Amigos

TRAIN – WORK – THRIVE

Church-Led Community Development Toolkit

Amigos

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Welcome, Amigo

Thank you for opening this booklet and being interested in finding out more about **church-led community development**.

We believe God has a fantastic mission for his church, one that addresses the challenges of today and gives hope for tomorrow.

We are inspired by how our Ugandan church partners play a vital role in helping people move from dependency and despair to dignity and destiny through **an integrated approach to mission and social action.** We believe there is much to learn from their posture – which looks **holistically** at individuals, families and communities.

We hope and pray this booklet inspires your church too as you look to serve and bless the community around you.

As Christians, we are a people of hope. Let's continue to be bringers of compassion and the light of Jesus to our communities.

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Transformation Stories from Uganda

"I'm thrilled about the local church being a community of imagination where God's people are discipled in supporting one another, worshipping together and building loving friendships to overcome poverty and display God's radiant abundance to others."
Pastor Patrick (Lira, Uganda)

At Amigos we have found churches in Uganda that are examples to us of what it looks like to make a difference in a local community.

Often situated in an environment of abject poverty, they naturally (or supernaturally) put their **faith** and **belief** in a **Sovereign God** to work and help the poor and marginalised. If they don't, who will?

The church in Uganda generally focuses on **basic needs**, such as water, food (agriculture), education and conflict resolution.

Sometimes in the UK and beyond the church can miss the deeper issues and just do what catches the eye.

So, what are the basic needs in your community?

Football, Drugs and Church

Namukoge Baptist Church

Uganda is one of the youngest countries in the world, with an average age of under 16 years old. But this brings many challenges, one of which is the lack of employment and disaffected young people. Since the majority of young people lack the opportunity to complete a secondary school education, their skill levels are also often very low, leaving them with little hope of change.

With a vision to combat this situation, a Youth Inclusion Programme was started in 2020 by Namukoge Baptist Church, and supported by Amigos, to engage young people, who have fallen through the cracks and who do not feel that they have a place in society, so that they can enter into what they were created for.

One of these young people, George Pele, tells his story:

"My father was a huge fan of soccer so when I was born he named me after the Brazilian football legend Pele. As I grew up, my father expected me to be very active and possibly be good at soccer. But to his disappointment, I hated soccer and I was terrible at it. What I really loved was music. My father hated me and I was a huge disappointment to him. Nothing I did pleased him. I grew up a very depressed boy and I thought using drugs would make me feel better. But taking drugs had the opposite effect and I became a danger to the whole community.

When the youth project started in our community, I felt I needed to join in order to get my life back on track. I am happy that the church welcomed me. I was kept busy through the farming group learning carpentry, building and tailoring too.

Ever since I joined the training, I stopped using drugs and started helping out in the community with furniture repairs using my newly acquired skill and before I knew it, everyone at home started loving me and the community started accepting me. I cannot wait to finish my training so that I can establish a workshop to help youths in the community."

Through this project, George has become a Christian and is now a youth leader in his church.

The Why

"As we continue to work with the church, the best is yet to come" Joshua Kizito, Youth Empowerment Facilitator at Amigos Uganda.

We have seen that churches in Uganda have a God-centred approach to the whole of life. Because of this, they have a holistic view of life, with the physical and spiritual realms seen as **interconnected**. This affects their attitudes to so many parts of life, including farming, since to be successful involves skills, hard work and being in right relationship with God.

Their understanding of blessing also encompasses the personal and the communal - life is best enjoyed when there is harmony. For them, there is no secular/sacred divide as God is interested in everything – people's relationship to him, how they work, how they live together as families and neighbours and how they take care of their land.

The good news of Jesus is supposed to spill out and touch **the whole of life** since Jesus said, "I have come that they have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

A key lesson that Amigos has learnt from the Ugandan church is the holistic approach taken to caring for the needs of others – materially, spiritually, socially, economically and environmentally.

