



# Faith in development: Transcript

## Season 3: Church and Community Transformation

### Summary keywords

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### Speakers

Pete Dawson, Bethany Sikes, Peninah Kayitesi

### Episode 3: Stories of the church in action

#### Pete Dawson 00:12

Hello and welcome back to season three of the Faith in Development podcast, brought to you by Tearfund, a Christian relief and development agency working in over 50 countries around the world. This is a podcast of storytelling and conversation as we explore different areas of development through the lens of faith. Drawing on the wealth of incredible people who'll share their learning and experience. This season we're focusing on the church and why Tearfund believes working with the church is critical for ending global poverty. I'm Pete Dawson and as always, I'm joined by my co-host, Bethany Sykes. Hey, Bethany.

#### Bethany Sikes 00:48

Hey Pete.

#### Pete Dawson 00:49

So, Bethany, last episode we were learning about how Tearfund's CCT – our church and community transformation model – brings positive, whole-life transformation to communities and how this is linked to poverty. So Bethany, could you give us a quick recap on the last episode?

### **Bethany Sikes 01:03**

Yeah, definitely. So we were looking at how Tearfund understands poverty. And at Tearfund, we believe that poverty is much broader than just income or economics. We look at the whole person and want them to experience fullness of life, as it says in John 10:10. And based on this, we have designed a framework for holistic transformation and called the Light Wheel, which has nine aspects of wellbeing that we want to see transformation in.

### **Pete Dawson 01:28**

Fantastic. Now, you mentioned the Light Wheel. That was something we covered in a previous episode. So I encourage you, if you've not listened to that, I encourage you, it'll just give so much context to what we're talking about today. But, Bethany, we have evidence that Tearfund's model of working with the church – CCT – is bringing this kind of whole-life transformation.

### **Bethany Sikes 01:45**

Yeah we do. So we wanted to measure the impact of CCT on individuals' lives, which is why we commissioned our largest ever independent research study, Local Church, Lasting Transformation, so inspired by the Light Wheel, we devised 23 questions about people's wellbeing across social, personal, economic and spiritual factors. And then we compared that with people living in communities where CCT's happening and places where it hasn't started yet. And the results showed that wellbeing was higher for people living in CCT communities, even for people who live there but don't actually directly participate in CCT.

### **Pete Dawson 02:20**

That's pretty incredible. So this episode, what are we looking at?

### **Bethany Sikes 02:25**

Well, now that we know some of the impact that communities experience through CCT, we're going to take a step back and explore what it looks like in practice. What it looks like when a church goes through the CCT process and starts to reach out and meet the needs of their community.

### **Pete Dawson 02:41**

So in this episode we have the amazing privilege of being joined online by our colleague Peninah Kayitesi. I had the immense privilege of spending some time with Peninah a couple of years ago in Rwanda, where

Peninah's from, and getting to see firsthand the impact of CCT. And she's involved in supporting church and community transformation work all over East and Central Africa.

So, Peninah, a big welcome to you. Thanks so much for joining us today. You are, in fact, calling from Rwanda, which – the joy of technology, this is amazing. Could you just begin by telling us a little bit about yourself, who you are, and maybe how long you've been working for Tearfund?

Thank you. I'm Peninah Kayitesi, the CCT advisor of East and Central Africa region, and I'm from Rwanda and I've been in Tearfund for 11 years. I'm really glad to be in this interview.

### **Bethany Sikes 03:58**

And actually we worked with Peninah on the Local Church, Lasting Transformation study. So I'm really excited for us to dig into that in this conversation.

### **Pete Dawson 04:07**

Yeah. So during this podcast, we've been learning about how people go through like the mindset shift when they start the process of CCT – church and community transformation. But my question to you Peninah, to begin with – so the process from having that mindset shift to actually taking action in community, how do churches go about doing that?

