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KNOWING BETTER, DOING BETTER?
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NGOs, FAITH AND WELLBEING

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PhD International Development
The University of Edinburgh
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**DECLARATION**

I confirm:

(a) that I have composed the thesis  
(b) that the work is my own, and wherever I have made use of significant work by others I have acknowledged this  
(c) that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification  
(d) that any included publications are the student’s own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised and clearly identified on the declarations page of the thesis.

Mark Adams  
1.10.23
Lay Summary

**LAY SUMMARY**

Wellbeing, and particularly subjective wellbeing or happiness, has come to the fore in the rhetoric of international development since 2000. Making the promotion of human wellbeing the principal goal of public policy and using self-reported wellbeing as a key indicator of performance has proven hugely popular. It promises better information and practice; greater voice, agency and shifting power in aid projects, and space for secular and faith-based conceptions of human development that challenge dominant emphases on economic growth and metrics (“beyond GDP”). Together these are said to offer better outcomes for those at the sharp end of interventions.

Reviewing the UK international development NGO sector as a whole it is clear that wellbeing has entered the rhetoric of development and that NGOs have embraced wellbeing as an aim. Some NGOs have gone further, seeking to articulate visions of human wellbeing and integrate these into their policy and practice. Some UK Christian-rooted NGOs have seen in wellbeing a vision of human development very similar to their own and an opportunity to advance their views of a person-centred, holistic, and social vision of human wellbeing, one situated in a long-term relationship with people and the planet.

There is an emerging consensus that human wellbeing should be the aim of international development, and that wellbeing should be considered from both objective and subjective standpoints, as well as situating the individual within relationships, culture and moral frameworks, including faith. Wellbeing carries a heavy burden, with its promises of better information and practice, increasing voice and agency, shifting power, and in some cases aligning with alternative agendas to dominant development paradigms.

The thesis combines an overview of the UK NGO sector with a number of in-depth case studies of organisations drawn from across the faith-based spectrum. It draws on additional information on other organisations that have deliberately engaged with wellbeing, from faith-permeated to secular. It explores if the rhetoric of wellbeing is reflected in practice. In doing so the research explores how secular and faith-based organisations engage with wellbeing, and how Christian-rooted organisations have used wellbeing both to distinguish Christian visions of development and build bridges with secular and other faith-based actors that share similar visions of human development and wellbeing. The use of a spectrum of religiosity rather than a binary view of faith-based versus secular organisations has illustrated differences between these Christian-rooted organisations and supports the argument that such binary distinctions have limited analytical use.

The organisations assessed in this research have demonstrated that the promise of improved information can be, at least partially, achieved with investment, but that a wellbeing approach will not automatically shift power. Organisations face competing demands between “proving” and “improving”, and competing priorities and organisational realities may mean wellbeing initiatives remain limited to improving information, with limited gains for practice or increasing the voice, agency and power of those the work is intended to assist. In addition, efforts to explicitly include faith and religion in operational frameworks have illustrated some challenges in doing so, and the need to explore again the issues of public and private spaces and what a positive vision of secularism can offer to the wellbeing of all. Wellbeing has entered the rhetoric of development, but practice is yet to fully realise its promises. This research explores that discrepancy, and suggests some avenues for further research.
Abstract

**ABSTRACT**

Wellbeing, and particularly subjective wellbeing or happiness, has come to the fore in international development rhetoric since 2000. Making the promotion of human wellbeing the principal goal of public policy and using self-reported wellbeing as a key indicator of performance has proven hugely popular. It promises better information and practice; greater voice, agency and shifting power in aid projects, and space for secular and faith-based conceptions of human development that challenge dominant emphases on economic growth and metrics (“beyond GDP”). Together these offer better outcomes for those at the sharp end of interventions.

Reviewing the UK international development NGO sector as a whole, and in a number of in-depth case studies it is clear that wellbeing has entered the rhetoric of development and that NGOs have embraced wellbeing as an aim. Some NGOs have gone further, seeking to articulate visions of human wellbeing and integrate these into their policy and practice. Some UK Christian-rooted NGOs have seen in the developing debate on wellbeing a vision of human development very similar to their own and an opportunity to advance their views of a person-centred, holistic, and social vision of human wellbeing, one situated in a long-term relationship with people and the planet.

There is an emerging consensus that human wellbeing should be the aim of international development, and that wellbeing should be considered from both objective and subjective standpoints, as well as situating the individual within relationships, culture and moral frameworks, including faith. Wellbeing carries a heavy burden, with its promises of better information and practice, increasing voice and agency, shifting power, and in some cases aligning with alternative agendas to dominant development paradigms.

The thesis combines an overview of the UK NGO sector with a number of in-depth case studies of organisations drawn from across the faith-based spectrum, and additional information on other organisations that have deliberately engaged with wellbeing, from faith-permeated to secular. It explores if the rhetoric of wellbeing is reflected in the practice. In doing so the research explores how secular and faith-based organisations engage with wellbeing, and how Christian-rooted organisations have used wellbeing both to distinguish Christian visions of development and build bridges with secular and other faith-based actors that share similar visions of human development and wellbeing. The use of a spectrum of religiosity rather than a binary view of faith-based versus secular organisations has illustrated differences between these Christian-rooted organisations and supports the argument that such binary distinctions have limited analytical use.

These organisations have demonstrated that the promise of improved information can be achieved with investment, but that strengthening voice, agency and shifting power requires stronger political will and leadership. They highlight the temptations and pressures to adopt a top-down approach, to elaborate in detail universal frameworks, and failing to root these in the priorities the realities and priorities of the local contexts. In their efforts to explicitly include faith and religion the organisations have illustrated some of the challenges in doing so, and the need to explore again the issues of public and private spaces and what a positive vision of secularism can offer to the wellbeing of all.

This research contributes to the literature on wellbeing and international development by exploring the role that religion and faith plays in conceptualizing and assessing wellbeing, and how Christian-rooted organisations are using concepts of wellbeing to explore and advance
Abstract

their notions of human development. It contributes to the discussion of distinctions between faith-based and secular organisations. It highlights two challenges of giving explicit expression to faith and religion in wellbeing frameworks – the risk of taking an overly normative approach, and of doing so in mixed-faith spaces and with communities that may have quite different conceptions of wellbeing. The challenge of using universal frameworks in ways that reflect and respect local priorities and understandings is central to how wellbeing is used in international development. In addition, the focus on faith and religion has highlighted the need for a more critical analysis of secularism and its potential in navigating these tensions. Wellbeing has entered the rhetoric of development, but practice is yet to fully realise the promises of wellbeing. This research explores that discrepancy, and suggests some avenues for further research, including the need to explore these issues in relation to non-Christian faith traditions.
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CHAPTER 1: THESIS OVERVIEW

From whatever we and others do ... we can strive to learn and find better ways of knowing and doing. Ideals like equality, justice, well-being for all and putting the last first will always be there for us to strive towards. ... The enthralling adventures of our human struggle to know better and do better should have no end (Chambers, 2017).

“He who pays the piper calls the tune” (Anon).

WELLBEING\(^1\) AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The pursuit of human wellbeing, as opposed to alternative and existing objectives of economic development, meeting basic needs, or reducing or eliminating material poverty, has gained growing prominence and popularity in the international development sector since the 1990s. In 1994 Robert Chambers called for the pursuit of “Responsible Wellbeing” as an approach to international development, and by 2014 he claimed the term “wellbeing” had entered the rhetoric of development (Chambers, 2014, 1994). Interest has continued to grow and consolidate in the 2010s and 2020s, although perhaps without the vim and vigour of the period up to the mid-2010s, which was marked by a series of international conferences, research programmes and declarations (Gough et al., 2006; OECD, 2013, 2008; Stiglitz et al., 2009; White, 2010a).

The interest in human wellbeing as a policy objective is far from new, dating back as far as Greek philosophy. However, a number of factors came together in the 2000s to facilitate its emergence as a desirable, practical and popular policy objective. This interest was not limited to international development circles but was a feature of national government programmes in countries such as Canada, Australia, the UK and perhaps most famously, Bhutan. Indeed, the deliberate application of wellbeing to international development was in part in response to these wider discussions.\(^2\) The interest in wellbeing was motivated in part by the widespread and growing dissatisfaction with mainstream measures of national development (Gross Domestic Product or GDP) and the resultant policy choices, a dissatisfaction with existing material measures of poverty, and the growing credibility of self-reported subjective wellbeing (SWB) or happiness as a data source for policy purposes (Layard, 2005; McGregor, 2007). These offered the prospect of broadening and improving the objectives and measures of international development in support of policies more directly aimed at achieving human development rather than the proxy of economic growth (OECD, 2013; Stiglitz et al., 2009). They also suggested more person-centred and inclusive development strategies (White, 2010b), better reflecting the complex reality of people’s lives and wellbeing, including the importance of relationships, culture, agency and autonomy (McGregor, 2007).\(^3\)

\(^1\) Throughout the thesis well-being and well-being are treated as one term.
\(^2\) International development is a construct and at times an uncomfortable and ungainly one. It reflects a past of colonialism and inequality between nations in terms of power and wealth, as well as attitudes and beliefs that have underpinned it. This is not to deny the good intentions and work that have also characterised it, but as we have entered a more multi-polar world many of the often-unexamined assumptions within it about what “development” is have come under increasing strain. It also struggles to deal with the range of social, economic and political actions that contribute to human development but that exist outside the institutions and activities of “international development”. I have used the terms “big D” and “little d” to distinguish between them, big D referring to formal initiatives by development organisations (Lewis, 2019).
\(^3\) Autonomy is used here as used by Ryan and Deci i.e., not in the sense of personal freedom, independence or separateness from others, but rather in the sense of being able to pursue and achieve personal goals that are consistent with personal values and personality. This Ryan and Deci call autonomy or volition. (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p. 160)
of the person, and her own assessments and priorities in determining what wellbeing is and the extent it is being achieved give wellbeing for many a deeply radical potential (McGregor, 2007), suggesting a shifting of power and greater democratisation (Scott, 2012).

In the 2000s subjective wellbeing (SWB) or happiness was increasingly proposed as a new measure for human progress and development (Layard, 2005). Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness Index (GNHI) was a frequently cited example (OPHI, nd; Royal Government of Bhutan, 2012). There were however, concerns that this approach was problematic when applied to international development for both methodological and policy reasons (Stewart, 2014). While the study of subjective wellbeing in psychology had greatly increased the understanding and credibility of measuring SWB, and there was a body of work on Quality of Life (QoL), there remained significant questions around the validity and reliability of the results, and the implications of relying on them as a sole indicator of societal progress. In terms of data quality, issues of adaptation to circumstances, the influence of contextual factors on expectations, and of culture and moral frameworks on self-assessments of subjective wellbeing suggested limitations to their use. The potentially Eurocentric nature of SWB approaches, often with a strong focus on an individual conception of wellbeing, were cited as a weakness if they were to be used as universal measures of human progress (McGregor, 2006). In addition, if used alone and without reference to objective criteria there were fears it could lead to pernicious policy outcomes, ignoring and potentially accentuating inequalities, and over-emphasising the role of the individual in determining wellbeing vis a vis structural and contextual factors (Edwards and Imrie, 2008; Stewart, 2014; Stewart et al., 2018a; White, 2017a).

There had already been initiatives in the international development sector to capture broader measures of human development and move beyond a narrow focus on economic growth. Most notable of these was the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2020). This combined income, education and healthy life-expectancy. While an improvement on GDP per capita, the HDI was itself criticised as “a very incomplete measure of [human development], leaving out many aspects of life that are of fundamental importance” (Ranis et al., 2006, p. 324). The question was whether subjective wellbeing alone, or in combination with other measures, could and would provide a more complete and useful way to assess and track human development. In addition – for some at least – there was a question as to whether this inherently person-centred approach could lead to a shift in power, facilitating voice and agency and greater democratisation. This promise was not new, but wellbeing offered a new way to advance the agenda. The HDI drew on Sen’s capabilities approach, rooted in a person-centred view of human development which is holistic and concerned with the individual’s own definition of what they wish to do and be (Alkire, 2002). The UNDP has been associated with the participatory development movement, itself an attempt to focus on the person, and to shift power from experts to the people themselves (Chambers, 2007, 1983).

Typically, the term subjective is associated with ideas of unreliability and bias, in contrast to objective data which is considered reliable and bias free. Here subjective is used to refer to information which is only knowable by a person themselves and must by its nature be reported by them (White, 2014a). The use of such self-reported data has long been controversial, challenged by the natural sciences as lacking in rigour and reliability (McGregor, 2007). However, a growing body of work by psychologists across different populations and countries (Diener, 1985, 1984; Diener et al., 2016, 2011; Diener and Suh, 1997) had
increasingly established self-reported assessments of wellbeing as both valid and reliable when used carefully and appropriately. In addition, they appeared to generate valuable additional information to the existing objective metrics.

A consensus increasingly emerged that a mixed approach was desirable. Considering a person’s wellbeing holistically and directly, rather than partially and/or through the proxy of income, would produce better information and better practice. This was endorsed by the Sarkozy Commission and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), both of which called for the use of both objective and subjective measures in the tracking of national development progress (OECD, 2013; Stiglitz et al., 2009).

Sponsored by the UK Government, significant conceptual and empirical research was carried out on the application of wellbeing to international development at the University of Bath in the Wellbeing and Development (WeD) and subsequent Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways (WPP) research programmes (2002 to 2009, 2010 to 2014 respectively). These research programmes laid out an approach for the application of wellbeing to international development that has proven influential. Drawing on a wide range of theory and empirical research, they concluded there was clear evidence that wellbeing is a relevant concept for people living in poverty in the Global South (Gough et al., 2006), and that it could provide a useful way to address both the limitations of GDP and subsequent policy prescriptions, and resolve inadequacies in the existing theory on poverty which was limiting progress in poverty reduction (McGregor, 2007). The person-centred approach, regarding people in the round as a “whole person” and as social beings, demanded that people’s own subjective assessments had to be included. At the same time, it was recognised that the methodological weaknesses of subjective wellbeing meant it could not be used alone – consequently material conditions and contextual factors needed to be included in the analysis, assessed both subjectively and objectively. An actor-oriented approach was important, but had to be contextualised within the structures and processes that facilitated or undermined an individual’s pursuit of the wellbeing they desired (McGregor, 2007). The social nature of human beings was identified as fundamental, both because relationships influence subjective wellbeing, and because they produce the cultural norms and values that influence our individual assessments of wellbeing (White, 2006). This further underlined the importance of contextualising understandings of wellbeing in a particular context and with particular people.

The WeD programme subsequently laid out a conceptual framework that defined human wellbeing and suggested how it might be applied at a conceptual-level to international development. This framework argued against the singular use of subjective wellbeing, and instead for a framework based on an assessment of three key dimensions of wellbeing: objective conditions; subjective assessments; and relationships. Within these dimensions, a set of domains – the key factors influencing wellbeing/illbeing – were set out. In line with the wider literature (see Chapter 2) they identified a set of domains that were broad enough to be universally applicable, but open enough to be contextualised (McGregor, 2007, 2006). The current state of wellbeing was to be assessed through data collection on both objectively verifiable indicators and self-reported assessments by individuals, triangulated against each other and against contextual information. These ideas were further developed in the WPP programme, and tested and popularised with a number of NGOs (White and Abeyasekera, 2014).

Wellbeing has proven an appealing concept in government and inter-governmental policy, as well as in organisational and personal life. One informant referred to it as the “zeitgeist” of
Chapter 1: Thesis Overview

the 2000s and early 2010s (Interviewee I14, 2019a). As indicated above, in the international development sector it talks to a number of pre-existing concerns, including finding alternatives to the dominant development paradigm (modernisation and neoliberal capitalist economics) (Gough et al., 2006), and ways to reinvigorate the person-centred, participatory development agenda (Chambers, 2014). More recently, as preoccupations have shifted in the aid sector it can be seen to have a role in supporting efforts to come to terms with, and find policy answers to, the historical legacies of colonialism, racism and inequality, (including greater “localisation” or locally-led humanitarian and development action), and climate change and sustainable development (OECD, 2019).

Wellbeing is positive and appealing in nature – it is something that we all aspire to (White, 2009). Shifting from a focus on deficits, needs, and material poverty to a wellbeing approach offers a way to shift from an “us and them”, “aid giver and aid recipient” approach to one that recognises our common humanity, and that “development” problems and inequalities exist in all countries. Through a holistic and relational approach it offers a way to capture the full range of human development, and to balance a promotion of the different influences on wellbeing, avoiding those that cause harm, and averting the excesses engendered by a narrow pursuit of economic growth (McGregor, 2007). The focus on relationships is critical, drawing us away from a focus on the individual, and recognising that wellbeing is formed and sustained within relationships. It suggests that the wellbeing of all matters in the promotion of individual wellbeing. Conceptions of wellbeing are often extensive, reaching beyond the immediate family or community and nation, to future generations and the environment, bestowing rights but also obligations on each of us as individuals. Trade-offs may need to be made for unknown others, for future generations and for environmental and climate change considerations (OECD, 2019; Pope Francis, 2020, 2015).

In these interpretations wellbeing can represent a radical alternative and challenge to dominant approaches to national and international development and conceptions of human development (White, 2010b). Indeed, Robert Chambers’ call for “Responsible Wellbeing” was subtitled “a personal agenda for action”, and suggested the affluent needed to change their behaviours if everyone was to achieve wellbeing (Chambers, 1994). The participatory development movement was founded on the intention of sharing power (Chambers, 1983). The Wellbeing Economies Alliance established in the 2010s promotes policy change for economies “designed to serve people and planet, not the other way around” (WEALL, 2022a) in an agenda that shares much in common with ideas of sustainable human development. The Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien movement in Latin America is often seen in this way (Waldmueller and Rodriguez, 2019). In this there are strong parallels with the positions of some faith-based actors, including the Pope, that have decried the detrimental effects of a narrow focus on economic growth on people and the planet, and called for a different vision of human development and policies to achieve it (Atherton et al., 2011; Pope Francis, 2020, 2015; Theos et al., 2010b). For secular and faith-based NGOs wellbeing offers a way to tackle these challenges.

On a more mundane level, for development practitioners, it offers a way to complement or supplant the project management tools used in the aid sector which (necessarily) simplify and reduce, but in doing so risk ignoring important aspects of human development both positive and negative. While mundane, it is in the practice of development that much de facto policy is determined (Lipsky, 1980; Thompson and McHugh, 2003) and good intentions are realised or subverted (Goetz, 1995). Taking a wellbeing approach, and putting users or project
participants front and centre, offers the potential of producing better information (in the senses of being more holistic, and reflecting users’ views, assessments and priorities), contributing to better practice (more relevant, appropriate), and giving space and priority to the voices and influence of project participants and users on the interventions and services created and delivered in their names. On a grander scale they suggest the potential of reviving the more political (with a small p) promises of participatory development, shifting power from organisations and donors to the individuals and communities intended to benefit from international development (Brock and McGee, 2002; Cleaver, 1999). It talks to the power imbalance inherent in a sector where those for whom interventions are designed, resourced and delivered are not the ones that exercise power, control resources and make decisions.

Religious and faith-based organisations and individuals have increasingly been recognised and accepted as actors in international development (Bompani, 2015; Marshall and Saanen, 2007; Office of the Press Secretary, 2008; UNHCR, 2014). This recognition by the formal institutions of international development (big D) has come in part in response to the reality that religion and faith are embedded in the lives and cultures of the majority of people with whom international development is done (Berger, 2014, 1999). The Voices of the Poor participatory research exercise made this clear (Narayan et al., 2000a). The modernist development paradigm where religion and faith would naturally wither is strongly disputed (Berger, 1999). Religion certainly has a tainted history, be it its role in colonialism and conflicts between groups, or the way some religious groups position themselves in relation to gender relations, women’s rights, reproductive health, homosexuality, or have protected abusers of children and the vulnerable (Berger, 2005; Khan, 2019). However, faith has inspired great acts of selflessness and service, and religious orders and organisations of all faiths are globally significant providers of social services (Calderisi, 2013; Gifford, 2015; Tyndale, 2006). Moreover, whatever the long-term trajectory is for faith and religion it is clear that for the foreseeable future religion and faith will play an important role in the wellbeing of billions of people, faith leaders will have influential roles, and development initiatives that do not take this into account will both struggle to achieve their objectives and possibly undermine people’s wellbeing. This recognition is far from universal, and when it does exist, for some faith actors it is insufficient, and overly instrumental (Fountain, 2015).

The rise of wellbeing as a policy issue has given faith-based actors an opportunity to put forward their own views of human development. In the UK some Christian international development organisations have seen a strong alignment between their visions of human development and wellbeing (for example, Integral Human Development) and the interpretations of wellbeing as person-centred, holistic, relational and rooted in the common good (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; Theos et al., 2010b). They have seen an opportunity to engage with this wider debate on wellbeing, and promote an appreciation of the role of faith and the practice of religion as constitutive of wellbeing and human development (Gordon, 2021; Pope Francis, 2020, 2015; Tearfund, 2012). Some have considered how these visions can be better integrated into international development work.

The focus of this research is on Christian-rooted organisations. While this offers an important lens on the wellbeing debate, the focus on this one faith is acknowledged as an important limitation as many of the people that international development NGOs work with are not from a Christian-background, and ascribe to different cultural and moral frameworks and have different understandings of wellbeing. Where possible I have drawn on literature that covers other faiths and faith-based organisations from a non-Christian background to provide...
a comparative perspective. However, it is important to acknowledge this limitation, not least as it focuses on the faith tradition of the dominant powers within the international aid system.

We can see that wellbeing as a concept has proven extremely popular, not least in the international development sector. However, it carries a heavy burden of expectation, its popularity motivated by a number of promises:

- Better information and practice, reflecting and responding to the whole person
- Greater voice and influence of those at the sharp-end of development
- Embodying an alternative conception of human development, for some encapsulated in the phrase ‘Beyond GDP’ but for others in relation to faith-based conceptions of human development and wellbeing.

This research makes a significant contribution to the literature on wellbeing and international development by exploring the role that religion and faith play in conceptualizing and assessing wellbeing, and how Christian-rooted organisations are using concepts of wellbeing to advance their notions of human development. In doing so they reflect the increased acceptance of religion and faith in development since the 1990s and its constitutive role in wellbeing. In analysing the organisations approaches to wellbeing and faith I draw on Occhipinti’s three typologies of faith-based organisations (Occhipinti, 2015). I have named organisations that come from a Christian-context, and broadly fit within a Christian cultural and faith tradition as “Christian-rooted”. However, they can occupy different positions on Occhipinti’s “faith-based” typology. I have refined this typology further. The faith-permeated category within it does not capture important differences between Evangelical and more mainstream faith-permeated organisations, and I suggest that the level of religiosity of these faith-permeated organisations can be further distinguished. In addition, I have suggested Occhipinti’s “type of work” typology can be refined to include a dichotomy between organisations with a general / person-centred focus and those with a thematic or technical focus, and that this can influence an organisation’s adoption of a wellbeing approach.

The research suggests there is great complementarity between the faith-inspired visions of human wellbeing and the emerging consensus on wellbeing in the international development sector. At the same time, it highlights the challenges of balancing the person-centred, democratic promise of wellbeing with a detailed formulation of wellbeing frameworks and the associated risk of becoming overly prescriptive and normative. In addition, the explicit inclusion of faith-related aspects of wellbeing in multi-domain wellbeing models has proven problematic in heterogenous organisations and communities. Together these suggest that the balancing of public and private spaces, and universal frameworks and local views and priorities, not least in the context of differing or multiple faith traditions and moral and value systems, remain important issues for wellbeing approaches (An-Na’im, 2005; Freeman, 2019; McGregor, 2018).

Wellbeing’s central focus on the person, and her dignity and rights, should prove an important mediating factor for these challenges but the research suggests it is not one that will automatically prove effective. These aspects of the wellbeing agenda take us naturally to the same issues as human rights and rights-based approaches to development – recognising that we are social in nature, live in communities, and generate our wellbeing with, and in reference to others, how best do we balance our wellbeing now and in the future with the wellbeing of others? It also relates to the growing literature on secularism and whether that offers a way to enable rather than diminish faith’s role in human wellbeing (Ager and Ager, 2015; An-
Na’im, 2005; Juergensmeyer, 2017). The engagement of faith-based organisations, and particularly Christian-rooted organisations, with wellbeing is not a topic that has been extensively researched and in doing so this thesis makes a significant contribution to the wellbeing agenda in the context of faith and international development.

**Research Aims and Design**

There has been a great deal of theoretical and empirical work on wellbeing and international development. An area that has received less attention is the extent to which international development and particularly faith-based NGOs have engaged with wellbeing as a policy and practice issue. The research aimed to determine if wellbeing has entered the rhetoric of international development NGOs as Chambers claimed, and if so, with what effects. Has the rhetoric of wellbeing been reflected in the practice. In particular I have investigated if, how and why Christian-rooted NGOs have engaged with the wellbeing agenda. The over-arching research question asks: “How and why have Christian-rooted International Development NGOs engaged with wellbeing, and with what effects?”

Alongside this over-arching question, I have sought to address a number of related questions.

- To what extent and how have Christian-rooted international development NGOs engaged with wellbeing?
- What drives an organisation’s engagement with wellbeing?
- What effects occur when a commitment to wellbeing is made?
- To what extent are the promises of better information, greater voice, agency and democratisation, and alternative visions of development realized in organizational policy and practice?”

The research design is set out in detail in Chapter 4. It involved a review of the literature on wellbeing, wellbeing and international development, faith and international development, and organisational theory. A sector-wide review of UK-based NGOs was conducted to determine and understand their use of wellbeing as a term. Focussing in on Christian-rooted organisations, three case studies were undertaken from organisations occupying different positions on a “faith-based” typology (Occhipinti, 2015) to explore in more depth how, why and with what effects they have engaged with wellbeing.

The principal case, SCIAF (Caritas Scotland), was studied in the role of a “participant-observer”, which allowed for sustained access to a wide range of information, but created challenges related to bias (Yin, 2003), and an imbalance of data available for the different cases. In addition to SCIAF, other Caritas organisations have published on IHD and wellbeing and this deepened the data set for that particular case. Access to other organisations varied and was not as extensive. This was addressed by gathering information on a number of different organisations across the faith-based to secular typology, to provide additional information and support comparative analysis.

In order to maintain a manageable focus to the research it has focused on one faith tradition. A focus on one faith tradition, and particularly the faith most associated with the dominant international development paradigm, is a limitation to the research. However, it provides a starting point for exploring issues of wellbeing, faith and international development. During this research literature on other faith traditions has been consulted, and consultations made with faith-based organisations from non-Christian traditions. Comparative reference has
been made to these in the research. However, I acknowledge that this is a partial vision of the engagement of faith actors in international development and the pursuit of wellbeing.

This has been an iterative research process. This is not unusual, as Blaikie describes (Blaikie, 2010, pp. 131–140). In the course of this work, I have revised my research design, samples and analysis methodologies. I returned to the literature on wellbeing, faith, secularism, international development and research methodologies to refine and improve my design and methodology, strengthening the analysis and the ability to generalise from the results (Bryman, 2016, pp. 64, 399).

I have played the role of a practitioner-researcher (Robson, 1993) and a participant-observer (Yin, 2003), with consequent opportunities and advantages, and challenges. Throughout I have sought to be a reflexive researcher, understanding my own position within the research process and using that to inform my research, as well as to minimise bias and other limitations.

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature on wellbeing, faith and international development. It sets outs current thinking on what wellbeing is and what constitutes it, why it has been so popular, how it has been applied to international development, and what frameworks have been developed for its application in policy and practice.

Chapter Three looks in depth at faith and development, setting out the growing recognition in the international development sector of the importance of faith, religion and faith-actors. The chapter explores in some detail Catholic social teaching as an example of an articulated faith-based approach to human development, and its commonalities with the emergent conceptions of wellbeing in international development. It describes why wellbeing has provided a useful meeting point of secular and faith-based conceptions. The chapter reviews organisational theory in order to set out a theoretical framework for how policy is made, negotiated and implemented in organisations.

Chapter Four sets out in detail the research design and methodology, including the approach to the sector overview, the choice of case studies and the methods and sources used. It presents the results of the sector overview, including an analysis of how wellbeing has appeared in the rhetoric of international development NGOs, charting an increased usage over the last two decades and considering how and why this has happened.

Chapter Five presents the first case of an NGO’s engagement with wellbeing. The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) is a faith-permeated organisation (using Occhipinti’s typology), and the chapter looks at the work of SCIAF and other Catholic agencies on Integral Human Development (IHD) – a vision of human development based in Catholic social teaching. It outlines the concepts, and how these have been deployed by Caritas agencies to integrate a Catholic view of human development and wellbeing into their development and humanitarian interventions. It reviews the strong parallels with the wider interest in wellbeing. It reviews the extent to SCIAF’s work has achieved the promises of wellbeing.

