

The Light Wheel essentials pack

A starting point for understanding and measuring holistic wellbeing

tearfund

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Acknowledgements

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The updated Light Wheel toolkit, launched in 2024, was developed and written by Lydia Powell, alongside Shannon Thomson and Seren Boyd, with designs by Helen Eldridge. The toolkit brings together the voices of Light Wheel users worldwide to give best practice examples and guidance. This Light Wheel essentials pack presents key content from the Light Wheel toolkit to help users begin their Light Wheel journey.

We thank and celebrate all of the many Tearfund staff members and partners globally who have used the Light Wheel in their work and tested content for the updated toolkit. Our hope is that this Light Wheel essentials pack will enable many more people around the world to use the Light Wheel in their work to help transform lives, so thank you for sharing it with your community.

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We welcome feedback on our publications and how you have used them. If you have any questions or comments about the Light Wheel, please contact **lightwheel.support@tearfund.org**

Tearfund is a Christian charity that partners with organisations and churches in more than 50 of the world's poorest countries. We tackle poverty through sustainable development, responding to disasters and challenging injustice. We believe an end to extreme poverty is possible.



A group of Light Wheel facilitators in Bangladesh. Photo: Amit Rudro/Tearfund

Welcome!

Are you passionate about seeing people flourish in every aspect of their lives? Do you want to see communities inspired to lead change for themselves? Would you like to learn from other change-makers around the world? If so, this resource is for you!

The Light Wheel is an innovative approach that helps communities to understand, work towards and measure holistic wellbeing in their lives. The Light Wheel has been co-created by a global community of Light Wheel practitioners, combining many years of experience and best practice. Our hope is for many more people to benefit from using the Light Wheel! Will you join us?

> **'The Light Wheel is not only a tool to measure transformation: it is a tool for *bringing* transformation.'**
>
> **Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DME) Coordinator, Tearfund, Asia**

About

Whether you are starting your Light Wheel journey, training other people, or translating it into different languages, the Light Wheel essentials pack is your starting point. This pack contains a selection of key extracts from Tearfund's Light Wheel toolkit that we've found to be most frequently used worldwide – and which will help you take your first steps with the Light Wheel. You can then look at additional content from the Light Wheel toolkit when you are ready (see 'Additional resources' box below). The Light Wheel toolkit is made up of five parts and the Light Wheel essentials pack contains material from the first three parts. The essentials pack is presented as four separate documents, which can be found at **learn.tearfund.org/LW-essentials**, and covers the following content:

Introduction

Information about the development of the Light Wheel and the benefits of using it. You will also find a glossary of key terms related to the Light Wheel.

Part 1: Prepare

An overview of the nine aspects of wellbeing and the Light Wheel data collection tools, as well as how the tools can be used at different points throughout a project or process.

Part 2: Facilitate

Instructions for how to facilitate Light Wheel group discussions, the Light Wheel survey, a transect walk and a forcefield analysis.

Part 3: Resources

Practical resources and printable templates to use when facilitating the data collection tools listed above. You will see these resources referenced throughout the Light Wheel essentials pack (eg **Maturity model visuals** (Resource 3.2.2)).

Additional resources

You can develop your Light Wheel knowledge further, using these additional resources:

Light Wheel toolkit

The Light Wheel toolkit can be found on Tearfund Learn at: **learn.tearfund.org/lightwheel-toolkit**. Here you will find some additional Part 3 resources that are not included in the Light Wheel essentials pack, as well as guidance on how to analyse your Light Wheel findings in **Part 4: Analyse** and how to communicate with different audiences in **Part 5: Communicate.** Any Part 3 resource that is referred to in this essentials pack but not included will have a web address showing where it can be found on Tearfund Learn.

Light Wheel e-learning

To deepen your Light Wheel knowledge, you can take this self-led, online course which explores the theory and theology of the Light Wheel using case studies from around the world. See: **learn.tearfund.org/LW-elearning**

Translating the Light Wheel

A key part of sharing and using the Light Wheel in an effective and inclusive way is to translate it into local languages. The Light Wheel essentials pack gives you the most commonly used content from the Light Wheel toolkit, which we recommend translating first. Then if needed, you can translate additional content from the Light Wheel toolkit over time.

