

The Light Wheel

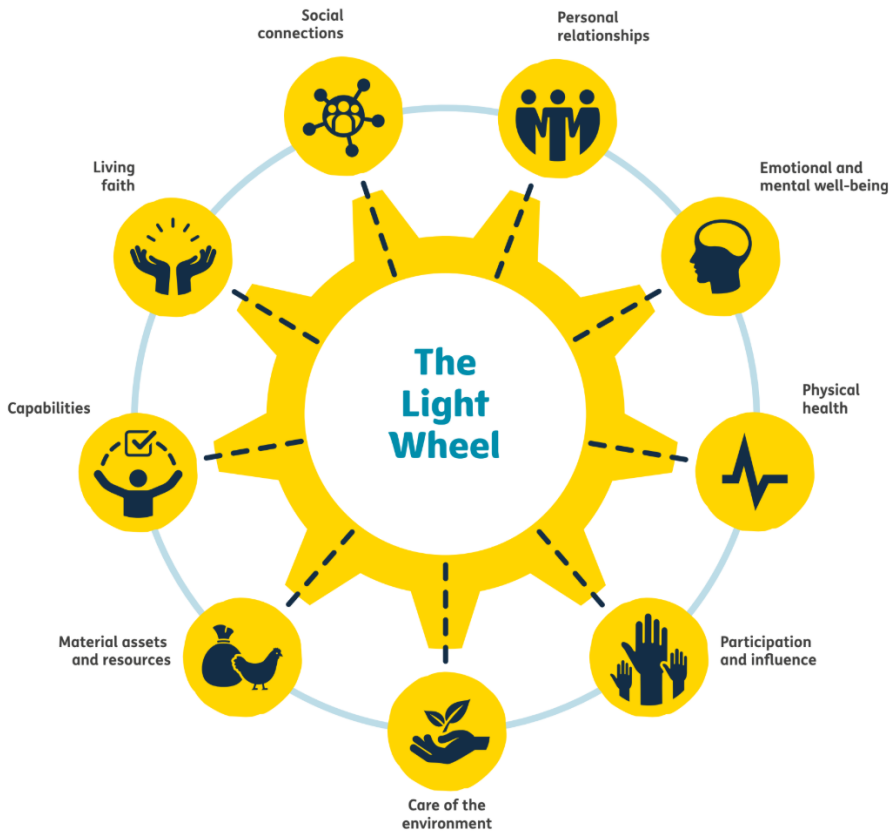
A deep dive into the impact of Tearfund

July 2026

Tearfund is committed to continuous learning, deepening and improving our work together with the communities we serve. In 2025, we therefore introduced the Light Wheel: a standardised measurement tool designed to monitor well-being comprehensively, consistently and with active community participation across our programmes. This tool was applied in five different projects in four countries.

While independent research provides insight into the effectiveness of our approach at a broader level, the Light Wheel focuses on learning within communities themselves. The method assesses well-being across nine interconnected domains. As Tearfund, we believe that all these nine spokes need to be addressed if we are to see whole life (or holistic) transformation. These nine spokes are the following:

- Social Connections
- Personal Relationships
- Emotional and Mental Wellbeing
- Physical Health
- Participation and Influence
- Care of the Environment
- Material Assets and Resources
- Capabilities
- Living faith



The Light Wheel, by focusing on these nine domains, creates a clear picture of how change is experienced in the daily lives of individuals as well as communities. It will also strengthen shared learning and ownership and supports informed decision-making on next steps.



The participation of the participants is essential to the Light Wheel process.

What makes the Light Wheel participatory?

