

How local churches strengthen community resilience to disasters

A theory of change

tearfund

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Resilience is critical in reducing the impact of disasters

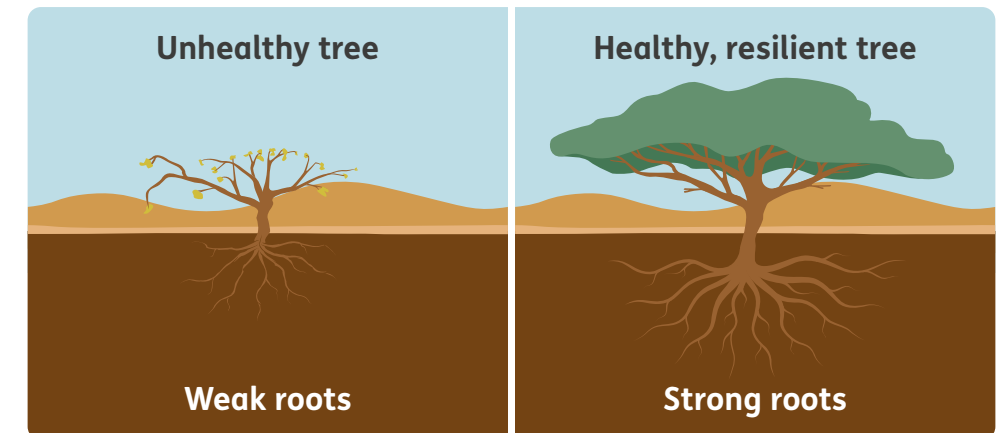
‘Tearfund supports churches to embrace their calling to holistic mission.’¹

Tearfund has been working alongside churches and communities for many years to help them become more resilient to disasters. In simple terms, resilience is the capacity to cope despite problems and recover quickly.

We see our core role as assisting local churches to better live out their

calling to help release people from poverty and to reduce the impacts of disasters that keep people in poverty.

For many years, we have used the metaphor of a tree to represent people and communities.

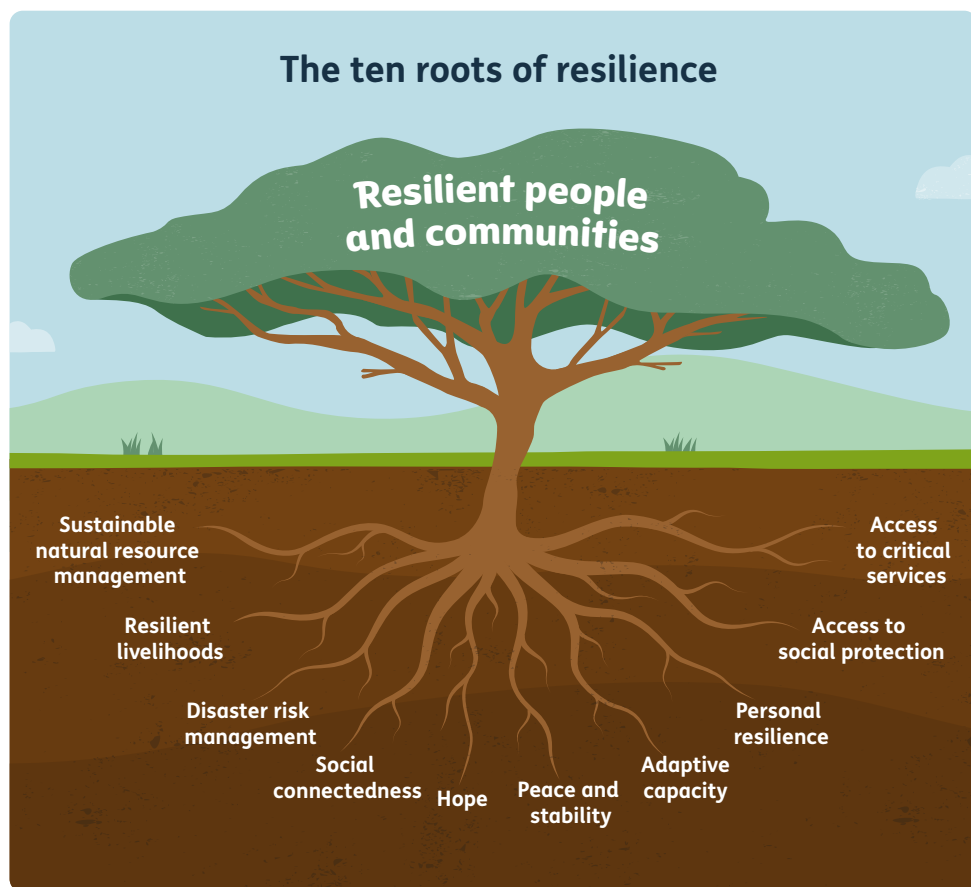


¹ Tearfund, 2022, [A short introduction to the CCT theory of change: How church and community transformation is achieved](#).

Resilient people and communities are like a healthy tree. Their trunks grow strong and tall. The canopy of their branches is full of healthy green leaves. And flowers grow, developing into nutritious, ripe fruit.

And the key to this flourishing is the state of the tree's roots. A healthy tree depends on strong roots.

Specifically, there are ten roots of resilience we believe are present in the most resilient communities.



Roots: Tearfund's ten roots of resilience identify key capacities that are present in the most resilient communities.

