



Faith in development: Transcript

Season 3: Church and Community Transformation

Summary keywords

Church and Community Transformation, CCT, State of Life, the Light Wheel, wellbeing, holistic wellbeing, whole-life transformation, community, research, outcome, outcomes, data

Speakers

Pete Dawson, Bethany Sikes, Lizzie Trotter

Episode 5: The value of CCT

Pete Dawson 00:10

Hello and welcome back to season three of the Faith and 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 will share their learning and experience.

This season we're focusing on the church and why Tearfund believes that working with the church is critical for ending global poverty. My name is Pete Dawson and once again I'm joined by the wonderful Bethany Sikes, who's co-hosting. Hey, Bethany.

Bethany Sikes 00:47

Hey Pete, how's it going?

Pete Dawson 00:49

All very good, thank you. So last episode, we heard about how church and community transformation, or CCT for short, encourages churches to go beyond what they can do themselves to advocate for change. So, Bethany, can you give us a quick recap from last episode?

Bethany Sikes 01:05

Yeah, honestly, I think I'm still on a bit of a high from the last episode, and just hearing so many inspiring stories from Chalwe, who's our CCT advocacy advisor. She told us so many amazing stories about churches advocating for change in their community. We heard a story from Zimbabwe where a church heads, through the CCT process, looked at what they needed in their community, and they decided to pool their resources and build a medical centre. But then they went even further and advocated for the local government to get the right medical equipment and staff. You know, just amazing to see a church starting just from a simple set of Bible studies and going all that way. Then she told us some even more exciting stories around national level advocacy as well. So yeah, some really exciting examples of what happens when you start this really... plant this small seed in a church, and it just grows and grows and grows from there.

Pete Dawson 01:58

Amazing. So what are we looking at this episode?

Bethany Sikes 02:02

So looking back over the series so far, we've learned about how church and community transformation impacts the individual, and they have a mindset change, and then how that starts to change the church and then the wider community. What if we could quantify the size of that impact and put a monetary value on it? That's what we're going to be looking at in this episode, and it's something that we did in the Local Church, Lasting Transformation study. And so in this episode, we're going to be unpacking this concept of social value or social impacts. And what evidence there is to back up our claim that CCT creates high social returns and has great value. So we've got some really exciting data to be unpacking. But don't worry, it's really accessible, really exciting, and honestly, really, really fascinating.

Pete Dawson 02:47

Great. I'm looking forward to this. And just the fact that we have robust data on something that has an incredible impact is great. But there are lots of terms you just mentioned which I don't recognise at all.

Bethany Sikes 03:00

Yeah, don't worry about it. We're just going to be joined by Lizzie Trotter from State of Life, the organisation we worked with on Local Church, Lasting Transformation, and together will be unpacking this concept with you. And the reason that I've actually been really excited about this episode as well, I've been looking forward to it the most, because I do genuinely believe it's some of the most compelling evidence that you'll hear about the impact of working with the church to end extreme poverty.

Pete Dawson 03:24

Amazing. Well, let's dive straight into it. So in this episode, as Bethany said, we're joined by Lizzie Trotter from the organisation State of Life, who Tearfund worked with on the Local Church, Lasting Transformation study. Now, State of Life are an independent, secular specialist in measuring wellbeing and social value. Now I'm going to say for this episode we are in the glorious north of England, my favourite part of the country, and in my home city, Bethany, of Sheffield. And we're actually recording this in the centre of Sheffield. So during the podcast you might hear the odd beeping horn or drilling, but you know why.

Well welcome, Lizzie. A massive thank you for joining us today. So over the past few episodes, we've been hearing lots about the Local Church, Lasting Transformation research study, which I know you've worked on. Could you just begin by introducing yourself, letting us know what you do and who are State of Life?

Lizzie Trotter 04:26

Sure. Well, thank you very much for having me. So my name is Lizzie Trotter, and I'm head of social impact and wellbeing at State of Life. So State of Life, we're an organisation who basically help other organisations to measure their social impact. And we can get into a bit more detail of what that means in a bit, maybe. But yeah, we've been working with Tearfund for the last couple of years on this really exciting project. So it's great to be here today to talk about it.

Pete Dawson 04:49

Amazing. Great to have you with us. So I'm having this conversation with you, Bethany and Lizzie, who are pretty well versed in this area of social impact, or we sometimes call it social value, we might use that interchangeably. But I guess first things first. What is social impact or social value?

