

Research summary

Local church, lasting transformation

How the church is working together with communities to address poverty and bring positive change



Tearfund works with local churches in more than 50 of the world's poorest countries to help people lift themselves out of poverty, live transformed lives and reach their God-given potential. We believe that poverty is not God's plan, but is caused by broken relationships and human behaviour.

And we believe that the local church can be a force for change to address poverty.

Tearfund has worked with local churches around the world for over 50 years to bring transformational change to communities and reduce poverty. We call this model of working Church and Community Transformation (CCT).

Put simply, a CCT process is a Bible-based guided training approach that a local church can use with its community to identify the resources they have – working together to create long-lasting, whole-life change. As local communities work through the process, they decide what outcomes and activities work best in their situation. For example, this might be running training on vocational skills, establishing community projects, or setting up support and savings groups.

27%

Our research found 27 per cent higher life satisfaction among CCT communities.

Members of the Zizu community in Rwanda harvesting bananas from the plantation they set up through their church-based training group
Photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

Introduction

We know from research studies and from the stories shared with us by the communities we have worked with that CCT is making a powerful difference. But we wanted to measure the impact CCT has on people's lives and the value of the transformation communities are experiencing.

To do this, we commissioned the largest independent study Tearfund has embarked on. We worked with [State of Life](#), external specialists in measuring wellbeing and social value, and had our findings peer reviewed by an economic advisor in the UK Government Economic Service.

This was a large and pioneering study: in 2022 we surveyed almost 8,000 people across four countries (Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zimbabwe). We compared people actively involved in CCT activities with others in the wider community. And we also surveyed communities where CCT was not taking place at all yet. What we discovered was inspiring!

The remarkable results showed that CCT brings positive whole-life transformation, which is sustained and far-reaching and is great value.

You can read the full results in the [technical report](#)

What is wellbeing?

Tearfund understands poverty as holistic, with impacts on people's wellbeing. Wellbeing is made up of a number of different components and aspects of our lives, all of which are interconnected and interdependent. In this study, we measured wellbeing through life satisfaction, as well as economic, personal, social and spiritual factors.

What is social value measurement?

Social value measurement aims to put a monetary value to costs and benefits that do not have a market price, such as improved quality of life, increased trust in our neighbours, or an improved natural environment. Measuring social value (also called 'social return') helps us to understand the broader impact of CCT, and to quantify the intangible effects on someone's life of increased life satisfaction and wellbeing.

In this study, we have sought to put a monetary value on the impact of CCT on people's life satisfaction using the WELLBY approach. You can find out more about this on page 6.

Our research found:

- **There is 27 per cent** higher life satisfaction among CCT communities.
- **Every £1** that Tearfund invests in a CCT process **unlocks £7** of additional resources within a community.
- **Nine out of ten** communities who participated in CCT built new or improved community assets.

Robust methodology

These findings are based on a statistical approach known as 'regression analysis'. This allows us to explore the difference in people's lives associated with CCT once other factors such as age, gender or education level are taken into account.

Key finding

CCT brings positive, whole-life transformation

People who participate in CCT have better economic, personal, social and spiritual wellbeing and higher life satisfaction.

- People living in CCT communities are **27 per cent more satisfied with their lives overall** than people living in communities not yet taking part in CCT. This demonstrates the whole-life transformation churches are inspiring when they work with their communities.
- We asked people about 23 aspects of wellbeing, covering economic, social, personal and spiritual factors. **Every single one** of these 23 aspects were higher for people living in communities where CCT is happening compared to where it has not started yet.

- In particular, people in CCT communities are 31 percentage points more likely to **work together on a shared project** and 23 percentage points more likely to have **invested in assets** in the last year. They are 18 percentage points more likely to **believe that they will be financially better off** in the next year, compared to people living in communities that have not started CCT.
- Evidence suggests that CCT strengthens the local church – three-quarters of churches engaging in CCT reported that **church attendance and financial giving to the church increased** in the last year.

‘Working with and through churches using our Church and Community Transformation approach is changing lives in Rwanda. Every day, I hear of communities working together to improve lives and lift themselves out of poverty. Praise God!’

