

Can local faith actors help accelerate progress to meet SDG6?

Monday October 27, 2025



Session agenda

Setting the scene

Case study 1

Living Water International - “Co-laboring” with local Churches in WASH programming - lessons learned

Case study 2

Tearfund and State of Life - presentation of research on impact of Church & Community Transformation (CCT) ; case study of CCT impact on WASH in Bolivia

Case study 3

World Vision - faith leader engagement in WASH in Sudan’s fragile context

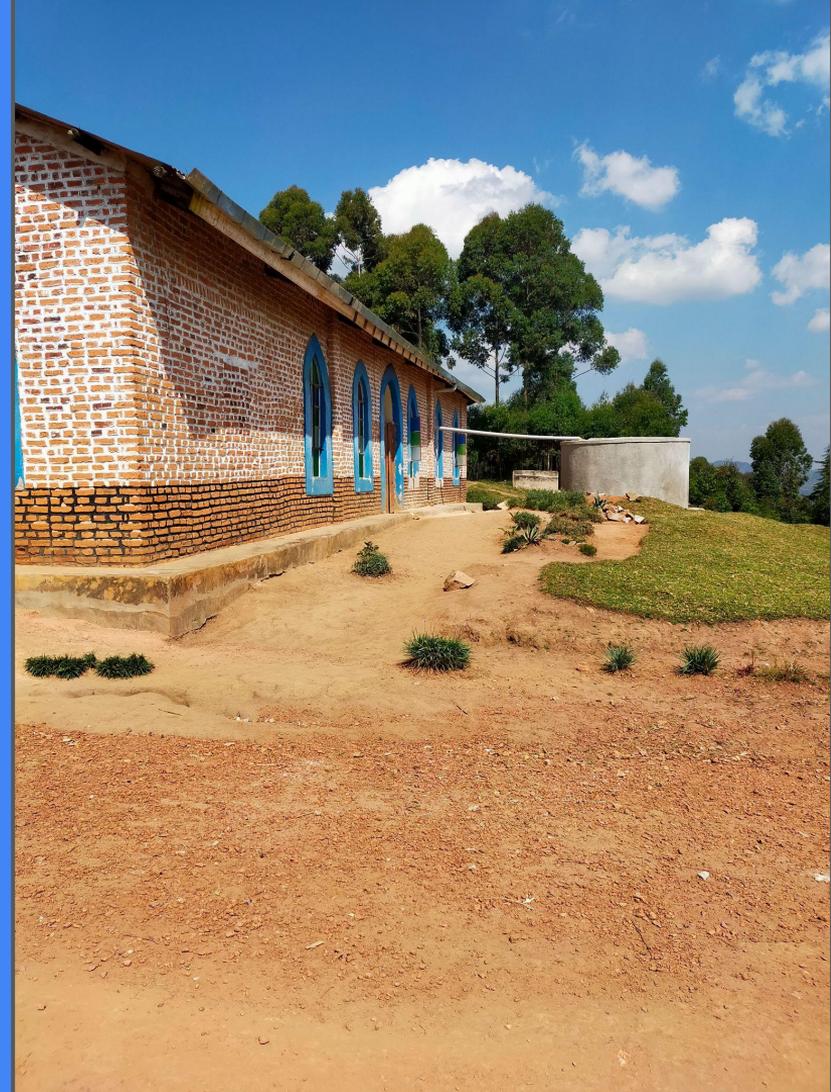
Case study 4

Water Mission - Engaging local faith actors to accelerate progress to SD6 - case study from Malawi

Breakout group discussions and feedback

Setting the scene

- *“Faith endures when policies fail and funding fails”*
- 76% of global population identified with a religion as of 2020
- Faith institutions are long-term, grassroots social structures
- Faith leaders among most trusted community leaders