Chapter Six looks in detail at the second case - Tearfund’s LIGHT Wheel project. Tearfund is a faith-permeated organisation, but one coming from an evangelical rather than Catholic tradition. It arguably exhibits a higher degree of religiosity – or at least of how faith should permeate the private and public spheres of life. The LIGHT Wheel project aimed at better integrating a Christian approach to development into the organisation’s work with Churches
Chapter One: Thesis Overview

and communities in the Global South, providing a standard methodology for the assessment of wellbeing amongst communities and assessing how wellbeing changes over time. A “tool for change” it aims not only to assess but to promote personal transformation and improved wellbeing. The chapter reviews the strong parallels with the wider conceptions of wellbeing, and the extent to which it has achieved the promises of wellbeing.

Chapter Seven looks at the third case - Traidcraft Exchange (now Transform Trade)'s work to measure improvements in human wellbeing as a result of its projects. Traidcraft Exchange is classified as having a “faith background” under Occhipinti’s typology – i.e., it is loosely tied to a faith tradition through historical ties or values, but with few overt or current references to faith (Occhipinti, 2015, p. 338). The chapter outlines Traidcraft’s use of the Inner Wellbeing Framework (IWB), the parallels with the wider conceptions and motivations on wellbeing, and the extent it achieved its expectations from using the inner wellbeing approach.

Chapter Eight sets out the main findings of the research. It summarises the findings of the sector overview in light of relevant literature, and compares and contrasts the three case studies. These are complemented with information from other organisations (from faith-permeated to secular organisations) that have engaged with wellbeing, and the wider literature on wellbeing and international development. It draws out the principal conclusions and suggests potential avenues for further research.
CHAPTER 2: WELLBEING AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION
This chapter reviews the literature on wellbeing, and particularly how it relates to international development. It outlines the increased interest in wellbeing as a policy issue since the 1990s, and explores the reasons for this growing popularity. I provide an overview of the common meanings attributed to wellbeing and associated terms. I explore the promises it holds for many in terms of better information, a person-centred and more democratic approach, and creating space for alternative views of human development. I outline the principal approaches to assessing wellbeing, and the emerging consensus in international development around a view of wellbeing as subjective, objective and relational; on a list of influencing factors or domains; and the value of using both objective and subjective indicators and assessments in the evaluation of wellbeing. I touch on the temptation to quantify and some of the challenges involved.

WELLBEING’S GROWING POPULARITY
Wellbeing, along with the associated terms happiness, subjective wellbeing (SWB), Quality of Life and to a lesser extent flourishing, has gained wide usage and great popularity in the UK since the 1990s across government, academic, NGO and popular discourse. Robert Chambers suggested in 2014 that wellbeing had become part of the “rhetoric of development” (Chambers, 2014). While there are a number of associated terms, wellbeing has emerged as the most popular term, at least in the UK. (See analysis of UK international development NGOs below.)

The term has gained significant popular purchase, with a host of wellbeing publications and products claiming to assist people to boost their individual wellbeing. “Health and wellbeing” is a buzz phrase for the beginning of the 21st century in the UK, part of the zeitgeist of our time. Employers in the state, private or third sectors are increasingly expected, and expect, to consider and promote the wellbeing of their employees (CIPD, 2021; MAKE UK, 2020; Walton, 2021). This is for both ethical reasons, and self-interest - happy workers are believed to be productive workers. To what extent the rhetoric of wellbeing of employees is matched by changes in practice and a rebalancing of priorities between shareholders and employees is debated (Kowalski and Loretto, 2017; Mishra and Venkatesan, 2023). However, organisations’ commitments to wellbeing may conflict with the need to “do more with less”, and may not be matched by actions (Kowalski and Loretto, 2017). Thin raised the prospect of “happywashing” by organisations – making implausible claims to improve wellbeing as a way to garner support (Thin, 2012).

Academic study of wellbeing has grown enormously since the 1980s. Historically research has been concentrated in a number of academic disciplines, most notably economics, psychology, and healthcare. The education, health and social services sectors in the US and UK have studied the closely related field of Quality of Life since the 1980s (Schalock, 2004). Increasingly academics in other fields have taken an interest including anthropology (Thin, 2005), international development (Gough, 2004; Gough et al., 2006; Land et al., 2012; McGregor et al., 2015b; Norton and Sumner, 2012; Ranis et al., 2006) and political science (Bache and Scott, 2018). There have been deliberate efforts to work across these disciplines, particularly in international development (McGregor, 2007).
This interest has both championed and reflected an explicit linking of government policy with the promotion of wellbeing (Galloway et al., 2005; Government of Scotland, n.d.; UK Government, 2021; Welsh Government, 2022). It has become the ultimate goal of global efforts towards development (McGregor, 2006). Advancing human wellbeing is central to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda (UNDESA et al., 2021).

This expressed commitment to the promotion of wellbeing is not new, it has long been a favoured objective of public policy. Plato and Aristotle are frequently cited as providing foundational thinking on the topic. Aristotle’s discussions of happiness, wellbeing and eudaimonia have heavily informed current thinking on wellbeing, and are frequently used as arguments for their place as the objective of government policy (Bache and Scott, 2018, p. 3; Michalos, 2014; Ranis et al., 2006; Royal Government of Bhutan, 2012, p. 7). Documented commitments to wellbeing by governments go back to at least the 1770s. Influenced by the philosophical writings of Frances Hutcheson (Hutcheson, 1725) and Jeremy Bentham (Crimmins, 2021) on the importance of happiness as the aim of human action, the founders of the modern United States of America (USA) famously stated in the Declaration of Independence:

All men are created equal, ... are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, ... among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness (US Government, 1776, p. 1).

The upsurge in recent interest relates less to the principle of human wellbeing being the ultimate policy goal of Government and social action, and more to questions about how it is defined, assessed and measured – and the policy and practical implications of these options. In particular this “second wave” of interest since the 1960s relates to both the role subjective assessments of individual happiness and life evaluations can and should play in setting policy goals and assessing achievement against them, and how this offers policy space for alternative conceptions of sustainable human development in the context of environmental and climate change challenges (Bache and Scott, 2018). Interpretations of wellbeing offered alternative measures of human development that addressed the widely acknowledged weaknesses of GDP per capita, the long-dominant indicator of human development at a national level (Boarini et al., 2014; McGregor et al., 2015b).

These economic measures have long been used as proxy indicators for human wellbeing because they were considered the best practicable indicators available. Increasingly however the limitations of these measures, and the consequently negative effects on national policy of using the measures, have become better understood and accepted in official circles (European Commission, 2007; OECD, 2009; Stiglitz et al., 2009; UN, 2021). For decades there have been critiques of narrow economic measures of human development, which have become symbolised by GDP per capita or GNP per capita (Cummins, 1996; Jones and Klenow, 2016; McGillivray, 1991; Stiglitz et al., 2009) This is particularly the case for GDP per capita which was transformed into a de facto objective for government policy.

There are various criticisms. Some are methodological – that they exclude much important economic activity and ignore many economic, social and environmental costs of economic activity – and as such present a partial and inaccurate picture based on specific ideas of what counts and what does not. They mask as much as they reveal, such as inequality of distribution between men and women, racial and ethnic groups, and socioeconomic groups. They are rooted in a Western, capitalist conceptions of human nature and political-economy which
regard people as individualised and rational actors, with consequent implications for policy-making (McGregor, 2004 citing Douglas and Ney (1998)). As a result critics argue they fail to provide an accurate or complete picture, driving inequitable, unjust and unsustainable policies and decisions, and failing to recognise the varied cultural and moral conceptions of human development across the world (European Commission, 2014, 2013, 2007; Hoekstra, 2022; Jones and Klenow, 2016).

Efforts to find better measures of national human development have been made by governments and international organisations since at least the 1970s. Setting out some landmark events in this process helps situate the current interest in wellbeing within a broader process of identifying appropriate goals and measures for national and international development.

In 1972 Bhutan’s King Jigme Singye Wangchuck proposed that “Gross National Happiness” (GNH) should be the measure of the country’s progress rather than GDP (Alkire and Ura, 2012; Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016; Nelson, 2011; Royal Government of Bhutan, 2012). In 1991 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2020). It was followed by series of complementary measures: the Inequality-adjusted HDI, the Gender Development Index, the Gender Inequality Index, the Multidimensional Poverty Index and even the Planetary Pressures-adjusted HDI (Conceicao, 2022).

Reflecting a dissatisfaction with existing measures and tools, and in order to better understand how people living in poverty themselves experience and conceptualise it, the World Bank commissioned the Voices of the Poor study in the late 1990s. This huge cross-country research programme gathered the views of over 60,000 women and men from sixty countries on what poverty and wellbeing meant for them, and has proved influential in framing ideas of poverty since (Narayan et al., 2000a, 2000b; Narayan and Petesch, 2002). In 2000 the World Development Report, referencing the Voices of the Poor study and the aims of both reducing poverty and improving wellbeing, formally accepted on behalf of the World Bank the “now established view of poverty as encompassing not only low income and consumption but also low achievement in education, health, nutrition, and other areas of human development. … it expands this definition to include powerlessness and voicelessness, and vulnerability and fear” and the need to measure them (IBRD, 2001).

The OECD hosted World Forums on social progress in Palermo (2004) and Istanbul (2007) which led to the Istanbul Declaration on Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies. This was jointly agreed with the European Commission, the UNDP, the World Bank and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. It was subsequently endorsed by a number of governments and non-governmental organisations (OECD, 2009). In 2007 the European Commission, OECD, the European Parliament and the international NGO the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) hosted an international conference on “Beyond GDP”, and concluded “It’s time to go beyond GDP” and use measures of national progress that include human wellbeing more effectively (European Commission, 2007). This began the EU’s “Beyond GDP” initiative. The 2007 meeting led to a roadmap for the European Commission’s work to for develop “a more comprehensive measure of prosperity and well-being” (European Commission, 2014). At the same time the United Nations University in The Hague sponsored a research programme on Social Development Indicators with the aim of improving how human wellbeing might be better conceptualised and measured (Clarke and McGillivray, 2007).
In 2008 French President Sarkozy sponsored the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMPEPS) under the leadership of three Nobel Prize winning economists. This hugely influential Commission reported in 2009, endorsing the inclusion of subjective wellbeing in the measurement of human development with objective measures (Stiglitz et al., 2009).

Together, the Sarkozy Commission in 2009 and the Istanbul Declaration proved influential, successfully urging national statistics offices to include both objective and subjective measures of people’s Quality of Life, including life evaluations and priorities (OECD, 2013, p. 10; Veenhoven, 2010, p. 234). This was used as a reference point for new work by the OECD on subjective wellbeing (OECD, 2013) and measuring wellbeing for development (OECD, 2020, 2015, 2009). In 2011 the OECD launched its ‘Better Life’ programme intended to create the evidence base for wellbeing assessment at a national level (OECD, 2015, 2013).

In 2012 the Bhutan Government hosted a “High-Level Meeting on Wellbeing and Happiness: Defining a New Economic Paradigm” at the United Nations in New York (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2012). A series of regional inter-governmental conferences were held on measuring wellbeing in 2012 (Boarini et al., 2014). In 2013 the EU reviewed progress against the 2009 Roadmap, and reported significant improvements in the range of data available to decision-makers on a range of complementary indicators, and the timeliness of data (European Commission, 2013). The OECD has continued its “Better Life” project, publishing reports in 2015 and 2020 and maintaining an interactive database on country-level wellbeing (OECD, 2023).

Happiness and subjective wellbeing remained popular with some as the measure of national progress (Helliwell, 2020; Layard, 2010, 2005). The World Happiness Report was launched in 2012 by a group of notable academics, aiming to provide cross-country comparisons of wellbeing and happiness and strengthen the impetus for research and methodological development in the study of happiness as a public policy aim (Helliwell et al., 2012). The report has been published on an almost annual basis ever since (Helliwell et al., 2021).

National governments, and sub-national governments have also engaged in efforts to move “beyond GDP” and use wellbeing as a way to do so. The Canadian Government has collected information on subjective wellbeing since 1985 and both the Australian and New Zealand governments were doing so in the 2000s (OECD, 2013). In this two-way process between national and international organisations, national governments were supported to collect data on citizen wellbeing (ONS, 2011; Scott, 2012, p. 35; USG, 2011). In the UK there have been efforts to develop and implement such measures at a national and sub-national level. As early as 1999 the UK Government published a strategy for promoting “A Better Quality of Life” (UK Government, 2001) and a set of indicators for local governments to use to measure the Quality of Life in their areas (DETR, 2000). Local government has also sought to operationalise wellbeing in its work (Scott, 2012) and in partnerships with local groups (Camden Giving, 2022). The UK Office of National Statistics (ONS) began compiling quarterly measures of life satisfaction and subjective wellbeing (ONS, 2018a). The Canadian, Australian, Italian, New Zealand and Icelandic governments continue to collect this data (Battaglia, 2022; Sanmartin et al., 2021). In the UK, at a sub-national level the Welsh (Welsh Government, 2022) and Scottish governments have strongly embraced the wellbeing of their citizens as official policy goals (Fischer, 2019; Heins and Pautz, 2021; Scottish Government, 2022a).
Civil society has similarly been engaged. In the UK the influential New Economics Foundation (NEF), campaigning for wellbeing to become a mainstream policy indicator during the 2000s, published its own “Five Ways to Wellbeing” in 2008 (Aked et al., 2008) and followed up in 2011 and 2012 with policy recommendations and an analysis of UK wellbeing data (Abdallah et al., 2011; NEF, 2012). The NEF hosted a “Happy Planet Index”, now passed on to the Hot or Cool Institute (Hot or Cool Institute, ND). The Carnegie UK Trust has begun compiling a measure of Gross Domestic Wellbeing (Wallace et al., 2020). There has been particular interest in Scotland as the devolved Scottish Government has been open to engagement with wellbeing, and civil society. In Scotland Oxfam commissioned its own Humankind Wellbeing Index, published in 2012 (Dunlop and Swales, 2012). The Carnegie Trust has also researched wellbeing in Scotland (Wallace, 2013; Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012).

Reflecting the interest of WWF in economic models that look beyond GDP, some conservation organisations intervening in the Global South have engaged with wellbeing as a way to address the inter-related processes of conservation and human action and development. For decades it has been recognised that conservation interventions have to work with human populations in a proactive and positive way to create synergies between conservation and human development if they are to be successful (Biggs et al., 2019; Campfire Association, n.d.; JOA, 2021; Murindagomo, 1991). Certain international conservation organisations have recently experimented with wellbeing frameworks as a way to capture human development and its inter-relatedness with the natural environment (Milner-Gulland et al., 2014; Woodhouse et al., 2015; Woodhouse and McCabe, 2018; WWF, n.d.) As recognition of the challenge to human development posed by climate change has grown links between sustainable development have been increasingly drawn with wellbeing, and the wellbeing economy approach makes explicit links between human wellbeing, the environment and climate change (Aguilar, n.d.; Janoo, 2017; OECD, 2019).

The concept of Wellbeing Economies has gained growing popularity (McGregor and Pouw, 2017), defined by the OECD as the “capacity to create a virtuous circle in which citizen’s well-being drives economic prosperity, stability and resilience, and vice-versa, that those good macroeconomic outcomes allow to sustain well-being investments over time” (Gurria, 2019) The Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) was established in 2018 (WEAll, 2022b), and subsequently supported formation of the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo), hosted by the Scottish Government. In 2023 it had six member governments: Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, Wales, Finland and Canada (WEAll, 2022a).

**What do we mean by wellbeing?**

Wellbeing is not an easy concept to define in detail, and can feel elusive and slippery. Our understanding of wellbeing – what it is, how it is produced, and how it might be expressed or assessed – are rooted in our understandings of the world and the language we use to communicate about it. These are inevitably influenced by our personalities, culture, life histories, and relationships, as well as our circumstances and the wider context in which we live.

It doesn’t help that there is a range of terms in use (wellbeing, happiness, Quality of Life, flourishing) that are used in different ways and often inter-changeably, or in different ways, sometimes within the same discourse and even the same document (Galloway et al., 2005, p. 14; Scott, 2012, p. 36). Unpacking the terms is important for analysis and policy usage. Some of these variations in the discourse reflect different views of the world, human nature, and
human society, the different cultures and faiths and moral frameworks that people subscribe to. Others the academic disciplines and contexts in which writers are working, and the focus of specific research. Some reflect the purpose to which the concept of wellbeing is being put. Others emphasise the practical need to have an overarching framework with the need to be able to contextualise it in the particular (Gough, 2003; McGregor, 2018; Nussbaum, 2011). As a consequence certain academics argue it is neither possible nor desirable to define it (Galloway et al., 2005, p. 11). Others conclude that the terms wellbeing and Quality of Life describe a field of associated ideas, rather than a single concept (Veenhoven, 2012; White, 2014a, p. 4). This is a useful approach to take when analysing wellbeing and is adopted in this paper.

However, when applied to a policy objective, a certain level of definition is required. Moreover, as efforts have been made to assess or measure wellbeing, we have learnt more about what it is and how it is influenced, which have then led to an emerging, rather fuzzy, consensus about the concept’s varied meanings and how these might be deployed in policy and practice.

To exemplify this the New Economic Foundation (NEF) definition of personal human wellbeing from 2011 is a good place to start. Their work on wellbeing has been influential in the UK. They suggested wellbeing is the:

extent to which people experience happiness and satisfaction, and are functioning well (Abdallah et al., 2011, p. 2).

In the same paper they go on to associate wellbeing with the term flourishing, another word that appears in much writing about wellbeing:

people are ‘flourishing’ when they are functioning well in their interactions with the world and experience positive feelings as a result (Abdallah et al., 2011, p. 2).

The paper describes what a flourishing life would involve:

A flourishing life involves good relationships, autonomy, competence and a sense of purpose, as well as feelings of happiness and satisfaction (Abdallah et al., 2011, p. 2).

This example shows both how the definition can shift as it is described, but also how it quickly becomes multi-faceted. Here wellbeing and flourishing are both used to describe a situation of happiness, satisfaction and functioning well. They may be different terms used to describe the same concept, although flourishing may be used as a more general term, specifically including good relationships, a sense of personal competence, autonomy and purpose. We don’t know, and it is not clear. It may not matter very much to be precise, but rather to capture the essential elements.

Even with such an extensive definition from NEF it omits explicit reference to important factors that other interpretations highlight as constitutive of wellbeing, including economic prosperity (or at least the meeting of basic physical needs), physical security and health values and meaning (White and Abeyasekera, 2014). It is focused on the individual, though clearly one that interacts with others and for whom relationships with others are an important contributing factor to wellbeing or illbeing. It does not explicitly discuss culture, faith and spirituality which influence how individuals frame and perceive “relationships, autonomy ... and a sense of purpose” and their very wellbeing (Deneulin and McGregor, 2009; Narayan et
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al., 2000a; Thin, 2018, 2012; White, 2017b, 2017c). While not explicit, these factors are not incompatible with the NEF exposition, and can be seen as implicit.

A broad interpretation of wellbeing would look something like the following:

Personal human wellbeing is the extent to which people experience happiness and satisfaction and are functioning well. Wellbeing is experienced in a flourishing life which involves economic security and prosperity; physical security; good health; good relationships near and far; personal autonomy, competence, agency; a sense of purpose, as well as of being valued and able (but not required) to practice your culture and faith. Underpinning these are the enjoyment of human, social, economic and political rights and a sustainable relationship with the environment and future generations (Source: NEF and White, adapted by author).

Much of what we understand about wellbeing has come from philosophical explorations of what it means to have a state of positive wellbeing, and attempts to assess or measure it. Typically writing on wellbeing makes reference to Greek philosophy and particularly the work of Aristippus, Plato and Aristotle and their identification of two different but complementary types of wellbeing – hedonism and eudaimonism (Bache and Scott, 2018, pp. 8–14; Ryan and Deci, 2001, pp. 144–7).

These two strands have been hugely influential in policy-related thinking about wellbeing. “Hedonic” wellbeing focuses on “happiness” or “subjective wellbeing” and is seen as more temporary and ephemeral, but a key element and indicator of wellbeing. “Eudemonic” wellbeing, is often referred to as “Wellbeing” or “Flourishing”, and is associated with a sense of living life with purpose and achieving one’s potential (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989). White described hedonic and eudemonic as respectively: “doing well, feeling good; doing good, feeling well” (White, 2009, p. 3). There is significant use of the hedonic versus eudemonic division in the wellbeing literature (Taylor, 2015).

Academic research in the field of psychology during the 1980s and 1990s increasingly validated the collection and analysis of self-reported assessments of wellbeing as a source of information to rival the established proxy indicators of income and wealth. Work by Diener made a particular contribution to this field (Biswas-Diener et al., 2005; Biswas-Diener and Diener, 2001; Diener, 1985, 1984; Diener et al., 2018, 2016; Diener and Diener, 1995; Diener and Suh, 1997). This work led to the identification of three broad types of subjective wellbeing: feelings (affect such as happy or sad in the moment), evaluations of an individual’s satisfaction with their life overall, and finally an individual’s sense of purpose or that life is worthwhile (often referred to as eudaimonia) (Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012; OECD, 2013). Diener distinguished the first two types (affect and life satisfaction) as subjective wellbeing, and set aside eudemonic wellbeing (Diener et al., 2018). Ryan and Sapps took a similar view (Ryan and Sapps, 2007). All four are routinely in use, for example in the quarterly data collection exercises by the UK Government (ONS, 2018a). While making this distinction it is important to emphasise that they are inter-related. Indeed, Ryan and Deci argued in 2001 that “well-being is probably best conceived as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes aspects of both the hedonic and eudemonic conceptions of well-being” (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p. 148).

The academic work on subjective wellbeing concluded that people experience affect (positive and negative emotions) and life satisfaction differently, and they are influenced by different factors. In general people across the world tend to have positive affect balances (i.e.,
experience more positive than negative emotions) but are less satisfied with their lives. There are a number of hypotheses put forward to explain these differences, but essentially they conclude that “human happiness is not just in our heads or genes but is also influenced by personal and societal circumstances ... people obviously do not adapt to all circumstances, and practitioners and policy makers need to understand that societal and personal circumstances can have a significant influence on people’s well-being” (Diener et al., 2018, pp. 167–169). The efforts by the World Happiness Report to explain life-evaluations through a statistical analysis of such circumstances supports this view (Helliwell et al., 2021).

The best-known example of the subjective wellbeing approach is perhaps the World Happiness Report, launched in 2012. Intended to inform the UN High-Level Meeting on Well-Being and Happiness, it followed a Bhutanese Resolution to the UN in June 2011 calling on national governments to give more emphasis to wellbeing and happiness (Helliwell et al., 2020, p. 1). The report has been produced almost annually since then. It is led by three prominent academics: Jeffrey Sachs, John Helliwell and Richard Layard, who came together to encourage policy makers to take “happiness seriously” by presenting the existing evidence on global happiness and the implications for policy (Helliwell et al., 2012, p. 6). The WHR makes use of the Gallup polls for its source of data, the Gallup polls being one of two sets of multi-country data on subjective wellbeing. In line with Diener, the World Happiness Report uses life-evaluation, positive affect and negative affect as its key measures of happiness.

Some academics on international development critiqued proposals to use subjective wellbeing or happiness as the measure of societal progress at a macro-level, expressing concerns about the validity and reliability of such measures, potentially weak links between subjective assessments of happiness and external conditions, and concerns over the policy implications (Stewart, 2014; Stewart et al., 2018a). The championing of happiness as “the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence” (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2012, p. 7) caused significant concern in some quarters (Stewart et al., 2018a). However, it is rare that happiness – in the sense of positive affect or life evaluation - is proposed as the only indicator.

Stewart and Austin have been prominent critics of a singular and simplistic use of subjective wellbeing as a measure of human progress (Austin, 2016; Stewart, 2014). They provide a valuable caution to some of the enthusiasm associated with subjective wellbeing, pointing to methodological problems of measurement and comparisons over time and space. Deaton echoed the methodological concerns, finding they can have a more significant effect on responses than major external events (Deaton, 2012). Problems in translation and different interpretations due to culture, may all influence answers and limit comparability between surveys and limit internal reliability and validity. Additionally, evidence suggests self-reports can lack precision because people experience, identify and name experiences differently, and ignore or deny some emotions (Land et al., 2012, pp. 7–8 citing Diener’s critique of self-reports). Perhaps more profoundly problematic, personal factors (personality, sex, education, culture, expectations and life experience) influence how different people respond to the same “objective” conditions (Land et al., 2012, pp. 7–8). Time of day, time of year, and time of life (age) also influence responses to happiness questions (Stewart et al., 2018a, p. 6). The tendency of people to adapt after a positive or negative experience or event so as to return to a wellbeing equilibrium, and more generally to adapt to conditions by either lowering or raising their expectations, has been observed (Deaton, 2012; Stewart, 2014, pp. 8–10). In
Stewart’s view these methodological problems may prove insuperable (Stewart, 2014, p. 296).

Such charges are strongly contested by advocates of subjective wellbeing. Diener et al in their review of global data on affect and life satisfaction suggest affect and life satisfaction evaluations respond to different elements of life and have different characteristics. Life satisfaction seems to respond to both internal and external factors and they question the idea that people consistently adapt to externalities or return to an internal set-point whatever the circumstances (Diener et al., 2018). The World Happiness Reports have argued for a significant correlation between self-reported happiness and objective conditions, and they have found evidence that culture of birth does not predetermine reported levels of happiness – i.e., people’s moral and cultural reference points can change with time and circumstances (Helliwell et al., 2021). Easterlin found that adaptation and a return to a personal “set-point” after significant life events was stronger for pecuniary changes than non-pecuniary ones, suggesting that subjective wellbeing can adjust in response to changes in people’s lives (Easterlin, 2003). The OECD concluded that while there are plenty of reasons to be cautious about subjective wellbeing data, when gathered using a rigorous and sound methodology it can be valid and reliable, and certainly as reliable as objective data (OECD, 2013). Indeed, we should be careful not to assume objective data is unproblematic and inherently any more reliable or valid. A sensitive, knowledgeable, honest and triangulated use of a range of data is most likely to lead to good analysis, policy and decisions.

In fact, Stewart et al did not reject subjective wellbeing completely. Rather they objected to the proposal by some of the more enthusiastic champions of subjective wellbeing or happiness to use it as the sole measure of human progress. Austin has raised similar concerns, raising the spectre of the “hegemony of happiness” (Austin, 2016). These critics are concerned that a focus on happiness as a policy objective and measure of progress could reduce pressure for objective change and produce pernicious policies, focused on making people happy with their lot rather than agitating to improve it. The “main effort needs to be devoted to eliminating the conditions giving rise to poverty, not to making it acceptable” (Stewart, 2014, p. 302). Other writers have been concerned about the policy implications of a focus on the individual, fearing this will, for example, put the onus on people with disabilities rather than on society to create an inclusive environment (Edwards and Imrie, 2008).

Stewart warned that subjective wellbeing might supplant or undermine the gains made by the basic needs and capabilities approaches, leading to a partial and individualised approach that fails to take account of power and structures (Stewart, 2014). Wellbeing is often cast within a neoliberal paradigm where wellbeing is an individual’s responsibility and is acquired through market-based relationships which obscure and hide structures of power that influence and constrain individual wellbeing (Bache and Scott, 2018; White, 2017a).

People living in materially poverty often report higher levels of subjective wellbeing than would be expected if we (i.e., others) only assessed their objective conditions. As one of the motivations for a wellbeing approach is to focus not just on deficits, but to capture people in the round, this is not surprising. Indeed, it is noticeable for anyone who has spent time with materially poor communities that there is plenty of satisfaction and even joy (Gough et al., 2007, p. 3). The wellbeing approach attempts to capture this in its positive orientation (White, 2010b). This may lead to an understatement of their material poverty when using a wellbeing approach. This is a risk of a wellbeing approach – or at least one that relies solely on subjective wellbeing - and one that needs to be acknowledged. However, the approach does not
necessarily seek to underplay material conditions, but rather acknowledge the important non-material aspects of life. In doing so it acknowledges that people living in poverty do have strengths, assets and capacities and good things. It seeks to recognise and capitalise on these. Indeed, as Gough et al point out, life would be unbearable for millions around the world if life was only about poverty and need (Gough et al., 2006).

Indeed, Stewart et al do accept subjective wellbeing can play a complementary role alongside other data – concerned both with material or objective conditions and with factors beyond the individual whether they are relationships or structural factors (Stewart et al., 2018a). This was the position taken by the Sarkozy Commission (Stiglitz et al., 2009). In most cases a hybrid approach is used and argued for, balancing the strengths and weaknesses of the different data sources against each other to provide a holistic and balanced assessment (OECD, 2013; Stiglitz et al., 2009; Thin, 2020, 2018; Veenhoven, 2010). Even the iconic Bhutanese Gross Happiness Index is in fact a composite index of primarily objective data, belaying the names emphasis on subjective wellbeing (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016). As understanding has grown the focus on an individual delinked from their social context has been largely rejected in favour of an understanding of wellbeing as relational, constructed and reconstructed by individuals within relationships and social constructs (Helliwell and Ankin, 2018; Thin, 2020). In the international development sector this seems particularly true, wellbeing assessments being based on a mixture of objective and subjective indicators, assessed through objective and subjective assessments, and that includes examination of relationships and context.