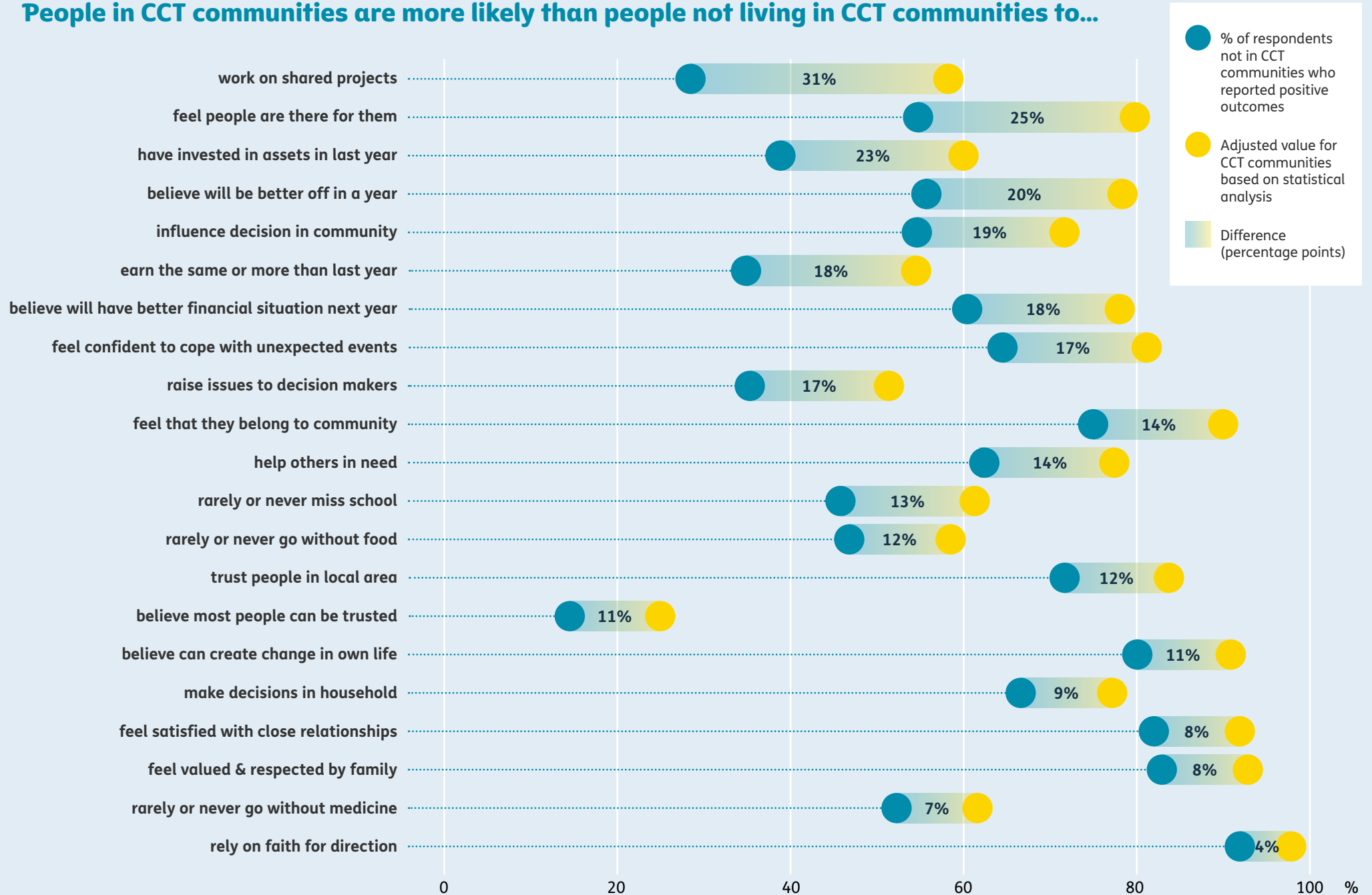
Emmanuel Murangira,
Country Director – Rwanda



Liberatta decided to set up her own shop and keep cows after joining a savings group as part of CCT at her church in Rwanda

Photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

People in CCT communities are more likely than people not living in CCT communities to...



Key finding

CCT creates sustained, far-reaching change

CCT is not only bringing a positive impact, but long-lasting, sustainable change to communities where it works. The impact is felt most by those who participate in CCT activities but also spreads to the wider community.

- **CCT creates change that lasts!** We spoke to people in communities ranging from those participating in CCT for less than one year to those participating over five years. We found that **CCT is quick to bring real change**. Wellbeing is higher in communities just getting started with the CCT process than in communities not participating in CCT, across all four countries studied. And this is **sustained for many years after Tearfund's initial involvement**.
- Not only do people experience near-immediate benefits to their lives and wellbeing when they participate in CCT, the impacts deepen as they journey through the process. For example, people experience **increased financial resilience the longer they participate in CCT**. After participating in CCT for at least two years, people are ten percentage points more likely to earn more or the same as last year, compared to those who participate in CCT for one year or less. They are also nine percentage points more likely to invest in assets and four percentage points less likely to have to go without food.
- CCT encourages people to take ownership of their personal and community journey out of poverty. It also builds positive relationships between the church and its community. As time goes on, **these outcomes spill over into the wider community**. Even non-participants living in CCT communities are eight percentage points more likely to report higher economic, social, personal or spiritual outcomes. And they are 18 per cent more satisfied with their lives. **This is how CCT creates far-reaching change**.
- One of the ways in which a community experiences the benefit of CCT beyond direct participation is through churches mobilising resources and volunteers to build community assets. Nine out of ten communities had **new or improved community assets which benefit the entire community**, such as schools, access to water, and roads, after participating in CCT.



