2. How to start Umoja
How to start Umoja

In this section the following areas are covered:

1. How to help senior church leaders catch the vision
2. How to help senior church leaders envision others in Umoja
3. How to help senior church leaders understand their on-going role within Umoja
4. How to identify appropriate churches and communities

1. How to help senior church leaders catch the vision

When senior church leaders engage with the process, support it, and encourage their local church leaders to get involved, it can transform whole denominations and numerous communities. When they do not actively support the process, keeping the process going and replicating it in other communities becomes very difficult.

Therefore, it is very important to find ways to help senior church leaders engage with the process, and shape and influence it, at all stages of the process.

Umoja needs to be central to their vision for the church. This is easiest when working with senior church leaders who are already open to new ideas and see the need for change.

Facilitators also need to be aware that some church leaders may have a hidden agenda that could potentially undermine the aims of Umoja. For example, these could be a desire to use Umoja to gain funding for an alternative activity, or to use Umoja to gain prestige and profile within the community, or to increase their influence. Because of this, it is important to take time to get to know the church leader and clarify their understanding of what they think Umoja can achieve.

Ways of keeping senior church leaders involved:

- Run a one-day taster for them to experience and understand what Umoja is and how it works.
- Arrange visits for them to see some Umoja projects in action. (See pages 92-93.)
- Arrange for church leaders to present reports on how Umoja is going in different churches at annual meetings.
- Involve them in awarding prizes and certificates to facilitators involved in Umoja.
- Run exchange visits with other denominational churches where senior church leaders can learn from the experience of other churches.
- Look for opportunities for senior church leaders to see and use the Bible studies in their own ministry.

It needs to be recognised that senior church leaders are busy people with many responsibilities. It may be helpful to show them the way that Umoja can meet some of the challenges they face:

- It helps to develop good local leadership.
- It helps local churches to be less reliant on external support.
- It can help to increase church attendance and church giving.
- It can help to promote a holistic approach to development where the agenda of the church is less likely to be distorted by large amounts of external funding for “physical only” projects.

It is also important to be clear from the beginning about the challenges of the process, and ensure that senior church leaders understand these. For example, it can be quite a big and difficult adjustment for church leaders to move to an approach where local people are empowered to make their own decisions, if those leaders are more used to a top-down style of decision-making. This adjustment can take time.
One day workshop for senior church leaders

This is an outline for doing a one day workshop with church leaders to help inform them and envision them for Umoja. It is important that those running the workshop are familiar with the Umoja process and its supporting guides so that they can respond to concerns and questions from participants.

It is important to make the workshop lively and fun so that it captures the spirit of Umoja and therefore inspires them to support it. Therefore, use plenty of energisers and group discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1: What is Umoja and why is it important to the church?</td>
<td>All you need to know about Umoja (Co-ordinator’s Guide page 7-15)</td>
<td>This should be a series of short presentations with opportunities to ask questions and clarifications. The main points should be written up in advance on flipchart paper and presented to the group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2: Case studies of Umoja</td>
<td>See stories of transformation in the Co-ordinator’s Guide appendices (pages 112-116)</td>
<td>Divide the group into small groups to discuss the case studies with the following questions: 1. What were the major changes? 2. How were these changes achieved? 3. What could be the benefit to the church?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 3: Overview of the Umoja stages and a taste of the different activities</td>
<td>a) Using our resources energiser b) Elisha Bible study c) Description of our community activity (mapping) d) Walking on the water Bible study (All these are in the Facilitator’s Guide)</td>
<td>The facilitator should demonstrate the energisers and activities and then divide the group into small groups to do them for themselves. There should be a feedback session, during which the church leaders should reflect on what they have learnt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 4: How to set up and manage Umoja</td>
<td>a) Helping senior church leaders understand their role within Umoja (page 22) b) How to identify appropriate churches and communities (pages 23-25) c) Adapting church organisational structures to best enable Umoja growth (page 94)</td>
<td>These are important topics to cover in helping church leaders to look at the practical aspects of setting up Umoja. These could be quite dry topics to cover and therefore the facilitator should look for ways to energise the group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing session</td>
<td>Group discussion on how Umoja is going to be taken forward</td>
<td>Put together an action plan of commitment and support to Umoja facilitators</td>
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2. How to help church leaders envision others in Umoja