Many communities across the UK and beyond are experiencing desperate times. From children and young people falling through the education system, to a lack of decent affordable housing, and significant financial hardship for many, we live in a time where hopelessness and debates about wellbeing are commonplace. The reality is, we all, whether we have a faith or not, face challenges and need each other to thrive in the age we live in.

If this sounds like doom and despair, **please stay with us!** We serve a good God who never leaves us and offers us a hope filled future.

As we look to serve those around us, we believe that there are biblical and practical ways Christians can engage with their communities, **displaying God's transforming presence, love and light**.

What kind of hope does your community need?

God's Story of Mission

When we come to the Bible, we see that it is fundamentally the story of God and his mission. It begins in Genesis 1 with God creating the world and finishes in Revelation 22 with the new creation.

We see that God's mission is **to see his kingdom fill the entire earth where people enjoy his presence and goodness in right relationship with him, themselves, others and the rest of creation.** This provides the framework for good community development.

We are invited to be part of God's mission.

• Creation and Israel

The Bible reveals God in his wisdom has chosen to work out his mission through people.

First, this was through **all humanity** as his image-bearers to rule over the rest of creation so that all creation might flourish and be filled with his life. This is often known as the **Creation Mandate** (Gen 1:26-28).

Then, after people rebel bringing catastrophe to themselves, their communities and the world, God called **Abraham** and through him the people of **Israel** as the channel of drawing all peoples to him and revealing his wise designs for life (Gen 12:2-3).

However, with Israel not living up to their calling, God promises a **son of David** who would be the saviour and king of the world (Isa 9:6–7).

Throughout the Bible we see God's concern is for the poor, oppressed, vulnerable, outcast and outsider. He expects His followers to take up this concern by showing mercy and working for justice – inside and outside the church. Jesus is the practitioner **par excellence.**

• Jesus

Jesus' coming into the world is what turns the biblical story from despair to hope, from disaster to triumph. Because of Jesus the Messiah, the story of the Bible, which began with creation, but tragically ran into trouble along the way, can now reach God's intended goal of his kingdom filling the entire world.

As Jesus begins his ministry, he announces the good news, **"The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near"** (Mark 1:15)**.**

Here he is as the one through whom God is working to put the world right. We see Jesus proclaiming and embodying God's reign and showing its effect in the whole of life.

He **beautifully and seamlessly integrates** the meeting of people's physical, spiritual and social needs as whole needs.

Jesus announces,
"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."
(Luke 4:18-19)

• The Church

The church is **Jesus' ambassador of a new story of hope** for the world. Through our life together, our words and our deeds – our **integral mission** – the church becomes a living expression of God's heart for all people.

In this way we are able to partner with God in his vision for thriving communities where people experience fullness of life in Him.

"As a Senior Pastor in Gulu District, I have witnessed the transformative power of faith in action within our rural community. The church's vision exceeds mere gatherings; it's a commitment to be a catalyst for holistic development, guided by our faith and a deep desire to partner with God in illuminating lives.

Socially, the church is a shelter for unity and support. We have created forums for dialogue and communal gatherings that break down barriers among diverse groups in our community... Moreover, our commitment to environmental stewardship is rooted in our faith. We educate the community on sustainable farming practices and the importance of preserving our natural resources. By fostering this awareness, we aim to honour God's creation and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

In essence, our church's journey toward holistic community development summarises our belief that true illumination comes from embracing the spiritual, physical, social, and environmental aspects of life. It's an ongoing partnership with God, seeking to radiate His love and light in every corner of our rural community."

Pastor Constantine

To the church, God has unveiled his worldwide plan to bring all things together in Christ. This is a new arrangement whereby everything is brought together to work properly under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:9-10).

The Bible Story can be told through six C's:

- **Creation**
- **Crisis**
- **Calling of Abraham & Israel**
- **Christ**
- **Church**
- **Consummation**

Take time to be immersed in the story and allow it to live through your church!