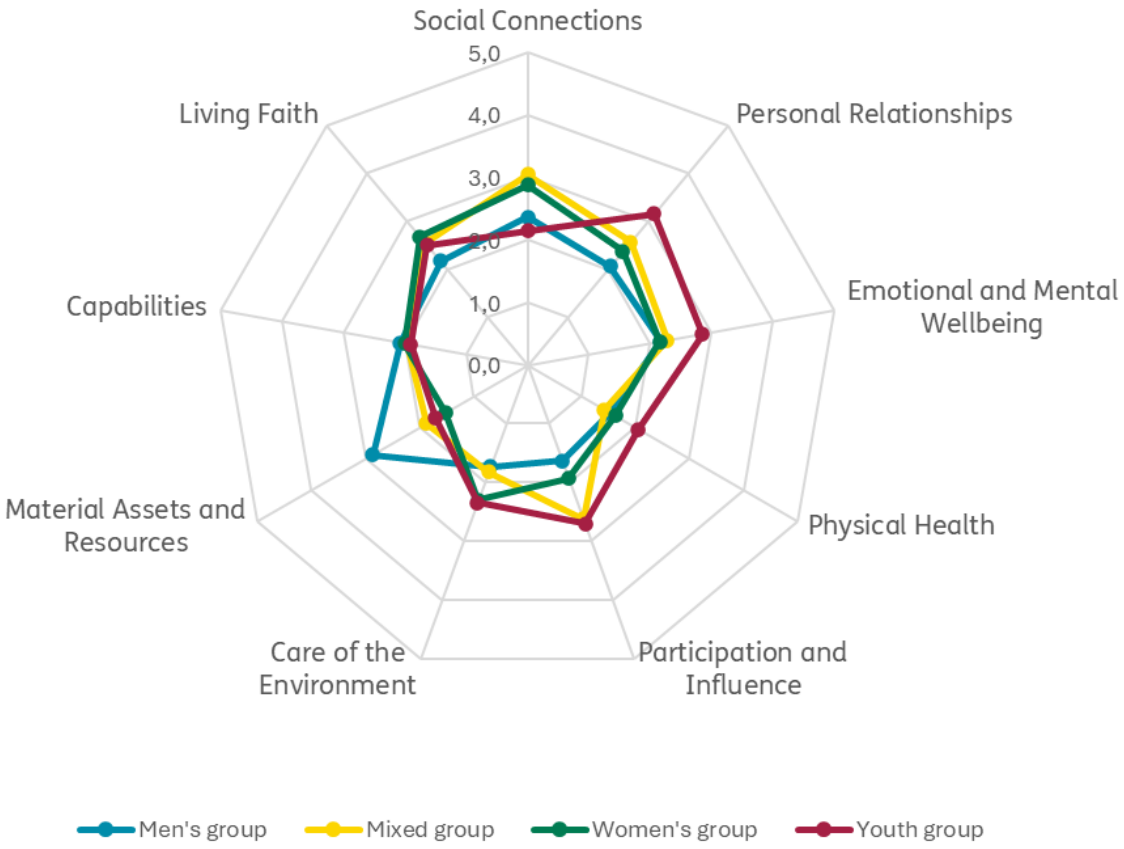
With the Light Wheel, community groups come together to discuss the situation in their community. The group discussion focuses on each of the nine spokes of the Light Wheel separately. Through the discussion, people hear each other's perspectives, making them aware of the issues and concerns in their community. Sometimes, these groups are mixed, but most often it is more appropriate and convenient for people to have separate groups for men and women for example, or for people of different age groups. These discussions are known for being very vivid and insightful.

After the group discussions, the participants are asked to rate the situation in their community. The score they give can vary from 1 – 5; where 5 stands for the ideal situation and 1 for a situation where people are unaware of the issues and not taking any action to address these. People score individually, and the average is calculated by the facilitator. The average scores are plotted on a spider diagram on the wall, so that people can see the scores, and visually compare the different scores for the various spokes. This way, people can analyse the scores together and make sense of the data.

What are the first results of the Light Wheel pilot?

The scores from the group discussions are also reported to Tearfund, and we can start making comparisons. As Tearfund we are specifically interested in the results between the start and the end of the project, however as we are in the first stages of the use of the pilot, these comparisons cannot be made yet. What can be done, however, is a more in-depth look into the situation in various communities.

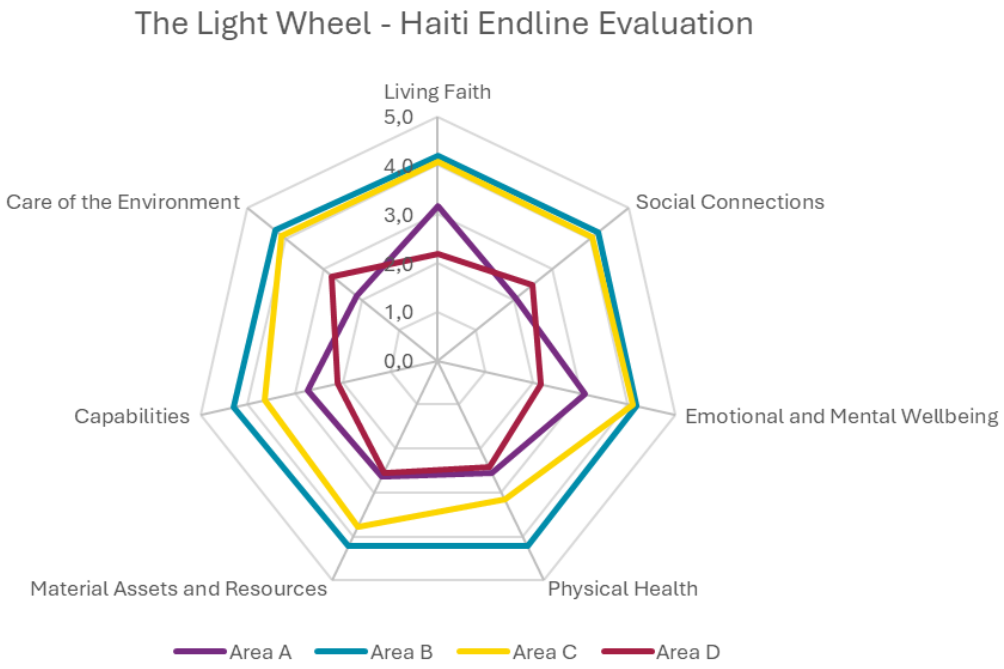
The diagram on page 4, for example shows the different scores for the different target groups in one of the projects we support in Uganda. The data was part of a baseline[1], explaining the rather low scores.



