



Terepeza  
Development  
Association

# Does Engaging the Church in Community Development Really Make a Difference?

A study of the impact of Tearfund's Church-based Community Transformation training in Ethiopia

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT**







# Introduction

Tearfund works with local churches in the poorest places to help people escape poverty, live transformed lives, and reach their God-given potential. **We believe that God's people can be a force for change** - and that the church is the only entity that can tackle the broken relationships that are at the root of poverty.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Although the church has been sent on a mission by Christ to be salt and light to its community, it often falls short. In some cases, churches turn inward, focusing on their own congregations and pay little attention beyond their walls. Other times, churches focus exclusively on the preaching of the word, and neglect physical outreach and acts of compassion.

At Tearfund, **we believe in a holistic gospel**, one that focuses on both word and deed. Out of this belief came Church-Based Community Transformation (CCT) - a biblical model of development that works with local churches, helping them to go beyond their walls and address the unmet needs of the wider community - physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

The objective of this study was to understand the impact CCT has had on 25 communities in the Wolaita region of Ethiopia. Alongside the Terepreza Development Association (TDA), we surveyed 201 individuals ranging from pastors to community members. We then analyzed the results to identify common themes.

Out of the research, we present **five key learnings and two challenges** that can act as a platform for future planning, discussion, and transformation:

## 5 Key Learnings

1. When trained in the CCT process, acts of compassion increased to those outside the church
2. When trained in the CCT process, regular fundraising and budgeting for community outreach increased
3. CCT training improved the outside perception of the church by their communities
4. When trained in the CCT process, church membership grew
5. When trained in the CCT process, other development programs grew

## 2 Challenges

6. Yet, despite CCT training, traditional mindsets still persist - this is a longer-term process
7. CCT can be viewed as a short-term project rather than a long-term solution



# Wolaita, Ethiopia



The majority of families in the Wolaita region of Ethiopia are dependent on small family farms that are tilled by hand. They experience a severe 5 to 9 month "lean season" each year in which they eat only one meal a day. 72% of families in the region are food insecure.

## The Church in Ethiopia

The Kale Heywet (Word of Life) Church is the most prevalent church denomination in Ethiopia. Nearly 100 years old, it boasts more than one million members across approximately 1,150 churches across the Wolaita region in Southern Ethiopia.

Historically, the primary focus of the Kale Heywet churches has been oral-based evangelism, with little attention devoted to physical acts of compassion and justice. Furthermore, if "charity" was performed, it was largely focused inwardly towards the members of the church, and not seen as something to do in the community.

Any acts of community development were (and are currently) seen as separate from the church and its theology. Integral mission - or the concept of the Gospel being both word and deed - was not a concept for the Wolaita church. Helping the poor and similar efforts were seen as the responsibility of "Other groups" (NGOs, government) rather than the church itself.

## Church-Based Community Transformation (CCT) in Ethiopia

Tearfund Canada has been working in Ethiopia for decades to help families escape from poverty. Along with the Terepeza Development Association (the relief and development arm of the Wolaita Kale Heywet church) we believe that local churches should be catalysts for transformative change within their communities.

In response to the lack of community outreach above, Tearfund and TDA enrolled several churches in a process called Church-Based Community Transformation (CCT). Based solidly on scripture (see page 15), CCT helps churches go beyond their own walls and address the unmet needs of the wider community in Jesus' name. The goal is to mobilize the local church to act as salt and light, unlocking people's God-given potential.

## 5 key steps of Biblically-based Community Transformation are:

1. **Mobilization:** Identifying the skills and gifts the church already has and then what resources are already in the community.
2. **Envisioning:** Acting as the catalyst for change the church works together with the community to identify current needs and ideas on how they might be met.
3. **Planning:** Once agreed, the vision of the community is developed and projects are planned using a combination of their own resources and training programs.
4. **Taking Action:** Putting the plans into action and engaging the community.
5. **Evaluation:** How the church and community have worked together - what has been learned? Are they thriving and more resilient? To motivate, improve and change more lives.