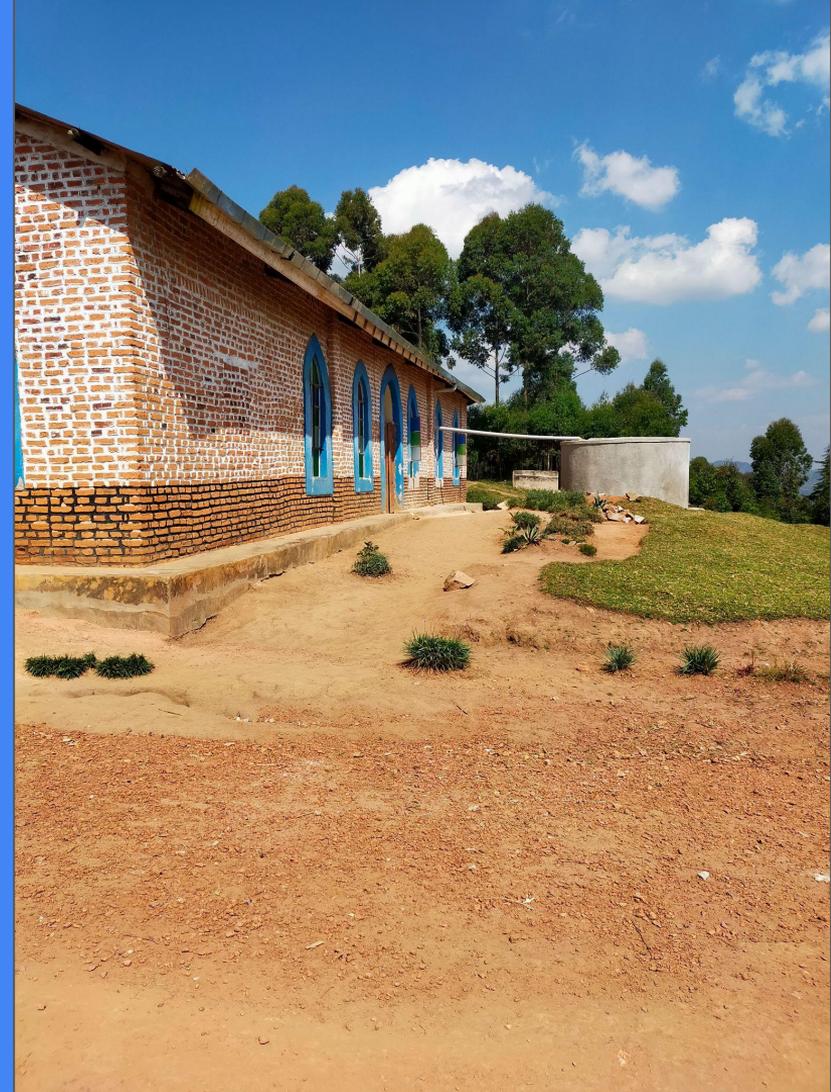
Keeping the Faith
The Role of Faith Leaders in the Ebola Response

psych
Traini
leader
Physi
Econo
3) Soci
4) Em
Psyc

Christian aid CAFOD Just One World tearfund Islamic Relief Worldwide

Setting the scene

- *Faith endures when policies fail and funding fails”*
- 76% of global population identified with a religion as of 2020
- Faith institutions are long-term, grassroots social structures
- Faith leaders among most trusted community leaders
- Historic and ongoing challenges



Five roles the local Church can play in WASH



Key roles the Church plays in WASH

Messenger : communicating messages about improved sanitation and hygiene



Key roles the Church plays in WASH

Messenger : communicating messages about improved sanitation and hygiene

Demonstrator: offering the chance to see and experience



Key roles the Church plays in WASH

Messenger : communicating messages about improved sanitation and hygiene

Demonstrator: offering the chance to see and experience

Implementer: helping to attain improved facilities through technical and financial support



Key roles the Church plays in WASH

Messenger : communicating messages about improved sanitation and hygiene

Demonstrator: offering the chance to see and experience

Implementer: helping to attain improved facilities through technical and financial support

Advocate: speaking out to authorities to express needs

CHIREZI: COMMUNITY SCORE CARDS

1. WATER

1 a) How many days do you receive tapped water? 1-2 days 3-4 days 5-7 days None

b) What is the source of your water supply? House hold taps Community tanks Boreholes

c) Is your water clean? Yes No

2. STANDS

1) Are you satisfied with how the residential stands are serviced?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
----------------	-----------	---------	--------------	-------------------

2) Are you a home owner or tenant? Home owner Tenant

a) Are you on the waiting list? Yes No

b) For how long have you been on the waiting list? 0-6 months 7-12 months 1-2 years More than 3yrs

3. SEWER RETICULATION

1) Are you satisfied with SEWER reticulation in your area?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
----------------	-----------	---------	--------------	-------------------

2) Does the Council respond to SEWER burst on time? Yes No

Key roles the Church plays in WASH

Messenger : communicating messages about improved sanitation and hygiene

Demonstrator: offering the chance to see and experience

Implementer: helping to attain improved facilities through technical and financial support