[1] *A baseline is a measurement of the situation at the very start of the project. By the time of a baseline the project has not really started. This information can be used as the basis for further comparisons to say more about the impact of a certain project.*

By taking an in depth look at this chart, we can for example see that Youth score notably higher on Personal Relationships and Emotional and Mental Wellbeing than the other groups, whereas men score higher on Material Assets and Resources. Women, on the other hand, score higher than men on Social Connections and Living Faith. Being aware of these differences, can affect the design of the project.

The group discussions not only shed light on the differences between specific target groups but can also highlight certain differences between various regions. As you can see in the chart on page 5, the average scores in the four different areas in Haiti are quite different. In Areas B and C people are rather positive about the 7 (out of the 9) spokes discussed, while the scores in Areas A and D are much lower. This can be explained by looking into the actual project implementation, where the partner organization had difficulty accessing Areas A and D due to the security situation in those areas. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the more positive results in Areas B and C are attributed to the project itself, however the difference in scores shows us that the scores given are in line with what was expected in the different contexts.



The data in Haiti was only endline data[2], we can therefore not make any comparisons with the situation before. We do however expect that in future more comparisons and trends can be discovered once the Light Wheel is rolled out in more countries, at frequent intervals.

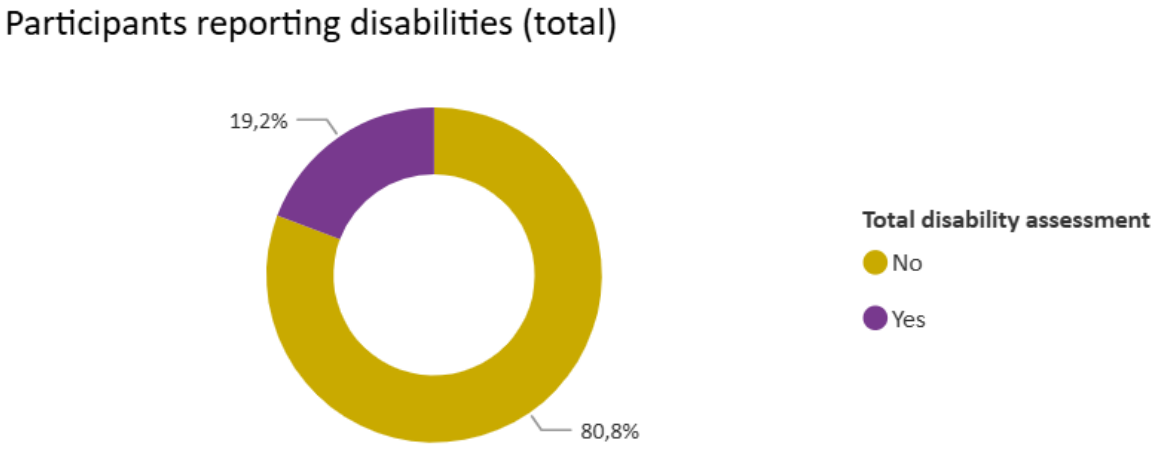
[2] *Endline data refers to the data collected at the end of a project. With this measurement, we gain more insight in the final outcomes and impact. In case a baseline and endline are conducted for the same project, comparisons can be made.*