Users of a hedonic interpretation of wellbeing have tended to emphasise measurements that focus on individual perceptions, while those in the eudemonic tradition have tended to use a broader range of objective and subjective indicators (Bache and Scott, 2018, p. 15). Much of the wellbeing writing specifically focused on international development and subsequent work by international development NGOs has tended to use the eudemonic interpretation of wellbeing (Gough, 2004; McGregor, 2004; Norton and Sumner, 2012; White, 2017b; White and Abeyasekera, 2014).

One of the most significant explorations of wellbeing in the context of international development to date has been the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) research programme at the University of Bath (Gough et al., 2006) between 2002 and 2009 and the subsequent Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways programme (2010 – 2014) (White, 2010a). The WeD programme, funded by the ESRC and DFID, worked across three disciplines (Economics and International Development, Social and Policy Sciences, and Psychology) with the aim of better understanding the social and cultural construction of well-being in poorer countries (Gough, 2003, p. 22). This programme sought to draw together a range of relevant strands of international development thinking into one coherent approach to wellbeing, as well as testing whether wellbeing provided a useful concept for international development policy and practice. The work continued to be developed after the programme completed in a series of writings by members of the programme, most notably McGregor (Joseph and McGregor, 2020; McGregor, 2018; McGregor et al., 2015b; McGregor and Pouw, 2017), Copestake

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4 Similarly, the iconic Gross National Happiness Index, popularly associated with the idea of using happiness as the measure of national progress, when turned into a policy tool became a multi-factor index of nine domains, only one of which is subjective wellbeing. These domains include living standards, health, education, and community relations (OPHI, nd). The list is strikingly similar to many of the domain sets identified in Chapter 2.
(Copestake et al., 2019b), Camfield (Camfield, 2014; Copestake and Camfield, 2009; McGregor et al., 2015a) and White (White, 2018, 2017b; White and Abeyasekera, 2014).

Drawing on Human Needs Theory and the Human Capabilities approach developed by Sen the WeD programme aimed to elaborate an approach to understanding and assessing wellbeing which would be both universal enough to work as a general framework but sufficiently open to the local, personal, contextual and cultural differences to wellbeing in different places (Gough, 2004; Gough et al., 2007). It also had a clear political agenda, aiming to ensure this would support “an emancipatory and effective political programme for all women and men” (Gough, 2003, p. i)

This tension between the universal and the local is a recurring theme in policy-oriented writing on wellbeing and international development – how to ensure that approaches are universal enough to be useful to policy-makers and practitioners and flexible and at the same time open enough to be true to the person-centred essence of wellbeing and it’s recognition that wellbeing is personal, contextual and dynamic (McGregor, 2018, 2004). Sen famously refused to develop a list of capabilities or wellbeing domains, suggesting this would impose one set of personally and contextually specific domains on others (McGregor and Gough, 2007, p. 12). This approach was rejected by Nussbaum, working within the human capabilities field, who argued policy and practice demanded some guidance, and it was possible to have a generic list that was sufficiently flexible to respond to local realities and interpretations (Gough, 2003; Nussbaum, 2011). The WeD programme argued they found a way to bridge these “thick” and “thin” approaches, using the Human Needs approach, providing an approach relevant to both policy and practice, and individuals’ own interpretations of wellbeing, and that promoted greater participation and power for women and men living in poverty rather than a technocratic tool that generated better information but no rebalancing of power (McGregor et al., 2009).

The WeD programme developed a framework for understanding and assessing wellbeing that relied on both objective and subjective data, recognising the psychological and cognitive as well as material aspects of poverty; used participatory methods where appropriate, facilitating communities and their members to articulate their own understandings of wellbeing and priority drivers of it (Gough et al., 2006). The approach understood wellbeing as having a number of inter-related domains, and saw people as fundamentally social in nature. It proposed a mode of wellbeing that incorporated three core dimensions: subjective, objective and relational, and a set of domains or more specific factors that influence human wellbeing. These were considered universal, but were expected to be adapted and prioritised in individual wellbeing assessments by the subjects, reflecting their own understandings and priorities (Boarini et al., 2014; McGregor et al., 2015b). Personal agency and autonomy (defined as feeling personal value and interest with respect to what one does) is regarded as constitutive of individual wellbeing (Ryan and Sapps, 2007, p. 76). Culture and moral frameworks, which are derived from social interaction, inform an individual’s assessments of what they wish to do and be. At the same time it is recognised that contextual factors from culture to government policy to material conditions influence the choices that are available and can be taken by an individual, and that individual agency is mediated by these contextual and structural factors (McGregor and Sumner, 2010). By taking this multi-dimensional approach to wellbeing the WeD team pivoted away from a hedonic approach to wellbeing, focusing rather on an eudemonic approach as championed by Ryan and Deci (Ryan and Deci,
This approach has been influential with official aid institutions (Norton and Sumner, 2012) and with international development NGOs.

Bridging universal frameworks with local realities is problematic in practice (McGregor, 2018). While policy and practical realities may demand the formulation of frameworks and lists, as Sen emphasised, the elaboration of such lists can quickly become normative and prescriptive, unconsciously or consciously rooted in particular socioeconomic and political contexts, moral frameworks and faith traditions. While the consensus suggests there is a broad list of wellbeing influencers (Austin, 2020) how these are perceived and prioritised varies and a wellbeing approach should address this. Individuals or organisations may take a view on what should or should not contribute to an individual’s wellbeing. For example one informant noted that poorer households, on gaining more income, may spend that income on larger TVs or more alcohol rather than on education – and the informant considered this a bad thing (Interviewee I24, 2019). It may be that certain items (chocolate spread, for example) are excluded from food distributions because they are not considered a priority. (Author’s experience.) It may be that wellbeing drifts into telling people what they can or should do or be, rather than listening to what they prioritise or value. This would undermine the central element of a wellbeing approach – that it is person-centred, and would emphasise the power imbalance between the individual and the administrator. In this area wellbeing has to struggle with the same issue that human rights has – how to balance the rights of everyone, especially when they conflict.

There have been some attempts to define and assess communal wellbeing (Scott, 2012, pp. 29–33). The NEF did define “national well-being” as the “overall state of the nation in terms of environmental sustainability, social and economic factors and human well-being” (Abdallah et al., 2011). It is not however clear that there is a shared wellbeing distinct from the sum of our individual wellbeing that could be assessed or measured, and so assessment may simply be the aggregation of individual wellbeing.

However, the question of communal wellbeing does highlight the importance of relationships, community, and with it culture, moral norms and values, and religious faith. If we accept that the individuals are formed within social institutions, and evaluate their lives and happiness at least in part in relation to values derived from these institutions, then the role of relationships and moral values and norms has a significant constitutive influence on individual wellbeing (Thin, 2020). Relationships are considered by many as one of the most critical influences on wellbeing (Camfield et al., 2009, 2006; Helliwell et al., 2018a; Helliwell and Ankin, 2018; Layard, 2005; McGregor et al., 2009). Culture, by influencing an individual’s norms and values can have a significant role in assessments of happiness and life satisfaction (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016; Thin, 2018; White, 2006). For many people faith is a key element of culture, and thus has a major influence on wellbeing (Camfield, 2006; White et al., 2012a, 2010; White and Devine, 2013). Research suggests moral values and norms, including faith, religion and spirituality, play a significant role in the life and wellbeing of those international development is most interested in – those living in material poverty in the Global South (Biswas-Diener et al., 2005; Biswas-Diener and Diener, 2001; Marshall and Saanen, 2007; Narayan et al., 2000a, 2000b; Narayan and Petesch, 2002; White, 2012, 2006; White et al., 2010).

This can be a challenge for those in international development NGOs who come from a formally secular environment. In such an environment faith and religion are factors for the private sphere of life. When they enter the public sphere, they need to be managed. And yet,
for many in the Global South living in communities that are religious, faith may be quite unremarkable, embedded in life. This is not to say that they are not socially constructed (White et al., 2010), but that in engaging with faith and religion aid actors may be starting from quite different points and this may affect our ability to see and understand the role of faith and religion (White et al., 2012a; White and Devine, 2013).

Most wellbeing domain lists do in fact make some reference to values, morals, faith, religion or spirituality. Cummin’s list includes “spiritual well-being” (Cummins, 1996), Shalock and Verdugo’s list includes “personal values” (Shalock and Verdugo, 2002), and White and Jha’s list includes “values and meanings” (White and Abeyasekera, 2014). Ranis et al identified spirituality as an element of wellbeing but excluded it from their final list as they considered it too difficult to assess (Ranis et al., 2006). An assessment of life satisfaction and reported happiness will inevitably make reference to the values of the individual, by what we regard as right or wrong, good or bad (Thin, 2018). This is particularly so if we are evaluating whether what we do is “worthwhile”, as the UK’s ONS survey asks (ONS, 2016). Indeed, there are claims that religious people are happier than non-religious (Bingham, 2016). These claims are often repeated by those who practice a religion (Interviewee I5, 2019).

The importance of relationships, culture and faith have implications for how we seek to promote wellbeing, and how we assess it. In terms of policy and action, it suggests that the focus of attention should be on the family and community as much as the individual; that interventions should aim to encourage, foster and sustain positive relationships where possible through their aims and the processes they use; that faith and the practice of religions should be recognised and facilitated and that recognition needs to be given to the constitutive role of culture, morals and faith in individual wellbeing, and how these vary over space and time.

The Promises of Wellbeing

As suggested above, the great interest in wellbeing is not simply due to suggestions that wellbeing may be a more complete and valid indicator of human development than economic measures. In fact, wellbeing as a concept carries a great weight of expectation (McGregor, 2007). Bache and Scott, drawing on White (2015), cited “four faces” of the discussion on wellbeing (Bache and Scott, 2018, p. 15).

- A macro-approach to widen the scope of government beyond GDP as a marker of progress
- A focus on personal behaviour
- A focus on life satisfaction or subjective wellbeing as a tool to evaluate policy
- A fundamental challenge to dominant models of economic and political governance.

This unpacking of the discourse is valuable, highlighting the variety of agendas and associated ideas in play when wellbeing is discussed. It also helps to highlight the association the term has for many people, not least within international development, with a radical agenda for social, political and economic change. We should not forget that these four faces are interlinked. A concern with “beyond GDP” is often associated with a challenge to models of economic and political governance. For practitioners this can lead to efforts to improve how we evaluate policy and measure progress. Much of the popular emphasis on “health and wellbeing” deals with it as a personal level, but also often links to ideas that challenge current models of political and economic life (such as circular and wellbeing economies, and an interest in spiritualism).
These motivations can be summarised as the promises of a wellbeing approach:

- Better information and practice, reflecting and responding to the whole person
- Greater voice and influence (power) of those at the sharp-end of “development”
- An alternative conception of human development, in shorthand ‘Beyond GDP’.

If we could know better, we could do better. One of wellbeing’s promises is that better information will lead to better choices and practice (McGregor et al., 2009). The critique of GDP and similar measures was not new in the 1990s. Already by the 2000s there were alternatives proposed such as the Quality of Life, the Human Needs Approach, the Capabilities approach, and the Human Development Index (Stewart et al., 2018b). These measures tended to focus on objective measures at either collective or individual levels (income, education, healthy years of life, etc).

The most well-known and widely used of these has been the Human Development Index (HDI). Published annually since 1991 (UNDP, 2020) it continues to provide an alternative view to the World Bank’s annual World Development Report, published since 1978. The index combines three national level statistics: income, life expectancy and education. Human development was defined by the United Nation’s Development Programme (UNDP) as “a process of enlarging people’s choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect” (Ranis et al., 2006, p. 2 citing UNDP 1990). The HDI relies solely on “objective” data. The HDI has been critiqued and refined over time, and several complementary indices produced. The Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index is possibly the most well-known (Alkire, 2018; Alkire and Foster, 2011). Hailed as a major step forward in the assessment of human development at a national level, helping to compare countries and guide policy decisions, it has achieved dominance as the indicator of human development in international development circles. However, many writers argued that these measures can and should be improved upon (Ranis et al., 2006). As indicated above, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the custodian of the HDI, appears to agree and has introduced a number of additional indexes although none have displaced the HDI as the lead index.

Subjective wellbeing or happiness emerged as a more distinct alternative during the 1990s (Helliwell, 2020). This offered the opportunity to combine and complement more traditional metrics with a new set that added additional, useful information, and allowed for a more diverse and inclusive assessment about what was important for human wellbeing, reframed in a more holistic, dynamic, relational, and culturally sensitive way. We would move away from the concept of people as “homoeconomicus” (McGregor, 2004 citing Douglas and Ney (1998)).

As suggested above, this wasn’t just about better information, however. This approach also gave voice and direction to long-standing concerns and arguably represents an evolution of existing participatory and person-centred approaches (Ramirez, 2021). A wellbeing approach inherently – and valuably - pushes us towards subjective measures - to ask people about their views on their wellbeing, and by extension their own ideas about what is a good life. They are after all the experts on their own wellbeing. Certainly this is what attracts some people to it.

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5 Measured as: life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling and mean years of schooling, and GNI per capita at purchasing parity.
and gives it the promise of a more “democratic” measure of wellbeing (White and Abeyasekera, 2014, p. 91).

For some wellbeing is inherently aligned with the micro, person-centred and participatory approaches to international development common within NGOs (White and Abeyasekera, 2014). In some ways it can be seen as an evolution. It offers a way to link the granular, local, grounded participatory development endeavour which seen as valid but distinct from, and too “thick” to incorporate into, policy-making, to one that was “slim” enough to directly input into policymaking. In addition, it is political and democratic (White and Abeyasekera, 2014, pp. 90–91). The participatory development movement was not just – or primarily – technical. Rather it was political – championing a view that international development was too much in the hands of experts grounded in a particular worldview, and that a rebalancing of power was required (Chambers, 1983).

For practitioners, wellbeing represents an opportunity to find new ways to frame development goals and assess progress towards them. To move beyond “mechanistic” approaches to monitoring and evaluation (typically the logframe is identified) that insufficiently capture the important aspects of people’s lives. Green describes the “’insidious creep’ of ever-more mechanistic methodologies (RCTs) and procedures (logframes)” (Green, 2019). It also offers a challenge to neoliberal economic and political models of development (Practical Action, 2012a, p. 10). It can be a tool for personal and community change. As a case management tool for people in HIV/AIDS programmes it can be a way to regularly assess and act on your own health and wellbeing (Interview I1, 2019). It is also seen as a tool for community change (Tearfund, 2016a).

Putting people at the centre, giving prominence to their self-reported assessments, and taking a positive and holistic approach to wellbeing are arguably the distinctive elements of a wellbeing approach, underpinning the two core promises of the approach: better information and of putting people’s own perspectives at the centre of policy and practice (Chambers, 2014, 1994; White, 2014a). A focus on wellbeing therefore offers the promise of itself being a tool for change, of challenging existing power structures, of being a force for greater participation, even democratisation. According to Scott, 2012: “Participatory democracy is central to notions of wellbeing” (Scott, 2012, p. 9). By focussing on the person and seeking to empower “people to articulate their own views on their own wellbeing” (Thin, 2018) we enable people to voice their opinions and affect the policies and practices that influence their wellbeing.

The WeD programme suggested one approach to balancing the universal with the local would be to use a standardised dimension and domain list, but contextualising it through consultations in each specific place that they are deployed (McGregor et al., 2015b; Milner-Gulland et al., 2014; Solis et al., 2023). They recommended use of a mixed methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative methods, and participatory tools, to identify local understandings of wellbeing (Camfield and Roelen, 2015; Roelen and Camfield, 2013; White and Petit, 2004). The process of developing indicators in a consultative manner can, some argue, open new spaces for democratic engagement (Hall and Rickard, 2013, p. 11; Scott, 2012).

Participatory research approaches offers a variety of methods and tools to generate data with people, which is particularly relevant to poverty and wellbeing research (Camfield and Roelen, 2015; White and Petit, 2004). According to Gough et al, a key advantage of participatory
methodologies is that they are “experience-near” in terms of their participant/respondents: they are able to reflect more closely the knowledge and worldview of people themselves than more formal, abstract, or “scientific” approaches (Gough et al., 2006, p. 27). The results of some participatory research contributed to our understanding of how people living in poverty experience it and what is important to them, including the Voices of the Poor research (Copestake and Camfield, 2009; Narayan et al., 2000a). These were explored in the WeD programme (White and Petit, 2004). A well-established participatory method (Wealth Ranking) has been reworked as Wellbeing Ranking (Rowley, 2014).

However, so-called participatory processes have been heavily criticised for being anything but participatory, to have often descended into formulaic exercises that use certain methods and tools in ways that are expert-led and do not in any meaningful way shift power (Brock and McGee, 2002; Cleaver, 1999; Eyben and Ladbury, 1995). Much has been written about the multiple meanings of the term, and its attractiveness as a “warmly persuasive word” (Williams, 1976 cited by Nelson and Wright, 1995). Critics have argued it has been more theory than practice, fine words hiding continued aid organisation control of projects (Lane, 1995). Too often it is reduced the use of data collection tools to gather information, and a purely functional use of participatory methods allows the practice of “participation” to coexist without a shift in power (Marsden, 2004). Eyben and Ladbury suggested that the desire for participation is often more driven by the “normative wish-fulfilment” of “some aid workers” than the interests of community members (Eyben and Ladbury, 1995, p. 194). They argued that participation was valuable and important but not a “one size fits all” solution to every problem. Nelson and Wright stressed the importance of understanding communities as heterogenous, containing power relationships which participatory processes can obscure or fall victim to (Nelson and Wright, 1995).

In response to these critiques and the perceived misuse of the term, the concept of participation has been unpacked, most famously by Arnstein in her “ladder of participation” in to steps from consultation (hardly participation at all) to the transfer of decision-making power (Arnstein, 1969, 2019; Rocha, 1997). I use this distinction in this thesis when considering the promise of democratisation or shifting power.

As the participatory movement is linked to the new interest in wellbeing, and they share similar promises – better information and practice, greater democratisation of power, and alternative views of development – its strengths and weaknesses are relevant to the pursuit of wellbeing. Indeed, much of the interest in wellbeing may stem from the failure of the participatory movement to achieve its more profound aims (McGregor et al., 2015b), seeking to find new ways to achieve the same goals. The implication and warning for the “wellbeing movement” is that it risks falling prey to a similar trap. The uncritical and unconscious replication of conceptions of wellbeing grounded in the Global North, and the tendency to prioritise “expert” opinions and technical tools over self-reported assessments may undermine wellbeing’s promise of shifting power.

One of the leading lights of the participatory development movement, Robert Chambers, has strongly promoted ideas of wellbeing (and illbeing) – noticeably as part of the Voices of the Poor team and in his writing on “responsible wellbeing” (Chambers, 1994). The Voices of the Poor project was a landmark research programme, providing a rare source of information and a key intervention in the validation of both the relevance and the need for a more holistic view of wellbeing and illbeing, that takes account of subjective, cultural and relational factors alongside material conditions (Narayan et al., 2000a). Subsequently Chambers proposed
responsible wellbeing as a central concept for the development agenda. He described it as a “pedagogy of the non-oppressed”, referencing Paolo Freire (Freire, 2017), suggesting that those with power and wealth have responsibilities to “experience being better off with less” so that those without can be more equal (Blackmore, 2009; Chambers, 1994; Scott-Villiers, 2004). In doing so Chambers attempted to address one of the principal critiques of wellbeing – that a focus only on the individual ignores context and structural factors such as power and inequality that enable or constrain individual wellbeing.

Participatory development practices have often focused on “process” – how things are done and thus who is included or excluded. How things are done matters in another way. Ramirez, in her study of cash transfer programmes in Mexico, shows how people are treated in institutional processes and their interactions with staff impacts on their sense of dignity and self-worth – and thus wellbeing. While the technical details of the service may be adequate, if they are treated with disdain or disrespect it may contribute to their wellbeing in negative ways (Ramirez, 2021). While obvious when considered through the lens of a person-centred, wellbeing approach to services, this is an aspect of international development policy and practice that is often overlooked.

A person-centred approach recognises these psychological and cognitive aspects of illbeing and wellbeing (Boarini et al., 2014; Narayan et al., 2000a, 2000b; Narayan and Petesch, 2002). They need to be more consistently considered in the design and implementation of policy and practice.

At a broader, societal level the wellbeing agenda has links with economic and political models such as steady-state, postgrowth economics and some versions of Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien that seek to challenge mainstream neoliberal economic and political orthodoxies (Buchs and Koch, 2017; Friz and Koch, 2014; Waldmueller and Rodriguez, 2019). For some it is associated with a set of ideas related to sustainable development and climate change responses that challenge not only the use of GDP per capita as a measure of human development but also of perpetual economic growth within what is considered an individualistic, neo-liberal capitalist political-economy which has caused much of the inequality, environmental degradation and climate change that we are currently observing (Scott, 2012). Many of those interested in wellbeing see it as an alternative, putting human satisfaction and wellbeing ahead of economic growth, equality and equity above inequality across generations and places. (Abdallah and Quick, n.d.; Dalziel et al., 2018; Friz and Koch, 2014)

As such it promises radical change (McGregor, 2007). Seaford argued that subjective wellbeing indicators could come to play a useful role in policy making (Seaford, 2013), and that flourishing (rather than wellbeing or happiness) offered a valuable policy objective and measure that politicians could deliberately use to promote progressive social policy (Seaford, 2018). The creation of the Wellbeing Economies Alliance and commitment by a range of governments to wellbeing economies (rather than economies focused solely on economic growth without consideration to human or planetary wellbeing) demonstrates that some governments see the need for deliberate, public efforts to change course (Sturgeon, 2019; WEALL, 2022b, 2022a).

In the context of alternative visions of human development, another promise, perhaps a subset of the third identified above, has been the opportunity for faith-based organisations to represent and champion their own interpretations of human development and progress in a formally secular world (Atherton et al., 2011; Gordon, 2021; Theos et al., 2010b). This research does not suggest that faith-based organisations are more likely to embrace wellbeing than secular ones, but certainly wellbeing has been seen providing space for their
interpretations of human development and a space for faith in life (SCIAF, 2019a; Tearfund, 2016a).

Wellbeing as a concept is both attractive and functional. It meets key requirements for a successful policy concept. Wellbeing as a concept has an inherent appeal, it has a feelgood factor, is positive and inclusive, and has a “positive charge” (White, 2014a, p. 6) - shifting the focus from “the default negative orientation of many social and development programmes, which emphasize deficiency and what people lack ... [to] their strengths or hopes” (White, 2014a, p. 6). As wellbeing is an issue for everybody it can break down the barriers between the providers and the recipients of aid, and overcome old prejudices and stigmas by reframing the work and associated ideas (White, 2014a, p. 6). Thin agrees that a wellbeing approach can and should be “aspirational”, breaking with the normal “pathologism” of social sciences and its emphasis on deficits and problems, rather focussing on what helps people to “flourish” (Thin, 2020, p. 5). And it is ambiguous, open to interpretation and reinterpretation (Mosse, 2004, p. 663). It functions as a metaphor under which disparate individuals and groups can coalesce and make use of it (Mosse, 2005, p. 36).

Wellbeing’s Global Relevance

While wellbeing has been adopted as a global goal of development work, the relevance of wellbeing and subjective wellbeing to international development, and specifically to those living in severe material poverty, has been challenged (Interviewee I24, 2019). Is too Eurocentric6 to be relevant globally? Is wellbeing solely a preoccupation for those who are materially well off, irrelevant for those struggling to survive?

There is strong evidence that meeting immediate basic needs are the priority for those living in severe material poverty. There is evidence that income is a significant determinant of self-reported subjective wellbeing (SWB) (Helliwell et al., 2015, 2012; Smith et al., 2005; White and Abeyasekera, 2014). Diener, one of the principle researchers of subjective wellbeing, found that income is a strong determinant of reported SWB at the national level, and a moderate determinant at the individual level (Biswas-Diener and Diener, 2001). Poorer people tend to report lower levels of subjective wellbeing than wealthier ones. Researchers have found that increasing income and assets has the greatest impact on the wellbeing of poor people, although with progressively diminishing returns as people become wealthier (Helliwell et al., 2012, p. 5). (Also known as the Easterlin Paradox (Easterlin, 2005).) After a certain level of income (which is contextual) it seems that income and wealth are primarily important for coping with negative events in life (such as ill health or disability), and that other issues such as health, social standing and relationships become more important (Smith et al., 2005).

However, there is strong evidence that the importance of material wealth as the determinant of wellbeing declines sharply after a very low threshold, and other factors quickly matter as much if not more to an individual’s evaluation of their own wellbeing/illbeing (Narayan et al., 2000a, pp. 24–25). The World Happiness Report identifies health, the quality of social relationships, our place within our community, freedom of choice and political participation as key influencers of subjective wellbeing across populations (Helliwell et al., 2012).

The Voices of Poverty research concluded that poverty is multi-dimensional, these dimensions clustering around five themes: material wellbeing, bodily wellbeing, social

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6 Used here to include North America.
wellbeing, security, freedom of choice and action (Narayan et al., 2000a, p. 22). Poverty is experienced by people as illbeing and powerlessness. (Narayan et al., 2000a, pp. 1–3). Studies in Bangladesh as part of the WeD programme supported these findings, including the importance of relationships in the family and the community (Camfield et al., 2006; Copestake and Camfield, 2009). Research by Diener in India found that the poorest groups (slum dwellers, sex workers and pavement dwellers) reported lower levels of life satisfaction than the average for the community, but not as low as might be expected based on a simple index of income (Biswas-Diener and Diener, 2001). Being able to socialise, to enjoy family life, to do and be what we desire, to exercise agency and influence over our lives, are important elements in constituting wellbeing and exist even in conditions of extreme material poverty. 

Moral and cultural norms are also important - being able to live in line with cultural, moral and religious codes are important elements in one's sense of emotional and mental wellbeing. The Voices of the Poor study in 2000 found that for many people living in poverty religion “permeated people’s conception of living well” (Deneulin, 2021, p. 1). In one study Diener and Biswas-Diener (2001) found family, friends, morality, and food to be important positive non-material factors in people's life assessments. While they were objectively materially poor:

They believe they are good (moral) people, they are often religious (and religion has been shown to be associated with SWB) and, they have rewarding families (marriage is associated also). They have satisfactory social lives and enjoy their food. So the complete picture requires not just focus on the deficits of poverty and poor health but includes the positive aspects of respondents' lives (Biswas-Diener and Diener, 2001, p. 20).

So, while income or material wealth is crucially important for wellbeing, particularly for the poorest, it is not the only factor. Even amongst those individuals and groups experiencing the greatest material poverty other factors influence their wellbeing (Copestake and Camfield, 2009; Gough et al., 2006). Indeed, one interpretation of reported high levels of optimism in Africa has suggested it may be a coping strategy for high levels of poverty (Graham, 2006). There is little theory or empirical evidence to support the view that subjective aspects of wellbeing are only relevant after basic needs are met, except at such a low level of need satisfaction that life is threatened. Indeed, writers on Maslow suggest that a linear, stepped interpretation of Maslow’s theory is incorrect, and fails to recognise the author’s own more nuanced interpretation (Maslow, 1970; McLeod, 2018; Ryan and Sapps, 2007).

Cross-location and cross-cultural assessments also appear to have significant validity and reliability. The WeD and WPP research programmes concluded it was possible to assess individual wellbeing in different cultures and conditions, including those in the global South (Camfield et al., 2006; Copestake, 2011; Copestake and Camfield, 2009; White, 2013, 2012, 2006). Cross-national, cross-cultural research on SWB by Diener et al suggests that effect and life satisfaction scores can be assessed but are affected by internal and external factors, although in different ways (Diener et al., 2018). Reported levels of happiness vary over time at a national level, and between regions of the world (Helliwell et al., 2017). Interestingly immigrants and refugees appear to change their reported happiness levels, adapting to match those of the country they move to rather than reverting to the level of their place of origin (Helliwell et al., 2018b, p. 7).
There is therefore a clear case for the applying wellbeing in the Global South, supporting the notion of an inclusive, positively-charged approach. Further, there is a growing consensus on a set of dimensions and domains that influence human wellbeing (Cummins, 1996; Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012; Galloway et al., 2005; McGregor, 2015, 2006). (See below for an expanded discussion.) There appears sufficient commonality amongst us as members of the human race that wellbeing is relevant across cultures and contexts (Austin, 2020; Boarini et al., 2014; Graham, 2009) and an emerging consensus over the factors that influence it.

WAYS OF ASSESSING AND MEASURING SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

A general statement of wellbeing is adequate when used for personal purposes, and as a broad aim of public policy. But as wellbeing and Quality of Life move into policy and practice more precise definitions are required, along with the identification of the key factors that influence wellbeing. Assessment or measurement becomes important as those charged with increasing levels of wellbeing need ways to assess or measure changes in wellbeing and make and justify choices about priorities and resources. Wellbeing for whom? And in what form and quantity? In equal measure or with equality as the goal? Equality of what – resources, opportunities, outcomes? (Camden Giving, 2022) Knowing what factors promote or hinder wellbeing will help decide on the priority actions needed to raise wellbeing for different groups (Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012, p. 409).