### **Peninah Kayitesi 04:27**

So, the journey of transformation is a process. And, it starts by, of course, envisioning the church leaders, because we want them to buy in and, you know, feel that this is our mandate. And the role of Tearfund is bringing them together, envision them on the integral mission and the theory of change of Tearfund. And after that, we start the journey with those who are buying in. So we start by again envisioning pastors in the locality we are starting, and we train their facilitators. It's a long journey, but it is not taking longer to start doing some actions in the community. Because when you start the first Bible studies with them and you go through the resource mobilisation and you start with them building relationship with their community, people start thinking, 'Wow, we need these, we need these.' And they start mapping the area to us, search the needs, in the area and prioritise their needs because sometimes there are many! You know, needs sometimes are very many in the community. And when they are using the Light Wheel tool to assess their needs, they realise that they need, they have many things, especially on living faith, on personal relationships, on capabilities or environment protection assets, their social connection influencing – they need many things in their lives. Finally, after assessing their needs, they also go through the resource assessment and they try to match the resource and their needs by using their own, you know, the available

resources. And we've seen that many things happen at individual level, at church level, at the community level, even at the national level. So I have many stories of transformation around that. As you know, poverty is not just brought by the lack of material assets. It's the entire life. If I can say to the holistic – when we have this broken relationship with God, relationship with self, with others and with the environment, that's what causes poverty. And I've seen that this is practical, because I remember one time when I was visiting the field, a group of men told us how they used to be drug users. And because of that, they were very vulnerable and poor. But after going through the CCT process and change their mindset and even get saved and things have changed in their marriage, in their communities, but also they started doing business. That's the living faith, the restoration of God. When it happens, things have changed. I have many, many, many, many case studies to share with you, but I've seen that poverty is holistic and restoring people, you need to restore their entire wellbeing. Not just one thing. That's what we see. And the same for the church. I've seen the transformation happening in the church. And you know, church is full of resources. And sometimes people don't know that the church is full of resources. When, for example, I start with the human souls, imagine how big is the human resource. Because in the church, that's where we have finances, that's where we have lawyers, that's where we have the agronomist, that's where we have, you know, any resource you want to know about people, they're there. I've seen this in many ways in the church, in the communities. If, for example, I give you an example in the community, I've seen it also in Burundi, where after assessing the needs of their communities, they realise that they have a very big need of road. They didn't have a road, they were not connected with others. And they said, even though we have many needs here, we have the needs of health, we have needs of building our sanctuary, we have needs [of our] own personal issues. But we need to start with this one, because what we do in CCT, we teach people to prioritise their needs, according to the means they have, but also according to the priority, how they see the priority of their needs. And they said the first priority for us is, building, you know, digging a road. They were digging a road of ten kilometres, and they started doing it because they wanted to be connected. And they said the second one is building a health centre, because here we have a programme of health. There are women we are delivering from home and children who are always... died because of that. And they were having problems over health and they started building also the health centres and now they have about five. But when you count the money they used to build those health centres, including the detail where they get it because they are very vulnerable when you see they don't have many things, they don't have cars, they don't have, you know, these material things, but they have resources around them. So what we do is just to help them to understand they have resources, and we help them to know how to unlock those resources and they use them. Really, the church is very special because especially in Africa, I don't know how it is in... at your end, but in Africa, the church is very special because it is everywhere. It is at every village. And being at every village and having the mandate of being the light and the salt of the world,

that's very important. And it's like a sleeping giant, and that's why really I like the philosophy of Tearfund, of awakening that sleeping giant, because, when it's well equipped, because sometimes they need to be equipped, when the church is well equipped it's easy to start responding to the needs of its immediate community. So for me, I see it as very important to awaken the church for its mandate. But also I believe that we need to equip the church to be able to do its mandate because sometimes they're ignorant of different things.

### **Bethany Sikes** 11:34

Yeah. I love that image of the sleeping giant. One of the things we looked at in the Local Church, Lasting Transformation study was actually tracking that impact of what happens when the church is awakened and is active in its communities. And, you know, you mentioned that story from Burundi about a church building a road and a health centre. And that's one of the ways that the wider community starts to experience the benefits of CCT, even if they're not directly participating in it at the church. So we actually were able to track that spillover effect in this study. And we find that even non-participants living in CCT communities were eight percentage points more likely to report higher economic, social, personal or spiritual outcomes. And they were 18 per cent more satisfied with their lives than people living in communities where CCT has not started yet. So even if you don't participate in CCT and live in that community, I think that the statistics show that you're experiencing benefits.

### **Pete Dawson** 12:42

So amazing. And it just shows how CCT creates far-reaching change beyond the immediate sort of people who are engaged with it. Peninah, could you just give us some examples of the types of community projects that you've seen churches implement after starting the CCT process? What's been the fruit? How is it outworked in practice in terms of projects?