Why not reflect on these passages for starters:
Gen 12:2-3; Exod 19:5-6; Isa 61:1-9; Matt: 5:13-16; 1 Pet 2:9-12 and Rev 21:1-5

Three Great Tasks

The story of the Bible shows us that we as Christians have three God-given great tasks to do as part of our mission: the **Creation Mandate** (Genesis 1:26-28), the **Great Commandment** (Matthew 22:34-40) and the **Great Commission** (Matthew 28:18-20).

Creation Mandate: The call on humanity to fill and rule over the earth so it functions as God intends and brims with life.

Great Commandment: The commandment to love God and to love our neighbour.

Great Commission: The commission to make disciples of all nations, seeing people coming into a life-transforming relationship with God through Jesus.

Some Christians gravitate to one of these tasks and try doing it on its own, **but we believe it's when they're all worked together** that we see God's kingdom grow more fully.

How can your church plan to fulfill these tasks in a connected way?

How to Begin

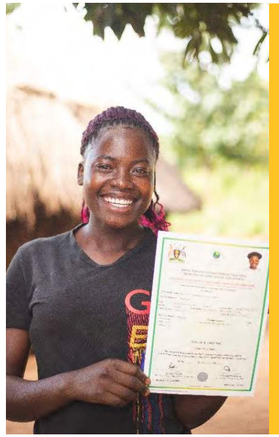
So how can your church outwork an integral and holistic witness to those around you?

As you plan your community engagement, keep these two principles in mind:

- **Integrity:** In integral mission each part has integrity, it has meaning and purpose, and without it the whole is less. Take away one leg of a three-legged stool and it no longer supports you! Whether it is physical, social or spiritual, ask: **What is the part's significance?**
- **Integration:** In integral mission the parts connect together and reinforce each other. Ask: **What are the connections between the personal, social, spiritual and work dimensions of people's lives?**

With a focus on integrity and integration, your community development initiative has the potential to bring a deep and lasting transformation for people:

- Healing their relationship with God
- Healing their view of themselves
- Healing their relationships with others
- Healing their attitudes to work and giving new opportunities

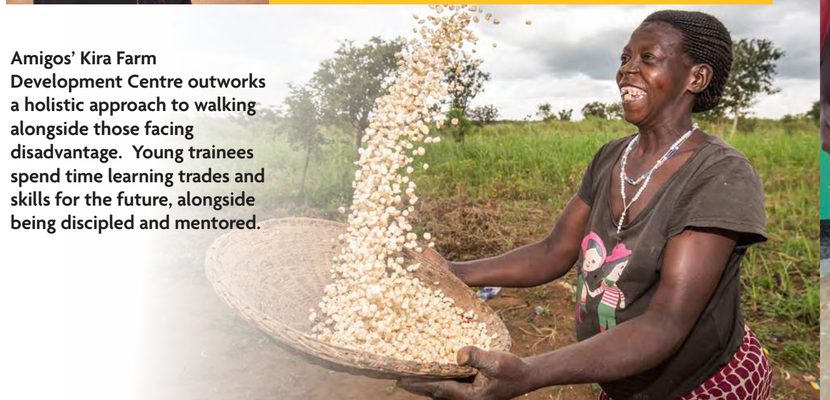


Stella says:

"Life before Kira Farm was marked by hardship ... daily struggle was filled with anxiety and worries, making each day challenging.

Joining Kira Farm became a beacon of hope. I acquired skills which empowered me to open my tailoring workshop, and I also offer hairdressing services on the side. Now, I can easily support myself and my siblings, providing food and clothing without worry.

Kira Farm equipped me with the skills needed for a fresh start, and I am determined to use them to build a better life for myself and my family. Today, my siblings and I attend church every Sunday, and I am immensely thankful for the transformative impact of Kira Farm."