Lizzie Trotter 05:08

Sure. So social impact or social value is basically looking at the difference that a given investment makes in the world. So if we've got a certain investment or we're delivering a certain programme or project, we want

to know the difference that it makes. And we want to measure that so that we can make sure that the resources that we have are making the biggest difference that they can in the world.

Pete Dawson 05:28

I get you. And so that's what it is. How do you actually go about calculating the social value of something, especially in our context of CCT – church and community transformation?

Lizzie Trotter 05:41

Sure. So social value has been, kind of been talked about for over a decade now. And there's been increasingly a focus on what it means. So now in the UK, social value equals wellbeing. And that's the government have defined it as such in the Treasury Green Book. So it's just the kind of fancy document, you know, that comes out of government, its bible of how to do evaluation and appraisal. But it basically says if you want, if you're claiming to improve the quality of life of people, through whichever way, you need to be demonstrating that you're having a positive impact on their wellbeing. So that's why wellbeing is such a key measure when we're talking about social value. And the reason that it's become this big focus on wellbeing is because it's ultimately where all the other outcomes lead. So we're talking about improving people's lives in whatever way, whether it's about reducing food poverty or increasing their confidence or employment or whatever. Ultimately, it's like, why are we doing that? Why are we doing that? Why are we doing that? It's because we want to increase their wellbeing. So that is ultimately why wellbeing has the focus that it does. And as there's been this increased focus around wellbeing, this wellbeing science has developed. So basically the ways that everybody should be measuring it and ultimately then valuing it.

Pete Dawson 06:52

Okay.

Bethany Sikes 06:53

And you can see why there's a nice synergy there between social value measurement and what we're doing with CCT. Because at the heart of CCT is people's wellbeing. And we had a whole episode where we looked at 'What is holistic wellbeing?' and why it's important to us and how Tearfund understands it. So you can understand why we were really excited by what State of Life can offer, which is this way of looking at social value with wellbeing kind of at its, at its heart. So maybe you could break down some of the steps of how we went about, well, how you went about calculating the social value of church and community transformation.

Lizzie Trotter 07:28

Sure. Well, we did do it together, like the Tearfund team were fantastic to work with. So I have to mention that. So yeah, the first thing that we did is worked out what we wanted to measure. So the way that wellbeing is defined, is that there's this measure of life satisfaction. So the question is, on a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with your life, with zero being not at all and ten being completely. So that is a standard measure that is now in loads of UK surveys but also increasingly other countries within the OECD definitely, so Canada, New Zealand, Australia and increasingly in the global south as well. So that life satisfaction question is really, really key. But we also work with the Tearfund team to develop these more holistic measure, as you said, Bethany, around other areas. And that was using the Light Wheel tool. That informed it a lot. So we measured that overall wellbeing measure, but then we also measured I think it was 23 other outcomes that we measured as well. So we kind of agreed with the team what we were going to measure. And then we worked out how we were going to measure those things.

Bethany Sikes 08:32

So would you say that the first step of calculating the social impact of CCT is to kind of put a figure to the benefit first, and then you take a step back and look more at the costs involved?

Lizzie Trotter 08:44

Yes, exactly. So that when you say that first stage where we're looking at the benefit, I mean that's quite a big stage.

Bethany Sikes 08:50

Yeah, it's almost the biggest stage.

Lizzie Trotter 08:53

Yeah, exactly. So if we wanted to look at, you know, the benefit that we're creating so we can then compare it to how much it cost to make that happen.

Bethany Sikes 09:02

Yeah. So do you remember when we talked about those 23 questions.

Pete Dawson 09:05

Yes.

Bethany Sikes 09:06

Yeah, so that covered people's personal, social, spiritual – what's the last one? I can't think. Economic, there we go. All their different areas of life. And one of those questions, one of the 23 questions, was this life satisfaction question. On a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with your life? Which is a tough question to answer. It's worth sitting with for a while and seeing what you think. And we found that people living in CCT communities were 27 per cent more satisfied with their lives than people living in communities where CCT's not started yet. And that was looking at where they place themselves on the, on the scale. Is that right, Lizzie?

Lizzie Trotter 09:44

That is right, yeah. And that is a key finding of the study. So, I mean, the strength of the study, a lot of it sits in the research design itself. So if we can get a little bit geeky for a minute...

Bethany Sikes 09:55

Love it. Let's do it.