Advocate: speaking out to authorities to express needs

Guardian: helping maintain the gains achieved



“Co-Laboring” with Local Churches in WASH Programming

Lessons Learned in Church Mobilization and Partnership

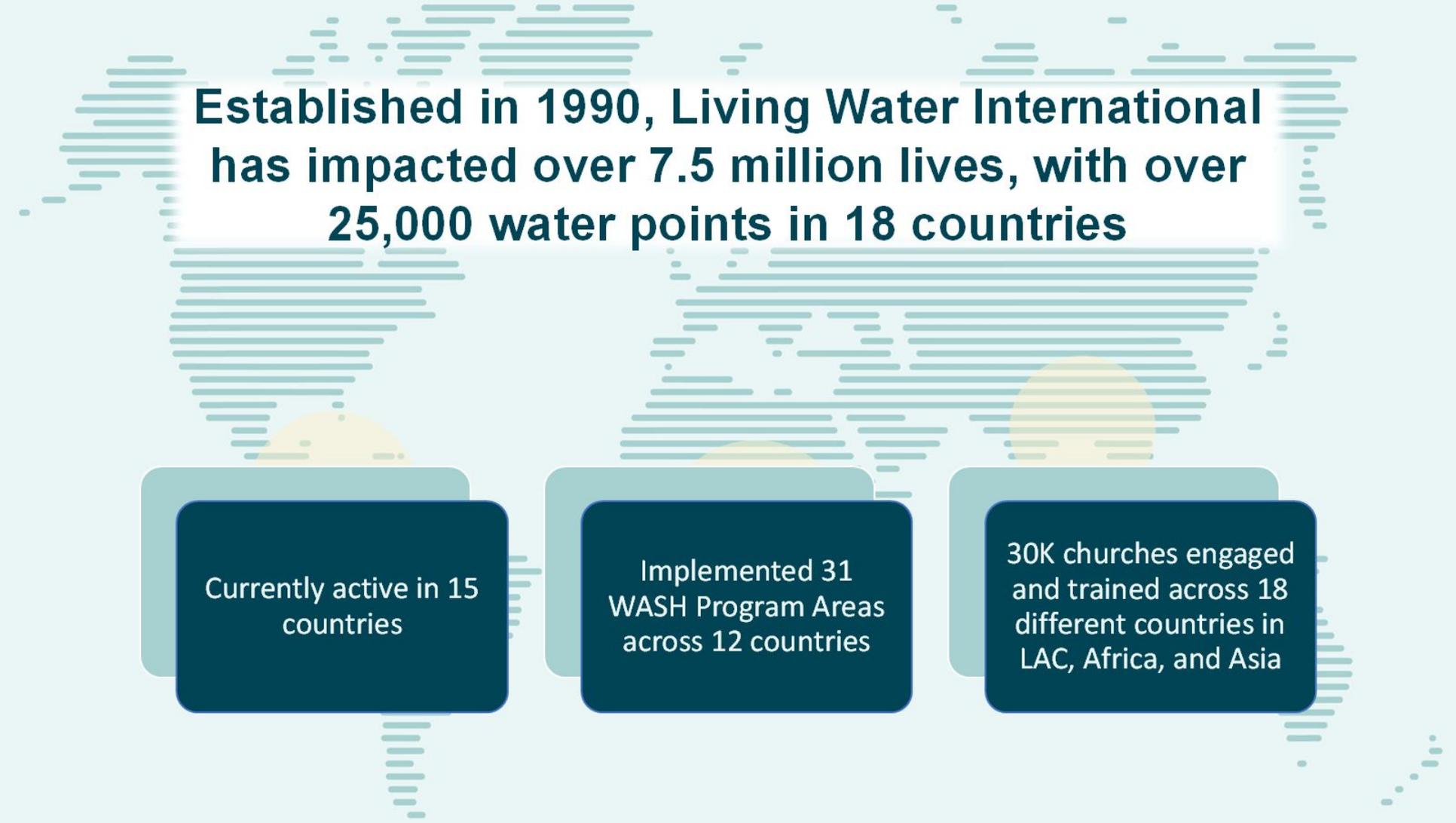
Living Water International

Pablo Maldonado

UNC Water and Health Conference

October 2025





**Established in 1990, Living Water International
has impacted over 7.5 million lives, with over
25,000 water points in 18 countries**

Currently active in 15
countries

Implemented 31
WASH Program Areas
across 12 countries

30K churches engaged
and trained across 18
different countries in
LAC, Africa, and Asia

Living Water WASH Program Areas

- Geographic focus area for 5-7 Years
- Serving 50-70K People

Since 2018



- 1 CHURCH + COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION
- 2 SANITATION AND HYGIENE PROMOTION
- 3 ACCESSING SAFE WATER
- 4 TESTING WATER QUALITY
- 5 DEMONSTRATING GOD'S LOVE

Our Goal: Everyone to flourish holistically through physical, social, and spiritual well-being



The FLOURISH v2 COHORT EXPERIENCE

Updated 2025

September 2025

STAGE 2

STAGE 4

It **STARTS** here with our neighbors and a new WPA



STAGE 1



ENVISIONING the Church for INTEGRAL MISSION



A Flourish cohort begins!
Network and Engage Local Church Leaders



1.1 Build Relationships



1.2 Church Vision Workshops



1.3 Identify Church WASH Champion



1.4 Commission the Church



CHURCH & COMMUNITY PLANNING



2.1 Form Church & Community Planning Team (CCPT)

2.2 Contextualize the WPA

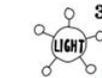
2.3 Develop WASH Plan

STAGE 3

CHURCH & COMMUNITY ACTION



3.3 Implement WASH & Church Actions



3.4 Conduct Monitoring Evaluation & Learning



3.2 Prepare for Action



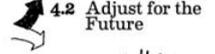
3.1 Create Community Entryways



REFLECTION & CELEBRATION



4.1 Reflect on Lessons Learned & Develop a Shared Story



4.2 Adjust for the Future



4.3 WASH Handover Worship & Celebrate



...and a new cohort begins



Indicates a Support Church Partner Linking Arms Opportunity

Learn more: <https://water.cc/flourish/>



Messenger

Communicates the importance of WASH and adopting behavior change



Demonstrator

Demonstrates effective use and maintenance of improved WASH facilities to inspire community change



Five Flourish Leadership Roles for Churches



Guardian

Helps maintain, monitor, and sustain gains in WASH services and environment



Advocate

Speaks out to those in authority on behalf of communities to improve WASH policies and services



Implementer

Helps households and communities attain improved WASH services and lead other grassroots initiatives



