URL: <https://medium.com/aidreimagined/its-time-to-decolonise-project-management-in-the-aid-sector-da1aa30c5eee>

Brief summary: The way we do project management in the aid sector—not just at the reporting stage, but from proposal, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation — is problematic. It is not designed with local values, knowledge, and experience at the heart of it. This matters. We have all committed to lofty ideas like localisation and shifting power by destabilising entrenched power structures. But how are we going to make these happen if our day-to-day tools and ways of working are not fit for purpose? It is for this reason efforts must be made to decolonise project management.

Bagele Chilisa, Thenjiwe Emily Major, Michael Gaotlhobogwe, Hildah Mokgolodi (2016): Decolonizing and Indigenizing Evaluation Practice in Africa: Toward African Relational Evaluation Approaches.

URL: <https://jmss.org/index.php/cjpe/article/view/31086>

Brief summary: This article discusses African perspectives on decolonization and indigenization of evaluation. It further provides a description of an African relational evaluation paradigm as a basis for originating evaluation practices and theories rooted in African worldviews. This study provides examples of evaluation studies that illustrate relational evaluation approaches. It makes claims for an African evaluation tree metaphor that features approaches to evaluation in Africa by African theorists.

Shiree Teng and Sammy Nuñez (2019):
Measuring Love in the Journey for Justice: A Brown Paper.

URL: <https://latinocf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Shiree-Teng-Measuring-Love.pdf>

Brief summary: To reverse the colonized, white supremacist culture of “knowing,” where only the mind-knowing way is valued and maintains power dynamics that accrue value based on white dominant culture, we must actively value and integrate ways of knowing that are deeply ingrained from our ancestors: prioritize connections and relationships, emergence, belonging, the mystery of things that are not “knowable,” and our own being. We are valuers, not e-valuators.

University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg:
Decolonising Evaluation.

URL: <https://www.edx.org/course/decolonising-evaluation>

Brief summary: Evaluation plays an integral role in understanding how different visions of development are expressed and contested in programme design and management. Decolonization is a central concern of the field,

and there is a need to bring together a wide range of discussions concerned with decolonized evaluation. This free online course introduces participants to the intersection of evaluation and decolonization debates by understanding how evaluation has evolved with the development sector.

2. GLOSSARY

Accountability | An element of MEAL that stresses the responsibility of project owners to share information and develop complaint and feedback mechanisms, so that donors, project beneficiaries, project partners, and other stakeholders can hold them accountable.

Affirmative Action | An approach consisting of policies or practices aimed at increasing the inclusion and participation of previously excluded groups.

Anti-racism | The practice of actively countering racism.

Appreciative Inquiry | A positive approach to leadership development and organizational change that focuses on existing strengths and creates common vision and direction.

Baseline assessment | An assessment of the situation at the beginning of a process aimed at bringing about change.

Blind folding | Part of the QulP approach that ensures participants and/or evaluators are not aware of the purpose of the interviews.

Capacity-building | A process aimed at broadening or deepening an individual's or an organisation's set of skills, knowledge, resources, or networks.

Capacity-sharing | A form of capacity-building that focuses on the strengths of all involved stakeholders and views them as equally contributing to the capacity-building process.

Church Community Mobilisation (CCM) | A process of local churches working together with their communities to bring about sustainable change.

Coding | The process of attributing codes to generated data, which is part of the data analysis in MEAL and research.

Community funding | Funding obtained through donations by individual donors or businesses, rather than government or other institutions.

Community ownership | A sense or act of ownership, responsibility, leadership, influence, and involvement with regards to an intervention by key stakeholders within local communities.

Confirmation bias | A form of bias in which participants may feel bound to only relate what they perceive to be desired information.

DAC-OECD | The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is a committee of 30 countries from the Global North aimed at coordinating development and humanitarian aid.

Data analysis | The process of making sense of generated data.

Data collection | The process of generating data through interviews, surveys, focus group discussions, or participant observation for example.

Data triangulation | The process of comparing

and contrasting multiple sources of data to enhance its validity and reliability.

Decolonisation | The political, economic, cultural, or psychological undoing of colonialism and its legacy.

DM&E | Design, Monitoring and Evaluation. A form of MEAL, with an emphasis on the design stage being an integral part of any MEAL activities.

Due diligence | Reasonably to be expected steps undertaken by an organisation or individual before entering a contract or agreement with another party, to avoid (unwittingly) committing an offense.

Empowerment | The process of becoming more self-confident, self-reliable, resourceful, skilled and/or knowledgeable, allowing an individual, organisation or community to act on their own autonomy.