# Does CCT really work?

To find out if engaging the church in community development really makes a difference, Tearfund Canada developed a hypothesis to prove or disprove. This report examines the impact of the CCT approach on both the church and on community development.

## Our Hypothesis:

When a church in a poor community is **engaged in defining their community needs, the resources they have, and then mobilize to solve their own communities' problems**, the impact of community development projects is enhanced, and five things happen:

1. Engagement with members of the community outside the church increases.
2. The impact of community development is enhanced.
3. Attendance and engagement increase in the church.
4. Longer-term sustainability of programs increases.
5. Acts of compassion amongst community members increases regardless of any affiliations (family, religious, social, gender, ability, economic, etc.) increase.



Tearfund's **Church and Community Mobilization Program (CCMP)** leading to **Church-Based Community Transformation (CCT)** has gone through a 20-year evolution and has impacted over **20,000 churches** around the world.



This is a summary of a 30 page report produced by our partners in Ethiopia. Criteria was originally set by Wayne Johnson and Anja Oussoren from Tearfund Canada. Approximately 45 survey questions were developed and the survey was conducted by Bereket Tassew and Bereket Demissie from TDA. Analysis of the findings were done by TDA and Tearfund Canada, led by Bereket Demissie, Aynsley Persad and Jewel Jamieson.



## Analysis Format and Structure

This study was conducted in 25 communities in the Wolaita region of Ethiopia. Twenty-five local churches from different settings, both rural and urban, were selected.

- A. Five churches started with the CCT model between five and 13 years ago using curriculum from Tearfund UK. Training was extended over a 3-5 year time period.
- B. Fifteen churches were introduced to the CCT model in the past 30 months by TDA using a modified curriculum that was delivered over an 18-month time period.
- C. Five churches who received no CCT training were selected to show the difference in outcomes between the CCT model and traditional models.

### Participants in this impact study included

- A. Pastors and lay leaders of 25 churches.
- B. Community members who did not go to the church but lived within 250 metres of the church.
- C. Farmers trained in church-based Conservation Agriculture (CA) methodology started by churches.
- D. Members of Self-Help Savings Groups (SHG) initiated by churches.

### Process

1. Translation of the data collection tool (checklist) jointly developed by Tearfund Canada and TDA and training data collectors.
2. The data was collected by employing a semi-structured questionnaire which was administered to **201 people from 25 communities**.
  - a. 165 church pastors, non-church members, CA farmers and SHG members
  - b. 36 non-CCT church leaders and members.
3. The data collected was quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed and narrated.
4. All surveys were completed in Amharic, the local language.

### Examples of survey questions included

- A. In what ways is the church reaching out to help people in need?
- B. What is the biggest difference in the attitudes of church people now compared to when CCT started?
- C. Do you believe that this church is changing your community?
- D. How has your relationship with other community members changed?







# Results at a Glance

Based on our study, we discovered 5 key learnings and 2 challenges in relation to how CCT is transforming communities through the local church.

## 5 Key Learnings

- 1** When trained in the CCT process, **acts of compassion increased** to those outside the church
- 2** When trained in the CCT process, **regular fundraising and budgeting for community outreach increased**
- 3** CCT training **improved the outside perception of the church** within their communities
- 4** When trained in the CCT process, **church membership grew**
- 5** When trained in the CCT process, **other development programs grew**

## 2 Challenges

- 1** Despite CCT training, **traditional mindsets still persist**
- 2** CCT can be viewed as a **short-term project rather than a long-term solution**



## Key Learning #1: When trained in the CCT process, acts of compassion increased to those outside the church

- A.** Only one church was reaching out to non-members prior to CCT Training.
- B.** Acts of compassion increased to those outside of the church after CCT training with **100% of churches now regularly pursuing ways to serve their community.**
- C.** Acts of compassion include:
  - a.** Construction of houses
  - b.** Giving of physical goods and food
  - c.** Cash supplements
  - d.** Care for widows and orphans
  - e.** Prayer
- D.** This shift in attitude has helped to change the churches perspectives on outreach and has assisted in evangelizing and caring for the spiritual needs of those outside the church. Each church can be the catalyst for mindset change in their communities, so they see that God has given them power to change their situation.
- E.** The churches that did not undergo CCT training had a greatly reduced community presence. These churches shared that because “they feel that they have not yet reached the poor within the church, it would not be appropriate to help the poor outside of the church”.