Churches Flourish Activities Monitored since 2018

Percent of Churches taking on each Flourish role

Messenger



• 79.1% (n=4104)

Demonstrator



• 60.7% (n=3150)

Guardian



• 37.1% (n=1927)

Advocate



• 34.7% (n=1803)

Implementer

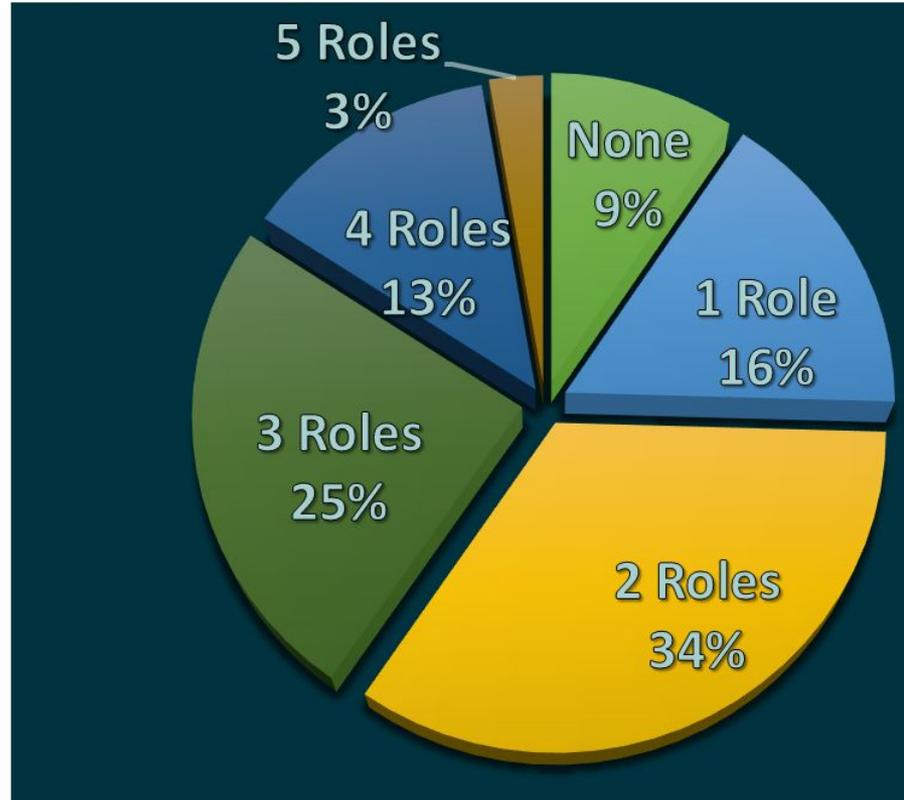


• 12.6% (n=653)

No Role

• 9.4% (n=487)

Number of Roles taken on by Churches



5191 Churches monitored since 2018

“Co-Laboring” Partner Church = 2 or more roles



REDMI NOTE 9
AI QUAD CAMERA



Church Partnership Study March-April 2023

Church Partnership Study

March-April 2023

Purpose of Study: To understand the facilitators and barriers to churches assuming Flourish leadership roles and maintain roles over time.

145 Churches across Seven Countries

Mexico - 10

Nicaragua - 13

Rwanda - 16

Sierra Leone - 31

Uganda - 16

Zambia - 29

Zimbabwe - 30

Focus Group Discussions with church leaders:

Churches who are
active partners
(50)

Churches who are
former partners
(34)

Churches who were
trained but never
took on Flourish
roles (40)

Churches that
declined to be
trained
(21)

Factors that Enabled Partnership



**MISSION ALIGNMENT
AND INTERNALIZING
INTEGRAL MISSION**



**LEADERSHIP VISION
AND
CONGREGATIONAL
CHAMPIONS**



CAPACITY BUILDING



**TANGIBLE IMPACT &
RECOGNITION**



**COLLABORATION WITH
LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

Factors Leading to Decline or End of Leadership Role(s)



**WANING INTEREST
POST-LWI ACTIVE
PRESENCE**



**LEADERSHIP
TURNOVER AND
VOLUNTEER FATIGUE**



**FINANCIAL AND
RESOURCE
CONSTRAINTS**



**COMPETING
PRIORITIES**



**LIMITED
COOPERATION FROM
COMMUNITY AND
LOCAL LEADERSHIP**

Factors that Enabled Initial Participation in Trainings



**CURIOSITY AND
LEARNING NEW
SKILLS**



**HOPE FOR
TANGIBLE
BENEFITS**



**RECOGNITION
AND TRUST IN
LWI**

Barriers Prevention Further Participation



**LIMITED
UNDERSTANDING OR
INTEREST IN INTEGRAL
MISSION**



**FINANCIAL & RESOURCE
LIMITATIONS;
COMPETING PRIORITIES
AND TIME**



**LACK OF CONFIDENCE
AND ROLE PERCEPTION**

Reasons for Declining Training



**THEOLOGICAL OR
DOCTRINAL BARRIERS;
REFUSE EXTERNAL
INFLUENCE**



**PERCEIVED POLITICAL
RISK**



**DISTRUST OF NGOS,
UNFAMILIAR WITH LWI**



**WEAK INTERNAL
MOBILIZATION**



**LACK OF PEER
LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES (SEEING
SUCCESS STORIES)**

Lessons Learned

Awareness and Trust are Prerequisites to Engagement

- Relationship Building takes time and consistency
- Transparent Communication sets appropriate expectations
- Working through District Umbrella Bodies facilitates willingness to participate