The process of translation should go hand in hand with contextualising the Light Wheel, which means reviewing and adapting concepts or wording to be sensitive and relevant to the context in which the Light Wheel is being used. You can find more guidance on contextualising the Light Wheel in **Part 2, Section 2.1.5.**



Translations should be done by someone who is translating into their native language. Ideally, translated content should be reviewed by a second translator, and tested with a small group of people before being used more widely.

The Light Wheel toolkit is already available in French and Spanish on Tearfund Learn. If you are planning to translate the Light Wheel into another language, please let us know by emailing **lightwheel.support@tearfund.org**. Tearfund's Communication for Development team can provide editable design files and translation support documents to enhance your work with local freelancers.

Over time, we plan to make different language versions of the Light Wheel available on Tearfund Learn. Please get in contact with us if you are planning any translations so we can share your version with others.

Helpful icons

Look out for these icons pointing you to different pieces of information throughout the Light Wheel essentials:



Navigation points you to relevant resources in different sections.



Contextualise highlights the concepts or tools that you should consider adapting to your local context before putting them into practice.



Key principles gives best practice advice on topics such as inclusion, safeguarding and informed consent, to help ensure your participants feel safe and welcome.



Bright idea highlights recommendations and suggestions from Light Wheel users around the world.



Reflect encourages you to take a moment to consider what you have read and how it might apply to your own life or work.



Case study shares stories that bring to life how the Light Wheel has been used in different places and the lessons that have been learnt.



Bright idea

We would love to hear about your experiences and stories of using the Light Wheel. Please share your bright ideas and questions at: **lightwheel.support@tearfund.org**

Glossary

Aspect of wellbeing: an area of life that contributes to individuals and communities flourishing

Baseline: data gathered at the beginning of a response, using the Light Wheel, so that change can be measured over time

Church and community transformation (CCT): Tearfund has helped develop a number of contextualised processes that support churches to work with their local community to bring about restoration and transformation using local resources

Contextualise/contextualisation: adapting the Light Wheel tools so that they are meaningful and relevant to the context in which they are being used

Dataset: information gathered from one or more of the Light Wheel tools, ready to be analysed

Disaggregate: divide up data according to different criteria (eg age, religion, sex, ability or location) to reflect contrasting experiences, opinions and situations

Endline: data gathered at the end of a response, using the Light Wheel, to compare with baseline data and assess change over time

Enumerator: the person who asks the questions in a survey, also known as a 'data collector'

Evaluation: an assessment that identifies, reflects upon and judges the impact and effectiveness of a response, and gives insight and learning about successes and challenges

Facilitator: someone who leads a group through an activity (eg a group discussion or Bible study) enabling everyone to participate and be heard

Holistic: involving every aspect of people's and communities' lives in combination, as set out in the Light Wheel

Inclusion: the extent to which different types of people feel safe, welcome and able to participate in an activity, group or community

Indicators: evidence, signs or questions used to monitor performance and determine whether change is taking place. Each Light Wheel spoke has a set of indicators for measuring change

Informed consent: a person agreeing to take part in a discussion or survey with full understanding of how data will be used

Integral mission: Christians and churches following God, living out their faith by serving others, and bringing about transformation in every aspect of people's and communities' lives

Interconnected: when two or more things are closely linked so they influence and affect each other (eg change in one aspect of wellbeing can have a positive or negative impact on another)

Lens: looking at something from a particular perspective

Maturity model: a five-point scale in which each new level describes positive changes that we might expect to see over time

Midline: data gathered halfway through a response, using the Light Wheel, to compare with baseline data so you can assess progress and change, and plan for the next stage

Monitoring: using the Light Wheel to regularly assess progress being made towards objectives, and make adjustments where necessary

Needs assessment: using the Light Wheel to understand participants' priorities, and their areas of strength and weakness, as the basis for designing a response

Participatory: an activity, tool or process that all types of people can get involved in or use