Efforts to assess wellbeing have led to a host of different theoretical frameworks for Quality of Life and wellbeing. Some of the difference in approaches derive from the different purposes to which wellbeing is put: to provide a macro (national) measure of wellbeing, to support individual assessment and case-management, or to assess particular policies, interventions or projects. Some arises from choosing a hedonic or eudemonic approach. Some from the academic background of the researchers. Different purposes influence the choice of approach and lead to quite different methods and tools.

There are a large number of Quality of Life, wellbeing and human development assessment and measurement models and frameworks (Galloway et al., 2005; Lee et al., 2021). Indeed, new ones continue to be developed (Benjamin et al., 2021). In the mid-1990s Cummins already thought it necessary to put some order on the “chaos” of contemporary efforts to define and measure Quality of Life (Cummins, 1996). Dolan and Metcalfe in their 2006 overview of the available measures of subjective wellbeing for national government policymaking, identified three “accounts” of subjective wellbeing that are useful for policy-making data: objective lists, mental states (subjective wellbeing), and preference satisfaction (from economics) (Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012, p. 411). Dolan and Metcalfe argued that these three “accounts” were the only ones to meet three general conditions necessary to inform policymaking, being a) theoretically rigorous; b) policy relevant; and c) empirically robust (Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012, p. 410).

Their account tallies well with Cummins’ earlier study which differentiated between unitary, single-item approaches and those that focus on a set of domains (Cummins, 1996). Cummins argued that hedonic and evaluative definitions broadly correspond with unitary, single item approaches, flourishing with domain sets. This is similar to Farquhur’s typology of QoL frameworks as focusing on a global (unitary) assessment, on a domain set, or on domain subset (Cited by Galloway et al., 2005). It matches with the WeD programmes conclusions, and preference for a dimension and domain-set approach to wellbeing.
This is a useful starting point when considering ways to assess wellbeing, providing an organising principle for the large variety of assessment and measurement approaches that have been developed. I will complicate it a little further by adding a distinction between objective and subjective assessments; and by including participatory methods, as these are relevant to wellbeing and to international development respectively. It is worth noting that the distinction between global or unitary assessments and domain sets can be overdone as some unitary assessments are in fact composite measures, made up of component parts which when made explicit often resemble domain sets or lists. At the same time, they start at different points and respond to different priorities.

For those looking across the piece summary data (unitary, single-item statistics often organised to show trends) are very useful; for those engaged in practical work with people the greater detail of domain sets or lists can be much more useful. White aptly describes these different approaches as “slim and thick” (White, 2014a), suggesting that slim measures are attractive to policy makers and thick ones to practitioners. (See also (Gough, 2003).)

It is important to acknowledge the temptation to quantify indicators in order to provide this slim data, and the real challenges in doing so. Wellbeing assessments are often presented in numerical form. Usually these are in the form of responses rates, such as the World Happiness Report. In some cases, they are quantifications of composite indicators or responses against wellbeing or quality of life domain sets. While useful, quantification needs to be treated with care. Some aspects of wellbeing may not be obviously quantifiable, such as spirituality. More challenging, there are significant theoretical and methodological challenges to composite indicators (Ravallion, 2012; White and Abeyasekera, 2014). Finally, numbers can become divorced from their source, used, reused and abused. Quantifying data can be valid and reliable, but care needs to be taken in the generation, analysis and presentation of data.

Preference Satisfaction

Revealed preference satisfaction is the second type of “account” identified by Dolan and Metcalfe. It is usually associated with economics. I discuss it first because it is the dominant approach, and its principal indicator (GDP per capita) is the one that many proponents of wellbeing seek to displace. Economists have tended to argue that happiness cannot be directly measured but needs to be observed through individual choices – what people choose reveals what gives them greatest happiness. This preference satisfaction assumes that with increasing income people are more able to satisfy their preferences, and consequently increasing income is used as a proxy for increasing preference satisfaction. However, for the reasons cited above, much of the interest in wellbeing has been about how to move “beyond GDP” (Bleys, 2012).

Subjective Wellbeing

Self-reported assessments of happiness, evaluations of life satisfaction, and positive and negative affect are arguably the purest forms of single-item measures. These subjective wellbeing assessments ask individuals to say how happy they feel or how they evaluate their satisfaction with their life. The World Happiness Report uses two measures of happiness: “the ups and downs of daily emotions” and “an individual’s overall evaluation of life”. The reports refer to these as “affective” and “evaluative” happiness respectively (Helliwell et al., 2012, p. 6). The WHR has not identified a widespread measure of life purpose or eudaimonia (Helliwell et al., 2020, p. 16).
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There is a wide range of factors that can be considered in assessing wellbeing. In this approach the informant makes the choices involved in identifying the different factors that influence happiness and the complex calculations assessing their contributions to it to arrive at a single wellbeing assessment or score. The respondent accounts for individual preferences, makes the trade-offs between a range of different factors, and takes into account related contextual and cultural factors (Cummins, 1996, p. 304). They do much of the hard work. It also allows them to choose what matters, what doesn’t and how the combine in a final assessment.

There are now many examples of the regular collection, analysis and publication of such data. The UK Government’s Office of National Statistics asks respondents questions each quarter about their happiness, life satisfaction, the sense of purpose they have and the level of anxiety they feel (ONS, 2021, 2018b). At a global level the World Happiness Report uses existing surveys of national populations across the world to report annually on happiness at a national level, to identify trends and through a comparative analysis draw out conclusions on subjective wellbeing for policy-making (Helliwell et al., 2021). Many organisations seek to gauge staff wellbeing through surveys and feedback processes (CIPD, 2021).

The growing body of work has helped to deepen our understanding of self-reported wellbeing, its strengths and limitations, how it can be assessed or measured, and to what purposes it can be put. In addition, the large-scale comparative analysis of self-reported wellbeing at a national-level carried out by the World Happiness Reports on an annual basis suggests new areas of research and understanding.

Of particular interest are six key variables the WHR identifies as explaining self-reported levels of wellbeing at a national level: income (GDP per capita), the availability of social support from family or friends in times of trouble, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, the level of generosity people show through charitable donations, and the perceived absence of corruption. These six variables are calculated to explain around 75% of the results. There remains 25% which does not have an explanation (Helliwell et al., 2021, p. 20). Importantly, these variables exhibit significant cross-over with the domain-sets listed below, suggesting both additional empirical evidence for those lists and that others are yet to be identified or to be measured. The WHR analysis is limited by the data that is currently available. If and when additional data becomes available more factors may be identified.

COMPOSITE INDICATORS

Efforts to assess wellbeing are often tackled through the creation of composite indicators like the HDI. These are intended to provide quickly understandable summations of complex social phenomena for policy makers. The power of a single number rather than a dashboard of indicators was one of the reasons that led to the creation of the HDI (Hall, 2014).

Whereas SWB gets the respondent to do the work, composite indicators are defined by the researcher, identifying key contributory factors to wellbeing. This is usually done through using a mixture of theory and empirical study. Any collection data requires choices about what is to be collected or measured, and these choices will be based in a more or less articulated

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7 The increased ease of digital surveys due to the growth of suitable applications and the ubiquity of computers, tablets and phones, combined with lockdowns and remote working, led many organisations to survey staff and volunteers on a regular basis about their happiness and wellbeing.

8 The levels of self-reported happiness are generated through responses to a Cantril Ladder question on happiness, not through creation of a composite index. These explanatory factors have been identified and tested statistically to suggest they have explanatory power of the separately generated self-reports.
theory. Once the contributing factors are identified ways are identified to measure each item and to use them to calculate a single score through a set of mathematical calculations and weightings (See for example Ranis et al., 2006). Arguably the most successful of these composite indicators has been the Human Development Index (Ranis et al., 2006).

Such indicators are attractive for a number of reasons. They provide high level data for policy and decision-makers. Their apparent objectivity and basis in data is valued. Traidcraft were for example interested in the Inner Wellbeing model because they believed it would summarise wellbeing in one single number, from a credible data set, and that ultimately this would be accepted and convincing to government officials who made funding decisions (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). Informal feedback from these officials suggested this belief was correct (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018).

Composite indicators have had significant criticism. Their objectivity and meaningfulness have been challenged. The choice of key factors may have a poor basis in theory, and may be determined more by the availability of data than theoretical or empirical reasons (Ravallion, 2012). The data itself may be of variable or questionable quality. As a result they can provide misleading impressions of accuracy, and ultimately lead to misinterpretation and poor decisions (Ranis et al., 2006). The HDI has been critiqued as both lacking a theoretical basis (Ravallion, 2012), for being too reductionist (Ranis et al., 2006), and for offering little additional information over per capita income, as they are closely correlated (McGillivray, 1991). Boarini, Johansson and d’Ercole found that the additional of subjective assessments of wellbeing to per capita income does add additional explanatory power (Boarini et al., 2006).

The Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways research programme tested a possible composite indicator of wellbeing called “Inner Wellbeing” between 2010 and 2014 but rejected the resultant single index number in favour of a domain set (White et al., 2012c). Without a solid theoretical or empirical base, putting a number on wellbeing is fraught with problems. Indeed, some researcher question our current ability to do this in a meaningful way (Ramirez, 2021; White, 2014b).

**OBJECTIVE LISTS OR DOMAIN SETS**

The third account identified by Dolan and Metcalfe was Objective Lists. Objective lists identify a series of needs or factors said to influence wellbeing. The extent to which these are met is assessed, and the level of wellbeing judged accordingly. I prefer the term Domain Sets, used by Cummins and a wide range of others, to Objective Lists because increasingly lists have combined both objective and subjective items (wealth, health, and so on) and objective and subjective interpretations of them (See for example White, 2010b, p. 169). Domain sets are used either as a list of separate but related factors to be assessed individually, or they can form the basis of a composite indicator, with the results aggregated into a single metric. This is discussed in more depth below.

There are a large number of frameworks for the assessment or measurement of wellbeing and Quality of Life that use a domain set approach. These typically map out a series of domains such as health, income, education, and relationships, regarded as influencing an individual’s wellbeing. Examples include the Quality of Life frameworks of the WHO, the Human Need framework, the ComQoL tool (see below), the Scale of Psychological Wellbeing (PWB), the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS). The WeD programme developed its own QoL tool – WeDQol (Gough et al., 2006).
Galloway (2005) (cited in Scott, 2012, p. 37) found that Quality of Life is most often used to identify a multi-dimensional concept made up of a number of domains.

The concept of Quality of Life has been prominent in medical and health sciences internationally since the 1940s. The WHO’s Constitution of 1948 set out health as “physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” (Land et al., 2012, p. 2)9 “Wellness” then emerged in the US public health sector in the 1950s as “an integrated method of functioning which is oriented toward maximizing the potential of which the individual is capable, within the environment where s/he is functioning” (Land et al., 2012, p. 2). More recently WHO formulated QoL as “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns” (Land et al., 2012, p. 3). These reflect a wider shift towards an holistic, person-centred approach to healthcare rather than a medicalised and profession-based one (Health Foundation, 2016; van Dulmen et al., 2015).

Like wellbeing, many frameworks have been developed to define and assess QoL. Cummins, working in the disability sector in Australia, identified over 100 tools while working on the Comprehensive Quality of Life framework (ComQOL) (Cummins, 1997). The World Health Organisation (WHO) has taken a leading role in this work, developing the WHO Quality of Life (WHOQoL) (WHO, 1998). Since the 1980s there was growing interest in the education, health care and social sectors in the concept of QoL (Land et al., 2012, p. 14). This is particularly true in the field of disabilities (Lombardi et al., 2019; Schalock, 2004; van Hecke et al., 2017).

The WHO Quality of Life (WHOQoL), published in 1998, aimed to create a truly international and holistic tool that looked beyond traditional health indicators and an “increasingly mechanistic approach” to health (WHO, 1998, p. 10). It has six domains: physical, psychological, independence, social relationships, environment and spiritual. In the WHO’s view QOL is “a subjective evaluation, which is embedded in a cultural, social and environmental context. As such, Quality of Life cannot be simply equated with the terms ‘health status’, ‘lifestyle’, ‘life satisfaction’, ‘mental state’ or ‘well-being’. Rather it is a multi-dimensional concept incorporating the individual’s perception of these and other aspects of life” (WHO, 1998, p. 3).

Michalos argued in 2005 that empirically determining “the total number of domains required for a full assessment of the perceived Quality of Life of individuals and communities” had been and remained a basic problem for research in this field (Cited in Land et al., 2012, p. 5). Like the contributing factors in composite indicators, the elements of objective lists should ideally be derived from theory (Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012) or empirical observation. Few disagree, but the extent to which wellbeing and Quality of Life frameworks do derive from theory – or at least rigorous theory - is open to debate. Hegarty et al concluded that the Quality of Life frameworks they reviewed were generally not grounded in a well-established theory (Hagerty et al., 2001, p. 72).

And yet academic work on Quality of Life and wellbeing has been extensive, both theoretically and empirically, and suggests a growing consensus around core domains. Literature reviews have suggested that the large majority of suggested domains can be reduced to a manageable core set of factors. In 1996 Cummins reviewed 1,500 articles published in the journal Social

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9 At this foundational time of international organisations, the USA played a significant role and perhaps influenced the framing of the definition of health.
Indicators Research (SIR), with the aim of determining how many of the different domains could be reasonably classified under the ComQol’s seven domains of material well-being, health, productivity, intimacy, safety, place in society and emotional wellbeing. He identified 351 different domains and concluded 83% could be categorised under the seven domains (Cummins, 1996). A similar, later review by Schalock and Verdugo (cited in Scott, 2012, p. 37 herself citing Galloway 2005) of 2,455 academic articles identified eight common QoL domains which are very similar to those identified by Cummins: emotional wellbeing, interpersonal relations, material wellbeing, personal development, physical wellbeing, self-determination, social inclusion, and rights.

Researchers have repeatedly surveyed competing wellbeing domain sets and confirmed a broad agreement on core factors in human flourishing. In 2006 Ranis, Stewart and Samman provided an overview of those they regarded as the most important lists: Primary Goods developed by Rawls (1999), Finnis et al (1987), Human Needs (Doyal and Gough, 1991), Central Capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000), the needs identified in the Voices of the Poor study (Narayan et al., 2000a) and the participatory studies carried out as part of the WeD programme identified above (Camfield et al., 2006). They also drew on Alkire (2002), who reviewed 39 separate attempts to identify the key elements of a flourishing life between 1938 and 2000 (Ranis et al., 2006, p. 349 citing Alkire (2002)). (See Figure 2.1 below for details.)

Ranis et al identified nine broad “requirements for human flourishing” which they regarded as a “comprehensive view of the dimensions” of human development, and which are similar to those of Cummins and Schalock and Verdugo (Ranis et al., 2006, pp. 327–8):

1. Bodily well-being
2. Material well-being
3. Mental development
4. Work
5. Security
6. Social relations
7. Spiritual well-being
8. Empowerment and political freedom
9. Respect for other species.

McGregor, a member of the WeD programme, developed his ‘3D’ framework in a series of writings with co-authors from key international development institutions (OECD, DFID and IDS) (Boarini et al., 2014; McGregor and Sumner, 2010; McGregor et al., 2015b; Norton and Sumner, 2012). The framework involves three dimensions: material (objective), personal (subjective), and relational (social), that underpins the framework and need to be considered in a holistic assessment of wellbeing (McGregor and Sumner, 2010). Under these three dimensions are ten domains:

1. Consumption possibilities
2. Work
3. Housing and infrastructure
4. Environmental conditions
5. Education and skills
6. Health
7. Vulnerability
8. Social connections
9. Empowerment and participation
10. Life evaluation, feelings and meanings.

Contextualising the framework are three ‘systemic drivers’: the economic system, ecosystems, and social and cultural systems (Boarini et al., 2014).\(^{10}\)

White, another a member of the WeD programme, also makes use of the three dimensions as a fundamental element of the architecture of her “Inner Wellbeing” model (White et al., 2014). She concluded on seven domains, after removing an eighth, the environment:

1. Close relationships
2. Competence and self-worth
3. Physical and mental health
4. Values and meaning
5. Economic resources
6. Agency and participation
7. Social connections.

These two frameworks have been influential in the international development sector, as will become evident. They are rooted in a eudemonic understanding of wellbeing. In addition, they reflect and support an emerging consensus around a set of influencing factors or domains.

It is worthwhile noting the cross-over with the factors that have been identified as influencing subjective wellbeing assessments. The World Happiness Reports (see above) identified a similar set of influencing factors. Layard, a key member of the World Happiness team, identified a “Big Seven” of happiness which were:

1. Family relationships
2. Income
3. Work
4. Community and friends
5. Health
6. Personal freedom
7. Personal values and philosophies of life (Layard, 2005).

While these different lists use a range of terms it is clear that they all consider key drivers of wellbeing to be:

1. Economic conditions (work, income, savings and assets)
2. Material conditions (shelter, etc)
3. Health
4. Close relationships
5. Wider social relationships
6. Safety and security
7. Personal freedom, agency within and influence on wider society and particularly how it affects the individual
8. Environmental issues
9. Life evaluations, feelings and a sense of purpose in life

\(^{10}\) Note that McGregor adapts his terms dimensions, domains and drivers between different articles. However, the basic structure remains throughout.
Chapter 2: Wellbeing and International Development

As this quick review demonstrates, there has been significant, wide-ranging and sustained interest in wellbeing as a policy aim in the last 40 years in national and international development circles. It has arguably been a zeitgeist of the time. The promotion of wellbeing has become well-established as an explicit policy aim in governmental and non-governmental

COMING TO A CONSENSUS?

Figure 2.1: Key Wellbeing Domain Lists for International Development

Gough and Doyal’s Theory of Human Needs posited a wellbeing domain list:

1. Adequate nutritional food and water
2. Adequate protective housing
3. A non-hazardous work environment
4. A non-hazardous physical environment
5. Appropriate health care
6. Security in childhood
7. Significant primary relationships
8. Physical security
9. Economic security
10. Safe birth control and child-bearing
11. Basic education

Nussbaum’s Central Capabilities. Nussbaum identified ten Central Capabilities that a “decent political order must secure to all citizens at least a threshold level”:

1. Life
2. Bodily health
3. Bodily integrity (security and freedom to move)
4. Sense, imagination and thought
5. Emotions (being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves)
6. Practical reason
7. Affiliation (being able to live with and towards others, the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation).
8. Other species (being able to live with concern for animals, plants and nature)
9. Play
10. Control over one’s environment (both political and material) (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 33–34)

The Voices of the Poor study, sponsored by the World Bank, was published in 2000. This landmark work sought the views of over 60,000 people living in poverty around the world. It was organised around “wellbeing and illbeing”. It identified seven themes for change:

1. From material poverty to adequate assets and livelihoods
2. From isolation and poor infrastructure to access to services
3. From illness and incapability to health, information and education
4. From unequal and troubled gender relations to equity and harmony
5. From fear and lack of protection to peace and security
6. From exclusion and impotence to inclusion, organization and empowerment
7. From corruption and abuse to honesty and fair treatment (Narayan et al, 2000)

The WeD programme combined “objective”, QoL and SWB approaches, and took a global perspective. The programme drew on Human Needs, Resource Profile and WHOQoL approaches (Gough et al., 2006, pp. 38–9). Participatory research in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Thailand identified key factors of wellbeing:

1. Having good family relationships
2. Being economically secure
3. Being educated or knowledgeable
4. Being respected or worthy of respect
5. Being healthy

The study distinguished between “happiness” and “living well” – reflecting the SWB distinction between happiness and life satisfaction/evaluation. It did not create a domain list but captured people’s responses.
circles in the UK and internationally. It is widely agreed that at a national-level GDP remains a key indicator of human progress, but an inadequate one, that needs to be complemented by additional information if it is to comprehensively reflect the human condition and drive policy and practice that enhances human wellbeing more effectively.

A significant body of research has generated greater understanding and important points of agreement. There is an emerging consensus that human well-being / ill-being is multi-dimensional, including both material and non-material elements, relationships with others, and contextual as well as personal influences (Bache and Scott, 2018; Norton and Sumner, 2012; Stiglitz et al., 2009; Woodhouse et al., 2015). While wellbeing is individually-experienced, it is largely constructed within relationships with others, the cultural and moral norms that we construct as social groups, and the structures and processes within which we seek to achieve our wellbeing.

There is an emerging consensus around a list of domains of wellbeing influencing factors (Galloway et al., 2005; Ranis et al., 2006; Taylor, 2015; White et al., 2014), underpinned by a three dimensional framework of objective, subjective and relational factors (Boarini et al., 2014; Helliwell and Ankin, 2018; McGregor et al., 2015b; Norton and Sumner, 2012). While the consensus suggests there are some common elements to wellbeing that allow for a universal framework, it has to be recognised that preferences and priorities will vary between individuals, and over space and time. They also vary between cultures and faiths; it should not be assumed that one domain set is universally applicable without contextualisation. This consensus suggests wellbeing assessments are best done through a mixed-methods approach of qualitative and quantitative approaches, drawing on both externally observable (objective) and self-reported (subjective) data (Camfield and Roelen, 2015; Roelen and Camfield, 2013). There is a range of approaches and tools available to assess wellbeing, and agreement that tools should be flexible and adaptive, focused on domain sub-sets when required (Galloway et al., 2005). Efforts should be made to contextualise universal frameworks.

Meaningful and policy-relevant data can be generated about people’s subjective wellbeing and assessments of their life as a whole, and distinct aspects of it. Subjective assessments of wellbeing should be part of a wellbeing assessment, but happiness or subjective wellbeing should not be the sole measure of human development and wellbeing. There is agreement that a combination of both subjective and objective indicators, and objective and subjective measures of them, is the best approach to assessing wellbeing, providing a more rounded, comprehensive data set in the aid of better policy and action.

The idea of wellbeing as an objective of policy, whether it is by governments or non-governmental actors, is far from new. The recent pivot towards wellbeing has in large part been encouraged by credible suggestions in the 1990s and 2000s that individuals’ self-reported assessments of wellbeing could be used to assess and evaluate policy, practice and its outcomes. This proposal suggested possible ways to address existing international development challenges and unachieved aspirations. For many, the ideas of wellbeing are associated with radical agendas for reshaping political-economies and dealing with issues like climate change and inequalities of wellbeing.

Often described as “happiness”, subjective wellbeing is now better understood as four separate but related states – life evaluation or satisfaction, positive and negative effect, and a purposeful life. These four are often grouped under two broad views of human wellbeing: hedonism (life satisfaction and effect) and eudaimonia (a purposeful life). The collection of
self-reported assessments has been extensively researched and while there are limitations and biases that must be accounted for it, has been judged to be valid and reliable, and no less subject to methodological constraints and potential errors than the more traditional, “objective” data (OECD, 2013).

Wellbeing’s core characteristics - positive in orientation, person-centred, and holistic - have wider and more radical implications than simply better information and practice. Taken broadly they can represent profound challenges to the dominant approaches to national and international development and visions of human development (Bache and Scott, 2018; McGregor, 2006; Scott, 2012; White, 2010b). Wellbeing has been so popular because of its inherent attractiveness, and its ambiguity. Different actors have seen within it the potential to advance their own particular views of human development (Austin, 2020; Bache and Scott, 2018; Gough et al., 2006; McGregor, 2006; Seaford, 2018; White and Abeyasekera, 2014). Faith-based international development actors have seen an opportunity in the wellbeing debate to champion their own perspectives of human development, that share much in common with the emergency consensus. This person-centred, holistic, and relational approach makes reference to moral norms and values, and often faith and spirituality. It fits well with both faith-based and secular approaches, but is seen by religious actors as providing space for faith-based understandings of human wellbeing (Atherton et al., 2011, p. 29).

A wellbeing approach inherently puts people at the centre, and pushes us to ask individuals themselves about their views on their wellbeing, and by extension their own ideas about what is a good life (White, 2017c). Arguably it is a distinctive feature of a focus on wellbeing, suggesting a recognition and a respect for the varied conceptions of wellbeing that exist amongst the women and men, young and old that international development is concerned with. This gives a wellbeing focus a natural fit with person-centred approaches to development such as participatory development and human-centred design, as well as aligning well with their more profound promises around “democratisation” (Scott, 2012).

At the same time, the experience of participatory development offers a salutary warning to advocates of wellbeing driven by these promises. The actual practice of participatory development, and the extent of the achievement of its own promises, has fallen short of its promise. The fine words have often overlaid largely unchanged practices and power relationships (Cleave, 1999; Nelson and Wright, 1995). A wellbeing approach could be drawn from particular socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts, but be applied universally. It could embody the values and priorities of the experts and administrators rather than the project participants. Using wellbeing as a policy aim and tool will not inevitably lead to the desired outcomes. Efforts to measure wellbeing may be successful in producing standardised statistical indices of wellbeing that can be applied universally without involving people themselves beyond being questionnaire informants. In doing so they may both lose the potential richness of a wellbeing approach, become overly expert-led, and be no more empowering than existing, alternative approaches (Scott, 2012, p. 8). They need to be applied in a conscious and deliberate way, in light of the varied objectives and promises.
CHAPTER 3: FAITH, WELLBEING AND ID NGOs

INTRODUCTION
There has been a growing recognition of the relevance of faith and religion to international development in recent decades (Berger, 1999; Marshall, 2001; Marshall and Saanen, 2007; White et al., 2012a). For many in the global South faith is a part of their everyday lives and intimately related to their wellbeing, reflecting the importance of culture and moral norms and values to wellbeing, as well as the social care and relationships provided through organised religion. This is touched on in the previous chapter and expanded on here.

The focus of this research is on Christian-rooted organisations, and this is acknowledged as a limitation of the research. The populations with which international development as a sector works ascribe to a range of faiths and religions, and to none. These include the more formalised religions and less generally recognised ones such as African traditional religions (Ellis and Haar, 2004). These faiths and religions form part of people’s identity and their assessments of wellbeing and development. For many a challenge of international development has been to ensure these identities, cultures and faiths remain possible within “modernity” (Berger, 2014; Verhelst and Tyndale, 2002; Verhelst, 1987). This focus on Christian-rooted organisations is a limitation identified earlier in earlier studies of faith, development and FBOs (James, 2009; White et al., 2012a), and indicates an area of research that is needed.

A focus on Christian-rooted organisations does however reflect the nature of many of the principal actors in the international development sector in the UK and globally, whether they are Governmental, inter-Governmental or non-governmental. It allows for a study of what is an important set of actors in international development, while acknowledging the limitations both in terms of conceptualising wellbeing and capturing the perspectives of organisations rooted in different faiths and traditions. I have sought where possible to include information on other religious traditions, and on NGOs from a different faith tradition. I will discuss this limitation in more depth in the research design section.

The Catholic church is arguably the “oldest global institution” (Berger, 2005, p. 19) and it has an articulated approach to social and human development (Deneulin, 2021). The principal case study in the thesis I set out in some detail Catholic social teaching to demonstrate the similarities with the emerging consensus on wellbeing and ideas of Integral Human Development (IHD).

The chapter also discusses faith-based organisations as a sub-set of international development NGOs. Faith-based organisations are often presented in a dichotomy with secular NGOs. I reject this simple dichotomy, instead drawing on the more nuanced typologies set out by Occhipinti (Occhipinti, 2015), and pose questions over some of the harder distinctions made between Christian-inspired FBOs and their secular counterparts in the UK context. Secularism is itself relatively under-studied, and treating “secular NGOs” as an undifferentiated, homogenous group is just as problematic as doing so for faith-based organisations. There is a growing body of literature on secularism, probably not unrelated to the increased recognition of faith and religion (An-Na’im, 2005; Juergensmeyer, 2017; Marshall, 2013; Zuckerman, 2018; Zuckerman and Shook, 2017). I use it here in the simple
sense of “non-religious” but draw on this literature to begin to explore some of the overlaps and distinctions with faith-based organisations.\footnote{The Merriam Webster dictionary defines secular as: “of or relating to the worldly or temporal; not overtly or specifically religious” and secularism as “indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations”. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/secularism}

Finally, the chapter makes a short summary of the key elements of organisational theory that have informed this research in relation to how organisations behave, how they make and implement policy and why they do so. This informed both the sector overview analysis and the case studies.

**FAITH, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS**\footnote{In this thesis I have focused on Christianity, and within Christianity on certain denominations. Some reference is made to other faiths, but these are very limited. I had hoped to have one case study from the Muslim faith but despite efforts to do so, it was not possible.}

The relevance and role of faith and religion\footnote{Religion is referred to here as the organised manifestation of faith traditions, faith as referring to a more personal and generalised stratum of spiritual sensibility and morality. (Berger, 2005, pp. 9–10)} in the international development enterprise has long been debated (Alkire, 2006; Beek, 2002; Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011; Marshall and Saanen, 2007; Rakodi, 2012; Tomalin, 2012). International development actors have increasingly recognised they could not ignore faith. As Denuelin and Rakodi commented in 2011: “Both development studies and religion are concerned with the meaning of “progress” or a “better life” (Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011, p. 45) and religion informs the thinking of most of the people development studies is concerned with. Concepts of development (and wellbeing) that aspire to have meaning globally have to recognise the varying cultural, moral and religious frameworks that people subscribe to and that influence their wellbeing. International development institutions, including NGOs, have to take account not only of the value systems of their base countries but of those in which they work.