Developing resilience

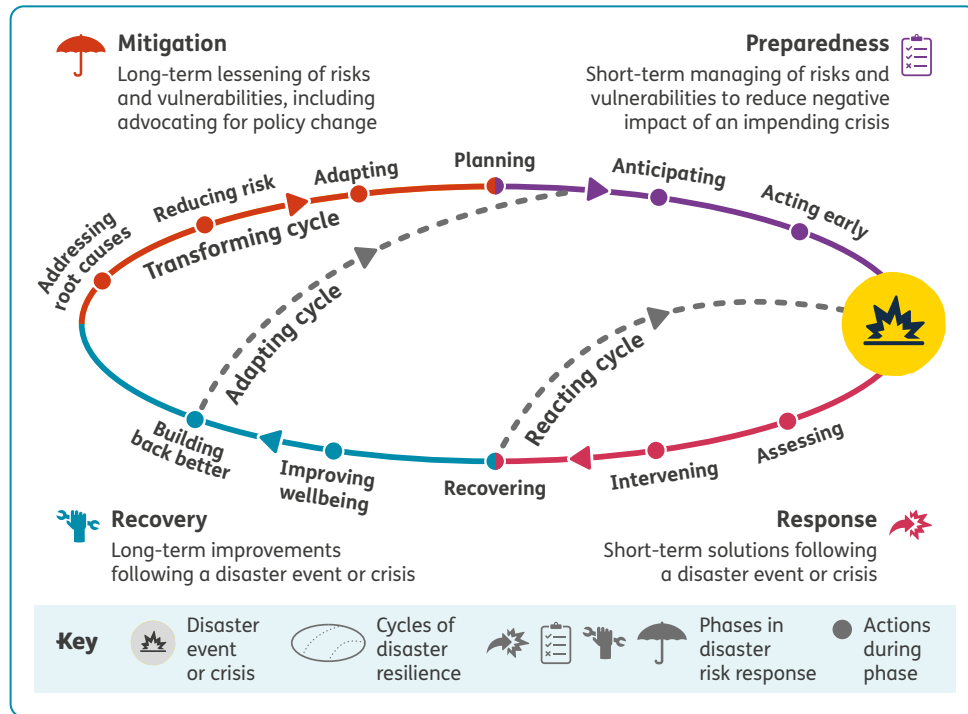
Communities that develop resilience are able to recover well from crises, prepare for the next one and lessen their community's risks and vulnerabilities in the long term.

Communities with little or no resilience can become stuck in a **reacting cycle**, perpetually vulnerable to the next disaster event or crisis. They only have capacity to implement short-term solutions in response to a disaster, leaving them susceptible to whichever disaster next comes along. In addition, more than one disaster hazard may occur at the same time or close together, particularly if the first causes the next. For example, a drought can lead to displacement, which then leads to conflict as displaced people trespass on other people's land.

Communities with some resilience are able to enter an **adapting cycle**. They begin some practical improvements that help them to 'build back better'; they recover and manage short-term risks well enough to be less vulnerable to the next similar crisis. While this helps to reduce disaster impact, it does not adequately address the root causes or reduce the long-term risks that make the

community vulnerable. For example, improving existing housing that has been damaged in an earthquake will help it to withstand similar earthquakes in the future. However, it would be better if the community moved beyond the adapting cycle and lobbied the government to enforce earthquake-resistant building codes, because this would ensure all future housing would be built to an adequate standard.

The most resilient communities are those with the capacity and ability to enter a **transforming cycle**. They move beyond the incremental changes of the adapting cycle and into more fundamental, systemic changes. For example, they might address social norms – like the acceptance of gender-based violence or the restriction of access to education – or advocate for changes in land ownership and inheritance laws, all of which reduce the vulnerability of women by increasing their options. These resilient communities are able to collaborate with government and other stakeholders to ensure the services and systems they rely on are able to withstand disasters or continue to function when disasters occur.



But how does this process of developing resilience – moving from a cycle of simply reacting or adapting to true transformation – happen?

This theory of change outlines Tearfund's understanding of how

community resilience to disaster risk is strengthened through the activity of local churches. It also describes Tearfund's role in supporting those churches and identifies the assumptions we have made.

Why we need a 'church and resilience' theory of change

Disasters are increasing in number worldwide,² with greater impact on people's lives and livelihoods as well

as cost to rebuild. However, the ability to respond in humanitarian action is not keeping pace.³

Requirements and funding, UN-coordinated appeals, 2012–2021

The amount of funding required by UN humanitarian appeals nearly quadrupled over the past decade. In 2020 the appeals reached the highest level of requirements but the lowest level of funding

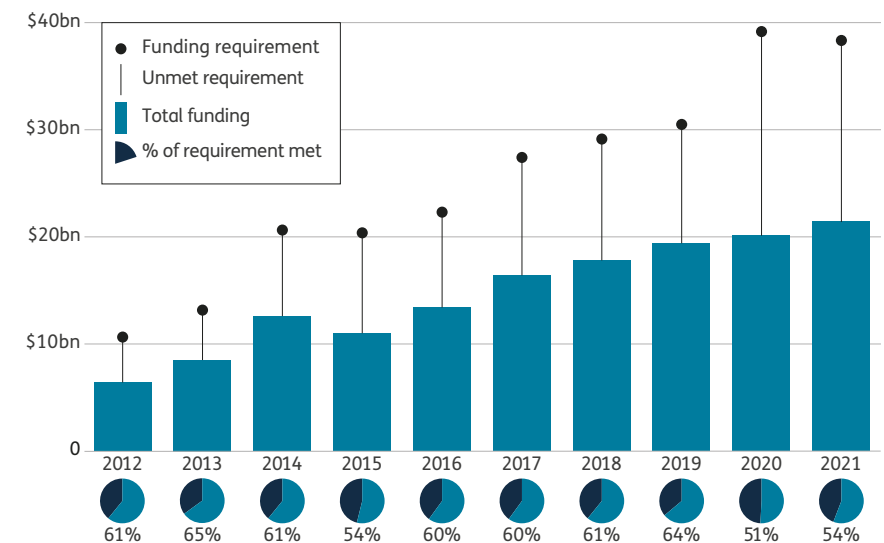


Chart taken from 'The State of the Humanitarian system', a 2022 report by ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance).⁴