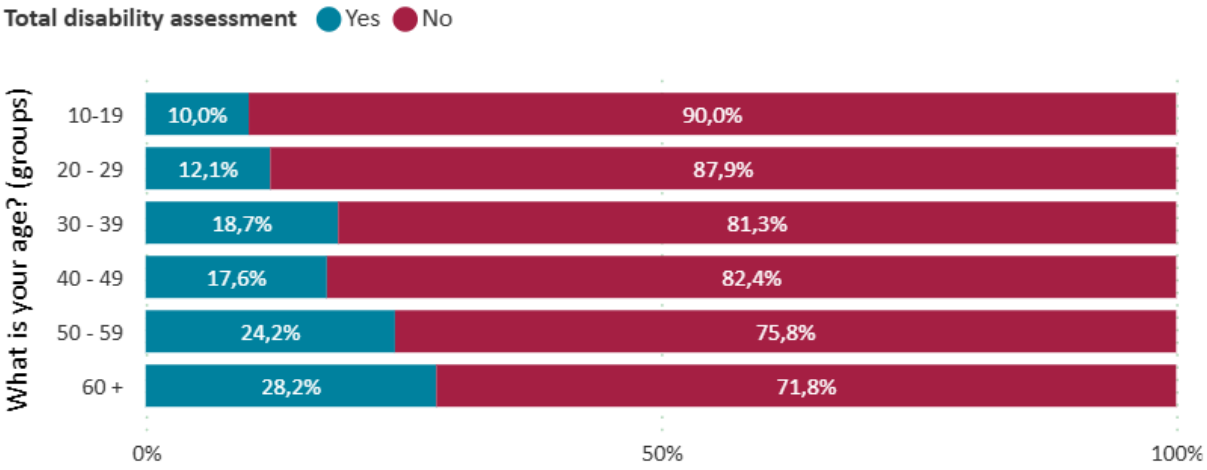
Light Wheel Household Survey

To have more robust data, in some of the countries the Light Wheel household survey was used. This tool is less participative in nature but really helps in making a thorough and more objective assessment of which spokes, and for which target groups, progress is made.
The Light Wheel Household survey entails more than 50 questions and covers all the nine spokes of the Light Wheel. In some countries only some of the questions are used, as some questions are not considered relevant or appropriate for that specific project. Nevertheless, since the pilot started in 2025, we have a database with responses from more than 1400 respondents over 101 different communities in 4 different countries.

Based on the data, we can, together with our implementing partners, now make comparisons between different age groups, gender or (dis)ability. For example, based on our data, we can see that that 19,2% of the respondents in the projects reported to have a disability. There is, however, a huge variety in the various age groups, with older people being more likely to suffer from a disability than younger people.



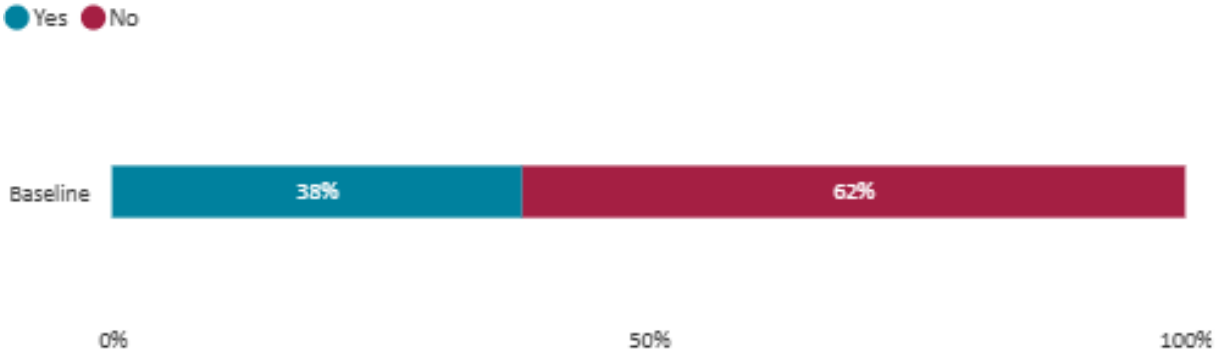
Participants reporting disabilities (per age group)