### **Peninah Kayitesi** 13:06

Thank you. I've seen many. A self-help group is a group of 15 to 20 people. Normally it's very easy to learn when you are in a small group than when you are in a mass in a congregation. But when it's a small group of 15 to 20, they can learn more. And when they come together, no matter what they do, especially in our CCT approach, they sit together, they do the Bible study together. They can share, you know, their stories together. And if for example, I have a programme at home and they say, I have, my child is sick, I need prayers. They can pray for that person. Or if, someone is hospitalised, they can go and visit that person, it's like a family. Then they do also saving, they do loaning. They do small initiatives, businesses or initiatives, you know, to respond to the needs of their community. Because they can say, you know, in this community,

you have this kind of problem, let us see how we can resolve it. And different groups can come together and start resolving the issue of their church or the issues of their communities. It's a great thing, in the CCT self-help groups, it has been very, very useful to different churches. I heard a very nice testimony from one lady. She's a member of one of the self-help groups in the church. She told us that, 'You couldn't go without listening to my testimony.' She came at the last minute. She said, 'I always like to give my testimony, because before I was very shy, I couldn't talk when I was in a group like this. But I learned to speak from my group. And because they started asking me to read the Bible study.' You know, they were doing it in rotation. And because she was doing that, she started speaking. But also she told us that she was very, hopeless because she was thinking that the husband was the only one who was the breadwinner in the family. And the husband didn't have a very good job, and they were always having problems at home. And she told us from the self-help group, she's now, she's learned to save. But also she received a loan from the self-help group, and now she's an owner of a shop in the community.

In another community, they told us how they learned to farm for commercialisation. Before, they didn't know it's something possible, but they learned that when they are in a small group, in the self-help groups, there is a power of numbers. And they started mapping the area. They knew that there is a factory there. They didn't know [before] that there is a factory, but from their trainings they learned that they have a factory in that community, because normally in CCT what we do, we help them map the area to see what are the infrastructures which are there, what are other resources around them. So after learning that they have a factory which is processing the banana, they started planting banana in big quantity. And they even involved the district agronomist to come. They did a lot of advocacy around that, they came and they started selling them. Finally, that community became a community of banana farmers. And they started taking the banana to that factory.

I can continue giving you stories, stories, stories, and I...

### **Bethany Sikes 17:07**

The thing that I love about your stories, Peninah, is it really shows that CCT is not prescriptive because each community maps out their own resources and their own needs, and then they decide, as the experts in their community, what needs to be done, what resources they have to do. And I just love in the stories you've just shared, they're so different from each other. And yet there's that common thread.

## **Peninah Kayitesi 17:33**

Maybe what I can tell you is that CCT is contextualised, because what we are doing here is not [what] others will be doing, it depends on the context. It depends on the needs, it depends on different things, and also it depends on how you have facilitated the community to do things. So that's why really it's not similar everywhere. When you visit one community you will see that their priority is in this or that or that, because it depends on the issues.

## **Pete Dawson 18:10**

I had the privilege, Peninah, of coming out to Rwanda a couple of years ago, and I was really surprised sometimes at the simplicity of what was put in place that brought huge change. So, I can't remember the name of the community, but there was one community who'd been farming fruit particularly. It was bananas again, and they'd just not been yielding what they used to, and that was causing them to slip back into poverty, struggling to provide educational resources for the children. And malnutrition was an issue. And it was the simple thing through the church of diversifying the farming technique. And it was the case of struggling to survive and the difference between thriving because it's something so simple. And I was amazed at the difference that it brought, something so simple.

## **Peninah Kayitesi 18:55**

Yeah, you will see it everywhere. I've been in Burundi and they have a very nice programme on malnutrition, because, in that area, malnutrition is a big issue. And the churches decided to have the kitchen, you know, to help mothers to learn how to prepare their food. Sometimes the food is there, but they don't know how to prepare the food, and their children, they are not aware, because of that ignorance. So, as you say, they are always innovative in CCT and they do different things.

## **Pete Dawson 19:37**

And the other thing that really impacted me, Peninah, as well – and again, I got to hear story after story everywhere we went – was obviously, you see the material difference in terms of material poverty. But what struck me with anything was just sort of internal transformation in people. There was one lady I met in particular, I think she was from more of a rural area in Rwanda, and at the local church they'd started a CCT process. And I think her house was damaged or destroyed in a mudslide. And they came alongside her and helped to rebuild it. And she just used the phrase, 'It was like God was visiting me'. I was like, oh my goodness. And she encountered the love of Jesus, and then she got involved and her life's just gone from

desperation to absolutely thriving, but not just from the material stuff, it's the... she's spiritually alive as well. It was just incredible.