² UN News (2021) [Climate and weather related disasters surge five-fold over 50 years, but early warnings save lives](#) – WMO report

³ 'What's wrong with the humanitarian aid system and how to fix it' – Remarks by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock, at the Center for Global Development on Proposal for an Independent Commission for Voices in Crisis, 2021

⁴ ALNAP (2022) [The State of the Humanitarian System \(SOHS\) – Full report](#)

In order to reduce the impact of disasters there is a growing need to invest more in disaster prevention, in

reducing disaster risks, and in better preparation for disaster events.

Disasters and poverty negatively reinforce each other

Poverty and inequality both perpetuate and are consequences of disasters.⁵

Poverty ultimately results from a breakdown in our relationship with God, with self, with others and with the environment.⁶ People living in poverty are more likely to be living in higher risk areas and have fewer means to anticipate or respond to disaster risk, so they are more impacted by disasters than those with greater access to resources.

But disasters also create or worsen poverty, as people suffer losses to their personal health, housing, possessions, loved ones, and income potential.

Hence, in order to tackle the endless, worsening cycle of poverty/inequality and vulnerability to disasters over time, we must address disaster risk. Supporting communities to develop resilience helps them to break free of this cycle.

Local churches have the potential to help



What we mean by 'local church'

Historically, Tearfund has defined a local church as a sustainable community of local Christian believers, where worship, discipleship, nurture and mission take place. In this theory of change, 'church' is understood as the wider 'body of Christ', of which Tearfund is a part. It includes peoples, church denominations, organisations, movements, networks, and other groups. This is distinguished from 'local churches', which are understood as local communities of believers with some level of organisation or institutionalisation.⁷

Local churches have key strengths in tackling disaster risk.⁸ They have the potential to:

- respond immediately
- provide compassion and care
- have resources available locally
- influence and shape values
- act as community peacebuilders
- facilitate community action
- raise awareness of risks and advocate for change
- communicate hope and promote healing
- pray to bring change
- raise issues and draw support from their denomination at a regional or national level

⁵ PreventionWeb, [Understanding disaster risk](#)

⁶ Tearfund (2019) [Understanding poverty: Restoring broken relationships](#)

⁷ See [Tearfund and the Church: a contextual, missional and guiding review](#)

⁸ Twigg, J and Chris McDonald (2023), [With you in the storm: Understanding the role of the local church in building resilience](#). Also see Tearfund's video ['Eight strengths of the local church in disaster preparedness and response'](#)

Local churches must, however, overcome some challenges

When helping to strengthen the resilience of communities, local churches face both internal and external challenges:⁹

Internal challenges for churches	External challenges for churches
<p>Some churches may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not see strengthening the resilience of communities as part of the church's role • hold theological understandings of disasters that discourage them from engaging • not dig deep enough to address root causes of disaster risk • lack expertise and capacity to engage with more technical aspects and so would not be able to uphold internationally expected standards of humanitarian response • lack the roles and organisational complexity within church structures needed to engage • favour their own congregations, denominations or religion and so not provide support on the basis of need alone • find the roles of external organisations and government departments unclear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing resilience - strengthening tools may not be suitable for churches • Churches may themselves be impacted by disasters, meaning they are less able to help others • Poor connections may exist between churches, other organisations and government departments • Churches may be overlooked by government departments and other organisations

Churches who are living out integral mission are better placed to help

Tearfund's work is based upon a foundation of 'integral mission', which understands God's work of restoration as 'responding holistically to people's needs, including economic, emotional, spiritual and physical ones. The church, as the body of Christ, therefore has a vital and distinctive role to play in fulfilling this mission.'¹⁰

Over the last 30 years, Tearfund has helped to develop and equip local churches in church and community transformation (CCT) processes, to enable them to live out integral mission. We believe local churches who live out integral mission, for example those who have gone through a CCT process, are more likely to be able to address the challenges listed above. They become more able to work with their communities to strengthen disaster preparedness.¹¹

As a result, Christians who have been through a CCT process tend to:

- be highly motivated to want to engage with and serve their community
- spend time restoring relationships across their community
- become more personally resilient as individuals
- have a high level of agency and confidence to engage
- be mindful of the value of the environment and the role it plays in supporting wellbeing

10 See Tearfund (2019) [Understanding poverty: Restoring broken relationships](#)

11 See Tearfund (2021) [An introduction to church and community transformation \(CCT\)](#)

Our vision and how to achieve it

We want to see:

An empowered, adaptive church, confident of its role in communities, using its influence and resources at local and national level to address vulnerability to disasters and reduce their impact.¹²

Change does not happen in the same way everywhere. In some contexts certain processes will be more important than in others. It also may not happen in a linear fashion – one process directly after another – but will have twists and turns, stops and starts and important tangents. A large range of different approaches, tools, resources and actors are involved. However, we believe for the local church to address disaster vulnerability and reduce disaster impact, change needs to include some or all of the following phases of disaster resilience: Awakening, Equipping, Resourcing, Collaborating, Advocating, Peacebuilding and Climate proofing.