## Key Learning #2: When trained in the CCT process, regular fundraising and budgeting for community outreach increased

- A.** Before CCT training, no churches were regularly fundraising for community needs.
- B.** Following CCT training, **65% of the churches have committed to continually raise funds or budget** for purposes of community involvement.
- C.** Methods range from a monthly offering to weekly donation boxes.
- D.** For churches without CCT Training, there is no organized support to their own members or the people outside. When these churches do help those in need, they use funds from the church’s general budget.
- E.** Regular fundraising and budgeting for churches that have had CCT training is a key component in regard to the long-term sustainability of the model. It shows that **churches are taking initiative because they see the importance of being Jesus’ hands and feet in the community.**

**‘We did not have experience going beyond our church members to help, but CCT training helped us to open our eyes wide to what Jesus taught’**

Pastor from Koysa Nare Kale Heywet Church

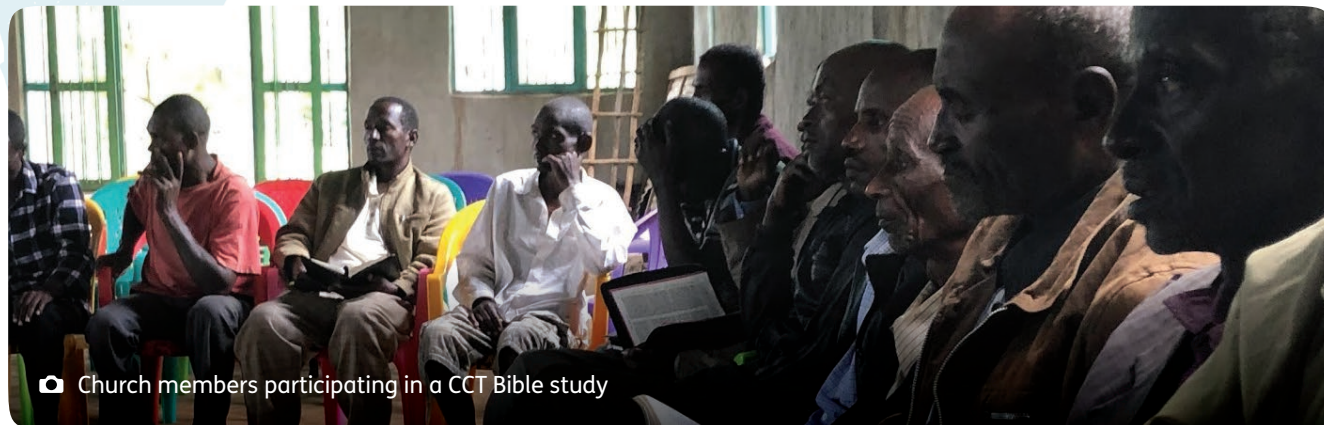


### Key Learning #3: CCT training improved the outside perception of the church within their communities

- A. The increase in acts of compassion toward non-members has positively impacted the outside perception of the church.
- B. **75% of non-church members who were surveyed reported a positive change of their perception of the church** in their community.
- C. By contrast, churches which had not received CCT training reported that the problem with reaching people who are not members of the church is that they perceive the church team “as visiting them to preach the gospel at them, and not to support them in what they need.”
- D. Churches with CCT training are **engaging the community and restoring broken relationships**.

‘Two years ago, we had never seen the church helping non-members. But now they are helping the poor without discriminating.’