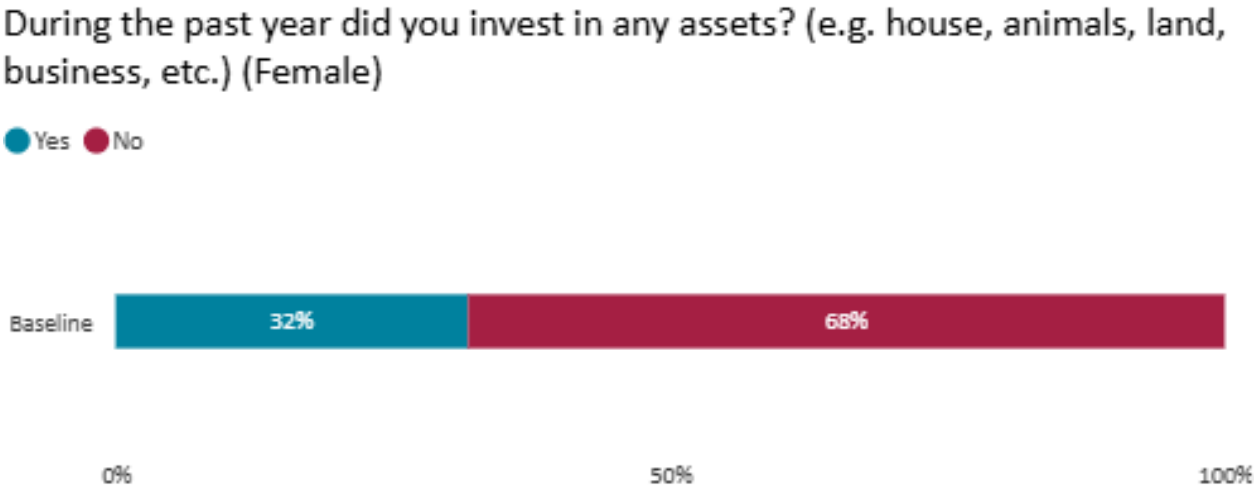


Triangulation

As already mentioned, the Light Wheel Household Survey has categorized the various questions into the nine different spokes of wellbeing. In this way, we can triangulate the data from the group discussions with the data from the survey. For example, at the start of this report, we highlighted that men in the baseline in Uganda were more positive about their Material Assets and Resources situation than women. Based on the data from the survey, we can double-check whether we see the same difference. Let's therefore look into the question "During the past year did you invest in any assets? (e.g. house, animals, land, business, etc.?)". We can see that a slightly higher percentage of men (38%) answered this question positively, compared to women (32%). This is in line with the results from the group discussions.

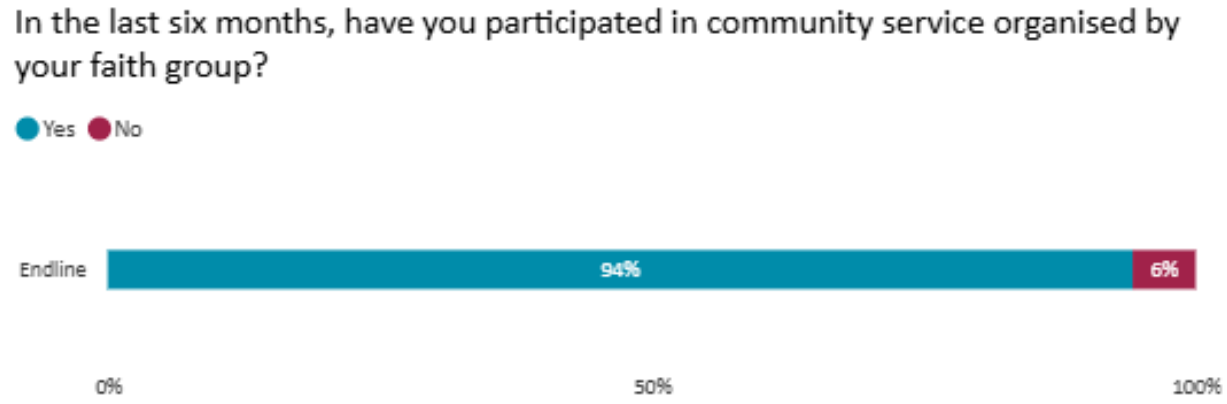
During the past year did you invest in any assets? (e.g. house, animals, land, business, etc.) (Male)





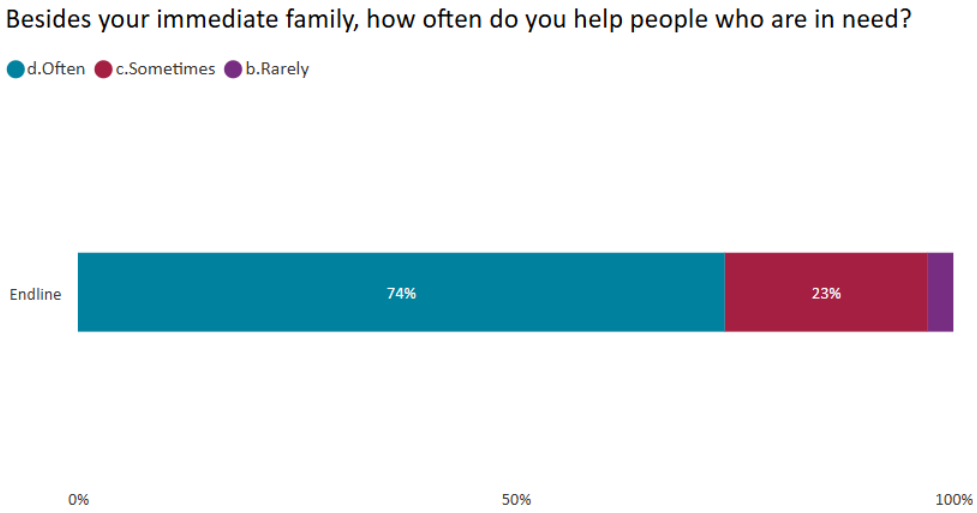
Quantitative data for the various aspects of wellbeing

However, the household survey serves not only to confirm or further dive into the data from the group discussions, but it is also a tool that stands on its own and gives a complete picture of wellbeing for members of the communities where we work (midline or endline) or are planning to work (baseline).
Based on the data from Indonesia (endline), we now have a better understanding of whether community members participated in community activities organized by their faith groups, and what kind of activities they participated in (Light Wheel spoke: Living Faith).