Take the Necessary Time for Envisioning and Capacity Building

- Peer-Learning and Seeing Prior Successes translates vision to action
- Internalizing Integral Mission as Identity leads to sustained engagement
- Local Contextualization and Clarity of Role(s) inspires confidence

Relationships Drive Sustainability

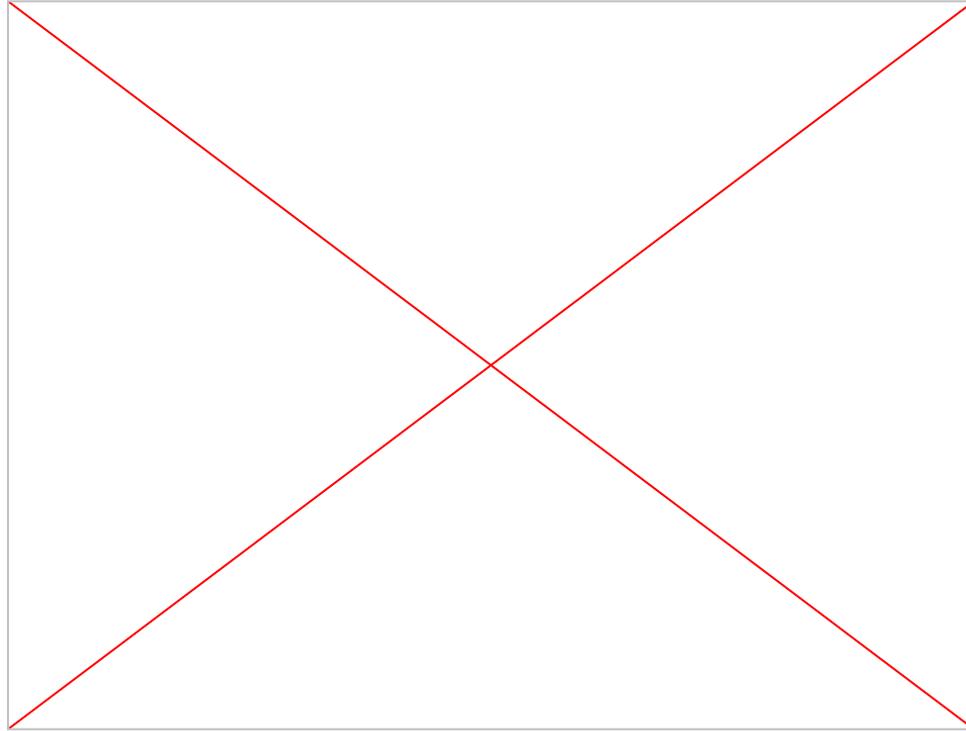
- Multi-layer Leadership to prevent burnout and build continuity
- Collaboration with Community Leadership legitimized and facilitates participation
- Network to other partnerships/resource, especially for Implementer Roles

Tearfund, WASH and the local Church

- Founded in 1968
- Partners with local churches and organizations - more than 50 countries
- Sustainable development
- Responding to disasters
- Challenging injustice
- Church and community transformation (CCT) approach



CCT Impact Research by State of Life



Research summary report

CCT impact study series:
phase one and two

Research summary

Local church, lasting transformation

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



Tearfund has worked with local churches for over 50 years 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 do not believe that poverty is God's plan, but we do believe that the local church is part of God's plan to address it.

The model Tearfund uses to work with local churches is called Church and Community Transformation (CCT). It begins with Bible-based training which leads the church on a journey that equips them to engage with their community, identify available resources and decide on activities that will have the greatest impact. For some communities this is vocational skills training, while others may set up support and savings groups or build community assets, like a school. Through CCT the local church works with their community to create long-lasting, whole-life transformation.

90%

Over 90 per cent of people living in CCT communities feel that they belong, trust others and believe that they can create change in their own lives.

© A women's self-help group called Talimbika, which means 'working hard', gathers for a meeting in Malawi
Photo: Alex Baker/Tearfund

Local church, lasting transformation 1

tearfund



CCT impact on WASH example from Tipa Tipa Community, Bolivia



Faith Leader Engagement in WASH: Sudan's Fragile Context



By Paul Oyesigye
October 27, 2025



World Vision Background

- Operating in 100+ countries globally
- More than 50 countries with WASH programming across 6 regions
- More than 1,200 WASH technical staff
- WASH programming in communities, schools, healthcare facilities, and emergency response



WASH in Sudan

- Over 30.4 million people in need of humanitarian aid
- 40% of rural families lack safe water and 43% lack basic sanitation
- Women and girls are responsible for fetching water, trekking 1-4 km
- Conflict driven by ethnic, religious, and resource tensions, worsened by floods and drought

