

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION IN KITGUM DIOCESE, UGANDA



SEPTEMBER 2018 REPORT

GREETINGS!

Thank you so much for your partnership as we seek to support the church in the Diocese of Kitgum, one of the neediest parts of Uganda. Over the last three years we have seen the beginning of wonderful transformation happening in many lives and communities. We know the Lord is at work there building his church, changing one life at a time, bringing healing and restoration to an area which has in the past suffered terribly at the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army.

In this update we are sharing with you the results of the evaluation that was done earlier this year, which sought to analyse the impact of work over the last three years and make recommendations for the next three years.

CONTEXT

Over the last three years, the Diocese of Kitgum (DoK) has been working with Tearfund to address the high rates of HIV transmission in the the area and bring whole life transformation to individuals and churches in the Diocese. They have been working working towards these twin objectives through two projects.

The first was an integrated HIV response project working in five communities with the following objectives:

- To reduce the rate of HIV infection by 50% in target communities.
- To improve access to treatment and adherence to treatment among people living with HIV and AIDS by 90%.
- To empower 10,000 individuals to improve their livelihoods and psychosocial wellbeing.

The second was a Church and Community Transformation (CCT) project, working in 28 churches across nine deaneries with the following objectives:

- To have 200 people in Diocesan leadership embrace CCT, becoming empowered to mobilise 28 local churches to bring whole life transformation for their entire communities.
- To strengthen and equip 3000 church members from the 28 churches, giving them the confidence to mobilise their communities through the CCT model.
- To integrate advocating local government and issues such as HIV, Gender or Child Protection in to the CCT.¹

¹ Photo: Charlotte Flowers/Tearfund

THE EVALUATION

In the early part of 2018, before starting a new 3 year project in April, the DoK conducted an evaluation of both projects. This evaluation will help shape future work, and was conducted with the following objectives:

- To review the effectiveness of the different elements of the HIV response
- To review the progress made in the CCT project
- To make recommendations for the next phase of the work in Kitgum

A team that combined DoK staff, together with staff from two other local partners (ACET Uganda and PAG) used the following methods to collect data on the work that had gone on to this point:

- A review of existing project data
- Organised Focus Group discussions with members of selected communities
- Semi-structured Interviews with individuals who had taken part in specific initiatives

As the vast majority of primary beneficiaries have come from local churches, it was decided to use them as a conduit for the research.²



² Photo: Charlotte Flowers/Tearfund

CONCLUSIONS

THE HIV RESPONSE PROJECT

The evaluation found the HIV response was doing a good job increasing awareness around HIV within communities. The approaches used were good at involving people of all ages in the project, with staff using school clubs and church groups to reach children and young people (ensuring young people who could not attend school were included). Meanwhile parents or adults are involved through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) and *Faithful Household*³ activities.

What's more, the increased awareness helped prompt people to seek services on offer including HIV Counselling and Testing and information on safer sex, all of which contributed to a reduction in the rate of transmission in those communities.

For people living with HIV, the project provided better access to treatment. Furthermore, those people with access to the treatment were more likely to keep to treatment regimes. The project also had a positive effect on these people's quality of life. This positive change was achieved through VSLAs, which improved livelihoods, allowing people to pay school fees and medical bills. It also helped improve psychosocial well being through counselling and community Bible study groups.

However, while the impact was good, the evaluation highlighted areas where the project could improve. Firstly, as many of the approaches were limited to church members, the reach of the project was smaller than it might be. Secondly, the high degree of mobility among young people changing schools or moving to look for jobs has affected school and church groups; experienced members who might have helped lead activities have moved on.

THE CCT PROJECT

The evaluation showed that the CCT project has also had a positive effect.⁴ Participating churches showed increased attendance in church services and much improved relationships with other Christian denominations. Churches and their leaders have embraced the process which is empowering individuals and transforming their mindsets. There was also evidence that communities were beginning to think of the most vulnerable people living among them, and that women were becoming more involved in decision making.



³ The Faithful Household is a family focussed approach that aims to prevent the transmission of HIV by strengthening relationships and encouraging behaviour change through training and counselling for couples

⁴ For more detail on the positive effects of CCT, we recommend reading this excellent independent report https://learn.tearfund.org/en/themes/church/church_and_community_mobilisation/studying_the_impact_of_ccm_using_quip_methodology/

However, there are also areas where the CCT project needs to grow and develop. While church leaders have embraced CCT, they need to be better equipped to lead the process. The project has also had a limit in its impact as it was only being implemented in 28 churches across the Diocese.

There is also a need to find better ways of engaging women and young people with CCT, something that has been difficult recently.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE

For the vast majority of people in Kitgum, farming is their primary source of income. The survey noted that the area is particularly vulnerable to changing weather patterns and environmental degradation. So to see communities across the Diocese thrive, improving agricultural skills and reducing vulnerability to disasters will be vital.

Not only will this be a benefit in itself, it will also help increase the impact of other interventions, such as savings groups where the amount people can save depends on the success of their harvest. It will also help to improve and consolidate the impact of both the HIV response and CCT work, as good livelihoods mean people have more time to devote to project activities.