Once senior church leaders understand the process and are themselves committed to it, it is important for them to envision others, and show others in the church that they are supportive of the process. This is particularly important with Umoja because the approach is very different from anything the church may have done before, and so can raise many questions and issues for people.

Ways in which senior leaders can envision others and show their support for the process are:

- Refer to it in their sermons (even use some of the Bible study material).
- Hold meetings and workshops for all their local church leaders on Umoja to help them understand it.
- Visit churches involved with Umoja to find out what is happening and give their support.
- Encourage their staff and local church leaders to visit churches involved with Umoja.
- Have Umoja as a regular agenda item at senior level committee meetings.
- Develop a ‘Social Action Policy’ that puts in writing the denomination’s commitment to working with poor people.
3. How to help senior church leaders understand their on-going role within Umoja

Senior church leaders have a number of key roles in the on-going development of the Umoja process:

1. Ensuring there is adequate staffing and resources to enable the process to happen

To support senior church leaders in this, you will need to ensure there is good communication with them, and that you are realistic about the amount of resources (people, time, vehicles, money etc) you will need.

2. Monitoring the programme regularly at senior level committee meetings, and ensuring that lessons are learnt and applied to new churches

To support senior church leaders in this, you will need to provide them with regular information about the progress of the process in each community where you are working, and also to encourage their involvement in an evaluation of the programme at an appropriate point. See Chapter 5 of this guide for more on this.

3. To plan for and enable the growth of the programme throughout the churches they are responsible for

To support senior church leaders in this, you will need to be encouraging them to think about future budget requirements, staffing needs etc. See Chapter 4 of this guide for more on this.

4. How to identify appropriate churches and communities

This section provides guidance in choosing churches and communities where Umoja is most likely to be successful.

Choosing which local churches and communities to work in is an important decision. Not all churches and communities are suited to Umoja, and working in such places can prove very frustrating, and may damage the reputation of the process in other places. On the other hand, where the church and community is ready for Umoja, the process can lead to remarkable results that inspire others.

Factors that help Umoja to be effective are:

- Strong, empowering leadership within the local church that encourages the whole church to get involved in Umoja.
- Stable leadership within the church. When the church leader is likely to be in post for the next three years, this can provide helpful continuity to the process.
- Churches that have a sense of calling that this is the right thing to do, and are not just doing it because they have been “told to” or because they think it will bring in money.
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- **Good relationships** between the local churches in the community. This helps the process to begin with broader initial support.

- **Openness to the process** amongst those who make decisions in the community, such as village development committees or local government.

- **Communities that are not heavily reliant on external resources**, as they often find it easier to identify and utilise their own resources. If there are other organisations working in the community with a hand-out approach, this can make Umoja more difficult.

- **Stable communities**. Where people do not fear displacement or want to move on, they are more willing to invest in positive long-term changes.

- **Clearly defined communities**. Where people have a clear sense of what the community is, for example, a rural village, they find it easier to work together.

- **Communities where there is good social cohesion**. It can be difficult, though certainly not impossible, to involve the whole community in contexts where the community is significantly divided, for example, along tribal or religious lines. In such contexts, the facilitator needs to work with particular sensitivity and patience, and view relationship-building as a key part of the process.

- **Communities where there are other Umoja communities near by**. This provides the opportunity for communities to learn from one another.

It is unlikely that any church and community will be able to meet all these factors. However, this list will provide you with guidance on where there are potential weaknesses, and what areas you may need to look at addressing during the process.