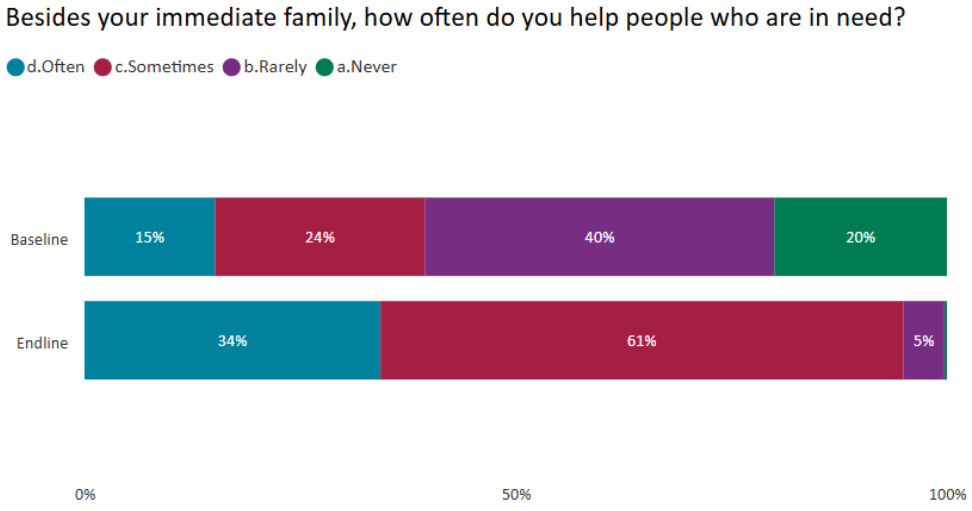


What did you participate in?	Endline
Visiting sick or elderly	87%
Community cleaning	52%
Taking a meal to sick or discouraged person/family	16%
Distributing essential items to person/families	1%

This area of community activities, and looking after each other is something we as Tearfund believe in. We see increased social cohesion as an important indicator for ownership of the project as well as sustainability. Therefore, topics like social cohesion are further illuminated in questions that fall under the Light Wheel Spoke "Social Connections". Based on the answers given on the question "Besides your immediate family, how often do you help people who are in need?" We can also see here the same picture for Indonesia; over 90% has answered this question positively:



Equally interesting, is that this same question was also answered by community members in Uganda. One group of respondents were living in an area where one of our implementing partners is planning to start their project (baseline), the other group of respondents participated in the evaluation of a project that had just ended[3]. You can see the difference between these two groups in the chart below:



[3] *There are important geographical differences between the two areas (e.g. the seize of the household is higher in the endline group than in the baseline group, and so is the economic situation, more people invested in assets in the endline group than in the baseline group).*

The chart leaves the impression that our project has contributed to enhanced social cohesion and that social support in the community has increased. However, as this is just a comparison of two groups, and as there is no baseline available for the group that participated in the endline evaluation, it is difficult to draw a firm conclusion. However, as we continue to roll out the use of the Light Wheel and as more people are responding to the questions with more frequent intervals, we hope that we can draw evidence-based conclusions in future, which will help to improve and enhance our programming.

Relevant comparisons between countries

Though it is hard to make causal focused comparisons between the countries, as they are in different stages in the projects, it is however still possible to make comparisons between countries in certain topics. For example, in the household survey, attention is paid towards to the impact of climate change in people's lives (Light wheel spoke: Care for the Environment). Based on the answers given, we can observe interesting differences between the respondents in the countries we work.

For example, in Bangladesh, 24% of the respondents indicate that they have not observed any changes in climate and local environment. Whereas a plurality (43%) experienced changes in temperature.

In the last year, what changes have you noticed in the climate and local environment? (Bangladesh)	Baseline
Changes in temperature	43%
Floods	26%
No changes noticed	24%
Loss of natural habitats	18%
Abnormal storms	8%
Drought	6%
Poor air quality	3%

In Indonesia however, only 3% did not notice any changes, and while more people experienced changes in temperature, the experience of floods is similar to Bangladesh. However, the loss of natural habitats is much lower in Indonesia.