RECOMMENDATIONS

SCALING UP

The evaluation identified scaling up the CCT work as a key priority, even ahead of other projects where the results were easier to measure, with **the aim to expand the project to include all churches in the Diocese**. To make the scaling up easier and more sustainable, two further recommendations were made:

1. **Translating the CCT materials into local languages:** This will make it easier to run training and will help everyone, especially facilitators understand the material better.
2. **Introducing an element of cost sharing:** In order to make the programme sustainable, participating communities will contribute to the cost of the training. While this might seem counterintuitive, in other areas of Uganda it has increased commitment to the process, enriched the training, as well as making it sustainable.

EXPANDING THE SCOPE

As well as expanding the scale of the CCT work, the evaluation recommended **integrating other issues into the training**. Given the reliance on agriculture in the area, this will include preparing for and responding to disasters like droughts through sustainable farming techniques; help to find other ways of improving livelihoods; training to help communities advocate with local government.

CCT will provide a sustainable way of delivering materials from the HIV response, including the *Faithful House* materials. The evaluation recommended expanding these materials to address gender-based violence related issues in the community.

CONCENTRATING ON YOUTH

In both the HIV response and the CCT project, the approach to engage and work with young people needs to be addressed. Firstly, the HIV response needs to be adapted to take into account the fact that young people will move location more often than adults.

In the CCT project, there has been no deliberate inclusion of youth. This needs to be addressed as well, as the earlier CCT is embraced by everyone in a community, the greater the impact.

Finally, to help reduce unemployment among young adults and to increase self reliance, the evaluation recommended providing vocational skills training for young people.

OTHER CONCLUSIONS

Other conclusions the evaluation has drawn include:

- Studies have shown that VSLAs tend to have a shortage of money for lending at the beginning of the cycle⁵ because they share out 100% of their savings at the end of the cycle. To create more consistency,

⁵ VSLAs have a cycle where they run for a set period during which members save and take out loans. At the end of that period, members get back what they saved plus the interest they accumulated.

there is need to consider encouraging VSLAs to share out only certain percentage of their savings, for instance share 60% and leave 40% to continue with at the beginning of the cycle.

- There is a need to consider expanding the *Faithful Household* methodology to address gender based violence in the community.
- Project staff need to consider more intensive and regular monitoring of the project, rather than relying on desk appraisal.
- It would be wise to develop a clear exit strategy that leaves a church and it's community more empowered as the project phases out, helping to make the project more sustainable.
- It is important to ensure all the staff are well acquainted with the DoK's policies and guidelines.

Moving forward, these two projects are being integrated to form one project, increasing the impact of the work. CCT will help to open doors through envisioning, and the HIV response will complement and bridge the gaps which can't be handled with CCT approaches in isolation.



STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

SAMUEL'S STORY



Samuel*⁶ (pictured left⁷) was one members of Pederyam PAG Church to take part in the CCT training in Omiya Anyima. In the first bible study on *Church Awakening* which talked about *God's purpose for His people* Samuel realised that God wants people to work for a living as part of His design for life in all its fullness. This revelation prompted Samuel to start some projects to help generate an income for his family which he could use to improve their living conditions.

Samuel realised that there were lots of plants in his area and that many people like eating honey, so he started keeping bees. He had plenty of space amongst the plants, so initially he started ten beehives, but he hopes to add more with time. Simply by using the income from the beehives, Samuel has been able to meet all of his daily expenses, including hospital bills.

But Samuel did not stop there. He decided that it would be a good idea to conserve the environment, especially as his bees rely on it's flowers for the honey they produce. So he planted 100 Eucalyptus trees. They will help protect the soil, and over time, will also provide him with an him an income. In fact, Samuel is so positive about the future that he is preventing unnecessary tree felling around his home. He wants to protect the natural forest in his area and encourage his neighbours to do the same.



(left) Samuel infront of one of his hives (right) A close up of Samuel's bee hive. (Photos:) Diocese of Kitgum/Tearfund

TRANSFORMATION IN OGUDA CHURCH

⁶ Name changed

⁷ Photo Diocese of Kitgum/Tearfund



The CCT project in Kitgum started the same year that Oguda Church in Lagoro was set up. Although Oguda is a very young church, CCT has given them a lot. The church started out meeting in the shade of a tree (see top picture right⁸), but thanks to CCT they have a vision to construct a new church building and a plan to make this vision a reality.

On the new church's land they started by planting 100 banana suckers - a type of shoot that banana trees produce, which can be planted like a cutting from a tree - (see bottom picture right). The income from these bananas will help fund the new church building.

But even more is happening thanks to CCT. It led the church to start a nursery school in a local village, and from the start there were lots of children enrolled.

CCT has also grown the unity and commitment of church members. They are doing more works in church and many have begun working to improve their livelihoods, growing crops like cassava and sorghum in greater quantities or keeping more livestock.



PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for the team in Kitgum that God would keep them safe in their work.
- Pray that the team will come up with effective ways of engaging young people in CCT
- Pray for the expansion of the project, that the new churches would embrace CCT and that the work would reach more people in existing communities.
- Praise God for the success that the project has already had and the number of lives already transformed by it.
- Pray that the new approaches, particularly integrating the CCT project with the HIV response, and also adding agriculture training would go smoothly and team would manage the change well.
- Pray that as the project expands, God will provide churches with enough that they can contribute to the costs of the project to ensure it remains sustainable.

⁸ Photos: Diocese of Kitgum/Tearfund

THANK YOU



Following Jesus where the need is greatest

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