The account in this thesis focuses primarily on the Christian faith which has had a profound influence on UK institutions and organisations (whether formally secular or faith-based), and arguably on the principal institutions of international development. However, many of the intended beneficiaries of international development do not subscribe to any form of Christianity, and are likely to be adherents of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or African or other traditional religions. The research does not address this issue in any depth. I acknowledge this limitation to the work.

Arguably the discourse and formulation of international development as an area of study and work has been largely secular (Berger, 1999; Fountain, 2013a, 2013b; Jones and Petersen, 2011; Marshall, 2001; SIDA, n.d.). It emerged within the Pax Americana that followed World War II, and reflected the colonial and imperial international system that preceded the war and the neo-colonial system that quickly replaced it. Much of the explicit thinking and institutions of international development have their roots in the US and Western Europe and in a modernisation conception of social progress. Modernisation theory, the dominant model of international development from the 1950s and 1960s, was determinedly secular, regarding religion as an artefact of pre-modern societies and in many ways a hindrance to “development” (Fountain, 2015). In this view development is a transition from a traditional (rural, agricultural and religious state) to a modern one (industrialised, urban and secular) (Rostow, 1990). It reflected the post-Enlightenment, secular approach to public life where religion and faith were consigned to a private sphere of life, and Church and State were
separated (Bruce, 2017). Mainstream development institutions arguably ignored religion, at least until the 1980s (Marshall, 2001). Some faith-based academics and practitioners have been exercised by this secularism (Ager and Ager, 2015, 2011) and for some writers international development has been decidedly anti-religious, consciously or sub-consciously (Fountain, 2013a; Gifford, 2015; Marshall, 2013). There have been strong calls from within religious communities demanding recognition of faith in development (Fountain, 2013b, 2013a). It has been argued that although it is often regarded as neutral, secularism is itself value-laden (Berlinerblau, 2017; Wiles and Mallonee, 2019) and some strands are strongly atheistic (Quack, 2017) or anti-Islamic (An-Na’im, 2005). Secularism itself thus needs to be unpacked and examined. An-Na’im for example poses different possible secularisms – ones that are anti-religious and ethnocentric (Western), and ones that are “necessary for freedom of religion” (An-Na’im, 2005).

In response, during the 1980s and 1990s there was a shift in thinking and an increasing recognition that the vast majority of people living in the Global South continued to practice a religious faith, that this was important to their identity and wellbeing, and that religious institutions were important stakeholders in these societies (Berger, 1999; Verhelst and Tyndale, 2002). Ironically the US is itself a famously religious outlier amongst “developed” nations (Berger, 2014, 2012, 1999). Even in largely secular nations such as the UK faith and organised religion continues to have significant influence on moral debates and thinking in these areas and enjoys a privileged position in society. The posited transition to a secular, Western modernity was not being observed in reality.

The World Bank’s Development Faith Dialogues began a process of bringing secular development and religious institutions together in the late 1990s (Marshall, 2001) and laid the foundation for ongoing dialogue and study (Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, n.d.; Marshall and Saanen, 2007). This initiative reflected a growing understanding amongst some development institutions of the importance of faith and religious institutions for the majority in the Global South. The World Bank-sponsored Voices of the Poor research found that faith and spirituality played key roles in the lives of people living in poverty:

Wellbeing is quite frequently linked with moral responsibility, with having the wherewithal to help others, and with having enough money to be able to give to charity or a religious organization (Narayan et al., 2000a, p. 28).

For many, too, a spiritual life and religious observance are woven in with other aspects of wellbeing (Narayan et al., 2000a, p. 38).

Increasingly it was recognised that people want to be able to practice their faith, and find spiritual, practical and social support from these institutions. Moreover, culture, moral norms and faith are intimately bound up with visions of human development and wellbeing. In addition, organised religious institutions and their leaders had significant moral authority that could be brought to bear for or against “development” (Fountain, 2015), and organisational capacity and reach in grassroots communities that few other organisations could match (Occhipinti, 2015).

Alternative perspectives on development (dependency, participatory development, anti-colonialist, culture and development), modernity, changing global politics and arguably globalisation itself, had highlighted the importance of culture. There was a growing interest in and advocacy for the continuing validity of non-Western cultures and visions of a modern world. In relation to faith, the continuing adherence to major religions by a large majority of
the world’s population at the turn of the 21st Century has been cited as a reason for having a more inclusive and diverse view of modernity, or of “multiple modernities” and recognising that for many faith and organised religion will have a significant place within it (Appadurai, 2011; Eisenstadt, 2000; Gellner, 1992; Gifford, 2015; Lynch, 2012). There was growing agreement that social capital and intangible social elements of communities that influenced whether development interventions were successful or not (DFID Livelihoods Team, 1999; Gough et al., 2006; Malloch, 2003).

Associated with this opening up to religion were three important global occurrences – the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the emergence of radical Islamic groups, and globalisation. The former allowed for a new range of alignments, policies and initiatives in the international development sector. The rise of fundamentalist Islamic groups gave the issue of religion particular urgency and importance. And globalisation had both positive and negative impacts and implications, not least for religion and faith (Berger, 2005; Juergensmeyer, 2005).

Provisions were made to accommodate people’s faith in humanitarian and development interventions (ICMC, 2014; Sphere Association, 2018; UNHCR, 2012). As recognition of the importance of faith and faith leaders in the lives of the people and communities that international development actors engage with grew organisations saw their potential as allies with significant influence over people’s ideas and values. Policy and technical documents reflected this greater engagement (UNHCR, 2014; WHO, 2021). In 2008 the US President created an Office for Faith-Based and Community-Initiatives, with the specific purpose of strengthening and expanding the role of faith-based organisations in providing social services in the USA (The White House, 2008). The UK Government funded a research programme on Religion and Development at the University of Birmingham between 2005 and 2010 to investigate how faith and organised religion could play a role with international development actors in promoting human development (Rakodi, 2007). In 2014 the UNFPA held a roundtable with religious organisations to explore potential collaboration (Karam, 2014)

At stake is a recognition of the fundamental role of religion, religious convictions and religious values as part of the cultural fabric of humanity—as a powerful force in shaping development. The issue is not about ‘secular’ organizations seeking to engage religious ones; rather, religion should be a matter of concern for all developmental actors (Karam, 2014).

Thus, by the 2010s, there had been a sea-change in international development with an increased acceptance of religion and engagement with religious institutions in development work.

However, while faith actors welcomed this shift, too often in practice they viewed the engagement as instrumental, treating these institutions as valuable delivery agents but not appreciating their faith in and of itself (Wiles and Mallonee, 2019). They saw many of these initiatives as efforts to co-opt their faith and institutions to secular agendas (Jones and Petersen, 2011). In their view these initiatives failed to appreciate how faith shapes an individual’s very idea of what human development is (Atherton et al., 2011; Theos et al., 2010b). For many who practice a faith, the purpose of human existence is to be at one with God (Chester, 2002; Interviewee I5, 2019). Men and women are invited above all to discover themselves as transcendent beings, in every dimension of their lives, including those related to social, economic and political contexts (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p.
To treat such a profound part of human existence as simply a tool for social mobilization is unsettling for some, and a source of persistent complaint for some writers on the topic (Ager and Ager, 2011; James, 2009; Jones and Petersen, 2011). Wiles and Mallonee argue there needs to be an authentic engagement and dialogue to aid mutual understanding of share value and move beyond simple instrumentalization of faith actors by international development institutions (Wiles and Mallonee, 2019).

Secular writers and practitioners also voiced concerns about how best to deal with faith and religion. There are fears of aid being used for proselytism and evangelism (Lynch and Schwarz, 2016). There is often a lack of knowledge and understanding, differing language, discomfort or even disquiet over overt displays of religious belief (Kartson and Featherstone, 2019). There be a lack of appreciation of the way in which secular international development advances, and at times imposes, very particular cultural, social, political and economic values (Lynch and Schwarz, 2016). There may be a genuine commitment to secularism as the best way to manage diverse, globalised societies (Berlinerblau, 2017; Bruce, 2017; Fox, 2018). Within these debates secularism itself is often set up as a homogenous, anti-religious, individualist, philosophy, lacking in positive values. Individuals who do not profess adherence to a religion are often referred to as having no faith, and at times the discussion of them can seem patronising (Interviewee 110, 2020). Secularism has in fact different strands, and this characterisation does not do it justice (Zuckerman and Shook, 2017). At the core of much of the discussion is balancing the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the group, particularly in a context where there are a number of different faiths and moral frameworks. An-Na’im argues for a form of secularism that positively guarantees religious freedom (An-Na’im, 2005).

In this debate it is important to recognise that faith is rooted in the politics of human society, and can have negative, divisive effects as well as positive ones. One driving force for the interest in religion in the 1990s and 2000s was the rise of fundamentalist Islamic movements and their acts of violence, in the face of globalisation and other pressures on cultures and livelihoods. Religion was demonstrating its ability to divide and foster conflict, as much as its ability to transcend differences and heal division (Berger, 2005). Religious and faith institutions are embedded in the history and politics of communities (An-Na’im, 2005). Thus, choosing to work with local faith leaders has political implications, and can entrench power structures that some within the society are hoping to challenge as part of social change, such as around gender issues. In such cases the actions of external actors may influence movements for social change within societies in unanticipated ways (Khan, 2019). This is a broader issue than religion – any intervention has consequences, many of which are likely to be unknown to all the actors involved, but it highlights that choosing to work with faith leaders is not necessarily unproblematic. The intertwining of politics and faith should not be ignored in this discussion. For example, President Bush’s promotion of FBOs reflected his own commitment to and support base in the evangelical churches of the USA. His was a project to give them greater involvement in US social care and international aid policy and implementation. This had implications not only for the role of the Church and FBOs in the USA but also for the role and position of evangelical churches in aid-recipient countries and the nature and focus of aid programmes (Fountain, 2015). In a very practical way, it can affect the services that are – or are not - made available to people. Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS programming are particular cases in point. While these discussions focus on the role of faith
in human development and wellbeing, there are political and practical consequences and motivations.

Alongside the interest in faith and development *per se* there was a growing interest in non-governmental organisations that were engaged in international development work. These were characterised as “faith-based organisations” (FBOs) and in the 2,000s there was a growing body of research focused on FBOs (Frame, 2019; James, 2009; Occhipinti, 2015, 2005; Occhipinti et al., 2009; Paras, 2012; Sadiq, 2009).

Many NGOs in the UK and elsewhere have their roots in religion or faith traditions. Many of the most significant international development charities in the UK are avowedly religious (for example Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tearfund). Some stress their roots in a religious faith but do not define themselves by their faith (such as Traidcraft Exchange, now Transform Trade) (Timson, 2022). Some began with faith-based roots and have transitioned to secular organisations (such as Oxfam with its Protestant and Quaker origins) (Quakers in the World, ND).

In the literature and amongst practitioners a dichotomy is often posed between “faith-based organisations” and “secular organisations” (Berger, 2003; James, 2009; Tomalin, 2012). It is argued that faith-based organisations can be distinct in some aspects from secular organisations (forms of governance, relationship with a wider faith community, leadership, culture, systems, staffing and recruitment) (James, 2010). However, this simple binary distinction between “faith-based” and “secular” organisations is of limited analytical value, obscuring similarities, suggesting oppositions and hiding the strong relationships and collaboration that exists between these organisations (Frame, 2019; James, 2009; Jeavons, 2004; Leurs, 2012; Sadiq, 2009). James found for example that FBOs are often distinct from each other in the same aspects he identified above, and in addition, they can share common elements with secular organisations. James concluded the term FBO is highly problematic due to the extremely heterogeneous natures of organisations classed as FBOs (James, 2009). Occhipinti suggested the diversity of FBOs, their internal diversity, the changes that take place over time means binary distinctions and even singular typologies can be unhelpful. She suggested examining FBOs along three typologies: the degree to which they are faith-based, the type of work they engage in, and their degree of formality and association with official religious structures (Occhipinti, 2015).

An examination of international development NGOs supports Occhipinti’s assertions. For example, the similarities in the identity statements of secular and faith-based organisations, whether Christian, Muslim, Sikh or Jewish, are often striking across the faith and secular faultline. (See Fig 3.1 below.) As the organisational theory section below suggests, organisations are themselves heterogenous communities and open systems – suggesting that one simple characterisation of an organisation, unless it is very small, is usually partial and can be misleading. The larger NGOs (FBOs and secular) have multiple parts, talk to multiple audiences, and often emphasise different aspects of their reality.
At the same time, faith-based actors often do have a sense of identity as faith-based actors, distinct from secular actors. Theology naturally plays a significant role in forming their thinking, and more broadly in their view of what human development means. Some organisations have sought to set out distinctly Christian approaches to development, deliberately distinguishing these from secular approaches (Chester, 2002; Freeman, 2019; Gordon, 2021; Theos et al., 2010b). Muslim organisations have similarly sought to conceptualise their work within their own religious tradition (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2014, nd). Many Christians (and presumably those of other faiths) have strongly held convictions that there is something distinctive and better about their kind of development work (Gordon, 2021). Drawing out these distinctions is one way to express their deeply-held convictions in their work, reflecting a genuine sense of difference from secular organisations (Freeman, 2018; Theos et al., 2010b). It can also have a practical function, affirming their credentials with their support base, and distinguish themselves in the charity marketplace. It may provide the basis for proactive measures to channel resources to them – President Bush’s

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14 Individuals or organisations.
administration was a driving force in pushing the US Government to work with and fund faith-based organisations domestically and abroad, going as far as establishing an Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Office of the Press Secretary, 2008; The White House, 2008).

Faith-actors often see a commonality with other faith-based actors, either from the same tradition or different ones. There are many examples of interdenominational and interfaith platforms. For example, Christian NGOs share a common language and have a commonality of interest on some points (See for example Theos et al., 2010b). Christian churches seek to work together through the World Council of Churches (The Pluralism Project, Harvard University, 2022), and in 2023 representatives of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church made a joint visit to South Sudan and the DRC to advocate for peace and reconciliation. Within the country the South Sudan Council of Churches advocates for peace on behalf of many Christian denominations. Often these alliances reach beyond faith traditions, and individuals and organisations of different faiths often come together for common cause. Christian, Muslim and African religious leaders came together to work for peace in northern Uganda (Peace Direct, 2021) and in the Central African Republic (Vlawonou, 2019). At an organisational-level programme collaborations take place. For example, between CAFOD, SCIAF, Christian Aid with Islamic Relief. These are often intended as clear signals of the needs-based approaches of the organisations and of the importance they attach to religious tolerance – they are practical and symbolic.

These examples of collaboration and cooperation between faith actors co-exist alongside difference, conflict and competition for audiences and their support. Religions themselves are heterogenous, with different traditions within them (See Kim, 2007 on Christianity; Kroessin, 2008 on Islam; Tomalin, 2009 on Hinduism). Faith actors are similarly diverse and manage complex relationships of collaboration and competition. Indeed for some, religion can be, and usually is, a source of division (Berger, 2005).

It may be that faith-based organisation feel most comfortable with others of their own tradition, or at least with other faith actors. However, there are also collaborations with secular organisations. These might be with donors to access funding or on campaigns around issues like debt and climate change. On certain issues such as technical or specific work areas, for certain faith-based organisations, it may make sense to collaborate with “secular” agencies. This is like to vary, depending on the organisation (or part), the issue, and the timing. Freeman suggests that the Catholic Caritas organisations, along with mainstream Protestant organisations, have found it much easier to participate in humanitarian coordination systems than some evangelical organisations because they are more comfortable with the separation of religious and humanitarian activities (Freeman, 2019, p. 74). Gifford argues there has been a growing “internal secularization” within Catholicism throughout much of the C20th, which has enabled many Catholics to express their faith through humanitarian activities, often ignoring other religious obligations (Gifford, 2015, pp. 79–103). Many faith-rooted organisations (SCIAF, CAFOD, Traidcraft) make no requirement for their staff members to share or practice the organisation’s faith, and staff members may profess a faith but be non-practising, profess no faith, or even be committed Humanists (Humanists UK, 2023).

Organisations – and particularly large ones - are themselves complex, multi-faceted and subject to change over time (Occhipinti, 2015). They may be capable of engaging with different external and internal audiences in different languages and in different ways. The Tearfund case study below suggests that different elements of Tearfund and its associated
institutions are more or less comfortable with the language and norms of secular aid (Interviewee I14, 2019a); a point made by Freeman (Freeman, 2019). Representatives of IRW have also shown themselves adroit in engaging with secular aid institutions (Pertek et al., 2019). Traidcraft, now Transform Trade, also appears to be on a journey along the spectrum of religiosity.

Faith-based (rather than secular) organisations have been the principle focus of attention to date, as they have argued for their place in the secular, international development mainstream. Perhaps as a result notions of secularism and secular organisations have been largely unexamined. However, these organisations as no more homogenous as a group than FBOs in terms of their origins, their values, their work or the form. They do not necessarily subscribe to markedly different moral norms or values than many FBOs. (See for example fig 3.1 above.) Some NGOs now considered to be secular have roots in a faith-tradition or were established by individuals motivated by such traditions. (See for example Oxfam (Quakers in the World, ND). Chester, while articulating what would define a “Christian approach to development” noted that at times secular NGOs embody the values he identified as defining “Christian development” better than FBOs did themselves (Chester, 2002). At a more foundational level there is a usually unacknowledged influence of Christian faith on the general moral norms and values of the UK – and therefore on most UK-based secular organisations. (See Fuller, 2019 for a similar discussion on the USA). Secularism, as theorised in the 19th century by Holyoake, had three principles, one of which was “it is good to do good”, echoing some faith-inspired conceptions of wellbeing. Moral Foundation Theory suggests there are core moral values that can be identified across the principle religions and atheism (Mobayed, 2019).

Fountain has warned against an uncritical view of ‘proselytizing’, arguing that the international development sector’s fear of faith-based organisations in this regard fails to take account of their own advancing of particular agendas. Lynch and Schwartz identified a “donor proselytism” that occurs in some international development relationships, shaping aid to conform to neoliberal conceptions of efficiency, sustainability, and measurable results (Lynch and Schwarz, 2016). A more sophisticated examination of how both faith and secular-based organizations advance specific agendas, and how they do so responsibly and for the common good would, he argues, be more helpful (Fountain, 2015).

Even spirituality, often considered a defining characteristic of religious faith, provides only a partial division between FBOs and secular visions of human wellbeing. “Religion is most commonly understood as a phenomenon embracing a metaphysical, transcendent dimension of life that can be experienced but not seen” (Tyndale, 2006, p. 153). One SCIAF respondent stated his belief that religions have ready concepts and language to deal with spirituality which secular traditions lack (Interviewee I10, 2020). The concept of Integral Human Development (IHD) promoted by the Catholic Church uses “integral” in the sense of including both the material and the spiritual (Deneulin, 2021, p. 22; Grassl, 2013). And yet, some secular visions of the world are increasingly theorising a secular form of spirituality (Fuller, 2019). Positive psychology seeks to fill this perceived gap in secular visions of the world (Nemko, 2020; Yaden et al., 2017). Some popular philosophies combine moral codes and a spiritual

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15 Often religious references are used unknowingly in secular contexts. Robert Chambers core text, “Putting the Last First” is widely cited in secular development circles. However, not all are aware the reference is from the Christian bible. Jesus is reported to have said “many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (BibleGateway, n.d. Matthew 19:30.).
element related to the natural world or inner peace, often situating them in the pursuit of human and planetary wellbeing. Examples include Buen Vivir / Vivir Bien and the philosophy of “deep ecology” (Environment and Ecology, n.d.; Oilos, 2020). In the United States secular humanism has been defined under law as a religion (Blankholm, 2017, p. 2; Fuller, 2019). This should not be overstated, as the numbers of people actively subscribing are said to be very low, but it talks to a human need that faith has largely met in the past (Bruce, 2017).

Thus, distinctions between faith-based and secular are far more complex than they appear at first sight. While drawing binary distinctions between secular and faith-based NGOs can have practical value in distinguishing organisations in the aid marketplace and accessing resources, they have limited analytic value. Occhipinti argues that instead we should use a range of typologies, reflecting the diversity of organisations and their multifaceted and changing natures (Occhipinti, 2015). She suggests three typologies are most useful:

- The degree to which they are faith-based (faith-permeated; faith-centred; faith-affiliated; faith-background; faith-secular partnership; secular)
- The type of work they do (religious policy, networking and cooperation; charitable and development work (service delivery); political activism and lobbying; proselytizing and recruitment.
- The level of formality and links to official church structures (initiatives within a larger faith organisation; formal structure within a denomination or faith; formal independent NGO with ties to a particular religious community; formal NGO with loose ties to a parent faith or multiple faiths or autonomous from any faith).

Occhipinti argues there will be significant overlap between the categories within each typology when applied to an organisation, and that this allows for a more nuanced analysis (Occhipinti, 2015, p. 340).

The organisations identified for study in this thesis (cases and examples) occupy different positions on these different typologies. Classified against the faith-based typology they occupy three principal positions: faith-permeated, faith background and secular. However, faith-permeated as a category masks differences between the two. Tearfund and Caritas arguably differ on the issues of faith and public and private spheres, and the expectations of the practice of faith by staff members together as members of the organisation. This would classify Tearfund as more “faith-permeated” than the Caritas organisations (Freeman, 2019). The practices within the Muslim organisations that were studied as part of this research are not known and have been placed alongside Caritas. (See Fig 3.2 below.)

Using the three typologies together would be overly complex and might not be very informative about distinctions between faith and/or secular organisations. For example, in relation to type of work, the secular organisations are all engaged in service delivery, but several are also engaged in political activism and lobbying (though not around faith per se), as are the faith-background organisations. The faith-permeated organisations are similar engaged in service delivery, most are engaged in political activism and lobbying. None are engaged in religious networking and cooperation as defined by Occhipinti. Occhipinti does not define “proselytizing and recruitment”, and Tearfund are not engaged in direct proselytizing and recruitment to their faith as normally understood. Caritas’ do not aim to evangelise through their work but rather to live out their own faith. “They must be ‘credible witnesses to Christ’ but not engage in what nowadays is called proselytism” (Davies et al., 2010, p. 6). “Love is free; it is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends” (quoted in
Calderisi, 2013, p207). Catholic social teaching’s separation of the spiritual and material, and its requirement that assistance is provided as an act of faith rather than an act of proselytisation, fits well with more secular conceptions of the place of faith in the world. It allows these organisations to play an active role in the modern development and humanitarian aid system (Gifford, 2015). On the spectrum of formality and engagement with a Church institution, the Caritas’ are probably the most formal and have the strongest formal links to a religious organisation, overlapping two categories as they are often legally independent organisations but governed by the Church; Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid and Tearfund are independent NGOs with strong links to religious denominations; Traidcraft is an independent NGO with very loose ties to its original faith-base. (See Fig 3.3. below.)

In using these typologies, I propose an alternative to the type of work typology that Occhipinti proposes, looking at a spectrum of focus between generalist / person-centred and sector specific / technical nature of organisations. Drawing on the sector overview, cases and examples discussed below it appears that organisations with a generalist or person-centred approach find a wellbeing approach both more applicable and more feasible. See Fig 3.4 below for an analysis of the cases and examples against the two criteria of faith-based and generalist / specialist. (Note that the relative positions are Illustrative, influenced by practical requirements of the diagram.)
Fig 3.2. NGOs on a Spectrum of Religiosity, drawing on Occhipinti (2015)

- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Caritas (SCIAF, CADECOM, Malawi, sister agencies)
- Muslim Aid
- Tearfund
- Traidcraft Exchange
- Oxfam GB
- CHEC Cambodia
- Practical Action
- WWF
- HelpAge
- Farm Concern Africa
Fig 3.3. Faith-Rooted NGOs by Level of Formality and Strength of Ties to Official Institutions

- Informal, within a faith organisation
- Formal, within a faith organisation
- Formal, independent NGO with strong ties
- Formal, independent NGO with loose/no ties

- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Traidcraft Exchange
- Muslim Aid
- Tearfund
- Caritas (SCIAF, CADECOM Malawi, sister agencies)
Fig 3.4. Organisations by Faith and Focus
**FAITH AND WELLBEING**

The emerging consensus around wellbeing indicates that culture and faith play important roles in influencing individual wellbeing. Culture and faith are intertwined, and by influencing an individual’s norms and values plays a significant role in assessments of happiness and life satisfaction (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016; Thin, 2018; White, 2006). An assessment of life satisfaction will inevitably make reference to the values of the individual, by what we regard as right or wrong, good or bad (Thin, 2018). This is particularly so if we are evaluating whether what we do is “worthwhile” (ONS, 2016). For many faith is a key element of culture, and thus has a major influence on wellbeing (Camfield, 2006; White et al., 2012a, 2010; White and Devine, 2013). Indeed, there are claims that religious people are happier than non-religious (Bingham, 2016). These claims are often repeated by those who practice a religion (Interviewee I5, 2019).

There is considerable overlap and affinity between many faith-based conceptions of human development and wellbeing, and the emergent frameworks of holistic, person-centred human development. Faith-actors have naturally tended towards the eudemonic perspectives on wellbeing. While the focus on this research is on Christian-rooted organisations, this is not limited to the Christian faith. Islamic Aid published its own Islamic Perspective on Human Development, identifying the Maqasid as an Islamic framework for development with five essential dimensions of human development: spiritual, human, education, social and economic (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2014). Khalsa Aid, a Sikh NGO, identified "the principle of ‘Sarbat Da Bhalla’ (positive wellbeing of all humanity)” as the guide to all of their work (Khalsa Aid International, 2021, p. 5). Zaimah, a Muslim organisation, states that by “restoring the cohesive ties that unite our very affinity as human beings, Zaimah endeavours to remove the increasing negligence for the wellbeing of our fellow man” (Zaimah, 2021, p. 2). Christian organisations have also outlined person-centred, holistic and relational views of human wellbeing (Atherton et al., 2011; Theos et al., 2010b). The Caritas agencies have articulated Integral Human Development as such a vision of human development (CRS, 2012a; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; SCIAF, 2019a). Denuelin argues that there are significant similarities between Catholic social teaching and the Human Capabilities approach (Denuelin, 2021). Calderisi makes a very similar claim in his discussion of the Catholic Church’s role in development (Calderisi, 2013, p. 75) As a vision of human wellbeing the term Integral Human Development appears to be acceptable within the evangelical tradition (Theos et al., 2010b). And Catholics are not averse to quoting Protestant theologians when discussing IHD and wellbeing (SCIAF Interviewee I17, 2020).

While there is considerable overlap in the essential ideas, faith traditions often have differing vocabularies, and they have contributed to the richness of language used to discuss wellbeing. Christian organisations are particularly fond of terms such as flourishing, thriving, holistic and integral as these have resonance in the key Christian texts. Such language may be used – or avoided – either to signal that the wellbeing discussion is taking place within a Christian tradition, or is not (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018).

Some Christian-rooted faith-based organisations in the UK have seen the rise of the debate on wellbeing as a way to advance their own visions of human development and engage with secular actors and power brokers on human wellbeing (Atherton et al., 2011; Tearfund, 2012; Theos et al., 2010b). As will become evident in the discussion of Catholic social teaching, these visions of human development and wellbeing often have radical policy implications,
suggesting like the Wellbeing Economies group that economies should serve people, and that
development interventions (and general socioeconomic and political policy) should be judged
by how they serve the wellbeing of people, the planet and other species, and future
generations (Pope Francis, 2020, 2015).

The global Catholic Church, with its unified and centralised structure, has set out a vision of
human development in its Catholic social teaching, and this is discussed below as an example
of a faith-based vision of human development and wellbeing.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING (CST) AND INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (IHD)

Catholic social teaching (CST) has provided inspiration, guidance and justification to the work
of the Catholic Church’s social development organisations around the world, and has
developed a conception of human development – termed Integral Human Development (IHD)
– that is very similar to the emergent consensus on wellbeing outlined above. As implemented
by social agencies of the Catholic Church (named “Caritas”), Integral Human Development
shares many of the core elements of other conceptions of wellbeing and can be treated as
one of the “associated ideas” (White, 2014a). Wellbeing is constituted through a combination
of material conditions, contextual factors, an individual’s own agency and autonomy within
this context, and their relationships with others. It is influenced by moral norms and values,
which influence individuals’ choices and assessments, and involve responsibilities to others
as well as rights that can be claimed. It is dynamic. The achievement of human wellbeing is an

Catholicism has historically been one of the most significant World Christian traditions and
remains so today. Although challenged both by other religions and secularism, and declining
in popularity in Europe, it remains a global force. Gifford describes Christianity as “perhaps
the most salient social force in sub-Saharan Africa” (Gifford, 2015, p. 11) and within that
Catholicism is the fastest growing Christian denomination in Africa, claiming 176 million
adherents in 2013, up from 45m in 1970 (Gifford, 2015, pp. 84–85). Catholicism is the religion
of the majority in Latin America where 69% of people identify as Catholic, though this has
reduced significantly from a reported 90% in the 1960s (Sahgal and Bell, 2014). In 2013 there
were a reported 1.2 billion Roman Catholics across the globe, the largest of the Catholic
Church’s rites.16

In contrast with other Christian traditions, the Catholic Church has a unified structure and a
global leadership, embodied in the Pope, based in the Vatican in Rome (Gifford, 2015). At the
same time the Church is strongly decentralised. In each country the Catholic Church is
governed by a Conference of Bishops, and within these countries each Bishop is the principal
authority within his own Diocese.17 A central element of the Catholic church’s story is how it
has managed to balance central control and coherence with the decentralisation of power to
national and sub-national levels. Critical to this is the articulation of a theology and social
teaching that balances core themes of relevance to all with flexibility and decentralisation
(subsidiarity). The Catholic church thus occupies a position of providing a unifying,
universalising approach while at the same time recognising the multiplicity of differences and
the need to reflect and even embrace, those differences.