Lizzie Trotter 09:57

So once we worked out what we wanted to measure and we developed a survey that was effectively going to collect the data on those outcomes that we were interested in, we then selected communities where CCT was happening, and a bunch of communities where CCT wasn't happening.

Pete Dawson 10:11

Okay, so you can measure contrast.

Lizzie Trotter 10:13

Yeah, exactly. So it gives us that point of comparison. And then within the communities where CCT was happening, they were at different stages in the process. So some had just started, some had been doing it for five years plus, and everywhere in between. So once we collected and analysed that data, we could understand not only the difference that CCT was making compared to those control communities, but also how it changed over time.

Pete Dawson 10:34

Yeah.

Bethany Sikes 10:35

So control communities refers to communities where CCT's not started yet. And the way that we picked those communities was they were really similar to the places that we were doing CCT already, and actually we intend to start CCT there in the next couple of years. So they've already kind of met our criteria. But yep, they're known as 'control'. And then people who live in the CCT communities, those are sort of 'treatment', to use the sort of scientific language.

Lizzie Trotter 11:00

Yeah. Wellbeing science.

Bethany Sikes 11:02

Yeah.

Lizzie Trotter 11:04

So, as part of this kind of increased focus on wellbeing and for it to be enabled to be included in cost-benefit analysis, which is effectively what we're talking about, the UK government has put a monetary value on wellbeing impacts, and this is the first time that they've done this right. So it's a huge step forward if you're interested in this area and a bit of a geek. But basically the UK government have said if you can move somebody one point up that nought-to-ten life satisfaction scale, it's worth X amount. And in a UK context that's £13,000. So in this study what we did is we adjusted that figure based on kind of median income in the countries we were working in. So that then enables us to put a monetary value in dollars on the wellbeing impact that CCT is having on the individuals.

Bethany Sikes 11:53

And that's called the WELLBY.

Lizzie Trotter 11:55

That's called the WELLBY, yeah. So it stands for Wellbeing Adjusted Life Year. And so that is a... that's basically a way that is now, you know, a consistent measure that you can say this intervention, this investment is resulting in or creating X pounds or dollars of wellbeing in the world.

Bethany Sikes 12:14

And one of the really innovative parts of the study is this is an established, an accepted methodology. But it's, as far as we're aware, not been applied in an African context before. So State of Life are at the cutting

edge of applying that and adapting it to outside of the UK context, specifically in, sort of, the countries we work in.

Pete Dawson 12:35

How does this enable us to compare with other areas of development? Because this is the first time this measure has been used. How do we then begin to compare with, and measure it against other areas of development, is that sort of possible because it's...

Lizzie Trotter 12:51

Well, yeah, as you say, it's in its infancy. So that it was in 2021 that the government guidance came out with this figure for a WELLBY, the monetary value. So it's early on in the UK context of actually applying it. But yeah, at State of Life we've been kind of one of the first to do it. But it's a really good question in terms of, you know, is this a good value, right? And is the result good or bad. And it's, I mean, the evidence is building in terms of what good looks like I suppose. But what we do see all the time, pretty much, is that if you're managing to target the people who need the intervention most, then you get a really big value. And I think that's what CCT is doing. And I think that's why the results here are so good.

Bethany Sikes 13:32

Well, we can take, we can dig into that a bit more. But we also spent some time looking at the costs involved, because you talked about it being a cost-benefit. So we've now quantified the benefit, but we also spent some time digging into the costs. So in the four countries that we worked with in the Local Church, Lasing Transformation study, Tearfund invested in CCT through making grants to partners, which go towards training and mentoring facilitators and investing in their ongoing learning as well as staff time. So, quite understandably, we can put a figure to that cost. But the sort of more tricky bit is putting a cost to the time and the resources that the facilitators, churches and communities that were engaged with CCT. So we – that was a big part of what the Tearfund staff were working on in the study. And so we looked at all the things that the communities contributed, and that could be anything from a facilitator preparing, for a CCT activity like a Bible study or the resources that a community mobilised for a community project. So that might be like building materials or raising funds for a scholarship. And so we basically found that, when you average that out, the contributions plus the volunteer hours were worth between £2,000 and £3,000 per community. And that's pretty significant when you think about the fact that we're working in communities where poverty is really prevalent. So this enables us to know that for every £1 invested in CCT by Tearfund, facilitators and communities have mobilised £7 worth of time and resources, so communities contribute seven times what Tearfund puts into CCT.