Trees that develop deep, strong roots are able to develop thick, strong trunks that provide for and support the branches, even when powerful winds threaten to tear them down. As Tearfund and its partners support these seven phases, communities can develop deep, strong roots which produce strong, multi-layered trunks, able to withstand the storms of disasters.

Year by year these trees have developed the resilience to resist the storms of disasters. They may lose leaves, fruit or branches, but they can survive without falling over and they have the capacity to regrow. Likewise, the most disaster-resilient communities will be impacted by disaster events – but not beyond their capacity to cope or recover.

The phases of disaster resilience

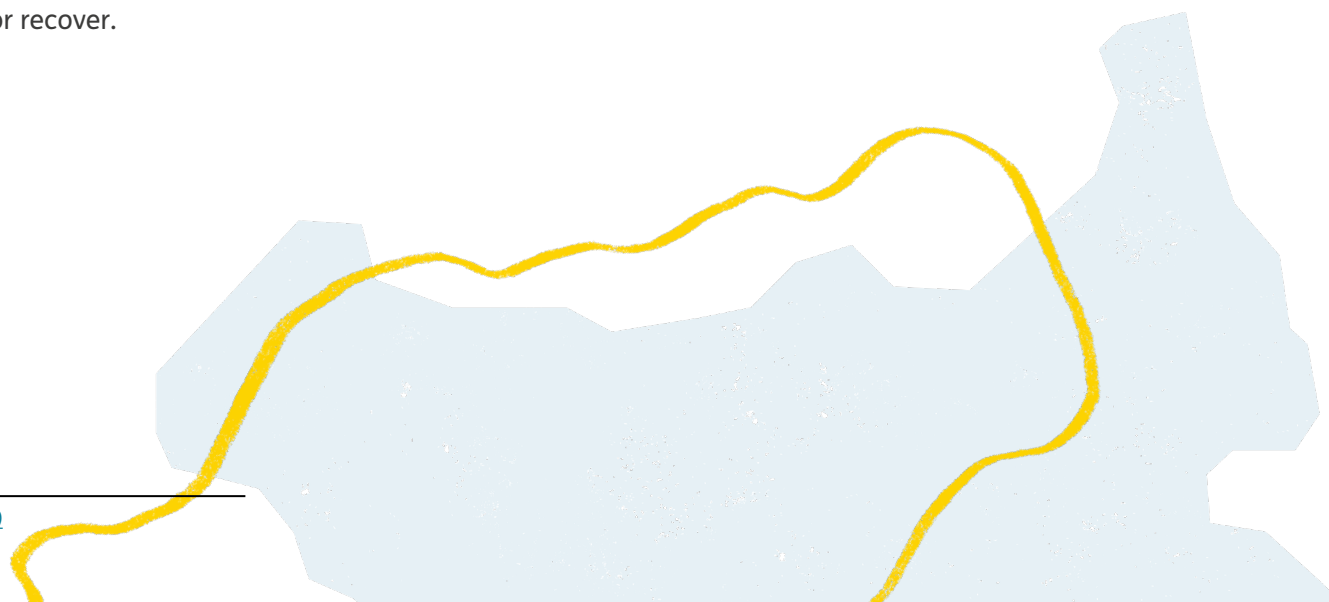
Activity in up to seven phases will be seen in churches and communities as they work together to strengthen disaster resilience. Like rings in the tree's trunk, they form from the inside out.

The first – **Awakening** – is focused on churches themselves being convinced of the biblical mandate for tackling poverty and disaster risk together and becoming active in carrying it out. It is the core of the tree.

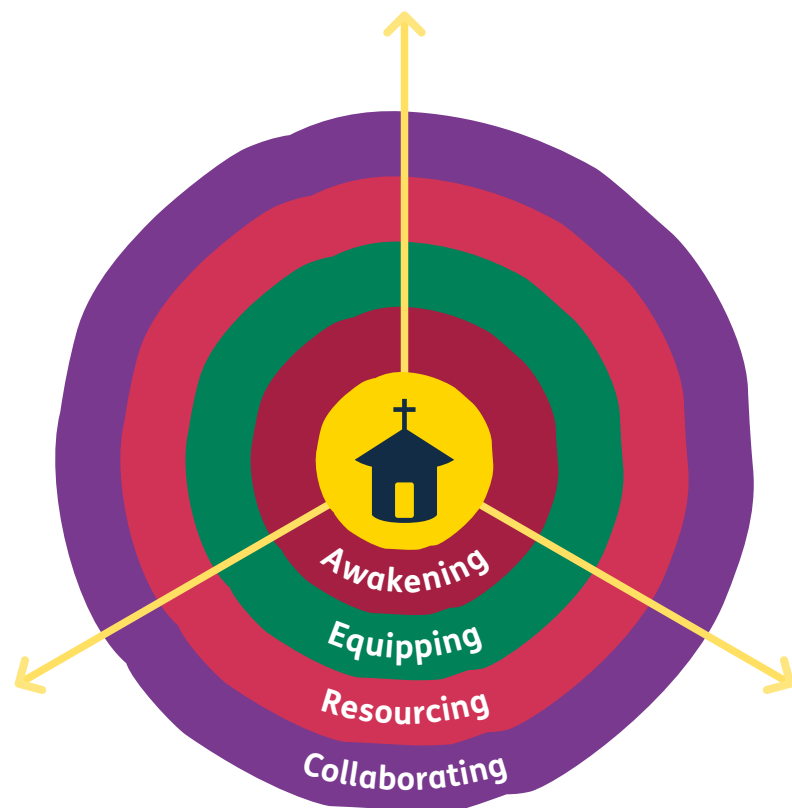
The next three phases – **Equipping, Resourcing and Collaborating** – are about how churches and communities together become aware of the disaster risks they, and individuals within their communities, face. Tearfund and partners then assist them to put in place or strengthen the institutions, processes, skills and resources to better manage and reduce disaster risk.