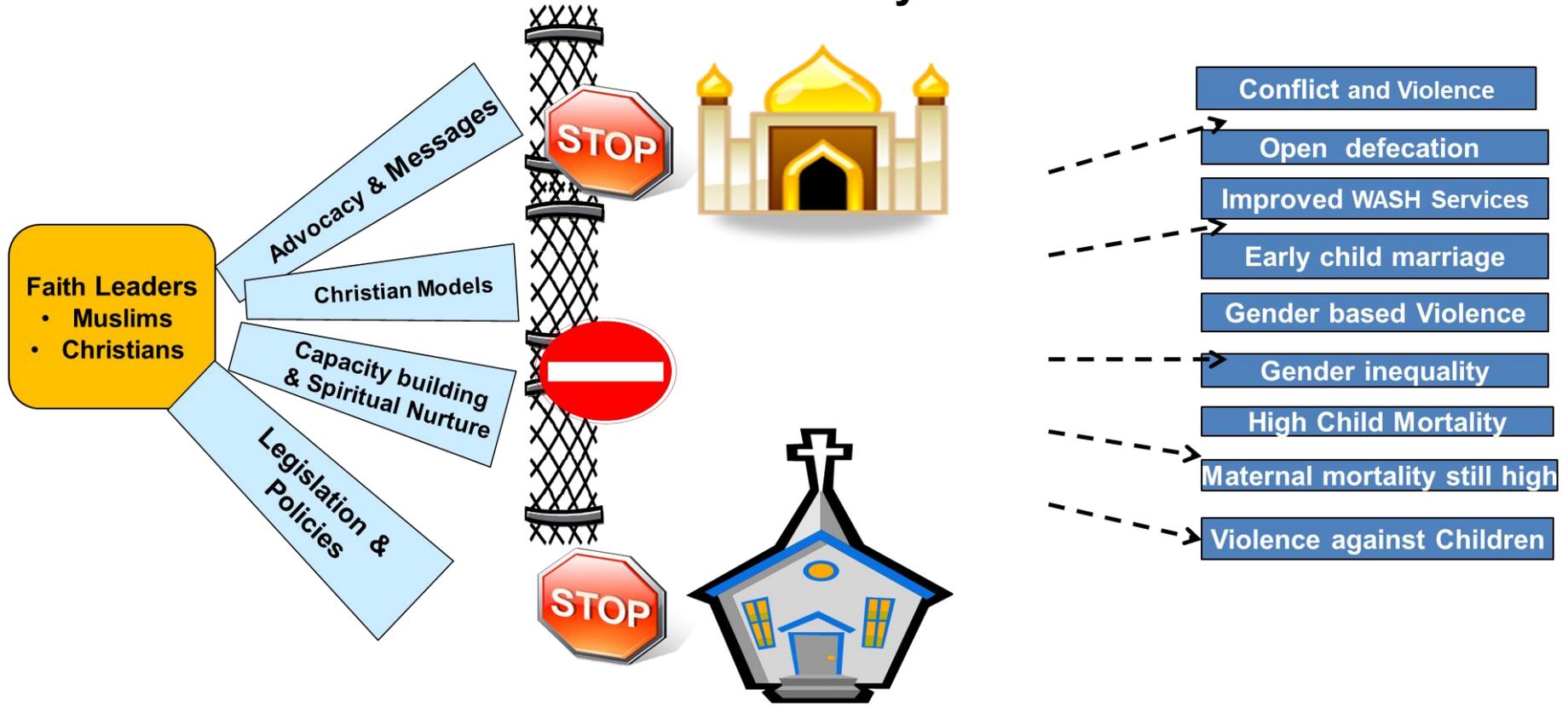


Faith Leader Engagement in Sudan

- 91% of the population is Muslim, 5% is Christian
- Mosques, churches, and interfaith networks serve as anchors of hope, trust, and community action
- Building on Uganda’s “Preach the WASH Gospel”, localized as “Faith in Action for WASH ” for Sudan’s interfaith context
- Empowered Worldview (EWW) equips faith leaders as WASH change agents, inspiring dignity, peace, and sustained hygiene behavior change
- WV Sudan focuses on faith integration to reach the most vulnerable children and families in fragile and recovering communities



Local Community



Example Messaging Framework

Islamic Scripture	Christian Scripture	Shared WASH Message
<p>Qur'an 67:30 – “If your water were to sink deep into the earth, who could bring you flowing water?”</p>	<p>Genesis 1:1–3, 31 – God created all things good, including water as life source.</p>	<p>Water is a gift from God; use it wisely and share equitably.</p>
<p>Qur'an 5:6 – “O you who believe, when you rise for prayer, wash your faces and hands...”</p>	<p>Exodus 30:17–21 – Priests must wash before entering the tent of meeting.</p>	<p>Cleanliness links worship and health; hygiene is honorable.</p>
<p>Qur'an 2:222 – “Indeed, Allah loves those who purify themselves.”</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 23:12–13 – “Designate a place outside the camp... and cover up your excrement.”</p>	<p>Promotes proper sanitation; cleanliness and dignity prevent disease.</p>
	<p>John 4:14 – “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.”</p>	<p>Water renews life — spiritually and physically.</p>
	<p>Isaiah 41:17–18 – “I will make rivers flow on barren heights...”</p>	<p>Access to water is a divine right; compassion mandates inclusion.</p>

