

Church action for community growth

Learning from successes in Burkina Faso

Since 2010, Tearfund in Burkina Faso has been training facilitators to run the church and community mobilisation process (CCMP) in churches throughout the country.¹ In March 2018, we partnered with the Chalmers Center to train and equip CCMP facilitators to set up church-based savings groups. A model for savings groups (SGs) based on Chalmer's 'Restore: *Savings*' curriculum, was used. The SGs would complement CCMP by being one tool with which participating churches may engage their communities and address locally identified needs.

CCMP and savings groups

Location: Burkina Faso

Period of implementation: 2018–2019

Implemented by: Tearfund and the Chalmers Center, with the CCMP church network in Burkina Faso

Funded by: Tearfund's Church and Community Transformation (CCT) Corporate Priority

Evaluated: In November 2019 by members of the project team

What impact are we celebrating?

An evaluation of the integration of CCMP and SGs has offered us an opportunity to celebrate, with Chalmers, the benefits and opportunities of such an approach. Both sides of the partnership saw evidence that their respective training had led to positive outcomes (Figure 1A and 1C, next page). On the one hand, the evaluation provided evidence of the effectiveness of SGs. By the time of the evaluation, 177 CCMP facilitators, newly trained in *Restore: Savings*, had formed 283 SGs in 173 local churches. Just over 200 of the groups were surveyed in November 2019. They reported total savings to date of CFA 98,309,295 (166,626 USD), which had been leveraged into 2,970 loans for group members worth CFA 76,749,070 (130,049 USD). These loans created 400 new income-generating activities and strengthened 1,091 others.

In the course of the evaluation, participants also cited several positive outcomes of CCMP as it was being facilitated in the churches. Participants had developed greater recognition of their own resources, as well as a new understanding of the role of the church and how to live out their Christian faith. This had improved relationships and unity within churches, and 14 groups of participants identified instances in which they had begun to reach out to their communities.

Perhaps more importantly, a high level of coherence between CCMP and SGs was observed, to the extent that some participants did not distinguish between the two initiatives. Others explained that they are complementary: they 'complete each other'.² The integration itself led to a number of unique positive outcomes (Figure 1B). SGs were an effective tool for church members to put their new theological

¹ You can read more about CCMP [here](#).

² Tearfund/Chalmers Center (2019) *Integrating Restore: Savings groups and the church and community mobilisation process – final evaluation report*, UK/USA: Tearfund/Chalmers Center, p 13.

understanding, from CCMP, into practice. Through the operation of the SGs, members also came to trust each other, more than they had before. This was a strong foundation for being disciplined together through CCMP. In turn, CCMP inspired group members to use their loans ‘for the glory of God’: to benefit others, not only themselves. For instance, when participants were asked how they used their loans, caring for people in need was a common response.

Figure 1: Some of the outcomes of Restore: *Savings*, CCMP and their integration



A) Restore: *Savings*
 2,970 loans, worth CFA
 76,749,070 (130,049 USD),
 were leveraged by SGs for their
 members.



B) Integration
 Group members were inspired
 to use their loans ‘for the glory
 of God’: to benefit others, not
 only themselves.



C) CCMP
 Participants developed their
 understanding of the role of the
 church, and vision for living out
 their Christian faith.

What lessons are we learning?

The evaluation also presents the opportunity to draw out lessons that will be incorporated into the scale-up of the project to other countries in West Africa. This includes establishing what worked in order for the ‘integration-specific’ outcomes to come about. Some local churches involved in the project began CCMP, reaching a variety of stages, *before setting up SGs*. Facilitators and lead trainers consulted by the evaluation team reported that in these cases, CCMP had caused significant mindset change within the churches, and deepened their spiritual life. They believed it was important that this had occurred before initiating savings and loans. However, other local churches set up *SGs before starting CCMP*, and this did not preclude positive outcomes. Indeed, the evaluation team points to evidence of increased trust between members of churches who were also members of SGs. It was helpful that this had occurred through one or more cycles of saving together before starting CCMP. This predicts positive outcomes of the integration, whichever is implemented first.

Although the lifetime of the project was 18 months, we would expect to see the outcomes extend further, having wider reach within communities, after the end of the project. The evaluation yielded evidence of potential barriers to this process, and recommendations for removing them. For instance, the majority of SGs consisted solely of church members. It will be important, therefore, to strengthen inclusive messaging about who the groups are for. Moreover, the most economically vulnerable church members struggled to participate because they could not make the required savings pay-ins. The evaluation team recommended lowering the minimum savings required of new group members.

What connections are we making?

Each year, we analyse a representative sample of Tearfund and partners’ project evaluations. We then synthesise the key learning and evidence of impact from these evaluations. This evaluation was one of 33



📷 A loan being issued to a savings group member. Photo: Cally Spittle/Tearfund

that we synthesised in 2020.³ We found that it had the following findings in common with other evaluations of similar projects:

- Self-help groups (SHGs) and SGs can have significant social and relational effects. The relationships established within the groups can act as drivers of change in themselves, leading to increased personal confidence, greater willingness to talk about problems faced, and a stronger inclination and openness to ask others for help and support.
- SHGs and SGs, when integrated with CCMP, present churches with a meaningful and effective tool for putting what they have learnt into practice. As a consequence, these groups can be strong spiritually as well as operationally, with people being motivated to use their loans 'for the glory of God'.
- The support of church leadership is a critical factor in the success of CCM processes, requiring that facilitators maintain close working relationships with their respective church leaders.
- A number of evaluations of CCMP tell a similar narrative of changed attitudes and relationships within churches, and changed attitudes towards their communities, implying a readiness to engage in church and community action.

³ The evaluation of CCMP and Restore: *Savings* was selected for this case study, from among the sample of 33, because it was one of the most high-scoring against the [Bond Evidence Principles](#) of voice and inclusion, appropriateness, triangulation, contribution, and transparency.

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