Amigos' Kira Farm Development Centre outworks a holistic approach to walking alongside those facing disadvantage. Young trainees spend time learning trades and skills for the future, alongside being discipled and mentored.

Stepping Out

Churches which run community projects will know that prayerful and thoughtful planning are essential! We believe the following **'four listenings'** provide a great framework for considering stepping out into a new faith venture. **So work through:**

- **Listening to the Bible**

Why don't you read and hear God's Word together as a church? Contemplate it, allow it to encourage, confront and form you as God's missional people. As you appreciate the whole sweeping story of God, of how the parts fit together into a whole, it will become your story too. Which particular passages has God highlighted to motivate you for a specific response?

- **Listening to the church/churches**

This gives you an opportunity to listen and talk to one another. Ask questions such as: What is our story as a church? What do we have vision and motivation for in mission? What are our gifts as a community? What are our weaknesses? How can we respond passionately and positively to the community's situation?

- **Listening to the community**

Are you part of the community already? Where are there overlaps and connections? What are the values of the area? What matters to people, to you? What are other churches already doing, is there space for collaboration? Ask people questions and listen well.

- **Listening to the Holy Spirit**

God's enabling and direction are vital, it's ultimately His mission, so listening to the Holy Spirit is essential. He may have highlighted things in your listening to the Bible, to yourselves and to the community. Take time to listen to Him and **synthesise all you have heard** before stepping out...

Next Steps

As you decide how you want to go forward, it can be useful to write a simple project plan. The aim is to end up with a dynamic and holistic engagement which is **biblically-inspired and framed**, **church-based**, **community-relevant** *and* **Spirit-led**.

A simple plan includes the following:

1. **Introducing the church and project**
2. **Reason for the project**
3. **Steps of the project and how it will be outworked**
4. **Aims for the project**
5. **The budget of the project**

Now check the shape of the project. Will it serve the local community effectively and encourage an integral witness by the church?

Below, we have listed organisations that can help with advice and funding:
Cinnamon Network, Poverty Lookup Tool, Transforming Churches and Communities, The Church of England, The United Reformed Church, All Churches Trust, The Laing Family Trusts, Tearfund Learn, Evangelical Alliance and Hope Together.

Learning

Once you begin, regularly evaluating the church's missional project is vital to see how things are going and whether you are on course. Often plans don't work out as expected and that can be all part of the learning process.

Spend time listening to all those involved. Gain as many viewpoints as possible: Ask them what is working well? What needs to be changed? And what would you suggest for improvement?

Conclusion

As is often said, 'the local church is the hope of the world'. We won't always get it right of course, but with God with us and at work in our ideas, we trust that He can work powerfully in our communities.

We are grateful to work in partnership with a number of churches in Uganda and as we learn from them hope that we are able to inspire other churches with the dynamic work of integral mission.

Amigos

TRAIN – WORK – THRIVE

Our vision:

For people and communities across Uganda and beyond to be whole and thriving.

Our mission:

Together with our local partner, we create lasting solutions to poverty and hunger in Uganda.

Our practice:

Amigos supports Ugandans to work their way out of poverty with dignity by providing them with the tools to thrive. Our integrated approach spans across communities; by providing access to education, vocational training, life-skills and clean water, enabling communities to achieve remarkable and sustainable change.

Our church-led community development programme aims to see an empowered church participating with God to bring community transformation with Jesus Christ at the centre.

Support the work of Amigos

Amigos is grateful for the support of many individuals and churches across the UK. If you would like to find out about making a donation or becoming a church partner, please contact our team via info@amigos.org.uk

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Amigos
3 Boutport Street
Barnstaple
Devon EX31 1RH

amigos.org.uk
+44 (0) 1217 377664
info@amigos.org.uk

Find us at Amigos Worldwide

Registered charity number: 1119450.
Registered office address:
3 Boutport Street, Barnstaple,
Devon, EX31 1RH