The final three phases – **Advocating, Peacebuilding and Climate proofing** – are more context specific.

¹² See Tearfund (2021) [An introduction to church and community transformation \(CCT\)](#)



The first four phases: local churches developing resilience to disasters



Trunk: The first four phases of disaster resilience relate to the role of the church in developing resilience in communities. As the trunk of a tree grows rings each year, becoming stronger, these phases are what we would expect to see in communities where churches are active in bringing about increased disaster resilience.

Awakening

Churches come to believe tackling disaster risk is part of their role in outworking integral mission.

What this looks like

Local church members, their leaders, denominations and church networks believe influencing the community and working alongside them to tackle disaster risk is part of their role in outworking integral mission.

They understand that community transformation is not possible without listening to the people who are most affected by disasters – often women and girls – and include them in church and community planning.

Unhelpful theologies that discriminate and keep people from addressing disaster risks are challenged.

What we do

Tearfund promotes the awakening of church members, their leaders, youth groups, denominations and church networks to the need to tackle disaster vulnerability as part of integral mission through the church and community transformation (CCT) processes and training of church leaders in theological training organisations. For example:

- The *Reveal Toolkit*¹³ helps identify who are most vulnerable to disasters and highlights the need to protect them in response and recovery.

13 Tearfund (2022) [Reveal toolkit: Tools to build resilience in churches and communities](#)

- The *How Beliefs Impact Disasters*¹⁴ booklet equips church leaders and CCT facilitators to help communities reflect on how their beliefs and theologies affect their actions and responses in times of crisis.
- The *Transforming Masculinities*¹⁵ approach works with church leaders and gender champions to identify and help change gender norms that leave women and girls more impacted by disasters.



Key assumptions

- The right actors are identified, engaged with and supported, including those who are chosen as CCT facilitators.
- Time is available for a deep process of sharing and reflection on core issues.
- The process is inclusive, diverse and participatory.¹⁶



Links to the Light Wheel

- Living faith

14 Tearfund (2023) [How beliefs impact disasters: Exploring the connection between theology and church engagement during crises](#)

15 Tearfund (2017) [Transforming Masculinities training manual](#)

16 Tearfund (2022) [A short introduction to the CCT theory of change: How church and community transformation is achieved](#)

Equipping

Churches and communities have the skills and tools to prepare for and more effectively respond to disasters.



What this looks like

Long-term development plans strengthen the resilience to disasters of all members of communities while short-term contingency plans reduce the impact of frequent events. The progress made in socio-economic, faith, and relational wellbeing is no longer set back by regular disaster events. Communities are aware of the risks, they have plans to reduce vulnerability to disaster events and strengthen their capacity to respond. They are active in risk communication, able to carry out disaster needs assessments,¹⁷ and are involved in early warning, disaster preparedness and contingency planning. They are part of the recovery effort that helps people recuperate from trauma.



What we do

Tearfund equips CCT facilitators and networks with a range of resources to assist churches and communities in their disaster preparation and response. The *Strengthening preparedness* guide helps raise awareness and encourages churches and communities to be better prepared.¹⁸ The *Disasters and the local church* guide supports churches with practical steps.¹⁹ The *Reducing disaster risk in our communities* guide helps address the root causes of disaster risk.²⁰ These guides equip churches to work with local government and civil society to develop action plans and set up inclusive community structures like disaster risk reduction (DRR) committees.

17 Tearfund (2020) [Needs assessment in emergencies](#)

18 Tearfund (2022) [Strengthening preparedness: Why and how to consider disaster preparedness on your journey to church and community transformation \(CCT\)](#)

19 Tearfund (2023) [Disasters and the local church – online course](#) and [original guide](#)

20 Tearfund (2011) [Reducing risk of disaster in our communities](#)

Tearfund also promotes self-help groups²¹ emerging from CCT processes, strengthening the socio-economic development of people in poverty, especially women. Members save money, building up group capital to provide small low-interest loans to pay for education and healthcare, urgent needs and starting or expanding businesses.²² When combined with training in DRR, agriculture, business, health, advocacy, literacy and other skills, self-help groups reduce poverty, strengthen social connections and grow disaster resilience.



Key assumptions

- Those facilitating change have access to technical support on selection and use of tools and learning resources



Links to the Light Wheel

- Capabilities

Resourcing

Churches and communities are able to access the resources they need to reduce disaster impact.



What this looks like

Churches and communities are able to find the people and resources to implement their long-term action plans and organise resources as part of their contingency planning. Where resources are not enough, have been damaged by disasters or exhausted by disaster response, people within communities find what they need through their social connections, church networks, government, civil society and business connections.