Enumerators | A person collecting quantitative data (for example, in the form of surveys).

Evaluation | An element of MEAL that assesses the worth, effectiveness, significance, and results of an intervention at specific points during (mid-term evaluation) or after the activity (end-of-term or final evaluation).

Faith actor | An individual, organisation, or collective inspired in their activities by their faith.

Faith-based organisation (FBO) | A faith actor with a certain level of organisation (often in the form of an NGO), sometimes with international or regional links.

Focus group discussion | A form of interactive group interview that allows those collecting data to observe group dynamics and gather different perspectives on a topic.

Impact assessment | The process of considering broad change brought about by an intervention in an organisation, community, society, or the environment.

Indicator | A specific, observable, and measurable criteria that shows the degree to which change has been brought about by an intervention.

Institutional funding | Funding from governments, international organisations or large-scale international NGOs.

International actor | Organisations, donors, collectives, or informal initiatives that work across state borders rather than within the same country they are based.

Intersectional approaches | Approaches that take into account how gender, class, race, faith, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, and/or other identifiers intersect and affect a person's lived experiences.

Komei Party | A Japanese conservative political party founded in 1964 by lay members of the Soka Gokkai movement.

Learning | An element of MEAL that focuses on what can be learned from monitoring and evaluating data and how existing approaches can be improved and new ones developed.

Light Wheel Approach | A tool for measuring

holistic change developed by Tearfund that focuses on nine domains which affect the ability of an individual, organisation, or community to live well, strive, and be resilient.

LM&E | Listening, Monitoring and Evaluation. A form of Monitoring and Evaluation with particular emphasis on the listening aspect.

Local faith actor (LFA) | A locally (or nationally) operating organisation with local staff that is inspired in their actions by their faith.

M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation. The process of collecting data about ongoing and recently concluded interventions to help inform future activities.

MEAL | Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning. A process to ensure project activities and outcomes are monitored (while interventions are ongoing) and evaluated (after the conclusion of project activities and, at times, also half-way through the project), and that they include elements of accountability (to donors, project partners, beneficiaries, and/or the wider community) and learning (to help inform future activities).

Methodology | The process by which (and reasons why) specific data collection methods are selected as part of a research project or MEAL plan.

Microfinance | A type of financial service targeting individuals and small businesses who would otherwise not have access to banking, loans, and other financial products.

Ministry | An activity practiced by Christians

to express and share their faith with other members of the Christian faith and/or those of other (or no) faiths.

Monitoring | The element of MEAL focusing on the ongoing collection of data during an intervention.

NGO | A non-governmental organisation.

Nichiren Buddhism | A Buddhist movement in the Mahayana tradition originating from Japan.

Oneness of life and its environment | The Nichiren Buddhist principle that life and its environment are not separate but two integral phases of a single reality. Eshō-funi in Japanese.

Outcome harvesting | An impact evaluation approach that identifies evidence of what has changed and then works backwards to determine whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes.

Participatory approaches | Approaches involving key stakeholders (especially those most affected by an intervention) in the process.

Pastor | Leader of a Christian church or congregation.

Qualitative approaches | Data collection and analysis processes that rely mostly on non-numerical data and often aim to analyse patterns of meaning within relatively small samples.

Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) | An impact evaluation approach that relies on causal narratives, contribution analysis, and an

organisation's theory of change to determine direct, indirect, and unintended impact.

Quantitative approaches | Data collection and analysis processes that rely on numerical data and analysing wider patterns within big samples with an aim for generalisability.

Qur'an | The central scripture of Islam, which Muslims believe was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by God.

Representativeness | The extent to which a small sample reflects the characteristics of a bigger group of cases.

Result Mapping | An approach aimed at supporting the design, monitoring, and evaluation of interventions by focusing on intended and actual results.

Sampling | The process of selecting a small group of cases from a larger population of cases for research or MEAL purposes.

Savings group | A community-owned form of financially and institutionally sustainable microfinance, which allows members from low-income households to save together and secure small loans.

Sectarianisation | The act of defining and politically mobilising communities along sectarian lines.

Secular actors | Actors whose actions are not (explicitly) inspired by faith.

Securitisation | A process by which individuals, organisations, or communities are socially

constructed as a threat, which allows for them to be targeted by extreme security measures.

Semi-structured questionnaires | A type of questionnaire with only some predefined questions, which allows for flexibility during the data collection process.

Sentinel | Point of contact in a system designed to assess stability or change within a sub-group to establish larger trends in a population.