Pete Dawson 15:22

I mean, that's huge, isn't it? Like a small investment is going a really long way with CCT. Now we know the costs and the benefits of CCT, can you actually put in monetary terms the benefit and effectiveness of CCT?

Lizzie Trotter 15:37

Okay. So yeah, for every pound that's invested in CCT it creates £28 worth of wellbeing impact for the individuals.

Bethany Sikes 15:44

Yeah, and then if we break that down further and if we split out those costs that I just talked about. And so we know that every £1 invested in CCT by Tearfund leverages £7 worth of resources that the community themselves mobilise. That figure can go up to as high as £211 pounds worth of social value created, or £211 pounds worth of impact on a person's life satisfaction. And that's equivalent to that social return of 1 to 28. So one way that I find helpful to think about it is sort of with buckets. Bear with me on this. But if you throw all the costs into one bucket, and that's Tearfund investment, the time the facilitators take, community contribution, even that bucket of costs is outweighed by the positive impact of CCT by 28 times. So you got one bucket versus 28 buckets of good stuff, to be really technical.

Pete Dawson 16:41

So pretty much turning every £1 invested into CCT, alongside community contributions, can ultimately end up around £211 of value. That's right. Yeah, that's pretty amazing.

Bethany Sikes 16:55

And that's not tangible money. But we're talking about it's not saying it creates £211 extra in a community, but it's the value we talked about with the WELLBY, the value of that increased life satisfaction.

Pete Dawson 17:08

Can I ask a question to you, Lizzie? And this isn't a competitive comparing thing, but just out of interest, how does that compare to other areas of development in terms of investment and sort of, social value in return?

Lizzie Trotter 17:23

Yeah, it's big, it's good. It's a really positive impact. And, the rigor of the study was really high. So like, the Tearfund team were brilliant and we managed to, you know, we were really happy with the control communities and the level of analysis that was possible. Really, really brilliant. In terms of the, kind of the

ratio of the value that's being created is really, really good. It's in its infancy in an international development context. So this is really pioneering basically. But as I said, in terms of it's definitely getting to the people where there's a great need. And so I think that's reflected in the value that's being created because it's working really well. And it's enabling these communities to do so much themselves. I think that's the kind of power of it. But yeah, really positive finding and really excited for year two.

Pete Dawson 18:11

I have another question. So obviously Tearfund is a faith-based organisation. Now I've heard it said in some development circles that historically the church haven't always been taken that seriously when it comes to good development or development that's recognised as highly with its peers. Would you say this kind of changes that?

Lizzie Trotter 18:33

Interesting question. I mean, what I could say is that it seems like the church is very well placed in communities to make change happen. That's what I've seen from my position as a researcher. Yeah, I think it can just give the confidence that CCT is working. I mean, obviously there's lots of programmes that go on, and there isn't that level of research to actually tell you whether it's working or not. It's kind of implicitly assumed that it is. And there might be more qualitative studies that show. But this is a really rigorous quantitative analysis. So I think it's really nice to be able to hang on to that and say, look, this is really positive, let's keep going, because I think, you know. But then, you know, there's always more questions because these were four countries where it's worked. Context can be really specific. So, you know, there's there's always more questions to ask. But yeah.

Bethany Sikes 19:20

And you mentioned just there that you're excited for year two – maybe you could give us a little sneak peek of what's coming up in year two. I know we're still in data collection at the moment, so we've got no findings, but maybe you can tell us where it's happening and what's going on.

Lizzie Trotter 19:30

Yeah, still in data collection at the moment. So, Malawi, Nigeria and Bangladesh are the three countries.

Bethany Sikes 19:37

So going outside of Africa for the first time...

Lizzie Trotter 19:38

Yeah outside of Africa for the first time, in a Christian minority country. Which is quite a different context. And also in Nigeria, we had the challenge around megachurches and, you know, some different...

Bethany Sikes 19:51

Oh gosh, yeah!

Lizzie Trotter 19:52

Yeah. So like obviously really different countries with things working in different ways and Tearfund working in different ways, as well. But yeah, there's been lots of data collected already. We're starting to build the analytical models, so exciting times.

Bethany Sikes 20:06

Yeah, lots of lots of hard work ahead, but exciting at the same time. Yeah.