### **Peninah Kayitesi 20:26**

Yeah, you are right. You're right. You know, that's what we always see in our CCT work. They are always innovative and if after assessing their needs, they respond to different needs, you can't tell how many they have. Because I've seen them, supporting the shelterless, to get the shelter. I've seen them supporting the elderly. I've seen them supporting the vulnerable, and many things are done. And I praise God for that.

### **Pete Dawson 20:57**

Fantastic. Bethany, I've got a quick question for you. In a more traditional way of doing development has been that we see a need, we try and fix it, so there's a need for education, we'll build a school. If there's a need for clean water, we'll give money to go and build a well or build a hospital. But that's not kind of, it's not how CCT works. This is about empowering people to do it for themselves. But with that said, when there are those needs, like how typical is it for churches going through the CCT process to build facilities in their community that are needed?

### **Bethany Sikes 21:33**

Yeah, that's a great question. And this is something we explored in the Local Church, Lasting Transformation study. So we had 201 communities in the study that were doing CCT, and nine out of ten of those facilitators in those communities reported that their communities have new or improved community assets after participating in CCT. So when I unpack that a bit more, those CCT facilitators told us that 44 per cent of these communities had a new or improved school; 42 per cent reported having a new or improved water access, like a well; 35 per cent reported having a new or improved road; and 21 per cent reported having a new or improved health clinic. So in some cases, they're building that from scratch, brand new. Other times they're taking what's there already existing and making it better. But what's really exciting is that all those initiatives were driven by the church themselves. That wasn't a Tearfund project coming in and building it, a health clinic or a new school. That was the church saying 'Well, we've started CCT, this is something we want to do in our in our communities.' And, you know, we just talked about the wide range of things that they're doing. I don't think that's capturing the breadth of it at all. But those were four areas that we asked about and heard from the church facilitators themselves.



## **Pete Dawson 23:01**

Fantastic.

## **Peninah Kayitesi 23:03**

You are right. I don't know, maybe in your country, if you are giving people lifts. But, in Africa, it's common when you are heading somewhere, and someone is on the road waiting for a lift, they request, 'Please give me a lift.' And you take that person to one stage to another, and maybe you are not going to the same direction, and you leave that person there and he continues, you know, his journey. The same for CCT. What we do, we start with our own resources. What we have around us. And it's like we are starting our journey because we don't know that we will get a lift from somewhere, or someone. And we start our journey. We use the resources available. We do all we could do, finally, when you get somewhere, we can do advocacy and get other resources from somewhere else.

Especially for the Burundi case I shared with you. They started building the health centre with their own resources. And I was amazed to see how much money they use, around 200 million – imagine – of Burundian francs. But it's a lot. And they mobilised that much money. But at the end they realised that even though the health centre is now completed, but they needed some equipment which were very, very expensive. And they need again, the staff, the nurses, paying staff every month for the community is not something easy. That's why they start involving the government. They started involving other key donors to support them. And it's like giving them a lift because they were continuing their journey. But they need some help really, to get somewhere. I know that even though the government will come in to support them, maybe to pay because they accepted it to pay the staff for them. And even other people will come in to bring some equipment. That will not stop them to continue their journey. They will continue with or without external support. They will continue doing their business because they are already aware of their needs. They are already aware of the resources available. They are already aware that they need to continue the journey, the journey continues with or without external support. So that's what I can say about how we are really mobilising the church, the community of using their own resources. Of course, sometimes we need support from here and there, but to not stop us to continue working.

## **Bethany Sikes 26:04**

Yeah. That's amazing. I actually love that metaphor.

### **Pete Dawson 26:07**

So with these extra actions of building facilities, you said sometimes extra money can come internally from country, like the government. Do churches have to get extra funding from Tearfund to take these kind of actions, or is that done in-country, amongst themselves?

### **Peninah Kayitesi 26:03**

Don't really think that Tearfund who will bring money. We are looking around at the map of our area and they see other stakeholders who can even support, not only Tearfund. That's what we normally send people in, we send people to map the area to see other stakeholders who are there, to see who they are dealing with. With other people, not just with Tearfund, but Tearfund when they have some projects, they can come and compliment what CCT is doing.