16 In many countries such as Syria and Ukraine there are several Catholic Rites bringing together different traditions within
the Church. (For an explanation of the Catholic Rites see Catholic News Agency, nd).
17 The Catholic Church is yet to welcome women into the clergy.
As a global organisation, the Church is large and complex, with many and varied dynamics within it. There are risks in treating a global church as a homogenous whole. The church is in fact divided on a range of issues; itself a site of debate and conflict over a range of issues (Brown, 2017; Vallely, 2023). The Church faces a constant challenge of managing competing visions of the Catholic faith and how it should be practised, as well as competition over resources, and the personal and institutional politics inherent in any human organisation. These are influenced by external changes as well as internal factors, and the need to respond to the external environment.

As the discussion of Catholic social teaching will demonstrate, the validity and importance of social action within Catholic theology is contested. The pronouncements on Catholic social teaching by a series of Popes function as expressions of formal policy setting by the leadership, aiming to direct policy and practice in particular ways and to particular ends. For those in less powerful positions within the Church who believe the Church should meet social as well as spiritual needs the pronouncements have provided an important opportunity and endorsement for social action in internal debates.

As a practical expression of this social mission the Church hierarchy created a series of “Commissions” dealing with Education, Health, Justice, Peace and Social Services. The latter, known as Caritas\(^\text{18}\), have become important providers of international development interventions. This is delivered through a network of 165 national Caritas organisations (Calderisi, 2013, p. 209). The Catholic Church’s role in charity and international development is significant globally, both in terms of direct service delivery and its influence on development policy. This is particularly true in Africa (Gifford, 2015). It is estimated that in the early 2010s the Caritas network spent around USD$3bn per annum and was the largest private charity in the world after the International Red Cross (Calderisi, 2013, p. 207). As well as Caritas there are a broad range of Catholic-affiliated organisations providing charity or influencing policy (Calderisi, 2013, p. 204).

Despite its evident importance for many people, particularly in the Global South, the Catholic Church has at times had a difficult relationship with many mainstream international development institutions. This was particularly true until the Second Vatican Conference, when the Church abandoned its opposition to many elements of secular modernism (Berger, 2005; Gifford, 2015, p. 19). However, the Church’s continued opposition to birth control, abortion and homosexuality, and well as its position on gender and the rights of women within the Church continue to set it at odds with the secular liberal consensus in many European states, and have proved problematic with significant areas of international development theory and practice (Calderisi, 2013; Deneulin, 2021). The Catholic Church has also been deeply damaged by revelations about child and sexual abuse over the last thirty years (BBC, 2021; Jay et al., 2020). In this there is much in common with the safeguarding scandals that have engulfed the United Nations and international development NGOs in the 2010s (UK Parliament Select Committee on International Development, 2018).

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\(^{18}\) Within Catholicism Caritas means \textit{charity} or more properly \textit{love}. Love of one’s neighbour as oneself, the giving of money but also of oneself to others in need (Interviewee I10, 2020; SCIAF, 2019a).
The Emergence of CST and IHD

Catholic social teaching first emerged in the 1890s with People Leo XIII’s Rerum Novarum (On Capital and Labor) and was developed through a series of Papal Encyclicals\(^\text{19}\) issued on social, political and economic issues. Primarily aimed at Catholics it is also considered relevant to, and a basis for collaboration with, other Christians, those following other religions and for "people of good will" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, pxiv). While the Catholic Church's teaching has always had implications for how life is lived and society organised, the articulation of guidance on social issues and how they should be addressed is a relatively recent phenomenon. In terms of an articulated and documented philosophy it has developed through a series of Encyclicals reflecting the concerns of the Church hierarchy as well as the social issues of the time and providing the faithful with guidance on how to address them in their lives. Deneulin identifies five encyclicals as most associated with Catholic social teaching: Populorum Progression, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, Caritas in Veritate, Laudato Si’, and Fratelli Tutti (Deneulin, 2021, p. 16).\(^\text{20}\)

As CST has developed through reflections on particular issues there is no one central or all-encompassing original text. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church serves as a "concise but complete overview of the Church’s social teaching" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p. xvii). However, the teaching continues to develop - since 2004 Pope Francis has published two further Encyclicals (Laudato Si’ and Fratelli Tutti), significantly developing Catholic social teaching. In doing so he introduced a new term, Integral Ecology, which made explicit and strengthened links between Integral Human Development and the natural world, reflecting the growing global concerns with climate change (Pope Francis, 2020).

Rather like the promotion of “Integral Mission” within the evangelical Protestant church by those who wished to see their churches address the practical and social needs of their members (Freeman, 2019), Catholic social teaching emerged as part of an internal debate about the importance of responding to material and social as well as spiritual aspects of people’s lives, and the purpose of the church and Christians in the world. Pope Benedict XVI’s first encyclical in 2005 dealt specifically with this theme, confirming pastoral care as a central element of Catholicism, and one that encompasses all people, whatever their faith. In Deus Caritas Est (God is Love) he wrote:

> The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than it can neglect the Sacraments and the Word (Quoted in Calderisi, 2013, p207).

\(^\text{19}\) An encyclical is literally an official letter written by the Pope and sent to all Roman Catholic Bishops, usually in order to make a statement about the official teachings of the Church. Collins online dictionary accessed 8.5.21 [https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/encyclical](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/encyclical). However, they are often quite extensive, appear in a book format and provide core developments of Catholic teaching. Each Pope may issue only one or two encyclicals and they become foundational texts in the Church.

\(^\text{20}\) The Popes release many Encyclicals and not all deal with social issues. Those usually associated with Catholic social teaching began with People Leo XIII’s Rerum Novarum (On Capital and Labor) in 1891, where he famously endorsed the right of workers to organise in unions. Subsequent Popes issued encyclicals that developed additional aspects of the teaching or returned to refine areas that had already been explored. Pope Pius Xi issued Quadragesimo Anno (After Forty Years – On Reconstruction of the Social Order) in 1931; Pope John XXIII issued Mater et Magistra (On Christianity and Social Progress) in 1961 and Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) in 1963. People Paul VI issued Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples) in 1967, and his successor Pope John Paul II issued three encyclicals: Laborem Exercens (On Human Work), Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (20th Anniversary of Populorum Progressio) and Centesimus Annus (The Hundredth Year) in 1981, 1987 and 1991 respectively. Pope John Paul II contributed Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason) in 1998 and Pope Benedict XVI issued Deus Caritas Est (God is Love) in 2005 and Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth) in 2009. Most recently Pope Francis issued Laudato Si’ (On Care for our Common Home) in 2015 and Fratelli Tutti (Fraternity and Social Friendship) in 2020.
Pope Benedict stressed that the two were inter-twined, and anticipated the on-going concern that Christian development be more than just development (Chester, 2002; Freeman, 2018):

The Church’s charitable activity (must) not become just another form of social assistance (quoted in Gifford, 2015 Chapter 7, p13).

The Catholic Church remains the site of conflicting views about social work. Within the Church the Encyclicals are important reference points and statements with authority, but they are themselves championed or challenged. As in other organisations, policy is interpreted and implemented in various ways. Those lower down the hierarchy make decisions about what to adopt and what to ignore (Calderisi, 2013, p. 181). In this way they act like the street-level bureaucrats that Lipsky describes or the “misbehaving” members of organisations identified by Acroyd and Thompson (Ackroyd and Thompson, 2011).

The social institutions of the Church, and particularly the Caritas’ such as SCIAF, play a significant role in interpreting, championing and popularising Catholic social teaching amongst the laity and clergy. References to the Encyclicals are opportunities to use the prestige of the Pope’s office to advance particular points. See for example the SCIAF Laudato Si’ study guide for parishes and schools in Scotland, and the CAFOD guide to Fratelli Tuti (Pope Francis, 2020; SCIAF, 2020). Caritas Australia begins its Principles of Engagement on International Development with the statement:

The social mission of the Church is one of the three central tenets of the faith … it is not an optional extra to the faith (Davies et al., 2010).

As an aside, it is noticeable how many women are active within Caritas organisations, often in senior positions. For Catholic women Caritas organisations appear to offer an opportunity to live out their faith in ways not open to them within the clergy.

**The Principles of Catholic Social Teaching and Integral Human Development**

Catholic social teaching is based on a number of interrelated and complementary principles:

- Human Dignity
- The Common Good
- Subsidiarity

Human Dignity is the foundational principle, based on an understanding of human beings created in the image of God, each with intrinsic and inalienable dignity, all equal to each other. This essential dignity is very similar to the notion of universal human rights, although for Catholics the source is God rather than the law or a social contract (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p. 76). This is an important distinction for Catholics between CST and secular approaches to international development.

At the same time each individual is regarded as fundamentally social in nature, seeking and enriched by relationships with others, from the family to wider society. The concept of the Common Good flows from this - as people exist and flourish both as individuals and within relationships, the Common Good is the sum total of the social conditions that allow people to reach their fulfilment. Rights are balanced with duties to others and to the Common Good. By strengthening the common good we all benefit, by undermining it we all lose. This idea of relationships is broad in both time and space. God created the planet and all things within it, and these are part of the Common Good. Rights and responsibilities relate to those alive now.
and those to come, and to the planet and all within it, now and in the future (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p. 232). Solidarity is a "firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good" and is both a moral and a social virtue. Catholics are called upon to act in solidarity with others in pursuit of the common good (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p. 99). The principle of “subsidiarity” is that the essential dignity of all social groups and institutions should be respected, and that other - particularly “higher” - social institutions should not act to constrain or supplant their initiative, freedom and responsibility (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p. 94). In practical terms decisions should be made at the most appropriate level.

From these principles emerges the concept of Integral Human Development, a term coined by Pope Paul VI in Popularum Progressio (Keleher, 2018). According to SCIAF Integral Human Development “upholds the innate dignity of the human person ... covering all spheres of life – the economic, political, cultural, personal and spiritual. It should promote the dignity of the human person and the common good” (SCIAF, 2019, p23). IHD is “development that promotes the good of every person and the whole person: it is cultural, economic, political, social, and spiritual” (Heinrich et al., 2008, p. 4). Keleher regards IHD is “truly radical participatory approach to human development” (Keleher, 2018, p. 29).

The commonalities of this concept of a person-centred, multi-dimensional, relational human development with the emerging consensus are clear. Wellbeing as a term appears frequently in writings on CST, as does flourishing. Achieving the wellbeing of all peoples is set out as the purpose of the Church (and the State) (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p. 225). Catholic Relief Services' Users’ Guide to IHD states "IHD suggests a state of personal well-being in the context of just and peaceful relationships and a thriving environment" (Heinrich et al., 2008, p. 2). Caritas Australia states that through the process of Integral Human Development individuals and communities will be enabled to flourish and achieve wellbeing. One of its four strategic aims to 2021 was the achievement of “socioeconomic wellbeing” (Caritas Australia, 2014, p10).

Individuals in SCIAF see strong - but differing - links between IHD, flourishing and wellbeing. Referring to wellbeing and flourishing one Senior Manager in SCIAF stated:

They are definitely in the right camp, aren’t they? They are talking about very closely related things. ... but I think wellbeing is more passing than flourishing. Flourishing is about the individual being able to live their potential, to really play their role in the world. When I think of wellbeing it’s more passive, about the state I’m in (Interviewee I10, 2020).

The informant went on:

I tend to think of Integral Human Development as the process and flourishing as ... the result, so in that sense I think of wellbeing and flourishing as more equivalent. Essentially, I’m thinking that wellbeing gets used a lot in secular contexts and maybe flourishing, Integral Human Development, tends to be used more within the Catholic community. I mean flourishing is used pretty widely across faiths, I think (Interviewee I10, 2020).

Another informant said something similar, interestingly referencing a Protestant theologian:

wellbeing is what the human development index covers, while human flourishing is when we realise, and then I quote Protestant Miroslav Volf: “life is only truly good
when one, it goes well; two, we lead it well; and three, it is plausable” (SCIAF Interviewee I17, 2020).

While the informant drew a distinction between Catholic and secular definitions of wellbeing, in fact the three-part definition of flourishing he offers is close to the emerging consensus outlined above. Moreover, the use of terms is far from consistent either within the Catholic tradition or elsewhere. Wellbeing truly does seem to be a field of associated ideas rather than a set of clearly defined terms. Wellbeing is used in a variety of ways by Catholic organisations, sometimes in the same documents. Moreover, the term flourishing is not limited to individuals and organisations from a faith-background. Rather it is generally associated with a eudemonic interpretation of wellbeing, one with a strong moral element. Some secular writers have made a claim for the term flourishing over wellbeing, suggesting it represents a eudemonic conception of wellbeing which is more useful than a focus on happiness or subjective wellbeing. The New Economics Foundation, Seaford, and Harvard University all explicitly make use of the term flourishing (Abdallah et al., 2011; Abdallah and Quick, n.d.; Seaford, 2018; The Pluralism Project, Harvard University, 2022).

As is evident in the quotes, for Christians there are differences in terminology and substance between religious and secular conceptions of wellbeing. These differences are a preoccupation for some individuals and faith-based organisations. However, the differences reside not in the inclusion of spiritualism or transcendence in conceptions of wellbeing per se, or the nature of the work that is done, or even perhaps in the values that actors hold, but in the belief in the existence of a God, and that true flourishing is to experience a connection with God. To “see the face of Christ” in an act of Charity for example (Interviewee I5, 2019).

Organisations

To understand why and how organisations have engaged with wellbeing as a policy and practice issue it is useful to unpack how organisations actually function, and how they make and implement policies. While it is true that organisations exist, have legal standing, and “do things”, their communication and actions are the result of decisions made by people within them. These may be instant decisions by one or more powerful individuals, or they may be the result of internal negotiation and lobbying (Freeman, 2019). They may be the cumulative result of multiple small decisions. They may be the result of “the way we do things around here” or individual interpretations or decisions about policy and practice (Lipsky, 1980).

Organisations are typically thought of as characterised by structure, hierarchy and rationality. While this is more or less true, depending on the organisation, they are also social communities of individuals, with many faces, many aspects. The “tightness” of “coupling” between different units or functions (such as communication and implementation) varies between organisations and within them (Basu et al., 1999; Ingersoll, 1993). It important when

21 It is used to refer to both the material aspects of life (“Each person must have access to a level of well-being necessary for his [sic] full development”) (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p. 86) and to a broader, overall conception of wellbeing (Wealth ... is ... used as a means for promoting the well-being of all men and all peoples and for preventing their exclusion and exploitation” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, p. 87). Like the term wellbeing, IHD is used in a variety of ways. Reviewing CRS’s use of the term, Grassl points out that it is used in three different senses in the Users’ Guide: as a goal, as a process towards the goal, and as an outcome of the process (Grassl, 2013, p. 2). Caritas Australia refers to wellbeing in different ways in the framework – as an overall state of being and aim, and at the same time related to elements of the whole such as “socioeconomic wellbeing” (Caritas Australia, 2014).
analysing organisations to consider them as both institutions in themselves and as communities, to “lift the lid” and attempt to understand how decisions were actually made.

There is a significant body of literature on organisations within the fields of organisation and management theory (Thompson and McHugh, 2003) and to some extent within the social sciences and international development. Many are relevant to this study, and particularly the links between policy and practice (Hughes, 2014; Hughes and Randall, 2013). I have not identified one defining theory but rather frames of reference and approaches to analysis, as suggested by Handy (1993) and Silverman (1970). These include Mosse’s ethnography of aid policy and practice (2005), Lipsky’s study of “street level bureaucrats” (1980), Ackroyd et al’s study of policy implementation (Ackroyd and Thompson, 2011), Crewe and Harrison’s consideration of “who’s development” (1998), Silverman’s discussion of the sociology of organisations (1970), Mintzberg’s organisational theory (1979) and Handy’s Understanding Organizations (1993). Mebrahtu’s combination of structural and actor-oriented approaches provided useful insights (Mebrahtu, 2004), and fits well with the general approach to wellbeing that acknowledges individual agency and autonomy but in the context of structures, processes and resources that shape how that agency and autonomy can be understood and exercised (Gough, 2004; McGregor, 2018). I have also made use of theories of organisational behaviour in relation to reporting and communication, and particularly Stakeholder and Legitimacy theories.

Organisations come in a variety of types and sizes. Usefully organisational theory identifies a relatively small number of organisational types from the large range of actual organisations (Frenie and MacVicar, 2011; Handy, 1988; Mintzberg, 1979; Morgan, 2011). It is worthwhile noting several important points from the literature.

Firstly, organisations are different from each other. But these differences are driven by a small number of identified factors – purpose, size, the kind of work they are engaged in, legal status, external environment and their own history. These influence how they are structured and how they function. While those factors are shared by every organisation, they combine in specific ways, making each individual organisation unique (Handy, 1993).

Secondly, internally, organisations are usually structured along relatively standard lines. Mintzberg identified standard elements common in varying degrees to all organisations (Mintzberg, 1979).
Of relevance to international NGOs are geographical divisions. Mebrahtu distinguished between head office, country office and field office (Mebrahtu, 2004). In his analysis of views of accountability in Oxfam Australia, Roche identified differences between “field and home office staff” (Roche, 2015). All five of the basic parts of an organisation identified by Mintzberg may be present in each of these divisions, highlighting the complexity that can exist within an organisation, particularly a multi-national organisation.

Thirdly, organisations are social rather than mechanical in their nature. From original conceptions of organisations as machines, increasingly organisations have come to be seen as social institutions, the sites of ongoing internal negotiation and conflict between individuals and groups, mediated through internal hierarchies (Mosse, 2005, p. 130; Roche, 2015). Organisations are heterogenous communities replete with competition, collaboration and coordination (Handy, 1993; Silverman, 1970). Handy argues this is particularly true of voluntary organisations (Handy, 1988, p. 21).

Fourthly, they are dynamic, open systems, inextricably linked to their environments, engaged in an ongoing interaction with them. Influenced and impacted upon by changing external environment, they adapt and change to reflect these changing external realities (Lipsky, 1980, p. 192). Observers of for-profit and not-for-profit organisations have considered how organisations engage with their environments, and internal and external stakeholders, and how language and communication both reflects these influences and in turn is used to influence them (Conway et al., 2015; Fifka, 2013). Organisations respond to both internal and external influences. Separating out the two can be difficult as they respond in complex ways to wider debates and trends in society, as well as direct interventions. Individuals within NGOs become interested in these ideas and question their own practice, introducing external ideas into organisation in subtle and indirect ways. Original missions, mandates and governance structures play important roles. If the priorities and interests of funders shift to stay relevant organisations must shift with them, rhetorically at least. When analysing shifts in explicit policy of organisations we can point to these internal and external factors.

Fifthly, they can be resistant to change, for a variety of reasons. Some of the most important are entrenched interests and organisational culture(s) (Thompson and McHugh, 2003, p. 59).
Organisational culture “comprises the shared set of beliefs, expectations, values, norms and work routines that influence how members of an organization relate to one another and work together to achieve organizational goals” (Frenie and MacVicar, 2011, p. 379). These are influenced by the size of the organisation, the kind of work that is done, the environment and the history of the organisation (Handy, 1988). Organisations usually have a dominant culture that typifies the organisation and exerts a powerful influence on how things are done, which ideas and changes are adopted, and which fail to gain traction. There may also be several cultures within an organisation, situated within the different teams, departments or divisions (Thompson and McHugh, 2003, p. 59). At the same time culture can and does change, is “managed” (Frenie and MacVicar, 2011, pp. 379–389). Handy argued that British voluntary organisations are particularly influenced by their own history, and this characteristic acts as a block to change and innovation, and adaptation to new external realities (Handy, 1988, p. 83).

Sixthly, people, personalities and power matter. Leadership matters. Leadership, and power, have different sources. Positional authority and power are fundamental but can be mediated by leadership exhibited by individuals who bring other forms of power to bear. Who decides to support or oppose a new approach or proposal affects whether it is successful or not (Eyben and Ladbury, 1995, pp. 4–5). Given the multitude of possible initiatives open to an organisation at any one time the factors that determine which of these (if any) gain traction are multiple but are often personal. Changes of staff can have a profound impact on the changing life chances of a policy proposal. Power matters and takes many forms (positional, personal, expert), is distributed throughout organisations, and is dynamic, influenced by a number of factors including people and personalities. Policy ideas may lie dormant for periods until an opportunity arises (Thompson and McHugh, 2003).

These insights help to unpack organisations and assist the analysis of policy and practice. The ideal view of policy-making is of a technical and rational process derived from an objective and dispassionate weighing up different factors. A more realistic view regards policy-making as a dynamic and uncertain process of negotiation and contest between different parties over priorities, interpretations, and access to the levers of power (Sabatier, 2007; Scott, 2012, p. 9 referring to Flyvberg 1998). The academic literature has explored the gap between the theory of a rational, orderly and phased approach to public policy making and the reality of an iterative, contested and essentially messy reality (Institute for Government, 2011; Stone, 2002; van Ostaijen and Jhagroe, 2015).

Once agreed, formal policy may become practice. However, translating stated aims into practice is far from straightforward. The delivery of agreed policy involves interpretation and choices by those that actually do the implementation – and these may subvert or change policy (Ackroyd and Thompson, 2011; Lipsky, 1980). Even when a policy is known and understood by all those involved in its implementation, the process and results can look quite different to what its authors intended (Ackroyd and Thompson, 2011; Lipsky, 1980). Anthropologists researching the reality of organisational life highlight that not only can practice vary from policy (Lipsky, 1980), but that this may be intentional or at least functional (Mosse, 2005, 2004). Lipsky explored how organisational policy is made in practice by the day-to-day decisions and practices of street-level bureaucrats - the public facing staff of public organisations. Lipsky argues that:

public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers (Lipsky, 1980, p. xii).
These comments are applicable to international NGOs (Mebrahtu, 2004). Goetz studied fieldworkers in projects in Bangladesh and reached similar conclusions about the way that field workers influence how policy is implemented through their own decision-making (Goetz, 1996). Eyben and Giujt analysed the “squeezed middle” of middle managers and intermediary organisations that play a two-faced role between funders and intended beneficiaries (Eyben et al., 2015, p. 7).

Going further, Mosse argues that the relationship between policy and practice is not always from policy to practice. In fact, he argues it is usually in the opposite direction. Mosse points out that policy is often a device for explaining and legitimising practice, rather than a driver of it (Mosse, 2005). Eyben describes the “creative adaptation” by the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) in using the language of results-based management in ways that suited its objectives rather than those of its funders (Eyben et al., 2015, p. 33). The work of NGOs and its outcomes are multiple and multi-faceted, with a variety of meanings for different stakeholders. The same policy or practice can bear different interpretations (Crewe and Harrison, 1998).

We should not suggest formal policy-making is irrelevant. There are multiple examples of deliberate efforts to guide practice through policy which do influence what happens, even if they do not determine it in every detail (Mebrahtu, 2004). In such cases the issue of leadership becomes critical – sustained and committed leadership may be required to see a policy through to implementation. However, that will only be possible for a relatively small number of policies.

This unpacking of organisations, and a more realistic understanding of policy formulation processes, suggests that policies are arrived at through a varying combination of technical review processes, rational and dispassionate decision-making by senior leadership and ongoing internal conflicts, negotiations, interpretations and decisions by staff at different points within an organisation (Basu et al., 1999; Mintzberg, 1979, pp. 50–51; Mosse, 2013). Moreover, while formal structures and pronouncements matter, so too do informal structures, the different cultures in different parts of the organisation, and individuals and their own particular choices and power. Formal policies are mediated through these formal and informal structures and the behaviour and misbehaviour of staff and managers (Ackroyd and Thompson, 2011). Actual implementation may often look quite different to that intended by policy makers. Together these factors suggest policy formation and implementation in organisations is a complex, dynamic and contingent process, influenced by a large number of dynamic factors.

**DRIVERS OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC REPORTING**

Historically, researchers into the communication and reporting of organisations have been primarily interested in for-profit organisations. Investors in businesses are interested to know how they are run, and regulators and pressure groups are interested to know if companies are behaving in line with the law and policy initiatives. This has been particularly true where pressure groups and legislators have sought to encourage companies to act in ways that protect or preserve the environment, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, or promote particular ends like the dismantling of apartheid. Companies have sought to protect themselves from such pressures in part through communication with these different stakeholders, and how they present their organisations to the outside world. Increasingly however researchers have turned their attention to NGOs.
Corporate researchers have developed a number of theories and approaches to guide their analysis and interpretation of organisations’ public statements, and particularly annual reports. Principle amongst these are Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory, the Political Economy of Accounting, and Political Cost Theory. These all provide valuable perspectives on the role that public dialogue has for organisations. Stakeholder Theory argues that an organisation’s management will take on and report on activities expected by their stakeholders (Guthrie et al., 2004). Legitimacy Theory considers a wider range of influences on organisations, arguing they are influenced by and have an influence upon the society in which they operate. Going beyond a transactional relationship between stakeholders, Legitimacy Theory proposes that organisations need their activities to be seen as legitimate within the bounds and norms of the societies within which they function (Conway et al., 2015). The theory has been critiqued and developed over time (Deegan, 2018). Abeysekera’s use of a Political Economy Approach is very close to the Stakeholder and Legitimacy theories in that it considers how firms use reporting to “sustain and legitimise their activities to social, economic and political constituents” (Abeysekera, 2008, p. 10). Similarly, the Political Cost Theory used by Gammerschag suggests managers are concerned with both internal and external factors, and use communication to influence regulation and taxation upon them (Gammerschag et al., 2011).

Essentially these different theories situate organisations within a web of relationships, some internal, some external, which need to be managed, in part through communication. Different stakeholders have different needs and different levels of influence. Annual reports play an important role in that communication and can be used as a way to analyse that communication. The different theoretical approaches can be considered complementary (Gray et al., 1995).

More recently some researchers have turned their attention to NGOs and the theory of Impression Management and how NGOs use Impression Management techniques in their annual reports to influence perceptions amongst their different stakeholder groups (Conway et al., 2015; Kshitij and Irvine, 2018). This theory explores how (rather than why) organisations try to influence how they are perceived rather than why and how they respond to perceptions. While I am sceptical of the value of Impression Management as a “theory” it is interesting to see it turned upon NGOs, reflecting a growing willingness to challenge the intentions and practices of charitable organisations.

Exploring the different determinants of organisational behaviour between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations - and whether there is a structural difference at all – is a potentially interesting area of research. This is particularly relevant given the efforts at collaboration between the two in recent decades in development and humanitarian interventions, perhaps turbo charged by the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine (Aly, 2022). Understanding these determinants could assist with developing mutually rewarding partnerships and understanding what the limits of such partnerships would be. The emergence of social enterprises adds another level of nuance. Much like the faith versus secular organisational debate, the answer may lie in a case-by-case analysis rather than an assumption that being profit- or values-driven is enough to define an organisation.

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22 These terms derive from the USA. I have used them here because they highlight the principal difference between the two types of organisation. A clearer distinction might be “profit-led” or “value-led”. However, as with most things, this is more a spectrum than a binary distinction.
Research on corporate disclosure has identified a set of internal and external factors that influence the level of corporate responsibility reporting. Important internal factors include: i) the size of the organisation, the ii) industry it operates in, iii) the attitudes of the key managers, iv) the interests of internal stakeholders, v) ownership (or perhaps in the case of NGOs, governance) structure, vi) level of indebtedness (Brammer and Pavelin, 2006 particularly highlighted the last two). When applying this to NGOs I suggest considering governance rather than ownership, and the size, source and structure of their income (particularly the volumes and ratio of unrestricted to restricted income), rather than indebtedness.\footnote{Restricted and unrestricted are used here to signify income that is tied to specific purposes or interventions and over which the organisation has legal or contractual obligations to do so, and income over which the organisation has flexibility to decide on this usage.}

External factors include: i) regulatory environments (Gammerschag et al., 2011), ii) the level of public and media pressure, and iii) the political and socio-economic environment (Fifka, 2013). One informant from Traidcraft suggested that wellbeing had acquired the status of a “zeitgeist” and this in part explained its popularity. (See below.) Fifka notes a longitudinal study that found political developments and policy changes over time influenced the level of environmental reporting by companies (citing Gray et al, 1995) and that exposure to criticism had a strong influence on reporting (citing Campbell, 2000). The influence of financial performance (good or bad) is unclear.