What we do

The CCT approaches help churches, communities and church networks mobilise resources to implement their action plans. One of the principles of CCT is that it 'celebrates and mobilises local resources, increases agency and releases community potential'.²³ This includes identifying what skills, assets, materials and funds are already available to church and community members, either from within communities or

through their social connections and networks. It may also be about identifying and accessing government resources and people, or reaching out to other active faith groups.



Key assumptions

- Church leaders, church members and wider community members are part of social networks that can be strengthened and added to.
- Strengthening social connections and deepening relationships does not lead to increased tension around existing grievances or create new ones.



Links to the Light Wheel

- Social connections
- Personal relationships
- Material assets

²¹ Tearfund Learn has a range of [resources describing and supporting self-help groups](#)

²² Tearfund (2017) [Saving for a very dry day: The contribution of self-help groups to building resilience in East Africa](#)

²³ Tearfund (2021) [An introduction to church and community transformation \(CCT\): Overcoming poverty through a whole-life response to the gospel](#)

Collaborating

Churches and communities have the relationships they can rely on to reduce disaster impact.

What this looks like

Social connections are strengthened before a disaster happens – building relationships people will rely on in times of need. Better solutions are found as the people most at risk are involved in finding them; wider knowledge, skills and resources are involved in understanding and addressing root causes. People are more able to anticipate, prepare for and mitigate disaster risks.

As churches work together with communities and others they are able to recognise and mobilise their own skills, experience and resources as well as tap into external resources to prepare for and respond to disasters. Church leaders and members become active participants with others in disaster preparedness and contingency planning, early warning systems, carrying out assessments of disaster impact and responding to the needs of crisis survivors.

What we do

Tearfund helps strengthen links between churches, government, private sector, civil society organisations and other faith groups working in communities. This is done by supporting CCT processes, peacebuilding, inclusion and economic empowerment initiatives – and establishing inclusive church and community ‘disaster risk management’ committees who take responsibility for disaster preparedness planning. These approaches encourage churches to identify key stakeholders in their communities, demonstrate the important role churches and church leaders play in disasters, and work together to influence others in addressing disaster risks of all kinds. Indeed, disasters may be seen as a neutral topic that affects everyone and so can act as common ground to bring people together.

Key assumptions

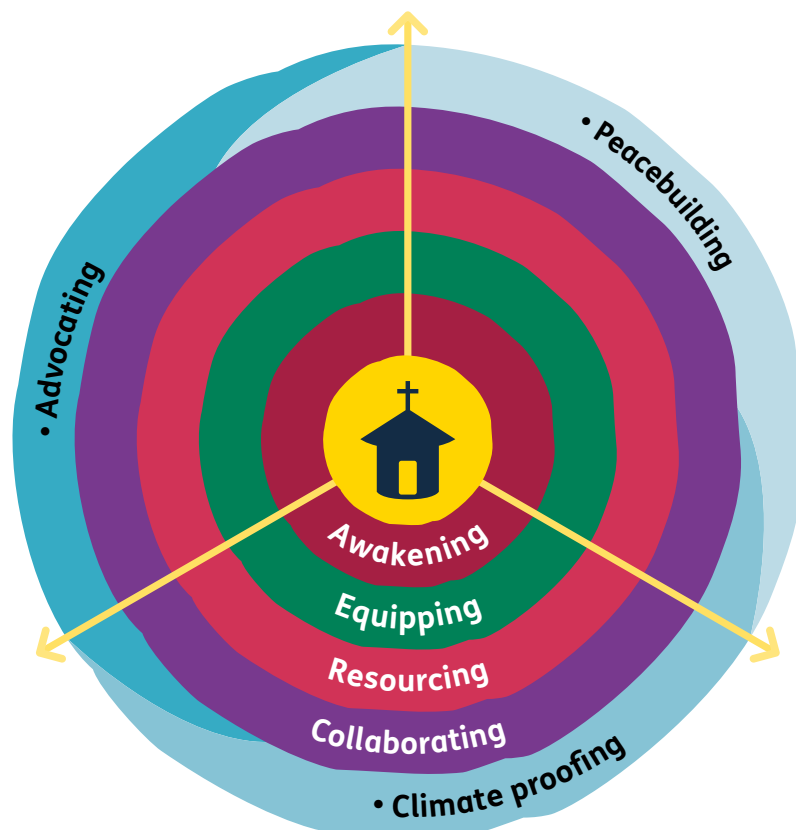
- Church leaders are known, listened to and seen as an influence for good.
- Churches are active in disaster response.
- External resources are available to tap into, from within or outside of the country.



Links to the Light Wheel

- Social connections
- Personal relationships

Contextual phases: Church and community developing resilience to disasters together



Trunk: The three contextual phases of disaster resilience relate to church and community resilience – how churches and communities work together to make the community more resilient. Each of these phases will increase the resilience of communities to disasters, but the specific relevance and importance of each will be dependent on the context.

Advocating

Churches and communities are able to inform and influence decision-makers in reducing and managing existing disaster risks, and in preventing new ones. They hold them accountable for what they promise to do.

What this looks like

Communities are more able to hold governments to account for what they promise to do in reducing and managing existing disaster risks as well as preventing new ones.²⁴ People are more aware of their rights and able to access government support in times of crisis. The critical services they rely on, like health care, education, roads and communications are likely to be more able to resist or adapt to disaster events and so continue to function.

What we do

Many issues that affect communities and keep people vulnerable to disasters are issues of injustice that cannot be changed from within communities alone. Through CCT advocacy, Tearfund helps local churches and denominations equip communities to influence decision-makers both inside and outside communities.²⁵ Churches often have well-developed influencing networks. By embedding training on theology and social accountability within CCT

²⁴ As signatories of the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction \(2015\)](#), governments have primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk of their citizens.

