6. Expanding and adapting the Umoja programme
Expanding and adapting the Umoja Programme

Introduction

Umoja can have a dramatic impact on the life of individual churches and communities. With good support, commitment and focus from the church denomination or Christian organisation facilitating Umoja, it can grow to have a dramatic impact on whole districts, regions, and even whole countries, as hundreds of churches and their communities engage with the process. The key is to establish Umoja at the heart of the vision, structure and thinking of the organisation.

For this to happen, the organisation facilitating Umoja (whether a church denomination or a Christian organisation) needs to explore the following key areas:

1. Helping the organisation’s senior leadership to fully own and lead Umoja.
2. Adapting church and organisational structures to help Umoja to grow.
3. Helping local church leaders see that engaging with Umoja is an integral part of their ministry.
4. Developing more people who are able to train facilitators.
5. Facilitating visits to Umoja communities.
6. Adapting Umoja to specific contexts.

1. Helping the organisation’s senior leadership to fully own and lead Umoja

Earlier in the book, we explored how to help senior church leaders catch the vision for Umoja and then envision others. To significantly increase the number of Umoja communities, senior leaders need to move from being envisioned and committed to Umoja, to being the owners and leaders of it within their organisation.

Here are a few ways in which you could help them to do this:

1. Involve them in evaluating the first Umoja churches and communities.

   This can be a helpful way of getting them to give focused time to evaluating and analysing the impact of Umoja. It can also help them to think of its implications for the future direction of the programme and organisation.

2. Take them to see what is happening in the communities to re-envision them.

   If it is difficult to involve the senior leaders in the evaluation process, it may be easier to get them to visit Umoja churches and communities. Seeing what is happening and hearing stories of transformation from community members can make a huge difference to their desire to support and scale-up their church or organisation’s commitment to Umoja.

3. Encourage them to re-evaluate the vision and mission of the church or organisation and its various departments in the light of learning from Umoja.

   Umoja can demonstrate a totally different approach to church development work and even to church pastoral work. Re-evaluating the mission of the whole denomination or organisation in the light of Umoja principles, such as participation, empowerment, being church-initiated, and sustainability, can lead to some dramatic change.

4. Encourage them to include Umoja as a key part of their strategic planning and resource allocation.

   Often, Umoja programmes can begin as a small project bolted on to the side of an organisation’s development department, funded by external donors. However, for it to become part of the life-blood of the organisation, it is vital to help senior leaders to think through how they can integrate Umoja into the core strategies of the church or organisation, and to begin to prioritise allocating their own resources to it.
6. Expanding and adapting the Umoja programme

**2. Adapting church and organisational structures to best enable Umoja growth**

Once senior leaders are fully owning and leading Umoja, it is important to assess the current structures of the organisation (whether it is a church denomination or Christian organisation) to see whether they are best suited to enabling the growth of the Umoja programme.

In many church denominations, there is a separate development department and a separate church ministry department. In such cases, careful thought needs to be given as to who should have responsibility for managing Umoja.

Two approaches to expanding Umoja within a church denomination can be to either keep it within a development department of the church or keep it within a church ministry department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umoja in a development</td>
<td>Helps the development department have a stronger link to local churches.</td>
<td>Perceived as yet another resource which has lots of funding from donors.</td>
<td>Some church denominations that have chosen to significantly expand their Umoja programme have decided that this is the most appropriate focus of their development expertise, and have begun to scale back on their other more sectorally specific development activities.</td>
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<td>department</td>
<td>Umoja can draw on a range of technical support from the development</td>
<td>Perceived by some clergy as distant from the local church.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>department (e.g. health, water and sanitation, agriculture, and income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Umoja in a ministry</td>
<td>Makes Umoja more central to the life and ministry of the local church.</td>
<td>Can be more difficult to access technical support.</td>
<td>In some church denomination contexts, Umoja started off as a programme within the development department but once the senior leadership decided to expand the programme across the whole church, they brought it into one of the church’s ministry departments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>department</td>
<td>Tends to get more local church and church leader support.</td>
<td>Can be more difficult to access seed funding because of the lack of donor</td>
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<td>relationships by the ministry department.</td>
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In some cases in the Asian context, Umoja can only be run through a local community based organisation.