In the last year, what changes have you noticed in the climate and local environment? (Indonesia)	Endline
Changes in temperature	71%
Floods	27%
Drought	14%
Abnormal storms	13%
Poor air quality	8%
No changes noticed	3%
Loss of natural habitats	2%

Lastly, the same question was also asked in one of our projects in Uganda. In that region most of the respondents experienced drought in the last year, due to climate change, as well as changes in temperature.

In the last year, what changes have you noticed in the climate and local environment? (Uganda)	Baseline
Drought	61%
Changes in temperature	50%
Loss of natural habitats	18%
No changes noticed	13%
Abnormal storms	8%
Floods	8%
Poor air quality	2%

Due to the changes experienced in Uganda, 84% of the respondents suffered from hunger due to these challenges.

In the last year, what challenges did you face related to the changes in the environment? (Uganda)	Baseline
Hunger	84%
Crop loss	73%
Loss of livelihoods	29%
Changes in physical health	6%
Migration	6%
Conflict	2%
No challenges faced	1%



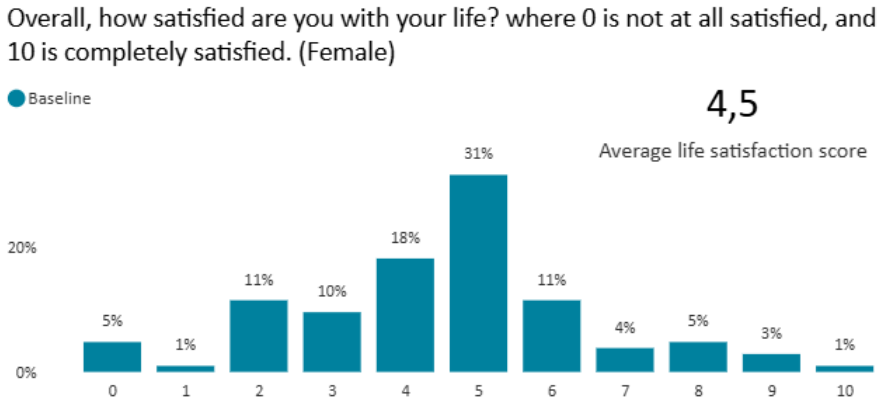
Church & Community Transformation (CCT)

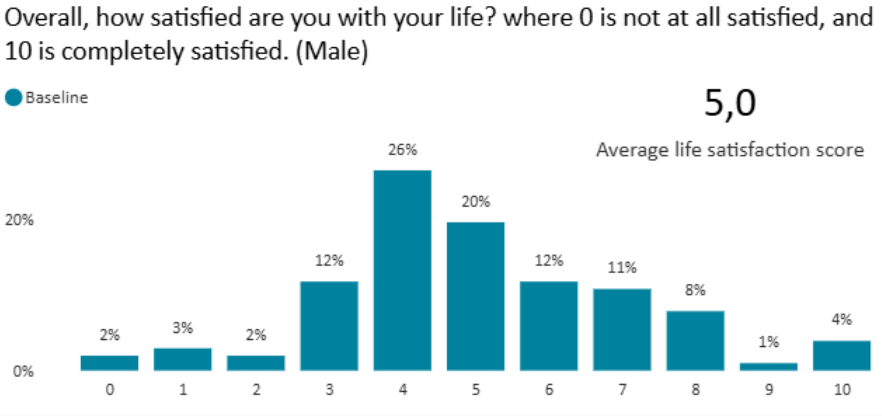
Tearfund encourages churches to work together with their communities to strengthen local development. This approach, CCT lies at the heart of Tearfund Netherlands' work. Through CCT, we equip churches to help communities identify their needs, mobilise locally available resources, and foster collaboration, dialogue and inclusion. In this way, we contribute to stronger social cohesion and to the support of vulnerable groups, both within churches and in the wider community among people of different faith backgrounds.

Connections with other questionnaires

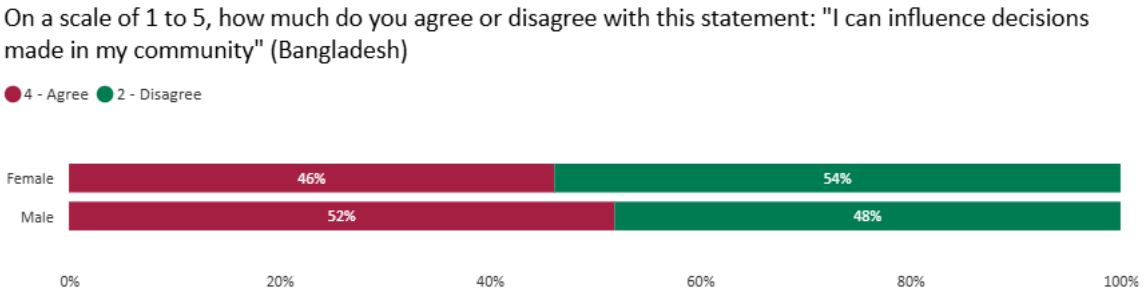
In 2023 and 2024, Tearfund conducted large-scale independent research to measure the impact of the Church and Community Transformation (CCT) approach in our projects. In this research, the subjective, self-reported question on life-satisfaction was included. This question is increasingly becoming a universal measure for life satisfaction. For comparison purposes with the CCT impact study, as well as comparisons with global data on life satisfaction, this question is also incorporated in Tearfund's Light Wheel Questionnaire (as part of the Light wheel spoke: Emotional and Mental Wellbeing).