Pilot testing: testing something on a small scale so improvements can be made before it is used more widely

Qualitative: data or analysis that cannot be counted, reflecting perceptions, opinions, emotions and observations

Quantitative: data or analysis that is numeric and can be counted, often presented as percentages, frequencies or rates

Response: any ways we might try to resolve challenges or meet identified needs, eg a programme, project or activity conducted by a church or organisation

Safeguarding: protecting children and vulnerable adults from all forms of harm and abuse

Sample: a subsection of people who represent the characteristics of the larger group you want to find out about

Spoke: the Light Wheel is made up of nine spokes that represent different aspects of wellbeing

Stakeholder: a person or group involved in, affected by or influencing a Light Wheel activity

Triangulation: comparing data from two or more Light wheel tools to build a picture of the situation and test your findings and assumptions

WASH: water, sanitation and hygiene

Wellbeing: feeling healthy and content, flourishing and living a full life. Tearfund uses the Light Wheel to represent the areas of life that contribute to a person's and community's wellbeing

Whole-life transformation: for Tearfund, this is when individuals and communities live as God intended in every area of their lives, as represented by the nine spokes of the Light Wheel

Introduction

This introduction gives an overview of the background and creation of the Light Wheel, as well as the benefits of using it.

At Tearfund, we want to see people and communities transformed in a deep and enduring way. We believe that wellbeing has many different aspects. So our response to poverty must also bring change in every area of life, in order for individuals and communities to flourish.

That's why we created the Light Wheel: it's a framework with nine different aspects of wellbeing that we believe need to be addressed if we are to see **whole-life (or holistic) transformation**.

We also believe it's important to measure the impact of our work. If we want to see people thriving in every aspect of wellbeing, then we need to be able to show and measure the changes taking place.

And that's why we developed the Light Wheel data collection tools, to help you explore what holistic wellbeing looks like in your community and measure progress towards whole-life transformation.



Who is the Light Wheel for?

We believe the Light Wheel can teach each of us something new about living life to the full. It can be used with many different groups and audiences. You can use it at a personal level to think about wellbeing in your own life or family. Or if you are a facilitator working with communities or churches, you can use it to help them work towards holistic transformation. The Light Wheel helps people take the lead in assessing their situations, making decisions and bringing about change. As a facilitator, you're there to help guide their exploration. We have found that gathering people together to discuss, reflect and come up with ideas is a transformational experience in itself.

Where can the Light Wheel be used?

Over the years, the Light Wheel has been developed and used by practitioners across more than 25 countries and many different contexts. It has mainly been used within longer-term development initiatives and what Tearfund calls 'church and community transformation' (CCT) processes.[1] But it's also been adapted for use in multi-faith communities and Christian-minority contexts. We hope to keep gaining more insight and learning about how the Light Wheel can be adapted to support communities in different places, such as contexts of fragility and humanitarian work.

How has the Light Wheel been developed?

For many years, Tearfund has been at the forefront of seeking answers to the question: 'What does whole-life transformation look like?' We have been exploring this with staff and partners all over the world: their co-creation of the Light Wheel is what makes it so innovative and globally relevant.

The Light Wheel also draws heavily on our theology, as a Christian organisation, and our biblical understanding of God's vision for our lives, as well as academic research on development and wellbeing.

The Light Wheel has been in development since 2013, with the first toolkit produced in 2016. Since then, we've been collaborating and gathering learning with users globally. The second edition of the toolkit, launched in 2024, is the culmination of their experience, creativity and best practice. The Light Wheel essentials pack was created subsequently for users exploring the Light Wheel for the first time, translating it, or training others.

We're excited to share the Light Wheel with you and hope you will see the benefits of using it in your work.



[1] Tearfund has helped develop a number of contextualised processes that take churches on a journey to respond holistically to the needs of their local community. For more information about these CCT processes, see: **learn.tearfund.org/LW-essentials**

Why is it called the Light Wheel?

The Light Wheel was designed in the shape of a wheel to emphasise the interconnectedness and interdependence of all the different aspects of wellbeing, which are shown as the spokes of the wheel. **We sometimes use the word 'spoke' as shorthand to refer to an aspect of wellbeing**.