Pete Dawson 20:11

Well, my head's a little bit buzzing. I know there's a lot of information shared. Great information, and, Lizzie to put it to you just to close, obviously, you've been part of doing this study with Tearfund. For you, just what were the standout points in this study that get you, that made you think actually, wow, this is really having an impact.

Lizzie Trotter 20:31

I think for me it was that it was so overall-y positive. There weren't really any negative findings. And we do normally find some. But it was people in the CCT communities were reporting higher life satisfaction than those in the control communities. So it was just all about like the answers that you would want to be positive were positive. So I think for me it was just that every element, every question we asked, the answer was good.

Pete Dawson 21:00

Amazing. And for me that's so exciting moving forward. As you know, Bethany, we want to see 250,000 churches mobilised. And hearing robust, tangible data that gives confidence to this model, gives a really exciting prospect for the future.

Bethany Sikes 21:15

I think just yes, you know, we use this phrase in development, of, like, a theory of change. So basically you

map out, hypothetically, if everything goes to plan, what the sort of process of change will look like. You know, for us, that starts off with envisioning, a facilitator who then goes to their church and then, you know, we've talked about that journey over the course of this podcast. An individual has their mindset changed, then the church, and that spills out into the community. And to have data that validates that what we expect to be happening, is in fact, happening, and we can put figures on that and, you know, do some fancy statistics to kind of control for different factors and show that actually someone's exposure to CCT is having a difference in their lives. It gives you a huge amount of confidence that what we're doing is making a really positive difference.

Lizzie Trotter 22:02

I think for me, the fact it's based on 8,000 responses across four countries, practically the challenge of data collection and everything: amazing. Obviously with sample sizes like that, we achieve statistical significance, really robust analysis, and the results are just overwhelmingly positive. And I think for me, you know, it showed that the closer people are through CCT, the more they benefit. So if they're in the church and participating, they benefit more than the people who are just in the church. But then if they're in the church, they benefit more and the people who are just in the community, but they're still benefiting more in that community compared to a community where it isn't happening. So even if you're not part of the church, if you're in that community, you're still benefiting from CCT. So there's that really nice ripple effect which is reflected in the analysis.

Pete Dawson 22:48

Exciting times ahead. Well Lizzie, thanks so much for joining us. Really appreciate it.

Lizzie Trotter 22:51

Thank you.

Pete Dawson 23:04

Well, Bethany, I thought that was pretty incredible. I just love the fact that we've got such robust data on something that... we've always known it's having a great impact, but to see it and see the stats and the figures, I think is pretty incredible. And going back to the question that we asked at the beginning of this series, why does Tearfund work with the church? I think so much of this data just gives the answer as to why. So, I'm interested, what are some of your takeaways?

Bethany Sikes 23:32

Yeah, definitely. I think being able to quantify that impact is so exciting. And to hear from Lizzie on behalf of

State of Life, who, you know, are an independent organisation, you know, objectively looking at this research and, you know, just to say that they're not affiliated with Tearfund, they're not even affiliated with the church. And for them to look at this data really objectively and say the church is having this impact is really compelling. The findings I'm most excited about are that we can show that investment goes a long way with CCT. So it helps communities to contribute seven times every £1 invested by Tearfund. So really that that means our training, our approach of CCT supercharges the investment that's put into it, turning every £1 invested by Tearfund, alongside community contributions, into £211 of value. I mean, that's incredible, isn't it?

Pete Dawson 24:27

It's phenomenal. So what are we going to be exploring in our last episode?

Bethany Sikes 24:31

Yeah, I can't believe we're already at the point of our last episode. But we're going to be closing out the series by hearing from some of our colleagues who are involved in supporting CCT across the world and asking them what's next for CCT. I think we're at a really exciting point in our journey in CCT, we've been doing it for, I think, around 30 years, which is great. And we've got a big vision that we've talked about before, but 250,000 churches, as centres of transformation in their community. So, yeah, it's going to be an opportunity for us to have – now that we know what impact CCT is having, what's Tearfund planning to do with that?

Pete Dawson 25:10

Amazing, exciting times ahead indeed. And lastly, how can people find out more about anything they've heard, whether it's the study or more about CCT?

Bethany Sikes 25:20

Yeah. So people can head over to Tearfund Learn, which is our hub of thousands of free resources, at learn.tearfund.org. And if you want to dig into the Local Church, Lasting Transformation study, add /CCT-impact to find out more.