Based on the initial results, we can observe an interesting gender-difference in Uganda for example, where men give a higher average score on life satisfaction than women in the same region.



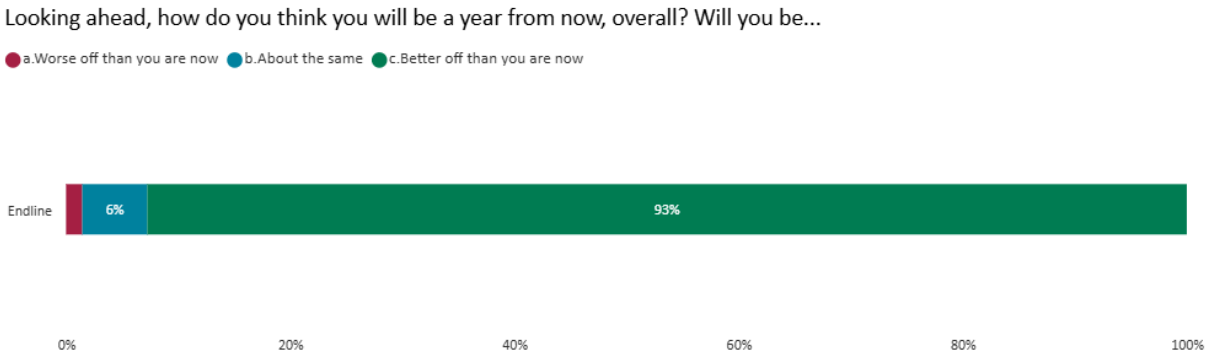


Other interesting differences between men's and women's perceptions, include for example, whether they feel they can influence decisions made in the community (Light wheel spoke: Participation and Influence). In Uganda, as well as in Indonesia and Bangladesh (presented in the chart below) we see that men are more convinced than women that they have this influence.

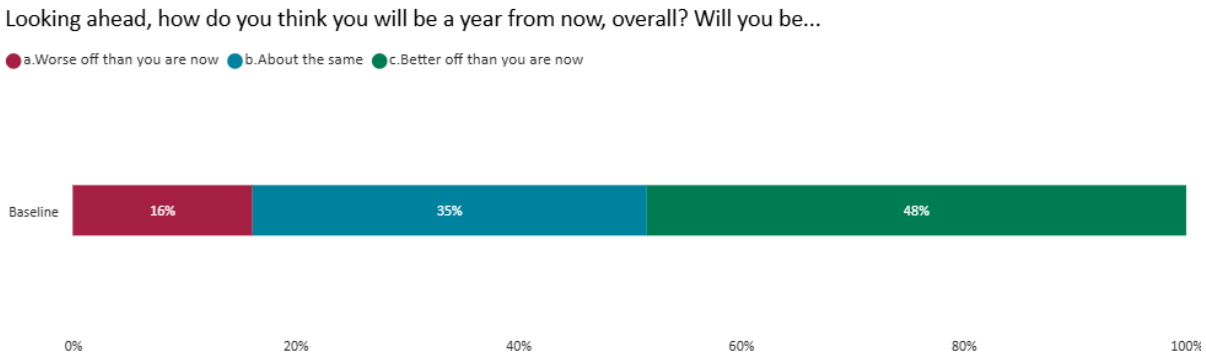


Future perspectives

In the survey, we enquired about people's future's perspectives (Light wheel spoke : Emotional and Mental Wellbeing). During the endline evaluation in Indonesia, people are quite positive, as you can see in the chart below. More than 93% believe that in the next year they will be better off than they are now.



In Uganda, during the baseline, people's future perspectives are more diverse, and not everyone is optimistic about their future. It remains to be seen whether, people over time, become more hopeful about their lives, as they participate in the project. Based on the research, and data already available, we have good indications that this will be the case, but this will need to be confirmed through future data collection.



For more information on The Light Wheel you can contact Tearfund via info@tearfund.nl.



Do you want to learn more about Tearfund's impact in 2025? Our annual report 2025 is now available on www.tearfund.nl/en/annual-report.