

An in-depth step-by-step guide to open-ended church and community mobilisation

This document explores the way a church can work within a community and inspire the community to help itself.

Please note: In this document, the term 'organisation' is used to describe Christian NGOs or networks working with a number of churches, or a church denomination at a national or regional level (such as a diocese).

Step 1: Envisioning workshop for the organisation's staff and pastors

A workshop, run by church and community mobilisation staff or consultants, is held for denominational staff, pastors and development workers. The focus of the workshop is on the biblical basis for development and holistic ministry. It also introduces the church and community mobilisation process. At this workshop, the participants select the pilot churches to work with and appoint 15-20 people who will be trained as facilitators. For example, in Soroti, Uganda, 68 people from one denomination (Pentecostal Assemblies of God) attended the workshop (11 District level staff including the Overseer, Treasurer and Secretary; 27 pastors; and 30 development workers).

Step 2: Initial training of facilitators

The facilitators selected by the envisioning workshop attend a second workshop run by the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants. This workshop covers similar topics to the envisioning workshop, but also trains the facilitators in how to identify relevant Bible passages on integral mission. The workshop also trains the facilitators to develop Bible studies and envision local churches.

Step 3: Local church envisioning

Immediately after the training workshop, the facilitators work with two of the pilot churches, applying their training and envisioning the churches for integral mission. During this time, the facilitators are guided and supervised by the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants.

The facilitators lead the pilot congregations through Bible studies and discussions about integral mission, helping them to understand development and the role of the church. The initial envisioning meetings can last 3-4 days. During this time the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants help the facilitators to reflect on what they are learning, and how they can improve the process.

During the next 6-8 weeks, the facilitators envision other churches, without the assistance of the trainers. Facilitators also continue to visit churches that have completed the envisioning process to provide on-going support.

Step 4: Local church resource mobilisation

The key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants run another workshop for the facilitators. At this workshop they reflect on their progress and the learning from the process since the last workshop. The facilitators also receive training in how to help churches mobilise and make use of their own resources.

The facilitators then work with two pilot churches to apply their training, with guidance and supervision by the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants. They facilitate Bible studies that help the churches to identify their own resources and to see that they do not need to be dependent on outside help to be able to improve their lives.

Over the next 6-8 weeks, the facilitators repeat this process with the other pilot churches, without the involvement of the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants. The facilitators keep returning to the pilot churches on a regular basis to give ongoing support.

Step 5: Church - community relationship building

The facilitators attend a third workshop, which provides time for reflection and learning new skills in relationship building. It is particularly important to build relationships with community leaders and members, as their commitment is necessary for success.

The facilitators then apply their training with two of the pilot churches, and under guidance and supervision, they facilitate meetings between the church and the community. The facilitators also assist the church in explaining the process of mobilisation to the community in order to encourage ownership.

At this stage, those who will carry the mobilisation process forward are selected. The community leaders and members, assisted by the facilitators, set the criteria for selection of those who will take an active role in mobilising the community. The selection process then occurs. The community decides what to call those selected to continue the mobilisation process. In Uganda they were called 'Church and Community Resource Persons'. In South Sudan they were called 'Awakeners'. They are referred to here as the Local Co-ordination Group. Each community has 2-3 people selected by the church and 2-3 people selected by the community to form this Local Co-ordination Group.

This process is repeated, without assistance by the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants, with the other pilot churches.

Step 6: Community description and information gathering

A workshop on initiating community mobilisation, description and information gathering is run for the facilitators and the newly appointed Local Co-ordination Groups. The workshop allows time for reflection about the process so far. It helps participants to build their understanding of community mobilisation and the role of the Local Co-ordination Group. They gain skills for facilitating the community's role during the description and information gathering stage.

The facilitators and Local Co-ordination Group, with the support of the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants, then work with two pilot churches and their communities. They help the community to gain an initial overview of the issues in their community through historical profiling, seasonal calendars, mapping, etc. The Local Co-ordination Group and the facilitators also assist the community in appointing an Information Gathering Team, which is then trained by the Local Co-ordination Group to collect more detailed information about the community.

This process is then repeated, without the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants, in the other pilot churches and communities. The Local Co-ordination Groups, based in their own communities, are able to give daily support to the information gathering process, and they are supported by regular visits from the facilitators.

The community description stage enables the church and community to review the present situation and relate it to the history of the community. It provides a time for the community to identify their resources, potential and challenges. After this is completed the community can identify problems and put them in order of greatest need. This leads to the information gathering stage, when specific questions can be asked about each of the areas of need. Other general information can be gathered, which will help with decision-making.

Step 7: Community in-depth needs analysis

A workshop is run on Community Information Analysis for the facilitators. This includes reflection on the process since the last workshop; developing further skills in facilitating community information gathering; and learning how to facilitate communities in the analysis of the information they have gathered.

The facilitators then work with two of the pilot communities applying this training, and helping the communities to sort and analyse the information they have gathered, and to investigate the issues further. This enables people to make logical conclusions about their current situation. This information can also be used to develop a baseline.

The facilitators then repeat the process in the other communities, without the key church and community mobilisation staff or consultants.

Step 8: Community goal setting and action planning

A workshop is run on Goal Setting and Action Planning for the facilitators. This includes reflection on the process since the last workshop, and training in facilitating realistic community, setting goals and planning action.

The facilitators then work with the pilot communities in helping them develop goals and action plans.

This stage logically follows the analysis stage – communities use the knowledge gained during analysis to make informed decisions about the next steps. During this stage, communities envision what they would like to see in their future. Envisioning enables the community to set goals, make action plans, and identify indicators to monitor the goals.

Step 9: Community implementation and monitoring

A workshop is run on Implementation and Monitoring for the facilitators. This includes reflection on the process since the last workshop; training in how to equip community leaders and Local Co-ordination Groups with monitoring skills; training in how to facilitate the selection of community development committees; and training in how to train committees in facilitating the implementation of action plans.

The facilitators then work with the pilot communities in helping them to establish development committees, and in helping them to implement their action plans.

Step 10: Renewal of diocesan/district level ownership in the process

A workshop is run for the organisation's staff, pastors, and development workers who attended the Envisioning Workshop in Step 1 of the process. Learning and outcomes from the process to date are shared with them to encourage ownership and support for the next stages of the process, and to encourage planning for the replication of the process in other parts of the District.

Step 11: Ongoing training and support to the community development committees

The organisation's development staff work with the committees in identifying their training needs, and then providing this training. This could include training in such areas as financial management; supervision, monitoring and evaluation; project cycle management; community action planning; and disaster management and preparedness.

Step 12: Replication

Stages 1-12 are repeated with a further number of selected churches and communities. The workshops are run by the first set of facilitators, training up further facilitators.

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