²⁵ Lawson, M and Joanna Watson (2016) [CCM Advocacy guide: How to integrate local-level advocacy into church and community mobilisation](#)

processes, churches working with communities are able to influence the decisions, policies and practices of powerful local and national decision-makers. Where Christianity is a minority religion and churches less present, their voices may be amplified through inter-faith dialogue on issues of common concern with leaders of other faiths.

Key assumptions

- It is safe to influence government and government has enough stability, even if only locally, that

officials remain long enough to be influenced.

- Government safety nets exist at least in commitments, in order to be influenced.
- Churches are politically impartial and do not side with any particular political or ethnic faction.

Links to the Light Wheel

- Participation and influence

Peacebuilding

Church and community leaders are strengthened in non-violent conflict management and resolution.

What this looks like

Communities recognise and monitor the early warning signs or flash points that tensions may be rising. Community leaders intervene early to cool tensions before violence breaks out. If and when violence

does break out, community leaders are ready and equipped to stop it escalating and manage the fallout. Social connections between people in conflict are strengthened, and the potential for disagreement to lead to violence is reduced.

What we do

We integrate peacebuilding into CCT processes through applying Tearfund's community conflict transformation dialogues approach.²⁶ Faith and community leaders identify community peacebuilding champions to be trained and have ongoing support. These champions facilitate a series of community meetings to help people reflect on the conflicts that affect them. People are equipped to analyse conflicts and explore what raises tensions. They recognise what role they and others play in fuelling tensions and decide on concrete peacebuilding actions to transform those conflicts. This might include identifying, strengthening and monitoring links between people in conflict that benefit everyone and bring people together. They also address what drives them apart and raises tensions, including within and

between different churches. Much of it is about strengthening relationships within churches, communities and between people and groups in conflict.

Key assumptions

- There are times when violence is reduced so people can meet to discuss conflicts.
- Local leaders are respected and listened to by conflict actors.

Links to the Light Wheel

- Personal relationships
- Emotional and mental wellbeing
- Social connections

Climate proofing

Communities practise climate-resilient livelihoods and influence policy to protect and restore their natural environment.

What this looks like

Communities are aware of the climate and environmental risks they face and practise climate-resilient livelihoods. Sources of food and income are adapted and diversified to cope with the effects of climate change. Linking up with other communities and social movements, they influence policy and practice to protect and restore their natural environment.

What we do

Climate change is perhaps the biggest global disaster risk driver of our times.²⁷ Strengthening climate resilience will therefore be crucial if we are to see people sustainably

released from poverty. In churches, Tearfund does this primarily through integrating the environmental and economic sustainability (EES) principles in CCT approaches and in church-linked self-help groups and savings groups. This includes promoting an abundant community theology of caring for and sharing our planet's resources,²⁸ helping people be more aware of the specific risks of climate change, and talking about what they are already experiencing locally and what they can do to respond.

The effect is that churches and communities clearly connect their faith with their role and responsibility to care for the environment. They work together to strengthen and

diversify livelihoods that restore and protect the natural environment while at the same time building economic capability. Climate risks are understood, and approaches demonstrated and implemented that both adapt to climate change and help mitigate its effects.

Key assumptions

- There is enough stability, absence of consecutive or linked disaster events and ongoing conflict to allow learning from practice.

- EES principles are understood and options to implement them are available and affordable.
- Incentives exist to encourage people to diversify and adapt their lives and livelihoods.

Links to the Light Wheel

- Care of the environment

²⁷ Guterres, A (2023) [Climate action and disaster risk reduction](#)

²⁸ Dr Thacker, J (2022) [Abundant community theology: Working towards environmental and economic sustainability \(EES\)](#)

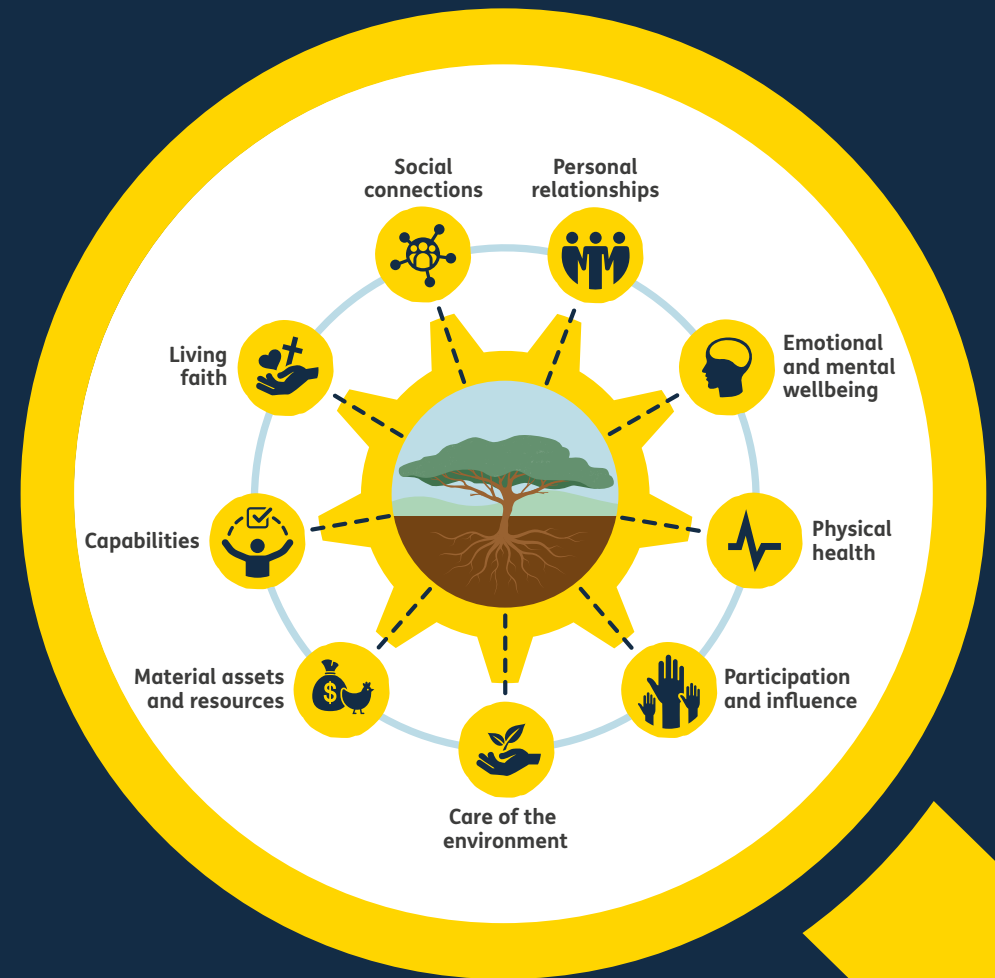
The Light Wheel is a lens for measuring the impact of resilient communities