### **Bethany Sikes 26:58**

One of the things that's always struck me when I've been researching the impacts of CCT in people's lives is, is that commitment to action in the community. It really cannot be underestimated, even when resources are low, we hear lots of stories about communities finding a way to continue and pushing forward. So we did some research in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Bolivia and Nepal about the changes people experienced in their lives during the implementation of CCT in their communities, and in all four of those places, the communities we were working in had experienced some kind of significant shock, whether that was a drought or a conflict, an economic crash or or even Covid 19. And despite those significant challenges, every single one of those communities had either continued or increased their investment in community projects and aspects. Which is just so encouraging to hear, because I think often you can think, oh, a challenge comes and everything stops. But actually, because we're envisioning the church, the church is going to, you know, it's always there. And like you said, Peninah, it's the sleeping giant, it's in every village. And it's going to continue regardless of the other circumstances.

### **Pete Dawson 28:12**

Is there anything else, Peninah, that you'd like to share or would like to add? Anything you get particularly excited about that's happening at the moment?

### **Peninah Kayitesi 28:20**

So I like CCT very much. I've seen, in my experience of 11 years in Tearfund, in CCT, I've seen people being really well equipped and empowered and engaged to transform their churches, their communities, but also

their personal life, in a holistic manner. And I like that holistic transformation because I believe that poverty is not caused by the lack of material, but it's caused by different things, spheres of life. It is caused by the four broken relationships. We always talk about four broken relationships, and sometimes people don't understand what it means. But the broken relationship with God, broken relationship with self, with others and with the creation could be a source of poverty. And when we are in poverty, we need to always think about all those spheres of life, for the holistic transformation. That's what I can say. Thank you.

### **Pete Dawson 29:38**

Fantastic, brilliant. Thank you so much for sharing with us. Just the insight, the stories. I know you could spend hours telling story after story because CCT is having a phenomenal impact, but we appreciate your wisdom, your insight and for all that you're doing. So thank you.

### **Peninah Kayitesi 29:54**

I can say that CCT is becoming my lifestyle.

### **Pete Dawson 29:58**

Oh, that's so good. I love it. Thanks so much.

### **Bethany Sikes 30:01**

Thanks, Peninah.

### **Peninah Kayitesi 30:02**

Thank you too.

### **Pete Dawson 30:13**

Well, Bethany, I just thought that was incredible and I could spend a lot longer listening to what I'm sure would be story after story after story of lives and communities transformed. That was probably the takeaway for me. We can talk about CCT on this big scale of what it is and how it's rolling out and its impact, but I think what I love about Peninah is she roots it in stories of individuals, cause that's what it's about, it's about individuals, who impact communities, which ultimately can impact nations. It was so encouraging to hear. But Bethany, what was your takeaway?

### **Bethany Sikes 30:43**

Yeah, I agree, just so many amazing stories there. And what I find really exciting as well as, you know, hearing all these individual stories of these communities doing CCT. But in, through the study, the Local Church, Lasting Transformation study, we have evidence to show what scale this is happening at. So we know that nine out of ten CCT communities in the study went on to improve or build a new community project or community asset, like a school or a road and just hearing from Peninah, like what that actually looks like in practice and what impact that has, it's really exciting.

### **Pete Dawson 31:17**

Amazing. And so what are we going to be exploring in the next episode?

### **Bethany Sikes 31:21**

So I love this idea that, or this image, that Peninah introduced us to, this idea of a lift. So picking people up along the way – sometimes you need to just be taking them part of the way. So we're going to be digging into that idea in the next episode when we look at advocacy, so what happens when churches are reaching out to needs in their community, but actually they need to get involved with their local government or even their national government to start tackling some of those needs. So we're going to be hearing from our colleague Chalwe, who supports CCT advocacy across the world, and we're gonna be hearing some stories, and also some evidence around the effectiveness of CCT advocacy.

### **Pete Dawson 31:59**

Fantastic. And lastly, how can people find out more about anything we've covered on this episode?

### **Bethany Sikes 32:05**

Yes. You can head over to Tearfund Learn, which is our hub of thousands of free resources. And you can actually find out more information about self-help groups, so you can find those at [learn.tearfund.org](https://learn.tearfund.org). And for the Local Church, Lasting Transformation study, you can add a /CCT-impact for that one.

### **Pete Dawson 32:24**

We hope you can join us for the next episode of the Faith in Development podcast. See you then.