Community members surrounding Olafino Kale Heywet Church



Church members participating in a CCT Bible study

### Key Learning #4: When trained in the CCT process, church membership grew

- A. The growth in community outreach and positive non-member perception has contributed to a growth in church membership for churches with CCT training.
- B. **70% of the churches with CCT training saw an increase in church membership** during the same time period of which they were doing training.
- C. Churches shared that their membership numbers had increased during their first two years of CCT training because they had been sharing the love of Christ to non-believers in practical ways.
- D. The church will continue to grow in the future due to the generational impacts of CCT.
- E. The church is growing as a result of CCT training and members are excited about their involvement in reaching the wider community with money, skills and the restoration of broken relationships.

‘The very benefit of this approach is that our children learned a lot from our holistic approach and are now praying for people of all races and faiths. We see the generational impacts.’

Pastor from Zamine Town Kale Heywet Church



## Case Study

### Caring for Orphans through the Local Church

Tseganesh Abraham (18), Tsehaynesh Abraham (16), Abebayehu Abraham (14) and Tibebeu Abraham (12) are children who understand what it means to struggle. They lost both of their parents 8 years ago, leaving them as orphans. They have two other siblings who were forced to go to other neighbouring regions in search of jobs in order to survive and provide for the family. The four siblings live in the Shela Motala village of Damot Woyde district, in a very old house built by their grandfather.

All they own is a small plot of land where they are hardly able to produce a crop to live off of because they do not have access to agricultural inputs like seeds or oxen. As a result, they have often experienced hunger and malnutrition. Let alone not having enough food to eat, they have had no access to educational supplies for their schooling and two of the siblings dropped out of school last year. This situation was desperate and these siblings needed urgent care.

Their house is located very close to Shela Motala Kale Heywet church. Prior to CCT, this church had never considered just how deep the needs of orphans, like these, were.

Two years ago, the church was introduced to the CCT model. Leaders together with pastors, women and youth went through various training to support people in real need. **Having been trained, church members began to look beyond church walls** to identify those in need in the community. Thankfully, the orphans were the first to come to their beneficiary list.

The church now provides the orphans with food, school supplies and medical insurance. They have coordinated members of the church to plough the farm for free and trained them to farm. As a result of the food and financial support from the church, the children no longer have to focus only on survival but are now able to attend school. The local church was able to come alongside the children and provide not only material support but also give them a family they can rely on.

The oldest, Tseganesh, shared, **“Even though we are surrounded by many relatives and neighbours, we became hungry for good, helpful people - not just food. We are so happy that now the church visits us and helps fulfill our needs.”**



The four siblings Tibebeu, Tseganesh, Tsehaynesh and Abebayehu (left to right)



**Key Learning #5:** When trained in the CCT process, other development programs grew

**Conservation Agriculture** is a method of farming that involves sustainable agricultural techniques like crop rotation, soil management, and mulching. It is used to increase crop yield and help provide sustainable food security.



**Self Help Savings Groups** are run by local church partners to help train and mentor members of the community to utilize the financial resources they have to move out of poverty. Groups of 15-20 people meet together to support each other financially and encourage one another. Members often use the money to start or expand their businesses.