**Area level Umoja co-ordinators**

As the Umoja programme expands, it will not be possible for one Umoja programme co-ordinator to train and manage all the facilitators. It will be necessary to have area or regional level co-ordinators who have responsibility for working with facilitators in a certain area.

A possible structure for managing area level co-ordinators has been created by a church denomination in Uganda. Area-level programme co-ordinators are line-managed by the national Umoja programme co-ordinator, but are based in the church’s area offices, and have daily contact with other area church staff. This means that they are involved in key area meetings where they can promote Umoja, and can meet regularly with the senior area leadership. At the same time, they are still managed by someone with specialist knowledge of their work.

**Growing and maintaining key staff**

Umoja empowers people and gives them new skills and confidence. It is, therefore, not surprising that Umoja programme co-ordinators are seen as key people in their church or denomination and are promoted to other work. Their departure can present a challenge to the Umoja programme.

From the outset, denominations and organisations need to be thinking of how they can be growing new leaders to replace those who move on. They also need to consider how strategic they view the Umoja programme. If church leaders see it as key, then they need to think carefully before moving staff away from Umoja into new roles.
6. Expanding and adapting the Umoja programme

3. Helping local church leaders see that engaging with Umoja is an integral part of their ministry

To expand Umoja across a geographical area or a denomination, it greatly helps if local church leaders see Umoja as a key way of helping them carry out their ministry. If Umoja is just seen by local church leaders as an initiative of the development department, or a Christian organisation, which they are asked to get involved with, the expansion of Umoja will always be limited.

However, where Umoja is seen by church leaders as bringing transformation to their churches and communities, helping to increase giving and commitment to the church, helping to equip and motivate church members to active service in the church, and helping to give the church a clear and valued role in the life of the community, there will be no shortage of local church leaders wanting to start Umoja.

Some ways of helping local church leaders catch this vision are:

1. Arrange for local church leaders to visit churches and communities where Umoja is already happening

We have mentioned already how effective such visits can be in inspiring people (see page 19). If such visits are then followed up by workshops that help the local church leaders to reflect on what they have seen, heard and learnt, and to think of how they can respond, this will help to encourage many more churches to start Umoja in their communities.

2. Encourage local church leaders involved with Umoja to share their stories at area church gatherings

When church leaders hear what has happened in other churches through Umoja, this can inspire them to get involved themselves.

3. Encourage Umoja churches and communities to “pass it on” to neighbouring communities

Once a church and community begin Umoja, neighbouring communities start to see the positive impact, and want to do it too. Helping the Umoja church and community share their knowledge and experience is a very simple and fast way of growing the number of Umoja communities.

4. Identify “champions” to promote Umoja

In some contexts, having an influential Christian leader who is pro-active in promoting Umoja can be very helpful, whether that is in meetings they attend, or services they speak at. Taking them on a personal visit to see communities transformed by Umoja, and giving them regular updates, enables them to speak in an informed way.

Similarly, encouraging area church leaders, who may have responsibility for a number of local church leaders, to support and promote Umoja can be very effective.

5. Getting media coverage of Umoja

Using the media to share stories of what is happening in Umoja communities can help to reach a wide audience and give credibility to the programme. Such media could range from area church newsletters to national newspapers and radio programmes. Such coverage can also greatly encourage the communities themselves, helping them to realise all that they are achieving.

Obviously, however, in contexts of political, ethnic or religious sensitivity, the value of media coverage needs to be assessed against the potential dangers.

3. Helping local church leaders see that engaging with Umoja is an integral part of their ministry

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6. Encourage theological colleges to teach Umoja as part of their training of church leaders

Some denominations have included a module on Umoja in their theological college curriculum. They teach all students the biblical basis, theory and practice of Umoja. This means that all new church leaders are equipped to facilitate Umoja in their churches. Where training is given to those who are already church leaders, there is the benefit of them being able to immediately apply their training.

4. How to develop trainers of Umoja facilitators

As more churches and communities become interested in Umoja, there will be a need for more facilitators. To meet this demand, it will not be feasible for one person to do all the training, preparation and mentoring of the facilitators. Others will need to be trained to carry out training of the new facilitators.