Drawing definitive conclusions about the influence of individual factors or combinations of them on what an organisation reports has been difficult (Fifka, 2013). This is to be expected. The different factors will combine in a particular way in each individual case, making prediction difficult. This body of research correlates well with the literature on organisations and policy-making within them, and provides some theoretical perspectives and a set of issues to consider when interpreting the contents of organisational annual reports, but no formula for \textit{a priori} determining the level or kind of reporting. There is relatively little research on small and medium organisations (measured by income) – the kinds of organisations much of this research is focused on (Fifka, 2013, p. 27).

This is the organisational context in which policy and practice on wellbeing is made, and organisations communicate internally and externally. These factors and their inter-relationships are set out in Figure 3.6 below. The diagram (prepared by the author) presents the complex web of structures, factors, spaces and processes (formal and informal) within an organisation and how they interact both internally and externally. It sets out:

- The organisational context or space within that internal context. Within the organisational space are set out:
  - formal structures (a la Mintzberg) – in black and bold. These are show with two-way arrows to indicate the ongoing interaction between the different elements of the structure. They are positioned at the centre of the diagram as these provide the basic structure within which organisational behaviour is carried out.
  - the formal and informal processes of policy, practice, and communication and representation – in blue and italics. Again, these are shown with two-way arrows to show the interactions between them.
  - the internal factors that influence these processes – in green and italics. These are the factors to influence how people work within the structures and engage
in the processes. They may be formal – such as policies and procedures, and how power is formally distributed. Other factors may be structural, such as the size and kind of work that the organisation does. Other influences are less formal such as the dominant culture and any sub-cultures in the organisation. Finally, the influence of individuals and their particular personalities, interests, relationships and how they choose to exercise their own voice and agency.

- The external context, and the signals, incentives, pressures that it exerts on the organisation. These include direct and explicit influences such as legislation or media criticism, to more general factors such as the “zeitgeist” of the time. The organisation is portrayed as an open system (with a porous boundary) from and to the external environment between the organisation as a whole and its individual members.

The diagram highlights the notion of an open and social system where policy-making and implementation is an uncertain, negotiated, contextual and dynamic process (Lipsky, 1980) and the various factors that should be considered when analysing how and why a policy is made, and becomes practice. The diagram draws on Mintzberg’s five basic elements of organisations (Mintzberg, 1979). It acknowledges the importance of both structure and individual agency. It draws on Stakeholder and Legitimacy theories to pick out the key signals and influences on organisational reporting and communication.
Fig. 3.6 Organisations and their External Context (By Author)

Organisations respond to the environment and seek to manage its influences, and possibly influence them.

Every individual interacts with society, bringing different views and priorities in and out of the organisation. Ideas and influences enter through direct and indirect routes. Leadership of ideas and priorities can be structural / positional, but it can come from across an organisation. The influence of individuals on policy and practice is mediated by structural, cultural, and personal factors. The result is contingent on this complex and dynamic process.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

To understand how Christian-rooted international development NGOs have engaged with the concept of wellbeing, my research design used an Abductive research strategy, intended to answer how NGOs have engaged or not with wellbeing, why they have done so, and with what results. In particular I set out to explore if an engagement with wellbeing had achieved the promises of better information and practice, shifting power and greater democratisation, and providing space for alternative views of human development and wellbeing. It aimed to produce understanding rather than an explanation. This seemed the most appropriate strategy for an issue that involved developing an understanding of individual and group action, in part at least formed by their own interpretations (Blaikie, 2010, p. 89).

The working hypothesis of the research was that organisations had increased their engagement with wellbeing, both in terms of the number of agencies and the depth of engagement, and that this impacted on their policy and practice. The literature on wellbeing and international development suggests that these organisations might focus on eudemonic interpretations of wellbeing, and use domain sets and a mixture of objective, subjective and relational issues to assess wellbeing. Organisational theory suggested that organisations are open, social systems and the motivating factors would be a combination of both external influences (public and media pressure, legislation and statutory requirements, and the political and social environment) and as internal ones (size, sector, governance structure, management attitude, internal stakeholders, and income structure). Finally, the literature on international development and wellbeing suggests there are key promises of a wellbeing approach which may have motivated and engagement with wellbeing.

A multi-stage approach was used for the research, with the aim of generating data that was both rich enough to inform an analysis of how and why an organisation engages with wellbeing, and to contribute to a theory that had wider applicability. (See Fig.4.1 below.) Guided by an initial focus on international development, wellbeing and faith, a literature review was conducted. This informed a revision of the research focus and questions. These then guided both: a cross-sectional and longitudinal survey of the public literature of UK-based international development NGOs as a whole, in order to assess the degree of engagement at a rhetorical-level with wellbeing; and a number of more detailed case studies of individual organisations that consider if practice has matched the rhetoric. These case studies were chosen to compare and contrast organisations occupying different positions on the faith-based typology developed by Occhipinti. They were complemented with additional information from other organisations occupying a range of positions on the typology from faith-permeated to secular.
Each stage had its own research design and approach. Within both the sector overview and the case study stages a mixed methods approach was used, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in a complementary fashion (Blaikie, 2010, pp. 218–227; Bryman, 2016, pp. 634–660). These are discussed in more detail below. The combination of the sector overview and the case studies was intended to be complementary, providing both an overview of how NGOs have or have not engaged with wellbeing, and in-depth case studies considering in detail the what, the how and the why of this engagement. The choice of case studies is important, particularly if we wish to generalise to wider theory (Yin, 2003). This is discussed in more detail below. The cases were not necessarily derived from the overview sample, although there is some overlap - different sampling logics were used for the overview and the case selection (probability-based versus purposive sampling).

My focus for the cases was on Christian-rooted non-governmental organisations based in the UK and actively engaged with wellbeing. At times I refer to non-UK based organisations and organisations that are secular or from a non-Christian background to provide additional information or for comparative purposes. I have drawn on the wider literature on faith and development more broadly, including the more formal religions (Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Christianity) and what are termed traditional religions (Bompani, 2015; Ellis, n.d.; Ellis and Haar, 2004; Kim, 2007; Kroessin, 2008; Rakodi, 2007; Tomalin, 2015, 2009; Turner and Salemink, 2015; Verhelst and Tyndale, 2002, 2002; Verhelst, 1987). I also consulted the literature of NGOs from non-Christian backgrounds (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2014; Pertek et al., 2019; Sadiq, 2009). An unsuccessful attempt was made to include a Muslim organisation in the cases.

**LOOKING ACROSS THE SECTOR**

The sector overview aimed to understand the extent to which the term wellbeing is used by NGOs, how it is used, if this has changed over time, and identify factors that influenced those changes.
For this review organisational Annual Reports as submitted to the charities regulatory body were identified as the most suitable source, providing comprehensive data on UK-based NGOs over a suitable period of time. This provided an overview of the extent to which these organisations had engaged with wellbeing in their public communications. While these reports must be treated critically as sources, for my purposes they are particularly appropriate. (This is explained in more depth below.) I settled on the use of two text analysis methods in a sequential manner as the best analytical approach: the quantitative Content Analysis approach and a more qualitative narrative analysis (Blaikie, 2010, pp. 218–229). I explored different samples before identifying the most representative one.

A DISCUSSION OF METHODS

As outlined above, there is a significant body of academic research on business reporting. Originally this focused on financial reporting but as expectations and particularly regulation has increased about how companies operate and their impact on a range of environmental and social issues so too has the level of scrutiny and research. Researchers have sought to determine if business reporting can be trusted to provide a fair, accurate and comprehensive picture of an organisation’s compliance with its various obligations, and the expectations of governments, consumers, investors and other stakeholders. Researchers have attempted to understand what companies report, how they report, and what internal and external factors influence reporting.

Different approaches and methods for the analysis of corporate disclosure have been developed and tested. In his meta-analysis of the global literature on corporate responsibility reporting Fifka concluded that quantitative Content Analysis of companies’ annual reports has been the most frequently used research method and source of data (Fifka, 2013). Content Analysis has been used extensively in the analysis of corporate annual reports to assess the level of disclosures on environment, social and human resource issues (Bryan, 1997; Cowen et al., 1987; Gray et al., 1995; Guthrie et al., 2004; Milne and Adler, 1999; Petera et al., 2020; Rutherford, 2003; Vithana et al., 2021). It has recently been applied to NGO annual reports, primarily in Australia (Conway et al., 2015; Kshitij and Irvine, 2018).

Content Analysis is a quantitative method for the analysis of text (and more recently images and sound). It is defined as “the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (Neuendorf, 2019, p. 2). Guthrie et al, citing Krippendorff, 1980, made a complementary definition: Content Analysis "is a method of codifying the text of writing into various groups or categories based on selected criteria. It assumes that frequency indicates the importance of the subject matter" (Guthrie et al., 2004, p. 287). Content Analysis has been deliberately developed as a scientific method. It is intended to be systematic, with a series of codified steps and quality assurance measures, including full disclosure on data sources, coding and analysis and the use of statistical measures to assess data quality. The aim is to have a method that produces reliable and valid results, that can be validated with statistical methods, and can be replicated and tested by others (Guthrie et al., 2004; Krippendorff, 2013; Milne and Adler, 1999; Unerman, 2000).

In Content Analysis a set of hypotheses are developed in advance of data collection, based on relevant theory. These hypotheses are used to develop a set of codes that are used in the analysis of the text. The documents are typically divided into sections (vision/strategy, director’s section, business/ operational; financial; remaining) - only certain sections are included in the analysis. A unit of analysis is defined – usually a word, sentence or paragraph.
The relevant sections are then analysed, the units of analysis being coded using these pre-determined codes. In a bid to ensure consistency and comprehensive analysis, often more than one coder is involved, and after coding the different coders compare coded text, identify areas of disagreement and where they disagree seek an agreed position. The remaining areas of disagreement determine the most common statistical measure for the reliability of the analysis – the reliability coefficient (Neuendorf, 2019, chap. 6).

Neuendorf suggests that combining the quantitative Content Analysis method with a qualitative one can be a valuable research approach. Neuendorf cites Gray and Densten (1988):

Quantitative and qualitative research may be viewed as different ways of examining the same research problem [and that this triangulation of methods] ... strengthens the researcher’s claims for the validity of the conclusions drawn where mutual confirmation of results can be demonstrated (Neuendorf, 2019, p. 22).

Other researchers have embraced this approach (Petera et al., 2020). In line with this, a mixed methods approach, using an adapted version of Content Analysis and a qualitative narrative analysis. This developed iteratively and is described here largely as it occurred, which encourages transparency and testing by other researchers (Bryman, 2016). Initially on words were as the “unit of analysis” and the Content Analysis searched for two specific terms (“wellbeing” and “well-being”) to assess the level of interest in them (Unerman, 2000). Given the number of documents to be reviewed (349) this seemed the most feasible approach, and one that offered the accuracy and consistency of a computer search. The choice of the terms wellbeing and well-being were justified given my focus on the concept.

The reports were analysed using Adobe Acrobat, using the search function. Some documents could not be read by Adobe Acrobat, and these were converted to MS Word and the same search terms were used. Double-checking the consistency and comprehensiveness of the searches by repeating the searches in the respective software programmes, and manually checking a sample, revealed that the search function occasionally missed some instances of “wellbeing” or “well-being”. As a result, a complementary search for “well” was used. In most cases this confirmed the earlier search results, but in a very small number of cases identified missed cases. This was repeated until no errors were identified.

Initially a simple count of the number of occurrences of wellbeing for the three points in time was prepared. The frequency of usage of wellbeing was initially taken as proxy indicators of engagement with wellbeing, as per the Content Analysis methodology.

Using a qualitative text analysis approach, the context in which the words were used was analysed in order to understand if they were relevant to the enquiry. This provided greater information on the meaning ascribed to the term in the document. A verbatim notation was made of the text in each case that the terms wellbeing, well-being, flourish, person-centred, human-centred, quality of life, holistic, and integrated were used. Where these were judged to refer to wellbeing they were counted, but ignored when it did not. The text was noted (full or part sentence as appropriate to provide meaningful context to the term) on an excel worksheet.

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24 The keywords used were wellbeing, well-being, thrive, flourish, power, and rights. Looking in more detail at usage, the terms wellbeing and well-being are used in different ways by different organisations, and by the same organisations in the same reports. Often both terms were used in the same report, once in the same sentence. I have treated them as synonymous.
For further analysis, the notated text was copied to a MS Word document where it was analysed using the search function to look for specific key words. It was later imported into nVivo 12 in order to create WordClouds for additional analysis, using key words from the sentences or part sentences where wellbeing appeared. Text that related to the use of the term such as types of wellbeing (spiritual for example) were included. Extraneous text was excluded. nVivo 12 was set to include the 100 most common words from this selected text. Only 80 words were actually included in the analysis.

Three different samples were tested in order to identify a suitably representative sample. (See below for details.) This also provided an opportunity to test and refine the method of analysis. For the third sample, I used a finalised methodology:

1. In line with some approaches to Content Analysis (Guthrie et al., 2004) the reports were divided into five sections and analysis focused on selected sections (vision/strategy, statements by Chief Executive and/or Chair of the Board, main body of the report), ignoring the financial sections and other notes. This tested whether excluding those sections and some of the more “mechanistic” repetitions might give a more meaningful count. A comparison between selected sections and whole documents was included in the analysis.

2. The qualitative narrative analysis steps were expanded, reviewing in more depth the usage of the words in the context of the document to understand what was intended by the use of the term.

3. Additional search terms were included for the content and narrative analysis: thrive, flourish, integrated, holistic, centred (to cover people-centred or similar) and Quality of Life. Based on the earlier analysis it appeared a focus on two terms (“wellbeing” and “well-being”) was too narrow, excluding different words or phrases with a similar meaning and thus missing relevant cases. Contextual issues were added to test possible relationships with safeguarding and the COVID-19 pandemic. The earlier analysis of the texts suggested it would be worthwhile to look at alternative terms like Quality of Life, thrive and flourish, which are often used to signify similar ideas to wellbeing. For example, an organisation might state their aim is to help people to “survive and thrive”. In such a case this was included in the analysis, but a breakdown of different terms was included. At times the terms were excluded – when used in was that did not relate to wellbeing. For example, when thrive related to people and an aspiration for them, it was counted. When it related to an organisation thriving it was not. When integrated or holistic was used to refer to multifactor drivers of human wellbeing it was counted. When centred was used to indicate some form of person-centred approach it was counted.

Refining the quantitative method in line with some Content Analysis approaches, by limiting the analysis to certain report sections (essentially excluding the financial sections and associated notes) did change the number of references but did not significantly alter the overall picture. Age UK / International for example still had the most references – at 37. Wellbeing references appear consistently throughout the report: in the organisation’s aims, the statement from the CEO and the main body of the report.

Moreover, while excluding the finance sections of reports may account for formulaic repetition of terms in those sections, is this actually meaningful? For example, United Purpose mentions wellbeing 16 times in its 2021 report. Ten of these mentions are in the financial section and are excluded under this measure. Yet many of these references relate to income...
and expenditure against a Health and Wellbeing work area, which is 39% of organisational spend. Is this something to be ignored? Or does it in fact reflect the level of importance attached to wellbeing? This illustrates some of the challenges of quantitative Content Analysis and the value of combining it with narrative analysis. Overall, 27 organisations mentioned wellbeing in their objectives, values or strategy; 17 had mention of it in their CEO or Board Chair statements; 87 referenced the term in the main body of their reports. The significance of this is unclear. Is it more important that wellbeing is referenced in the objectives and strategy, or in the CEO’s statement, than in the main body of the report? Only a more in-depth assessment can address these questions.

A DISCUSSION OF SOURCES

Company annual reports are an important and well used source of data in the academic fields of business, finance and accounting (Cowen et al., 1987; Flack, 2007; Gray et al., 1995; Guthrie et al., 2004; Li, 2010; Rutherford, 2003). Annual narrative and financial reports are generally the only statutory public reporting requirement upon legally constituted organisations. As a result they are the only publicly available and comparable document between them (Guthrie et al., 2004), and have become a principle source of information for comparative research on profit-making organisations (Campbell, 2000).

In the UK any legally registered charity is required to prepare and file an annual report with their statutory regulatory body. In addition, until recently all charities in the UK had to register as a Company Limited by Guarantee for legal reasons, and those with an income over £25,000 per year have to provide an annual report to the UK Government’s Companies House alongside the report to their charity regulator. In practice, most organisations use the same report for both. The legal reporting requirements are limited but require narrative and financial information to allow the authorities to ensure their information is accurate and up-to-date, and that the charity is functioning in line with its charitable objectives and mandate. Interestingly, they are often much more extensive than they have to be, suggesting deliberate efforts to communicate with key stakeholders. The large majority of organisations identified in this sample are registered with the Charity Commission and Companies House. A small minority are registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

While there is a long tradition of research on for-profit organisations, more recently researchers of non-profit organisations have begun using these sources (Conway et al., 2015; Kshitij and Irvine, 2018). Perhaps belatedly, given their importance in providing social and emergency services around the world, charitable organisations have come under increased scrutiny in recent years, and some of the research methods used for profit-making organisations have been adopted for this research. Using these documents in this research similarly provides a systematic and comparative source of documentation for analysis.

The overwhelming majority of researchers have taken the pragmatic view that the annual corporate report can be accepted as an appropriate barometer of a company’s attitude towards social reporting. This is for two reasons: the company has complete editorial control over the document (excluding the audited section); it is usually the

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25 Until 2006 all charities in the UK were registered and regulated by the Charity Commission. Since 2006 charities in Scotland have been able to register with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

26 Those with an income over £10,000 must file an annual return, which is a brief financial report.

27 Since 2011 Scottish charities have been able to legally constitute themselves as Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIOs) which do not need to register as companies and only report to the OSCR. In England and Wales there is a similar Charitable Incorporate Organisation (CIO) status introduced from 2015.
most widely distributed public document produced by the company (Campbell, 2000, pp. 84–5).

There are few accessible and comparable alternatives. Organisations produce a large number of documents. These include large numbers of internal documents (grey literature), few of which will be in the public domain and most will be difficult to access or use for research purposes (Bryman, 2016, pp. 553–4). In addition, depending on their purpose and work, organisations produce varying amounts of reports and documentation intended for public consumption. The growing ability of particularly larger or tech-savvy organisations to segment their audiences and engage with them through a range of channels (including social media) and with different language and messages means there may be a host of public documentation (used in its widest sense). Unerman noted that other documents can provide useful additional information, (Unerman, 2000). This is borne out by this sample where I have sometimes been able to compare annual reports with other documentation. For example, annual reports could be found for Rethinking Economics but other key documents were identified and consulted.

For the purposes of this research annual reports provide a uniquely relevant and accessible information source. Annual reports are one of the few – perhaps only - consistently available documents in the public domain, as they are both a statutory requirement for organisations legally registered as charities and companies, and are published on UK Government websites. These reports have their limitations as a source of data both as standalone documents and for comparative purposes. They are prepared with the aim of convincing regulators that the organisations meet their statutory requirements and to provide the best possible face they can to the world. Organisations are aware that the documents are publicly available and easily accessible by the general public, potential funders and others. There is a core of information that they must provide due to the regulatory requirements, but they can be brief and may omit many details and more importantly negative aspects of performance. Deegan’s research on for-profit organisations supported the view that organisations use their annual reports as a means to influence society’s perceptions of their operation and legitimising their operations (Deegan et al., 2000).

The reports vary significantly. Differing ambitions and levels of organisational resources that can be dedicated to their production mean they vary in scope, size and quality of presentation. The legal requirements in terms of the format and content of reports are minimal. All are required to provide sufficient overview of the organisation’s work and achievements during the previous year to meet statutory requirements and some financial data is mandatory. They usually set out the organisation’s principal priorities and actions from an official (i.e., senior management) perspective. Many are clearly not intended for a wider audience, do the bare minimum and are rather dry and official documents. Others are clearly written as much for the organisation’s individual supporters and stakeholders, full of colour and photos. This practice is not limited to the large organisations – even the smallest voluntary organisations can produce short documents that talk to these different audiences.

Bryman, citing Scott (1990), recommends that official documents from private sources such as NGOs need to be evaluated against four criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (Bryman, 2016, pp. 546–54). In relation to authenticity Scott

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28 A voluntary organisation dedicated to encouraging an interest in economics.
asks: is the evidence genuine and of unquestionable origin – i.e., are we confident it comes from the source we believe? On this point we can be confident. For credibility Scott asks: is the evidence free from error and distortion. We can assume the reports have a bias in that the author(s) seek to present a positive view of the organisation and one that is consistent with statutory requirements and the expectations of supporters and other stakeholders. They will highlight those aspects of the organisation’s work during the year that they feel do this best. At the same time this bias is both clear and consistent across all organisations – though the ability to do this and the extent to which this is done will vary. Given the consistency and transparency of this bias it is unlikely to introduce error or distortion that undermines the intent of this research. For representativeness Scott asks: is the evidence typical of its kind, and if it is not, is the extent of the untypicality known. I have restricted the document analysis to one particular type of document and sought examples for specified periods for each of the organisations. Where I have not been able to identify or locate these documents, I have not sought alternatives. Finally, for meaning Scott asks: if the evidence is clear and comprehensible. The documents tend to be clearly written and comprehensible. They are undoubtedly partial in the information they present, but as the purpose is to assess whether these organisations have given an explicit focus on wellbeing in their work, if they have chosen not to use the term (or associated ones) in their own synopsis of their work for the period, it seems reasonable to deduct that they have not given wellbeing an explicit focus at a strategic level and it has not become part of the organisation’s rhetoric in the period in question.

Unerman argued annual reports are too much in the moment and thus fail to provide a clear, comprehensive and objective overview of an organisation’s work (Unerman, 2000). This is undoubtedly often the case. Inevitably they provide a partial picture of the organisation’s work (Fifka, 2013) and offers little information of how rhetorical statements have been implemented, why, or with what results. They are written to bolster the reputation of the organisation. Consequently, Unerman critiqued the use of company annual reports as a data source, arguing that “the preparers of the annual report do not have the benefit of hindsight nor the extended period of reflection, and are thus caught up in the moods and passions of their time” (Unerman, 2000, p. 670) [My emphasis added]. For the purposes of this research, however, this perceived weakness becomes a strength. It is reasonable to assume they reflect those issues and terms the leadership consider to be significant and relevant, and reflect the language, priorities and objectives of the organisation. Had an explicit strategic organisational commitment to wellbeing have been made during the year or is part of the language (the rhetoric) of the organisation, it is reasonable to think that there would be mention of it in the report.

Reports were identified through searches first of the UK Charity Commission website (https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/results/search). When reports were not available on the Charity Commission website a second search was carried out on the Companies House website (https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/). In the UK Charities must register as both a Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee, and are required by law to submit annual returns to both. In Scotland there is a separate Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (https://www.oscr.org.uk/) and a relatively new specific legal status for Scottish Charities that does not require separation registration as a company. One of the organisations identified

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29 By strategic I mean a commitment at the organisational level, related to its longer-term overall direction or values, rather than shorter-term operational or tactical decisions.
in Sample 1 moved its registration to the OSCR from the UK Charities Commission in the period under investigation. A full set of reports was accessed from the two regulators. I also carried out a general search on Google for annual reports for those organisations with no reports on any of these sites. Where I was able to identify annual reports, I saved these. Where I was unable to, I have noted this in the table below.

To facilitate comparison between the organisations I selected reports from the same years: those ending in 2011, 2016 and 2021. I took 2011 as the starting point as this came two years after the publication of the Sarkozy Commission’s report, a period I judged would give sufficient time to see the ideas appearing in annual reports. I advanced in five-year periods as this would give a manageable number of documents to assess. Most organisations provide annual returns in accordance with the British tax year (April – March). Where they used a different period, for example 2011 only, I would use that report. If I could not locate a report for 2021 but was able to find one for 2020 or 2019, I used that as a substitute.

It was not possible to find a complete set of substantive documents for all organisations for all three time points. I faced three separate challenges. Firstly, in a few cases, organisations provided the minimum reporting required by law. This is largely financial, and there was insufficient information to assess engagement with wellbeing. Secondly, not all organisations were active throughout the period, and consequently did not post reports for all three time points. Thirdly, for each time period the number of reports that could be accessed reduced significantly, making the time series analysis more limited.

I did consider including a fourth time point for 2005/6 given the major spike of societal, political and academic interest in wellbeing took place between 2008 and 2012. This may have provided a stronger baseline. However, the difficulty in identifying reports for 2010/11 suggested it would be very difficult to obtain a sufficient number of reports for this period. Efforts to do so were largely unsuccessful.

A DISCUSSION OF SAMPLES

A number of samples of NGOs were tested before finding one that seemed representative of the wider group. While the focus on the case studies is on Christian-rooted organisations the samples look across the sector, including both secular and faith-based organisations, and a number of non-UK agencies active in the UK.

UK-based NGOs were chosen for two principal reasons. Firstly, the UK has a large Government and non-governmental civil society development and emergency sector. It has an influential role in the international development sector globally due to historical factors (principally the colonial legacy and the Commonwealth) and high levels of investment in development and emergency interventions and related policy work. While there are other important centres of influence globally the UK is one of the most influential (Center for Global Development, 2021). Secondly, there were practical considerations of scale, access and language. The number of NGOs in the UK means that there is a good source of data; information is accessible due to the regulatory environment and the high level of engagement between (some) charities and their stakeholders; and documents are available in English.

In 2021 there were over 193,000 legally registered charities in the UK. Around 168,000 are registered in England and Wales (Charity Commission for England and Wales, 2018) and over 25,000 registered in Scotland (Office of the Scottish Charity Register, 2022). To select a workable and representative sample from this large number of organisations I looked for an
existing list of charities that identify themselves as working on international development and humanitarian affairs. I identified a number of potential sources including the UN, the EU, the UK and US Governments and sector coordination bodies. A search for lists of NGOs found only three actual lists were available, from the British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND), the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), and the European Commission for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO). I was not able to identify suitable lists from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UN OCHA), the UN Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom (UK) Government’s Department for International Development (DFID), or the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

I judged the BOND list preferable to the ECHO and IATI lists because:

- It is publicly available
- Members of BOND are specifically involved in international development and emergency response interventions
- BOND’s relationship with DFID means that its membership includes significant NGOs from a number of countries, not limited to the UK. BOND membership includes many of the most significant NGOs in the global international development and emergency sectors.

BOND has established itself as the leading network for organisations working in international development in the UK, and most especially England and Wales. (https://www.bond.org.uk/.) Organisations joining BOND self-identify as working in development and humanitarian affairs, and an interest in being part of that sector of work. In 2022 BOND’s membership was reportedly over 420. I decided that this represented an appropriate list of organisations to sample from. Non-UK NGOs registering with BOND suggest an engagement with NGO policy issues related to international development in the UK and its rhetoric that merited their inclusion in the sample.

BOND does not identify organisations as faith-based or not. To determine if an organisation was faith-based each organisation was reviewed based on their key organisational statements. Those that made specific mention to a basis in faith or fundraising or supporter mobilisation via religious events were identified as faith-based. Where the language seemed typical of a faith-based organisation, but no specific reference was made to either of the two points above they were marked as secular. Of the 423 members 51 or 12% were identified as faith-based. This covered a range of faiths from Christian (Catholic and Protestant), to Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Quaker and Sikh. The faith basis or origins of the organisation were rarely obvious from the organisation’s name. I did not use this categorisation when selecting the sample, but was used in the analysis after the sample had been selected.

**Sample 1.**

An initial, small sample was tested, drawn from the BOND membership list, but found inadequate. My initial research design suggested a minimum of twenty organisations will be purposively sampled against the following criteria:

- An explicit focus on international development
- Organisations with a budget larger than £1 million
- A mix of original home country registrations (i.e., while registered in the UK the organisation may have a founding or head office in another state. For example,
GOAL UK is a subsidiary of GOAL Ireland, CARE UK’s origin is the US. Including these will give an indication of how far ideas of wellbeing are present beyond the UK

- A mix of secular and faith-inspired organisations
- A mix of faiths (Christian, Muslim, other as available).