Benefits/Results

- Formal MoU with the Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs & Endowment enhanced coordination for faith-based WASH action
- 1,122 Muslim and Christian leaders trained on Empowered Worldview across 7 states, promoting hygiene, dignity, and sustainability
- Faith-led mobilization improved prevention and control of WASH-related diseases, including cholera across 17 of 18 states
- Engagement built trust, community ownership, and sustained WASH services beyond project cycles
- Collaboration reduced tensions and promoted harmony among staff and communities
- Advocacy through faith leaders helped reduce child marriage and strengthen child protection

Engaging Faith Leaders in Fragile Contexts

- Faith leaders are **credible and stable messengers** in conflict and fragile settings; faith structures are maintained when other structures break down
- Religious framing makes WASH spiritually relevant and **widely accepted**
- Enhances **dignity and safety**, especially for women and girls
- Promotes **peaceful coexistence** through shared water and hygiene facilities



Lessons Learned



- Interfaith collaboration strengthens **unity and trust**, fostering tolerance and peaceful coexistence
- Faith-rooted messages create lasting hygiene **behavior change**
- Use of faith institutions' radio stations can extend WASH education to **wider audiences**
- Continuous mentorship develops local faith leader **WASH champions**

Case Study: Leading the Fight Against Female Genital Mutilation

Ms. Ibtihal Fatima Osman Akbar, a health worker from Kadugli, joined World Vision's *Empowered Worldview* training for faith leaders expecting an ordinary workshop. Instead, it transformed her perspective. Through faith-based reflection and open dialogue, she discovered that **female genital mutilation (FGM)** is not a religious requirement but a **harmful social custom** that endangers women and girls.

Motivated by faith and compassion, Ibtihal began holding **seven community dialogue sessions** in Qar Al-Hajar, engaging women, faith leaders, and health practitioners. Her message—linking dignity and health to God's true intent for human flourishing—sparked powerful change.

One local midwife, moved by the discussions, **publicly renounced the practice of FGM**, while many women pledged to protect their daughters. Ibtihal's courage and leadership now inspire others to act, showing how **faith can transform harmful traditions into hope and healing**





Engaging Local Faith Actors to Accelerate Progress to meet SDG 6

A Water Mission Case Study

Kimberley Gerken

UNC Water & Health Conference, 2025



The Partnership in Malawi

- This partnership brought together two faith-aligned organizations, each with distinct program models, to address multi-dimensional poverty through WASH solutions.
- In 2023, Compassion funded Water Mission's response to Cyclone Freddy, which became the catalyst for piloting a standard safe water project in Chimwenje, Malawi.
- These pilot projects allowed Compassion to see Water Mission Malawi's approach in action and created opportunities for collaboration and stakeholder engagement throughout the project cycle.

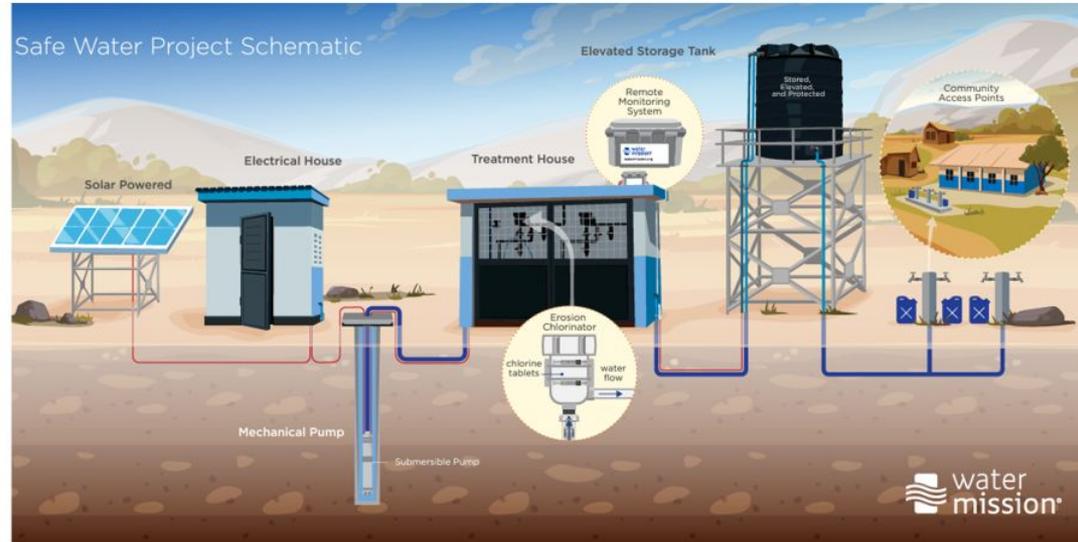
Water Mission Safe Water Project Model

Community Development:

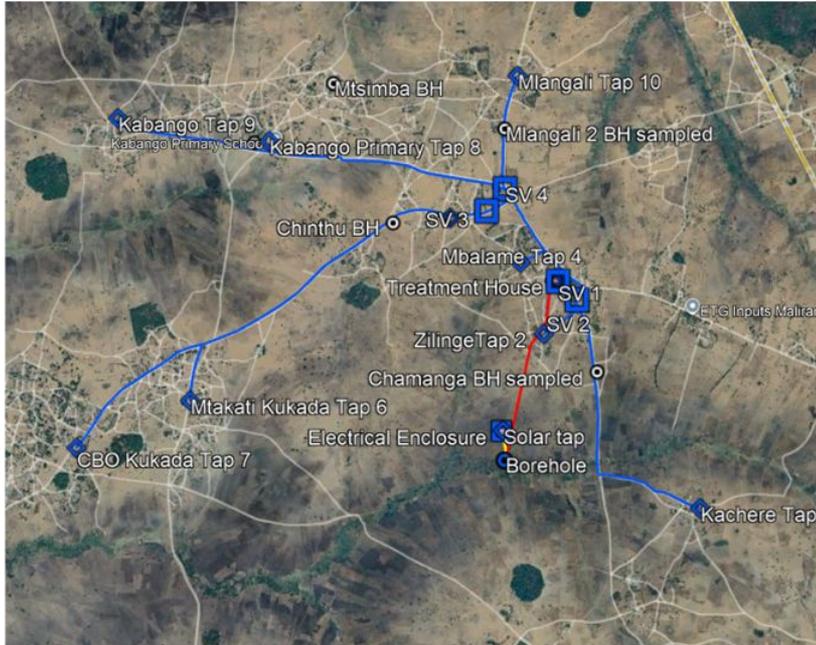
- Assessment
- Safe Water Committee Formation and Training
- WASH Promotion Training & WASH Promotion
- Follow-up and Support

Church and Community Mobilization Program:

- 9 Module Training Program
- Integral Mission Plan
- Follow-Up and Support



Chimwenje, Malawi Safe Water Project Design



Approximately 5,000 with access to safe water through 10 community tap stands, powered by 18 solar panels.

Church and Community Mobilization Program

Equip local church leaders with sound biblical knowledge

Empower the local church to be active in WASH service delivery

Support the local church to build new disciples

Promote biblical principles in existing community development activities

“After completing the CCMP training, my life has completely changed. My understanding of God’s word has grown tremendously, and my ability to lead others has greatly improved. Thanks to the CCMP training, I now relate well with church leaders from denominations different than mine. I have also changed my perspective on disease. Previously, I believed that all illnesses were caused by demons, but now I understand that many are due to unhygienic practices. Now, I have a toilet, have constructed a handwashing facility, and now encourage my family to drink safe water and practice good hygiene to prevent disease. I mobilized fellow church leaders and successfully helped resolve leadership conflicts among local chiefs that were affecting safe water sales in the community.”

- Pastor Dickens Mchoma Phiri



Project Outcomes

- Average time per day spent collecting water
 - *Baseline:* 2.2 hours
 - *Endline:* 34 minutes
- % of households engaged WASH education programming
 - *Baseline:* N/A
 - *Endline:* 70%
- % of households reporting waterborne illnesses
 - *Baseline:* 69%
 - *Endline:* 3%
- Average number of days spent in the clinic treating water borne illnesses
 - *Baseline:* 5 days
 - *Endline:* 0 days

Before the Safe Water Project, Matrida walked over an hour to collect a single bucket of water from a distant borehole with a handpump.

“We used unsafe water and frequently suffered from diarrhea,” she recalls.

Now, she walks less than five minutes to fetch clean water from a tap installed at her church.

“Since we started using the safe water, we haven’t had diarrhea. Most of our household decisions revolve around water, so now I’m able to finish my chores on time and have enough time for farming activities that help us earn income.”



Lessons Learned from Malawi

Partnership reflection meeting was held in February 2025, with robust participation from both partners.

What Went Well

- Relationships and collaboration
- Mission alignment
- Strong technical expertise and planning
- Cross-org learning

Challenges

- Community expectations
 - Cost + engagement
- FCP expectations
 - Cost + roles
- CI National Office understanding of costs

Recommendations

- Develop joint key messaging at start of project
- Develop lifecycle cost comparison to support future engagement
- Early Alignment of MEL Frameworks

Partnership History and Next Steps



Group 1 Living Water - What should guide NGOs in deciding when, where, and how to engage local faith actors as implementing partners for WASH, to avoid dependency or exclusion while maximizing social capital?

Group 2 - Tearfund - Which of the five roles identified for the Church in WASH [demonstrator, advocate, guardian, implementer, messenger] are most helpful in your context?

Group 3 - World Vision - What do you see as potential benefits and challenges of working with faith leaders from different religious backgrounds in fragile contexts or places where there is religious tension?

Group 4 - Water Mission - How can WASH organizations better layer WASH benefits with other benefits (education, health, nutrition, spiritual growth) to alleviate multidimensional poverty?

On-line discussion group - perspectives on challenges and opportunities for engaging faith actors

Other resources

Bridge Builders

Strengthening the role of local faith actors
in humanitarian response in South Sudan

A two-way model for sharing capacity and strengthening a localised response



JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES



Other resources

Research report

How active churches help communities overcome poverty

Church and Community Transformation in action: evidence of its impact from four research studies



Other resources



Good Faith
Approaches to
Gender Equality

How investing in faith-centered approaches to shifting social norms creates lasting change for women and girls



Imago Dei Fund



Thank you!