These “trainers of facilitators” will normally come from amongst the first group of facilitators, those who have shown particularly good understanding of the process and the ability to facilitate others.

A good starting point is to provide them with the Facilitator’s Guide (if they don’t already have a copy) and sections 3 (How to recruit and train facilitators) and 5 (How to monitor and coach facilitators) from this manual.

In addition to this, you may want to consider giving them the following support:

- Mentoring. (For example, when running training, involve them as a co-trainer, and give them feedback on how their training went.)
- Accompaniment. (For example, attend their training workshops and provide feedback.)
- Providing further training for them on facilitation skills. (For example, you could use the PILLARS Facilitation skills workbook - see page 117 for details.)

5. How to facilitate visits to Umoja communities

Visits to communities to see Umoja in practice can be a very effective way of inspiring people and encouraging them to get involved themselves with Umoja.

Here are some helpful guidelines:

1. Choose a community to visit

Visit the community to assess its suitability and the lessons that could be learned by others visiting. Key questions to ask when assessing the suitability of a community are:

- Does this community provide an inspiring example of Umoja?
- Are there church and community members who will be willing to talk about their experiences?
- Are there people (such as the facilitator, the local church leader or the local co-ordination group) who can explain the Umoja approach and answer questions?
- Are there other Umoja communities nearby? If so, could people visit the different communities to see how the approach has worked in different contexts?
- Are there lessons from the Umoja community that will be relevant to the context of those visiting it?
- Are there any reasons why receiving a visit may not be helpful to the community? Can these reasons be addressed before the visit or should a different community be chosen?
- Do you have a plan in place for supporting participants if the visit inspires them to want to get involved in Umoja in their own communities?
- How will you organise the logistics of the visit? Consider such things as travel, food and accommodation.
- In addition to reimbursing the expenses incurred by the host, will an honorarium or fee be expected or appropriate?
2. Hold a pre-visit workshop

It may be helpful to hold a pre-visit workshop for those who will be participating in the visit to explore principles of Umoja and provide people with a basic understanding of the Umoja approach.

During the workshop, help the participants to develop a list of key questions that will help them reflect both during and after their visit. These could include questions such as:

- What impressed you?
- What surprised you?
- Was there anything you did not like?
- What did you not understand?
- How did Umoja start?
- What was the role of the Umoja organisation?
- What was the role of the community?
- What were the key stages of the process?
- What were the skills of those working with the community?

3. During the Visit

During the visit, seek to ensure that the participants meet with a wide variety of different people from the church and community. For example, it may be helpful to participants to hear the reflections of community leaders, church pastors, church members, women, children, etc. Children sometimes find it difficult to express themselves with adults around, so it is important to find ways for them to do this safely.

4. After the Visit

Immediately after the visit (the next day if possible), hold another workshop to help participants to reflect on what they have seen and learned and to think of what they will do as a result. This could be written up as an action plan that could then be shared with others. Plenty of time should be allocated for this. The process of reflection should not be rushed.

Follow-up from the visit is also crucial if the benefits from the visit are not to be lost. You could, for example, contact the participants about their action plans within two months of the visit, and where possible, offer support and advice to help them implement their plans.
6. Expanding and adapting the Umoja programme

Introduction

It is important to think about the context in which you will use Umoja, and to adapt the materials to fit. The Facilitators’ guide has not been written as a blueprint, that everyone must follow exactly. It is hoped that each group using Umoja will combine it with their own unique experience to develop a new process that works for them in their context.

For example, the approach to Umoja outlined in the Facilitator’s Guide may work, as it is, very well in a rural village where the church is a recognised and respected part of that community. However, the process may need some adaptation for it to work in an urban setting, or in a setting where the church itself is marginalised or persecuted.

In this section, rather than trying to give an exhaustive account of how Umoja can be adapted to meet every context, we will focus on the experience of practitioners in two areas:

- Contexts where the local church is marginalised and legally restricted in its activities.
- Urban contexts where “community” can be more fragmented.