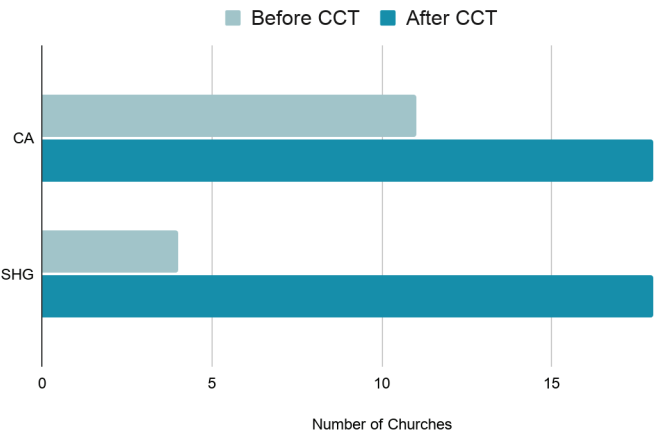


- A.** CCT training has positively impacted Conservation Agriculture (CA) and Self Help Savings Groups (SHG) programs initiated in the churches.
- B.** Prior to CCT, 55% of churches were using CA.
- C.** After CCT, 90% of churches were utilizing CA to help provide for their members and community. All church initiated CA programs included non-church members, whereas CA programs in non-CCT trained churches are predominantly for members only.
- D.** The CA approach has been vital for ensuring food security throughout communities. It is also a useful tool to reach those beyond the church.
- E.** In one church, 56 people who were trained through the church had taught 44 neighbouring farmers of their own accord.
- F.** Prior to CCT only 20% of churches had members actively involved in SHGs.
- G.** After CCT training, 90% of churches had active SHGs. All of these groups included non church members.
- H.** SHGs have given those with little income a chance to boost their small businesses and avoid high interest rates typically charged by money lenders.

**‘Savings Groups changed us from staying home to becoming small scale traders that contribute to the betterment of the family. Life has changed for the better’**

Female SHG member at Abela Faracho Town Enat Kale Heywet Church

**Churches Participating in CA and SHG before and after CCT Training**



# Case Study

## Caring for the Widow through the Local Church

As a mother of five, Birhanesh had experienced a life filled with heartache. After giving birth to her eldest three children, Birhanesh’s husband passed away. As a widow, Birnanesh was in a vulnerable situation as the sole caregiver of her family. In time, she remarried to another man from a different village to help provide security for her children. Together, they had two more children. Sadly, Birhanesh’s second husband passed away, leaving her once again as the provider for her family. With no help from her late husband’s family, Birhanesh and her children were cast away.

During this time Birhanesh experienced a deep depression, feeling the weight of the world on her shoulders. So much so, that she tried to commit suicide several times because she felt so hopeless in her current circumstances. In an effort to find stability after being cast out by relatives, she returned to the previous home she had lived in with her first husband.

She had left the farmland in the responsibility of her eldest children but upon arrival she found it abandoned. The eldest children had moved away from the farmland to earn an income in other locations.

In the midst of this situation, the local church came alongside Birhanesh and her children.

**Birhanesh stated “...that the Degaga Lenda Kale Heywet church received me and my kids with huge hugs.”**

**Due to the church’s prior CCT training, they were proactive and ready to assist this family in their desperate time of need.**

Pastor Mengistu, who leads the Degaga Lenda Kale Heywet church, explained how they mobilized to help Birhanesh and her family:

**“We associated her condition with the story we learned in CCT training about Naomi in the book of Ruth.**

**All expenses for construction of the house were covered by the church both in kind and cash. The church mobilized not only money but the skills like carpentry and stamping of mud and communication in the process of re-integration of her children from different places.**

**After exhaustive effort, the church succeeded in re-uniting the children with their mother and now they are leading a happy life passing through all the ups and down together. In addition to these, the church is fulfilling all educational supplies to her children and cultivating the land through mobilization of the congregation.**

**The church kept showing evangelism in action because of the CCT.**

**Praise be the Lord!”**



Birhanesh with her children



**Challenge #1:** Despite CCT training, traditional mindsets still persist

- A. 90% of the 20 churches trained in CCT have demonstrated a significant mindset shift in caring for their community
- B. 10% of churches reported that a continued charity model mindset continued to persist despite CCT.
  - a. Only give and help when required
  - b. Help the needy in the church first
  - c. Preaching the gospel is oral only, not action
- C. For these churches, work still needs to be done to address the entrenched poverty mindset of some church members. This attitude limits the interactions and influence the church has on the larger community.

**Challenge #2:** CCT can be viewed as a short-term project rather than a long-term solution

- A. In a small number of churches, there was a resistance to change and improve outreach to communities as a result of years of the charity-model mindset.
- B. In the absence of follow-up or clear instructions motivation for community outreach fell. There was a lack of ownership of the model.
- C. In the past, NGOs had come in and provided short-term relief with no ongoing support - and the communities have learned that these kinds of programs do not rely on themselves but rely on outsiders to maintain.
- D. CCT seeks to develop members in the church to keep CCT a priority alongside traditional church work until it is so integrated that the whole congregation will carry on the efforts.

“We used to hear that the church was giving small amounts of money to its members during the holidays, but now they have started going out and visiting people like us. This is a great move to see the church treating people impartially in the community.”