Canon Atanasi witnessed whole-life transformation in his congregation and community after CCT started in the church he pastors in Tanzania
Photo: Tom Price - Ecce Opus/Tearfund

Key finding

CCT creates high social returns and is great value

To understand whether CCT is good value for money, we used the UK Government-recognised WELLBY method to measure the impact of CCT on life satisfaction. **We found that the value of higher life satisfaction well exceeds all the resources, time and money invested in the CCT process by Tearfund, partners, facilitators and communities, by as much as 28 times.**

- The research shows that life satisfaction is significantly higher (by 1.4 points on the life satisfaction scale) for people participating in CCT. **This reflects the whole-life transformation that CCT has brought** to people's economic, personal, social and spiritual lives.
- This transformation process is community-owned and locally funded. The participatory Bible studies at the heart of CCT always contain a call to action, which encourages church and community members to mobilise resources to meet the needs they have identified in their community. On average these financial and in-kind contributions (like food and building materials) plus volunteer hours are worth between £2,180 and £3,270 per community, per year. **This represents significant giving from communities** experiencing poverty.

- As a result, we found that every £1 invested by Tearfund and partners in churches helps the community to unlock a further £7 in time and resources for shared projects, which ultimately creates £211 of social value in terms of improved wellbeing. **This is equivalent to a social return of 1:28.**

What is WELLBY?

WELLBY is short for 'Wellbeing-adjusted Life Year'. It is defined as a change in life satisfaction of one point on a scale of 0-10, affecting one person for one year. To make social value measurement possible, a WELLBY is given a monetary value. When social value is weighed against the costs invested, we are able to calculate the social return created by an intervention.

How CCT processes create social value in the community



*This is equivalent to a social return of 1:28



Case study Jean Batiste

Jean Batiste was a violent drug dealer and gang leader, feared in his local community in Rwanda. This all changed after **he experienced a whole-life transformation when participating in CCT.**

Jean Batiste lived next door to Serapie, who was trained by Tearfund's partner, Association Mwana Ukundwa, as a CCT facilitator at the local church. She encouraged and challenged Jean Batiste to attend the CCT group, but he always declined invitations to go to church.

However, Jean Batiste's wife, Agathe, took up Serapie's invitation to join the CCT group at the church. The group had collectively petitioned the local government to grant them some land for cultivation, and Agathe was invited to be part of the farming co-operative. They were successfully growing bananas and other crops to sell in this community project, and also started a self-help group to save money together.

After being badly beaten up by a local gang, Jean Batiste started to reflect on his life. **'I needed to change my life,'** he shared.

Intrigued by the change he noticed in his wife, he joined the farming co-operative, then he started saving money in the self-help group. He even took a loan from the group for metal sheets to repair his house.

The community **witnessed a remarkable transformation** in Jean Batiste. He gained so much trust in the community that local masons worked on repairing his house for half price until he could pay the rest from self-help group loans.

As Jean Batiste received teaching about spiritual transformation at church and in the CCT group, he became economically stable and his relationships at home and in the community started to heal. **His personal, social, spiritual and economic wellbeing transformed completely.**



'Come and see how your life can be changed!'

Serapie's invitation to Jean Batiste

Today, Jean Batiste is a church warden and security manager at the church he now attends with Agathe and Serapie. He is thankful for the discipleship of his community through CCT and is now actively bringing value to society.

📷 Jean Batiste sharing his testimony at a community meeting
Photo: Pete Dawson/Tearfund



After starting CCT, this church in Rwanda set up a savings group that has supported the creation of new businesses and community projects

Photo: Tom Price/Tearfund

Conclusion

CCT works. It changes lives. And through it we can end extreme poverty.

Our research has shown **exciting evidence of sustainable change** for individuals, church congregations and communities taking part in CCT. In economic, personal, social and spiritual areas of life, **CCT communities are better off than communities that have not started CCT yet**, and these benefits are experienced early in the CCT process. As people participate in CCT more frequently and for longer, the impacts deepen and spread from those taking part to the wider community.

The research also demonstrates that CCT processes **celebrate and mobilise local resources** and bring huge amounts of social benefit to communities. As a result, CCT has a high social return, 28 times the costs, and is great value for money.

During 2022, we worked with more than 25,000 churches to do CCT around the world. But we have a vision to scale up our work and see hundreds of thousands of churches lead transformation in their communities and bring an end to extreme poverty.

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We'd love to tell you more, over the phone, or over a coffee. Please get in touch! You can contact us by phone **31 (0)30 69 69 600** or email info@tearfund.nl

Poverty is not God's plan. You are.

Thousands of people needlessly suffer and die every day because of poverty. But that's not God's plan for the world. We believe that we can all play a part in ending extreme poverty and injustice.

We invite you to join Tearfund in partnering with local churches and organisations around the world, equipping people to lift themselves out of poverty and fulfil their God-given potential.

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