Tearfund developed the Light Wheel as a framework to measure our progress towards ‘whole-life transformation’ in individuals and communities.²⁹ If resilient people and communities are like a strong tree able to weather the storms, then the Light Wheel provides a way to assess the quality of the fruit. The Light Wheel sets out nine aspects of wellbeing, which together contribute to the flourishing of individuals and communities (see page 29).

The table on page 30 shows how the ten roots of resilience, the seven phases of disaster resilience and the nine aspects of wellbeing are related.

Activity in any of the seven phases contributes to the feeding of the roots of resilience and in turn contributes to the holistic transformation of the community.

For example, churches that invest in the **Equipping** phase of disaster resilience work with their community to strengthen their practical skills to prepare for and respond to disasters. This develops the roots of disaster risk management and resilient livelihoods, and results in a strengthening of the Capabilities aspect of wellbeing on the Light Wheel.



Fruit: As a lens brings a view into focus, so the Light Wheel is the framework Tearfund uses to measure the impact of churches and communities as they develop resilience to disasters, a vital feature to ensure sustainable transformation.

Phase of disaster resilience	Summary	Roots of resilience that support this feature	Aspects of wellbeing strengthened by this feature
Awakening	Churches come to believe tackling disaster risk is part of their role in outworking integral mission	The soil that enables the roots to flourish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living faith
Equipping	Churches and communities have the skills and tools to prepare for and more effectively respond to disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster risk management • Personal resilience • Resilient livelihoods • Hope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capabilities
Resourcing	Churches and communities are able to access the resources they need to reduce disaster impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social connectedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social connections • Personal relationships • Material assets
Collaborating	Churches and communities have the relationships they can rely on to reduce disaster impact together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster risk management • Adaptive capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal relationships • Social connections
Advocating	Churches and communities are able to influence and inform decision-makers in reducing and managing existing disaster risks, as well as preventing new ones. They hold them accountable for what they promise to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster risk management • Access to critical services • Social protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and influence
Peacebuilding	Church and community leaders are strengthened in non-violent conflict management and resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster risk management • Peace and stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal relationships • Social connections • Emotional and mental wellbeing
Climate proofing	Communities practise climate-resilient livelihoods and influence policy to protect and restore their natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilient livelihoods • Sustainable natural resource management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care of the environment

Of course, it is entirely possible for a community to have strong roots of resilience but have not passed through the seven phases – because these phases specifically describe the activity of the local church and therefore assume its presence.

But Tearfund's unwavering belief is that when the church is present it can influence holistic change, helping communities develop strong resilience to disasters and enabling them to flourish, despite what adversities they face.

Why, then, are the seven phases of disaster resilience necessary?

In the visuals we have likened the phases of disaster resilience to the trunk of a tree. The metaphor is not perfect, but is useful in two particular ways.

First, the trunk of a tree forms a transport system that carries water and minerals up from the roots to the leaves, and food from the leaves down to the branches, trunk and roots. A healthy trunk therefore allows a tree to produce fruit and strengthen its roots. In the same way, the phases of disaster resilience describe seven specific periods of activity that local churches can commit to in collaboration with their community to strengthen their roots of resilience and improve their aspects of wellbeing.

Second, the trunk of a tree acts as a support rod, giving a tree its shape and strength. In the same way, local churches that work alongside their communities during the seven phases are able to provide their communities with a structure and strength to effectively develop resilience to disasters. This collaboration of church and community itself bolsters the majority of the aspects of wellbeing.

We therefore remain committed to working with local churches – directly, and through partners and denominations – to ensure any community where the church exists can flourish despite the increasing threat of disasters, because of the strength of their resilience.

‘Tearfund sees its role as assisting churches to better live out God’s mission of freeing people from poverty and the disaster risks that keep people from flourishing’

Chris McDonald
Disaster Risk Management
and Churches Lead, Tearfund

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