For a wheel to function well, it needs each of its spokes to be strong and resilient. The image of the wheel helps us to remember that each of the spokes is important and contributes to wellbeing. It also reminds us that wellbeing is complex and that change in one area of our lives is connected to and often dependent on change in another area. The Light Wheel can also help us identify unintended or unexpected consequences of our work, positive or negative.

It was originally called 'The LIGHT Wheel', and the acronym in English stood for 'Learning and Impact Guide to Holistic Transformation'. As it became more popular and was translated into many languages, we simplified the name to Light Wheel to reflect the fact that it shines a light on the areas of life that matter to our wellbeing, and the changes taking place in our lives.

> **'The Light Wheel illuminates the areas of life we want to impact in order to see individuals and communities flourish.'**
>
> **Peninah Kayitesi,** CCT Lead, Tearfund, East and Central Africa



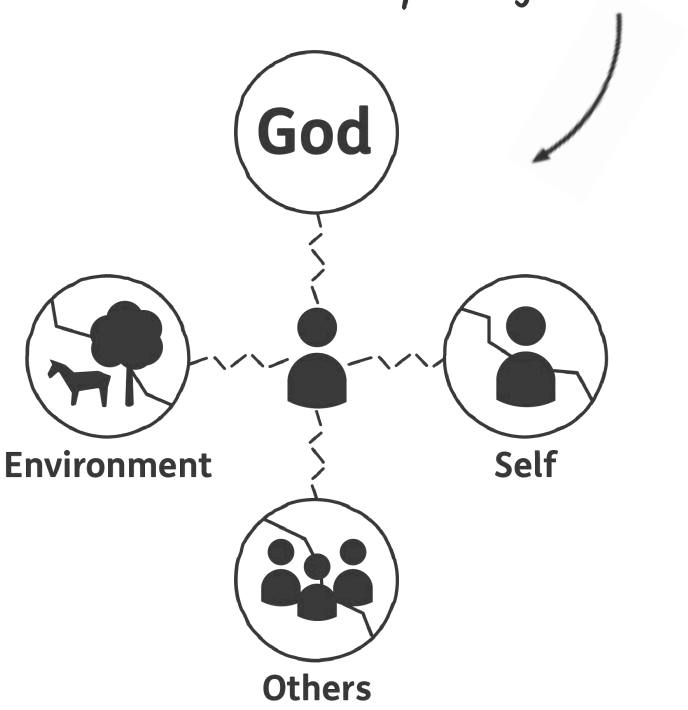
A group scoring the Light Wheel in Bangladesh. Photo: Amit Rudro/Tearfund

Tearfund's understanding of poverty

The Light Wheel is based on Tearfund's belief that our response to poverty should touch on every aspect of a person's life.

Tearfund believes that poverty is the result of four broken relationships: **our separation from God**, our distorted **understanding of self**, the ways we **treat others unfairly**, and the ways we **exploit the environment**.[2]

Four broken relationships diagram



In the Bible (John 10:10), Jesus says: 'I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.' At Tearfund, our vision is to mobilise and equip local organisations and churches around the world to respond to the brokenness in our world and play a role in bringing about this whole-life transformation that Jesus talks about. We call this holistic response **integral mission**.

The Light Wheel presents a picture of whole-life transformation and helps us think in more diverse and practical ways about what it looks like to bring about the restoration of broken relationships.

This means serving others in a way that considers every aspect of wellbeing, not just the more traditional areas, such as material resources and physical health, but also aspects that have typically been harder to measure, such as faith, social connections and mental wellbeing. Experience tells us that these less tangible aspects contribute significantly to people's sense of wellbeing and transformation.

[2] For more on Tearfund's theory of poverty, see our resource *Understanding poverty: restoring broken relationships* at: **learn.tearfund.org/LW-essentials**



Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on John 10:10 and answer the questions below:

> 'I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.'
>
> John 10:10

What do you think it means for individuals and communities to live life to the full? (Capture your ideas in the box below)

What are some of the factors in your community that prevent people from living full lives? (Capture your ideas in the box below)

Measuring what matters

The Light Wheel helps us think in a deep and practical way about what integral mission looks like. But then we have to ask: How do we know if holistic transformation is taking place? Have our activities contributed to that change?