Community members surrounding Dagaga Lenda Kale Heywet Church



**Our Conclusion**

*Does engaging the church in community development through CCT training really make a difference?*

The results of our study show that our hypothesis was correct. When Tearfund, local churches and the communities they serve come together, amazing things happen. **Engaging the church in community development through CCT really does make a difference.** As churches engaged in defining their community needs, and then mobilized to solve their own communities’ problems, the impact of community development projects was enhanced.

- A. Engagement with members of the community outside of the church increased: 75% of non-church members who were surveyed reported a positive change of their perception of the church in their community.
- B. Community development was enhanced: 65% of the churches have committed to continually raising funds and budgeting for the purposes of community development.
- C. Attendance and engagement increased in the churches: 70% of the churches with CCT training saw an increase in church membership.
- D. Longer-term sustainability of community development programs increased: 90% of the churches with CCT training are participating in both Conservation Agricultural and Savings Groups.
- E. Acts of compassion amongst community members increased regardless of any affiliations: 100% of the churches that received CCT training have sought ways to care for those in their communities.

After CCT training, churches have transformed how they reach their communities. Outreach is no longer confined within church walls and members are now giving their time, resources, and finances to help support those in need. **As a result, lives are being changed and the church is being mobilized - unlocking people’s God-given potential.**







# Next Steps

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are suggested in order to continue to empower local churches to help communities lift themselves out of poverty:

- 1. There are hundreds of churches to be trained on Church-Based Community Transformation in the Wolaita Region of Ethiopia, and thousands more elsewhere.
- 2. Capacity building is necessary at different levels - starting with the denominational level, then to the pastors, deacons and congregation and finally into the community.
- 3. Consistency across the approach should be in place with written curriculum for CCT in local languages.
- 4. Best practice examples need to be shared between churches and across the region for this to transform from good training into a movement.
- 5. CCT champions in every congregation need to be empowered to help sustain the CCT movement in their communities and churches.
- 6. Embedding CCT in theological training will enrich the approach to the gospel in communities to be more integral by including addressing people’s physical needs in the short and long term.
- 7. Exploration of ways to improve and enhance the sustainability of Conservation Agriculture and Savings Groups using CCT.

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# Overall Findings for 20 CCT Trained Churches

Indicators Used in Survey	Quantity	Percent of Sample	Comments
Prior to CCT training, churches reaching out to non-members	1	5%	The only church who reported reaching out to non-members prior to CCT training was Hanaze Kale Heywet Church.
After CCT training, churches reaching out to non-members	20	100%	Churches were enabled to see and act upon the needs of their community.
After CCT training, increase in church membership	14	70%	Due to increased community presence, membership has increased.
Total churches participating in SHG	18	90%	SHGs have helped women to become empowered and have strengthened community ties.
Total churches participating in CA	18	90%	CA Training has been cascaded down from church members to community farmers resulting in increased food production and environmental sustainability.
Non-church members positive perception of the church	15	75%	Non-church members from 15 communities surrounding 15 churches are excited to see churches breaking away from traditional models of charity and reaching out to those in the community
Increase in acts of compassion	20	100%	Churches are caring for those in their community by building houses, providing money and goods, and regularly praying and conducting visits.
Churches now budgeting for CCT/ incorporating regular fundraising	13	65%	Churches are taking ownership by conducting regular fundraisers within the congregation or creating separate budgets dedicated to community outreach.

# Key Passages Studied in the CCT Training Process

Passage	Key Learnings
Mark 6	Meeting all needs using God-given resources, even when they seem so little
Matthew 5	The church as salt and light of the world
2 Kings 4	What assets do you already have in your hand?
Nehemiah 1-6	Situational assessment and implementation of a plan using the whole community
Isaiah 61/ Luke 4	What is your calling? It’s much more than proclamation
John 10:10	God wants abundance, what does that mean in our context?



**Church and community transformation is our passion and calling; it empowers, it's sustainable, it offers extraordinary value for money, and we see communities lifting themselves out of poverty**

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