This may give some ideas of how Umoja can be adapted to other contexts too.

a) How to use Umoja where the church faces legal restrictions

In many parts of the world the local church faces legal restrictions as to what it can do in the community. It may be illegal, for example, for Christians to share their faith, or for people of other faiths to convert to Christianity. It may also be the case that the local church is not allowed to engage in social action.

In such a context, the following approach is recommended:

1. The facilitator starts by working with the church, envisioning them and motivating them to see their Christian mandate to serve their community.

2. The facilitator then helps the local church set up and run a separate organisation (NGO) to serve the community.

3. The facilitator works with the NGO to help envision the community, plan for action and move towards taking action.

4. The church plays a role on the board of the NGO and supply staff and volunteers to work in the NGO.
Setting up an NGO (non-governmental organisation)

The NGO should be funded and resourced by the local church or churches from the beginning. It should not be reliant on outside funding, and it should be accountable to the local churches. Sometimes NGOs are set up and then become independent of the church, doing their own thing and losing connection with the church that established them. In the Umoja approach it is really important that the NGO is accountable to and supported by the local church – that it is the vehicle of the local church for serving its community.

On the right are the training priorities that the facilitator must consider when training a church to set up an NGO.

The church members chosen to help co-ordinate the activities of the NGO should receive training in:

- Project cycle management
- Strategic planning
- Networking skills
- Facilitation skills and Umoja
- Supervision skills
- Training and coaching skills
- Reporting and documentation
- Ensuring good governance and church member representation
- Identifying and accessing financial and human resources from within the community
- Thinking through the remit and strategy of the NGO
- Developing an appropriate structure
- Ensuring a stakeholder analysis
- Ensuring the NGO is the vehicle of the local church for serving its community

b) Adapting Umoja for an urban context

Benefits of doing Umoja in towns and cities

- Access to large and diverse markets
- Co-operation between informal networks and interest groups
- Access to large source of diverse skills and expertise
- Large opportunity to work with different groups
- Access to materials and resources for income generation

Challenges of doing Umoja in towns and cities

- Competing demands of an urban lifestyle
- Mobile population and sometimes transient population
- Some communities are not clearly defined in geographical areas
- Communities depend on cash economy from the sale of goods or labour
- Some of the more vulnerable and marginalised groups are less obvious to identify

The remaining stages of Umoja can take place largely unaltered, but with the newly formed NGO being the catalyst for community mobilisation. A key part of the NGO’s role will be to ensure that the church is kept informed and involved in the process. The Bible studies in the Facilitator’s Manual could be used at each stage with the church, as well as providing an important reflection tool for the NGO members.
In designing an Umoja programme in towns and cities it is important to recognise the benefits (listed on the previous page) to see how these can be built upon and used to good effect. Also it is important to recognise some of the challenges which might limit the scale and scope of Umoja, as compared to its use in rural areas.

Tips for working in towns and cities

1. Because communities are less clearly defined, it may be more appropriate to work with distinct groups such as women’s self help groups, street traders, young people and particular groups of low income labourers.

2. It may be appropriate for a small co-ordination group to be formed for each of these distinct groups.

3. The programme should seek to build on the opportunities that are available in towns and cities to generate income for small groups and vulnerable individuals. Such activities could include:
   - setting up savings clubs for groups
   - self help groups and co-operatives
   - small business training
   - vocational training.

4. Where there are distinct communities within towns and cities there may be opportunities for improving services and provision of infrastructure. Such activities could include:
   - lobbying for better services to local authorities
   - improved access to water and electricity
   - improved housing
   - securing the rights to housing and property
   - improved water and sanitation
   - improved access to education for children
   - improved access to health services and clinics.

5. HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis tend to be more prevalent in the cities, and where they are identified as key issues, the following initiatives could be explored:
   - setting up voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) centres
   - HIV and AIDS awareness raising activities
   - alternative income activities for commercial sex workers
   - support and income generating activities for people living with HIV and AIDS
   - provision for widows and orphans of housing, education and income generation.

The process of using Umoja in towns and cities is quite similar to the process used in rural areas. The main difference is largely in defining which groups to work with. Where there are distinct communities, it is a matter of finding out how united they are as a group so that something can be achieved.

Final thoughts

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

We pray that you will have the strength to stick it out over the long haul - not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us.

Colossians 1:11 (The Message)