The nine spokes of the Light Wheel link with the four broken relationships and give tangible examples of the areas of life we need to consider, and measure, if we want to see relationships restored and lives fully transformed. For more detail, see **The nine aspects of wellbeing and the four broken relationships** (Resource 3.1.8), available at: **learn.tearfund.org/LW3-1**

The Light Wheel tools help us organise participatory activities that gather data and capture the reality and richness of people's experiences and perceptions of their wellbeing in all aspects of life.

> **'The Light Wheel enables us to capture the richness of people's lived experiences and the depth of change they are experiencing.'**
>
> **Jonathan Simpson,** Light Wheel practitioner, Zimbabwe

What does 'Living faith' mean to you?

As Christians, we see 'Living faith' as a key part of the Light Wheel and an essential aspect of wellbeing. It underpins the way we see all other areas of life and it is a catalyst for transformation in the lives of individuals and communities.

But we work with people of all faiths and none. That's why themes of faith addressed in the Light Wheel are designed to be general enough to be discussed by people of different faiths and adapted for different contexts. It's important that everyone feels included and welcome to explore how their faith contributes to their wellbeing. There may also be some contexts in which it is not safe or relevant to discuss the subject of faith.

We also want to support Christians to reflect on if and how they are strengthening and living out their Christian faith. We want to help them consider the biblical calling of the church in each aspect of wellbeing. That is why some of the Light Wheel data collection tools have specific questions to help Christians think through these sorts of topics.

We have also developed a full set of Bible studies to help you reflect on God's vision for our lives in each of the nine aspects of wellbeing; see **Light Wheel Bible studies** (Resource 3.1.7).

What makes the Light Wheel distinctive?

As it has developed, the Light Wheel has drawn on the best practice and experience of users across the world. Here's why people love using it:

'It helps us to think holistically'

The Light Wheel helps us to think about the many different aspects of wellbeing that contribute to real transformation in people's lives. It means our responses to poverty are more holistic, and so are our outcomes. It also helps us see how different aspects of wellbeing interact with one another.

'It ensures everyone is included'

The Light Wheel tools are designed to help ensure everyone feels included and valued. Everyone needs to be involved in the Light Wheel process, especially people from marginalised or excluded groups, if the whole community is to experience transformation. For more information on how to make your Light Wheel activities inclusive, see **Part 2**, **Section 2.1.1.**



'It equips facilitators'

Local-level facilitators play a vital role in bringing about holistic change. The Light Wheel helps them facilitate in-depth conversations so communities and churches can assess their current situation and decide the changes they want to see.

'It creates a culture of reflection and celebration'

The Light Wheel process involves local communities in monitoring and evaluating their own situations, to help them reflect, decide their priorities and celebrate progress. It becomes a familiar framework to help them regularly measure change taking place in their lives and dream for the future.

'It encourages collaboration'

Reflecting on the Light Wheel can help communities, churches and other organisations to see where their strengths and resources lie and where they need to seek support from and collaboration with others, to address gaps. The Light Wheel process also strengthens relationships within the community.

Next steps

By now, you should have a better understanding of the theory and concepts behind the Light Wheel and why users around the world think it is a special tool. Hopefully you are now ready to learn more about the different ways the Light Wheel can be used.



Next, in **Part 1: Prepare**, we're going to explore the nine aspects of wellbeing and introduce the Light Wheel tools and how they can be used in different ways. If you haven't got Part 1 printed out already, you can find it by going to **learn.tearfund.org/LW-essentials**

You can also visit **learn.tearfund.org/lightwheel** to find the full Light Wheel toolkit and a free, interactive Light Wheel e-learning course.

Feedback

We'd love to hear how this resource helped you. Your feedback helps us improve and share more of what matters.

learn.tearfund.org/feedback

Above, a Light Wheel group discussion in Honduras. Photo: None Guevara/Tearfund

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