Snowball sampling | A non-probability sampling technique that uses the networks of existing research participants to recruit other participants.

Stories of Most Significant Change | An impact evaluation approach aimed at generating and analysing accounts of change in a participatory manner, with a view to identifying which ones were most significant to a group of stakeholders.

Sunnah | The practices of the Prophet Muhammad that Muslims are encouraged to follow.

Surveys | A quantitative research tool aimed at collecting data from a group of cases, usually with a view to drawing conclusions about a larger population.

Theoretical framework | A structure of theories and/or concepts that guide the research process. The theoretical framework outlines the theoretical assumptions research is based on, situates the research within existing work, and informs the choice of research methods.

Theory of Change | A methodology that shapes

an organisation's intended strategic path to influence change, which describes why and how, given specific circumstances, activities are expected to yield short-term and long-term results.

Udhiya | The animal Muslims are obliged to sacrifice during the religious festival of Eid-ul-Adha in the Islamic month of Dhu-l-Hijjah, in commemoration of the Prophet Ibrahim's readiness to sacrifice his son for God.

Ulemas | Arabic: ulama. Plural of alim, which means wise or learned person. Muslim religious scholars.

Ultra-poverty | Extreme levels of poverty. Definitions vary and include those living on less than US\$0.50 a day, those who eat below 80% of their energy requirements despite spending at least 80% of income on their food, or those who go without food for days at a time and have no income or access to education and healthcare.

West, the | A somewhat vague term to describe parts of the world, usually including Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, with varying definitions. Some definitions focus on its supposed (Judeo-) Christian basis, although historically a variety of different faiths have shaped the West.

Zakah | A financial obligation on Muslims requiring them to give a certain amount of their wealth over a predefined threshold to one of several groups of eligible beneficiaries. One of the five pillars of Islam.

3. LIST OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

No.	Position	Type of organisation	Country	Type of data collection	Date	Usage of data
1	MEAL staff	Islamic FBO	UK	Email consultation	Sep. 2020	Context
2	Previous MEAL staff	Islamic FBO	UK	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
3	Programmes staff	Islamic FBO	Canada	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
4	Head of office	Secular organisation	Lebanon	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context
5	Programmes staff	Secular organisation	Lebanon	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
6	Programmes staff	Secular organisation	Lebanon	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context
7	Research staff	Islamic FBO	UK	Email consultation and Interview	Oct. 2020	Context
8	Programmes staff	Islamic FBO	UK	Two interviews	Oct. 2020	Context
9	Three research staff	Christian FBO	Philippines	Two interviews	Oct. 2020	Story of change
10	Programmes staff	Islamic FBO	UK	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
11	Project development staff	Islamic FBO	US	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context

No.	Position	Type of organisation	Country	Type of data collection	Date	Usage of data
12	MEAL staff	Christian FBO	Denmark	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context
13	Previous fundraising staff	Islamic FBOs	UK	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context
14	Head of office	Islamic FBO	Denmark	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
15	Academic	Expertise on Christian FBOs	UK	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
16	Academic	Expertise on Sikh FBOs	UK	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
17	Programme quality staff	Islamic FBO	UK	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
18	Academic and member	Buddhist FBO	UK	Two interviews	Oct. 2020	Story of change
19	Previous programmes staff	Christian FBOs	Jordan	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context
20	Programmes staff; previous head of office	Islamic FBO	UK/Turkey	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
21	Programmes and advocacy staff	Christian FBO	UK	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context
22	Programmes development staff; MEAL staff	Secular organisation	Lebanon	Interview	Oct. 2020	Story of change
23	MEAL staff	Jewish FBO	US	Email consultation	Oct. 2020	Context
24	Head of office	Hindu FBO	US	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context

No.	Position	Type of organisation	Country	Type of data collection	Date	Usage of data
25	Head of office	Buddhist FBO	US	Interview	Oct. 2020	Story of change
26	Programmes staff	Jewish FBO	US	Interview	Oct. 2020	Context
27	MEAL staff	Islamic FBO	Indonesia	Interview	Oct. 2020	Story of change
28	Head of office; public relations staff; programmes staff	Buddhist FBO	Japan	Interview	Oct. 2020	Story of change
29	Academic/ evaluator	Collaboration with Christian FBO	Argentina	Interview	Nov. 2020	Story of change
30	Head of office	Christian FBO	Myanmar	Interview	Nov. 2020	Context
31	Programmes staff	Secular organisation	Germany	Interview	Nov. 2020	Context

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