The logic underpinning the proposed sampling was that these agencies would provide a cross-section of significant agencies in the international development sector, across secular and religious-inspirations, and to some extent across international boundaries. The value of income was used as an indicator of organisational size, with the intention that the sample included agencies of a sufficient scale to be able to engage in such dialogue organisationally, to have the documentation that can be reviewed, and the scale to be implementing significant interventions. It was believed that 20 organisations would provide a sufficient number to be able to generalise from them to the wider group of NGOs. The organisations were chosen randomly from the BOND membership list organised alphabetically, choosing the first organisation and every subsequent 21st case, moving from A to Z.\(^3^0\)

Analysis of this first sample produced some interesting results. Firstly, annual reports could only be identified for about half the organisations – 7 of 16. Secondly, in the reports that were available the occurrence of the term wellbeing (or well-being) was in general quite low – surprisingly low given the working assumptions. Thirdly, frequency of usage varied significantly over time and appeared to be increasing over the 10-year period. Fourthly, the frequency of wellbeing mentions was higher amongst the organisations with the largest reported incomes, potentially supporting the hypothesis. Fifthly, in terms of type of work, the sampled organisations demonstrated significant diversity. I identified five main types of organisations based on the nature of their work: international development and humanitarian agencies; academic and research institutions, media organisation, peace-building organisations, and network organisations. The first group showed significant diversity (size of budgets, working in many countries, some small voluntary organisations supporting a particular village or location, faith) but these were covered by other lines of enquiry. This analysis suggested wellbeing was primarily used by international development and humanitarian organisations. Sixthly, on the axis of faith, the sample showed a similar diversity to the overall list. Three (3) of the sampled organisations were faith-based (15%), which was slightly over the percentage for the whole group. Two of these were Muslim and one was Christian, which again broadly reflected the overall make-up of the whole list. None of the three FBOs mentioned wellbeing in their reports which was surprising – from the literature review it seemed faith-based organisations often engage in debates about wellbeing and argue for holistic, person-centred approaches to development.

Overall, this sample appeared too small and too diverse to be able to draw clear findings from it. Certainly, any conclusions could not be justifiably generalised across the BOND membership. Drawing on the most similar systems (MSS) / most dissimilar systems (MDS) approach to comparative analysis (Lim, 2010, pp. 31–46) I concluded I was comparing a small number of quite dissimilar organisations.

\(^3^0\) The organisations were: Oxfam GB, WWF, BBC Media Trust, Concern Worldwide, Age International, Street Child, Prince’s Trust International, Tropical Health and Education Trust, Muslim Global Relief, Feed the Poor, Water Witness International, the Gender and Development Network, HealthProm, IT Schools Africa, Integrated Village Development Trust, Rethinking Economics, the Centre for International Development and Training, the London International Development Centre, Search for Common Ground UK, and A Leg to Stand, a Hand to Feed.
SAMPLE 2: MEMBERS OF THE DISASTERS EMERGENCY COMMITTEE
The second sample was similarly purposively sampled, and small, but based on similar rather than dissimilar organisations. Noting the similarities between the large-scale international development and humanitarian agencies observed in the first sample, the members of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) were analysed.

The DEC is a network of 15 of the largest non-profit humanitarian organisations in the UK (DEC, n.d.). They came together to maximise and streamline fundraising in the UK for major emergencies, and for large emergencies fundraise jointly for an initial period. The Ukraine crisis in 2022 is a good example – as a body the DEC had raised over £350m in donations by 9th June 2022 for its response to the humanitarian consequences of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (DEC, 2022). Membership is for leading UK charities to “are experts in humanitarian aid and specialise in different areas of disaster response” (DEC, n.d.). Six of the fifteen originated outside the UK but have established UK branches. As a result, there is a level of similarity not evident in the first sample. These organisations are all members of BOND except the British Red Cross, which due to its particular mandate and legal status tends not to be part of such networks31 (BRC, ND). They are very similar in terms of type of work and size. Five of the fifteen are faith-based organisations (33%) – higher than the BOND average.

Data was collected and analysed on this sample in the same way as the first sample. Three of the agencies appeared in the first sample. All the DEC members have an annual income over £50,000,000 - placing them fourth or higher compared to the first sample. Reports were identified and obtained for all three time periods for all but one of the DEC members – a significantly higher success rate than the first sample, giving a more complete picture of the group. This suggests larger agencies file reports more consistently – which makes them easier to study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Against Hunger</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ActionAid</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age International</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Red Cross</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFOD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Aid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern Worldwide</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Relief</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxfam</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan International</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save the Children</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tearfund</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Vision</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results were quite different to the first. All but one of the organisations made reference to wellbeing in their 2020/21 reports (93%). A large majority (87%) saw an increase in the

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31 The British Red Cross’s legal status is based on a Royal Charter rather than registration as a charity or a company.
frequency of use of the term over the period 2011 to 2021. These varied significantly from Sample 1 where 38% of those reporting made reference to wellbeing in the same report. Like the DEC sample, there was an overall increase in the use of the term. There is one clear outlier in the group: Age International (Age UK) which has consistently been the greatest user of the wellbeing term by some margin. Save the Children, and to a lesser extent IRC, are interesting because their usage of the term has increased so dramatically compared with their earlier reports.

This sample provided an interesting alternative to the first sample, with some potentially significant differences. However, I concluded that while representative of a particular type of NGO, this sample was too small, too internally coherent and too different from the first sample and possibly the whole BOND list to justifiably generalise the results to all organisations involved in international development.

**Sample 3: BOND Network Members**

To be able to generalise to the sector a much larger sample seemed necessary. Using a probability-based sampling strategy a sample size of 202 seemed appropriate for this population (5% margin of error, 95% confidence level and 50% response distribution) (RAOSOFT, n.d.). This further confirmed that neither sample 1 nor sample 2 was adequate for generalization. The first sample was too varied, the second sample too similar; both were too small.

To identify the sample from the full BOND membership list a simple random sampling (SRS) method was used (De Vaus, 2014, p. 68). The members of the BOND network were listed in alphabetical order, assigned an ID number from 1 to 423 from A to Z. The Excel random number generator was used to generate 202 numbers to select individual cases. Data was collected for these 202 cases using the same method as used for samples 1 and 2. In a number of cases it was not possible to collect reports, and these were substituted using the next available case in the list. In addition, a number of duplicates (4) were found in the BOND list, and these were substituted in the same way. Ultimately 221 cases were examined, and 202 complete cases were identified and examined.

Sample 3 has 202 cases. Annual income data was available for 201 of the organisations, and varies between a high of £925 million (British Council) to a low of zero. (One organisation had ceased operating in 2020/21.) The mean income was over £26 million, but the distribution of income is skewed in a similar way to Sample 1. Half the organisations reported an income below £2.2 million. Eighty-one organisations reported an income below £1 million. See Figs 4.1 and 4.2 below.

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32 One of the organisations is Dutch and an annual report could not be found.
**DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

The results indicate that the majority of organisations referred to wellbeing in 2020/21. 115 organisations (57%) used the term wellbeing in their annual report. In all there were 510 individual mentions.

Frequency of mention varied considerably. Eighty-seven made no mention of wellbeing. Of those that did use the term, one organisation had 51 mentions, the next most frequent 22 times, followed by 18, 16, and 13. Two organisations recorded counts of 12, 11, 10 and 9 respectively. The mean frequency was 3 and the median 1. Thirty-nine organisations mentioned wellbeing once. Twenty organisations account for almost 50% of all mentions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2. Wellbeing References, 2020/21 Reports, Frequency Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Mention of Wellbeing in 2020/21 Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention of Wellbeing in 2020/21 Reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

The results also suggest usage has increased over the period in question. To obtain a time series it was necessary to use a reduced sample based only on those organisations for which reports were available for the different points in time.

Reports were available for both 2020/21 and 2015/16/17 for 113 organisations. Of these, usage increased from 37% in the first period to 58% in the second. Thirty-nine made no mention of wellbeing in either report (35%). Interestingly eight used the term in the first report but not in the second (7%). In 34 cases (30%) it was mentioned in both periods by the same organisation.

It was possible to locate reports for all three time points for only 31 organisations. Analysing the 31 organisations, the number of organisations referring to wellbeing increased over the period. In 2010/11 eleven of the organisations (35%) referred to wellbeing; in 2015/16 17 (55%) and in 2020/21 19 (61%).

For those organisations that referred to wellbeing, frequency generally increased from the beginning to the end of the period. Sixteen organisations referenced the term more times in 2020/21 than in 2010/11. Two organisations referenced it evenly at all three points. Four made references to wellbeing, but with the fewest or none at the final data point. Nine made no reference at any point. (See Fig 4.4 below). Although this is a small and non-random sample it does suggest usage has increased.

Fig 4.4. Wellbeing References in Annual Reports 2011, 2016, 2021. (Analysis by Author)

A WordCloud was generated to aid analysis, based on the frequency count of wellbeing and different terms used in association with it. Wellbeing was the most frequent at 495,33 health the second at 102, staff third at 98, mental appeared 62 times and child appeared 21 times.

33 This combines wellbeing and well-being.
Three terms appeared between 18 and 13 times; 72 terms appeared nine or less times. Thirty-three appeared once.

The WordCloud illustrates the rich variety of ways the term is used, with a range of associations. There is a strong association with health, both physical and mental. At the same time there is a variety of terms and associations, pointing to the different elements of wellbeing. They span the individual (dignity, health, emotional, mental, spirituality, sexuality, disabilities) to the group (collective, social, communities, family) to the contextual (rights, security, and economics). They include other species, the natural environment (forests), different age groups (children, youth, ageing, adolescents, students, older), and inter-generational considerations (generations, future). Different philosophical, cultural and faith traditions appear through reference to “el buen vivir” and the Sikh concept of “Sarbat da Bhalla” (or positive wellbeing for all). There is a general positivity to the terms (positive, improved, inclusion, enterprise, sustainable, resilience, unity), although there is mention of vulnerability.

Fig 4.5. WorldCloud - Wellbeing References in 2020/21 Annual Reports

The textual analysis bears out the suggestion that wellbeing is a field of associated ideas. Forty-six organisations talked of people “thriving” and 15 mentioned them “flourishing”. Thirty-eight referred to “integrated” approaches to supporting people, and 27 “holistic”
approaches or needs. Twenty-nine organisations mentioned “people-centred approaches”. Fifteen organisations referred to “Quality of Life”. Moreover, usage of these terms tends to be by the same organisations that refer to wellbeing – they seem to be part of the wellbeing lexicon rather than alternatives. Of the 29 organisations that refer to a people-centred approach, 22 also mentioned wellbeing. Of the 15 organisations that referred to Quality of Life, 11 referred to wellbeing. Forty of the 46 that use thrive mention wellbeing; 12 of the 15 that refer to flourish. Thrive and flourish appear together only six times - they seem to be alternatives. Wellbeing is the most popular term but is used in conjunction with these associated ideas.

Based on the text analysis, a number of emerging themes were identified in relation to how wellbeing was used in the reports. The term was used most frequently to talk about human wellbeing in general. Ninety-two (80%) of the 115 organisations that mentioned wellbeing used it in this way. The second most common usage was in relation to “health and wellbeing” (56 (49%) of organisations). Thirty-five organisations used the term in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic (35 organisations, 30%), and 21 in relation to safeguarding (18%). (This includes two references to “protection” judged to be synonyms of “safeguarding”)

In seven cases more unusual formulations were used. These included “safety and wellbeing”, “physical and emotional wellbeing” (CHS); “engagement and wellbeing”, “physical and mental wellbeing”, “mental wellbeing”, “personal, physical, emotional and financial wellbeing” (Comic Relief); “well-being of their communities, lands, and forests” “buen vivir”, “collective well-being” (Forest People’s Programme); “mental health and wellbeing” “staff morale and wellbeing”, “spiritual, social, physical and mental wellbeing” (Leonard Cheshire); “spiritual wellbeing”, “global wellbeing”, “mental well-being” (Muslim Hands); “animal health and wellbeing” (Send a Cow); and “behaviour and wellbeing … of donkeys” (The Donkey Sanctuary). In addition to these formulations the WordCloud highlights associated ideas of wellbeing as “holistic”, being about the young and the old, people and nature; as individual and collective; for some concerned other species as well as humans and including other elements of the natural world; and to future generations.

The term was primarily used in the 2020/21 reports in relation to two sets of people, broadly internal and external groups: the organisations’ staff and volunteers, and those the organisation intended to benefit. Sixty-three (55%) of the 115 organisations referred to the wellbeing of internal staff and volunteers; 92 (80%) referred to external stakeholders. Forty of the organisations referred to both (43%). Twenty-three organisations that mentioned wellbeing only referred to internal stakeholders (25%). Organisations often refer to measures taken to support staff. The Leonard Cheshire annual report 2021 provides a particularly full account of such measures for their staff and volunteers which included fitness and mindfulness sessions ranging “from stand-up comedy to cheerleading, dance, wellbeing, and poetry, they have been particularly valuable to participants who may find social situations difficult” (Leonard Cheshire, 2021, p. 23).

External factors emerge as a principal driver of the focus on the wellbeing of internal and external stakeholders. In the research period these have most particularly been the COVID-19 pandemic and the safeguarding crisis in the international development sector. Organisations report a widespread stated concern about staff wellbeing while they worked remotely and unseen at home in a variety of situations as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns.

34 Or similar such as “survivor-centred”, “person-centred”, “community-centred”, “child-centred”, “youth-centred”.

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For example, United Purpose’s 2021 report referred to “wellbeing” 16 times in relation to the health and wellbeing of staff as a result of COVID-19 and safeguarding. Sector standards and professional bodies also have an influence, often themselves responding to and reinforcing the same external influences. All these organisations are members of BOND which has highlighted the need to strengthen safeguarding systems for staff and project participants (DEC, n.d.). Many are accredited to the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), which is included in the sample, and which encourages organisations to strengthen safeguarding protections and provide effective support and management of staff (CHS, 2021).

Relationships – whether between people, between human generations, between people and animals, between people and the planet – are frequently explicit or implicit in statements about wellbeing. The measures used to promote wellbeing are frequently “relational” – involving and deliberately seeking to facilitate interaction between people. Significant concern was expressed about the enforced isolation of people due to the public health restrictions imposed to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Age UK / International, 2022).

Relatively few organisations provide a definition of wellbeing, though its meaning can be deduced from the terms they use. Trocaire for example refers to “six dimensions of wellbeing” (not specified) (Trocaire, 2021). Three organisations stand out as providing a detailed definition: the Forest People’s Programme, Practical Action, and HelpAge International. The Forest People’s Programme defined it as:

‘el buen vivir’ - an all-encompassing perspective of a holistic healthy way of life not at odds with nature, translated as ‘living well’ (Forest People’s Programme, 2016).

wellbeing is the ability of all individuals and groups to live the lives they value without compromising the ability of others, now and in the future, to do likewise. ... Our work in ... food security and access to energy and clean water are all key to improving material wellbeing ... But wellbeing is also more than this. It’s about the degree of control people have over their lives and the quality of relationships within their communities (Practical Action, 2012b, pp. 16–17).

we have a sense of wellbeing when we are able to lead fulfilling lives with purpose and meaning to them. Our wellbeing is influenced by our own outlook, characteristics and circumstances, our connections to the world around us, and the social, cultural, economic and political systems we are part of ... Dignity is central to wellbeing (HelpAge International, 2020, p. 9).

These definitions are notable for a number of reasons. The first definition because it draws explicitly on ideas from Latin America about wellbeing – understandable given the organisation’s focus. It is also avowedly holistic in relation not only to people but also other animals and the natural environment, and hints at an unstated normative frame of what a good life is. The second definition is explicitly individual and collective, looks to the future as well as the present, is multi-factorial and sees wellbeing as fundamentally linked to people having autonomy and power within collectives where there are healthy relationships with others, and everyone is enabled to live as they wish as long as it does not harm others. The third emphasises purpose and meaning, individual characteristics, and context. Practical Action named its 2012 – 2017 strategy Technology Justice, Wellbeing and Scale, and expanded significantly on its view of wellbeing (Practical Action, 2012a).
These three definitions are far more expansive and comprehensive than the implied definitions of many of the very simple and brief references to wellbeing made in other reports. Usage by some organisations appears to be limited to the health and wellbeing of staff or intended beneficiaries with few wider implications (Mines Advisory Group, 2021).

At the same time, there are clear signs that for many organisations the term wellbeing is shorthand for such a broad definition. Wellbeing features in the organisation’s strategic vision as part of its discussion of health – “We improve health and wellbeing through increasing access to basic services and addressing people’s physical, social and psychological needs” (United Purpose, n.d., p. 7).

The terms are often used in different ways, even with different spellings, in the same document. This can be a detail, representing poor editing, or multiple authors with varied familiarity or interpretations of the term. But it can be more profound, reflecting the ambiguous and flexible nature of the concept and the varied uses to which it is put. For example HelpAge’s Strategic Plan 2020-2030 sets out its mission to “promote the wellbeing and inclusion of older women and men, and reduce poverty and discrimination in later life” (HelpAge International, 2020, p. 3). Here “wellbeing and inclusion” is presented as the overarching aim of HelpAge’s work. Later in the same document wellbeing is presented as one of three elements (“wellbeing, dignity and voice”) that make up “Quality of Life” (QoL). Moreover, while dignity, voice and wellbeing are separated out the three components of QoL, dignity is said to be “central to wellbeing” (HelpAge International, 2020, p. 9) This rather pragmatic and flexible use of the terms highlights the importance of these elements but also their inter-related nature. NGOs are not necessarily aiming for theoretical purity but rather ideas that connect and mobilise support and provide practical tools for work.

Age UK / International emerged as the consistently highest user of the term. It’s usage of the term reflects some of the wider themes identified above. It occupies an unusual position as its report covers both UK and international work, wellbeing is used in relation to both. Age UK / International used the term 51 times in its 2020/21 annual report, 22 times in its 2016 report and 26 times in its 2011 report. The 2020/21 report provides good examples of many of the most common ways in which wellbeing is used. The term is applied to both intended beneficiaries of their work and staff and volunteers. It is embedded in much of the language of the report. The organisation’s charitable objectives cover six areas of activity, one of these being “delivering wellbeing programmes and services” with the aim “being the promotion of the wellbeing of older people”. The organisation stated that its three-year objective was to “deliver wellbeing programmes that have a big impact on wellbeing”. Various work areas, grants and budget titles included the term wellbeing, for example the “Health and Wellbeing Alliance Grant”. Wellbeing was mentioned in relation to safeguarding, defined as “Protecting the health, wellbeing and human rights of our beneficiaries, supporters and colleagues”. The wellbeing of staff and project beneficiaries during the COVID pandemic was a particular concern. The organisation “paid particular attention to the wellbeing and mental health of … staff”, amongst other things surveying the wellbeing status of their staff three times during the year and providing “remote wellbeing support groups … quarterly wellbeing newsletters, [and] … an online wellbeing hub” (Age UK / International, 2022). The report highlights Age UK / International’s concern that “the physical and mental health and wellbeing of many older

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35 Age International and HelpAge International are two formally linked organisations, part of the same group, with distinct roles but with a high level of shared strategy and a common approach to wellbeing.
people has plummeted during the pandemic” and the “longer-term consequences on the health and wellbeing of older people” are feared to be negative.

ASSESSING WELLBEING

There are indications in the reports that some organisations are seeking to hear directly from these internal and external groups about their self-assessed wellbeing. However, information on this remains limited in annual reports. Only eighteen organisations (9%) refer in their 2020/21 annual reports to efforts to measure wellbeing. Nine of these refer to the wellbeing of staff and volunteers; eleven refer to the wellbeing of intended beneficiaries. Two refer to both.

For staff, eight of the nine organisations mentioned using annual and/or pulse 36 surveys of staff to measure wellbeing. Specific questions were not identified, although issues like "feeling safe carrying out their role at work", "feeling resilient", "feeling supported by their line manager" and "feeling they had a good work/life balance" seem to be the kinds of questions posed to respondents. Other methods identified for staff were “check-ins” and regular evaluations.

Less information is presented about measuring the wellbeing of intended beneficiaries. References tended to be generic references to research, studies or evaluations and doorstep check-ins. Check-ins were popular. Surveys were only identified once – the Jewish World Relief referred to annual wellbeing surveys of project participants (World Jewish Relief, 2021). However, it is likely surveys are widely. Numeric results were presented in four cases, two for intended beneficiaries. The Kanaama Interactive Community Support organisation reported they recorded an increase in wellbeing for 30% of clients and no change for 65% (Kanaama Interactive Community Support, 2021). Chance for Childhood reported that the wellbeing of 89% of children they worked with in one project in Rwanda increased (Chance for Childhood, 2021) In other cases wellbeing was identified as an overarching objective for some projects but how this was measured was not specified.

The greater availability of cheap and user-friendly digital survey applications has made these kinds of assessments, particularly within organisations, much more possible and there are indications that a number of organisations are making use of these to conduct occasional and regular surveys of staff, volunteers and potentially project clients. Staff and volunteers provide a more immediately accessible group for consultations, but the increased use of applications like Kobo and coverage of mobile data globally is making this approach more applicable to project participants too. The COVID-19 pandemic may have made these surveys more acceptable as a normal part of life, and the shift to a hybrid working environment in the Global North at least, may embed this as a way to interact with remotely working staff.

The research design posed the question as to why an NGO might engage with wellbeing. Drawing on corporate research and related theories, and particular Legitimacy Theory, a number of factors were considered: the size of an organisation and the type of work it does, the attitudes of key managers and internal stakeholders, ownership or governance structure, income structure, public and media pressure and criticism and the political and socio-economic environment.

One association suggested by the results of the final sample is between the size of an organisation (measured by income) and references to wellbeing. Seventy-one (62%) of the

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36 Surveys that are repeated relatively quickly to gather repeat information on a set of issues.
114 organisations with a reported income that mentioned wellbeing had an income above the median income of £2,155,422. However, within this group there are significant differences in the frequency of mentions. It is unclear if there is any causality underpinning this association.

The categories of “type of work” did not produce a strong pattern of association. Understandably, the large majority of organisations fall into the category of international development and humanitarian organisations. No particular pattern emerged. Just over half (56%) of international development and humanitarian organisations mentioned wellbeing in their 2020/21 annual reports; a similar picture was observed for network bodies. Academic and research institutions and fundraising platforms had skewed results – either all or none mentioning wellbeing, but the samples were too small for drawing general conclusions. Both the professional bodies did but that is probably related to a duty of care to their members. It is interesting to see 80% of conservation and environmental organisations mentioned human wellbeing. Two organisations mentioned animal wellbeing (The Donkey Sanctuary and Send a Cow).

The extensive engagement of an organisation like Age UK / International, with its focus on a specific group of people rather than a particular professional specialism or sector raises the possibility that generalist or person-centred organisations have a particular affinity with wellbeing. However, Plan International with a generalist focus on children and made few mentions of wellbeing in its reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>Number Orgs of this Type</th>
<th>% Orgs of this Type Mentioning Wellbeing</th>
<th>% of Organisations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic / Research Institution</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Care</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation and Environmental Organisations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Platform</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International development and humanitarian agency</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missionary37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97% (rounding errors)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample offers little support for the idea that faith-based organisations per se have a stronger focus on wellbeing than secular organisations. Faith-based organisations represented 12% of sample 3, which is in line with the overall BOND membership. (Faith-based organisations includes missionary organisations and organisations with a founding basis in faith.) Of these, half (50%) did mention wellbeing, slightly lower than the 58% for the whole sample. These are similar results as those for Sample 1 and the DEC sample. None of the three missionary organisations mentioned wellbeing. CAFOD, Christian Aid, Islamic Relief,

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37 Note: these are specifically missionary organisations, not faith-based international development and humanitarian organisations.
Tearfund and World Vision all have a healthy number of mentions but nothing out of the ordinary.

A range of faiths are represented in the sample, including Christian, Sikh, Jewish and Muslim. The results suggest that wellbeing is a theme that resonates across faiths. Khalsa Aid International, a Sikh organisation, identified “the principle of ‘Sarbat Da Bhalla’ (positive wellbeing of all humanity)” as the guide to all of their work (Khalsa Aid International, 2021, p. 5). Zaimah, a Muslim organisation, states that by “restoring the cohesive ties that unite our very affinity as human beings, Zaimah endeavours to remove the increasing negligence for the wellbeing of our fellow man” (Zaimah, 2021, p. 2).

I was not able to investigate issues of management attitudes or financial structuring in the overview. These are considered in more depth in the case studies.

There is, however, significant support for the hypothesis suggested by the literature on Legitimacy Theory that usage has increased in response to an increase in usage in society as a whole, and in response to external events. Organisations are influenced by and seek to influence their environments. Some organisations have no need to do so – their aims and their resources and funding are discrete, autonomous and independent. However, all organisations are affected by changes in society in one way or another (Abeysekera, 2008; Fifka, 2013). Many organisations, for example businesses and public sector organisations, are fundamentally linked to wider society. Charitable organisations are often established with the explicit aim of addressing a social issue and of mobilising support (financial, political, practical) for their particular take on it. Many seek donations from the public and many take grants from Government or private sector institutions. They are therefore fundamentally outward looking, and have to engage with the wider society as they find it, adapting to the debates and ideas that are current within it (Conway et al., 2015). In addition, organisations are made up of people who as individuals are caught up in these wider debates and bring that into the organisation to a greater or lesser degree. The hypothesis that the rhetoric of organisations adjusts to debates in wider society is supported by earlier academic research and the Legitimacy Theory (Conway et al., 2015). Given the increased popularity of references to wellbeing in wider society (Bache and Scott, 2018) and in international development (Chambers, 2014) I expected to see a growing number of organisations using the term and a growing use of the term by them.

As indicated above wellbeing is in 2020/21 frequently mentioned in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and safeguarding, both external events that significant impacted on these organisations. Protecting the rights, dignity and safety of staff, volunteers and project participants (“safeguarding”) has become a huge issue of concern for international development NGOs since 2019 due to media, government and parliamentary criticism and subsequent reductions in funding from official and public sources. COVID-19 was the first truly global pandemic with far-reaching consequences internally and externally for organisations. An anecdotal case that supports this argument is of Traidcraft Exchange. Having adopted an explicit focus on wellbeing relatively early on (around 2010/11), by 2021 the annual report made no mention of the term in the 2021 report. Instead the organisation referred to more recently current concerns – decolonisation and racism in international aid (Traidcraft Exchange, 2021).
CONCLUSIONS

As the literature would suggest, wellbeing – both as a term and a concept - is increasingly established and popular amongst UK-based NGOs. In the most recent reports, the majority (57%) of organisations refer to wellbeing in their annual reports. Frequently this is only one reference - though often as part of an organisations stated mission or core objectives, suggesting it has some power and authority. At the same time many organisations do not use the term, and it may now be competing with similarly important issues that have recently gained urgency in the sector (racism and decolonisation).

The term is used in a rich variety of ways, with differing interpretations and associations. Often it is used to refer to satisfaction, health and happiness. It is applied to different groups of people (staff, volunteers, children, youth, students, the elderly, communities, even “global happiness”), and sometimes to other species and to elements of the natural environment such as forests. It is applied to individual or collective wellbeing, or both. Relationships – whether between people, between human generations, between people and animals, between people and the planet – are frequently explicit or implicit in interpretations of wellbeing.

Again, as the literature would suggest wellbeing appears the preeminent term, but one in a field of associated ideas. While other terms like thrive and flourish are popular, they tend to be used by organisations that also refer to wellbeing. Similarly references to “person-centred” approach or similar tend to be used by organisations that use the term wellbeing.

There are relatively few attempts to explicitly define the term. However, where it has the definitions are expansive – holistic (i.e., considering the whole person and their environment, and considering material and non-material factors), individual and collective (i.e., social), inter-generational, and engaged with other species and the natural world. Other uses often appear quite consistent with this kind of interpretation. They are consistent with the growing literature on wellbeing and international development.

The idea of wellbeing appears to resonate with many NGOs engaged in international development. The expansive interpretation of wellbeing set out above corresponds closely with the emergent consensus on wellbeing in the literature. There is a suggestion that organisations are increasingly asking internal and external stakeholders about their wellbeing, and putting significant emphasis on self-assessments and emotional and psychological wellbeing. There are multiple references in the reports to consultations with staff, volunteers and clients about their wellbeing, and actions taken to improve wellbeing. It appears that some organisations are making regular efforts to consult staff, volunteers and clients about their perceptions of their wellbeing and what can enhance it. They seem keen to create workplaces that are conducive to wellbeing. The frequency of mentions in reports suggests this is less common for intended beneficiaries of interventions, but the evidence is insufficient to draw a conclusion on this point.

The influence of external events and processes on organisational communication seems vindicated by the analysis. Theories of organisational behaviour such as Stakeholder and Legitimacy Theory suggest organisational leadership responds most discernibly to internal and external stakeholders, public criticism, regulation and changes in funding. They are influenced by and seek to influence these external stakeholders and the environment. Annual reports are an important tool for communication to these audiences. The increased concern with wellbeing in society would predict a growing use of the term wellbeing in annual reports,
and usage has increased overall. It has primarily been used in relation to three themes: project impact, wellbeing under COVID-19 and the wellbeing of people affected by safeguarding breaches. COVID-19 has affected everyone since 2020; safeguarding has become particularly salient for international development NGOs operating in the UK in the last few years. The scandal that engulfed Oxfam over safeguarding and sexual exploitation in 2018 continue to cast a long-shadow on NGOs, their reputations and funding (BBC, 2019). It has prevented funding from the UK government until late 2022 (Preston, 2022). These seem to be powerful drivers of the increased focus on wellbeing.

However, organisations are not simply mirrors of society or the playthings of owners or chief executives. The varied factors that influence an organisation’s decision-making and communication mean there are a variety of responses, a diversity of organisations (see Fig 1.1 above for a presentation of these different factors). How an individual organisation responds to these different pressures will vary depending on a large number of factors. A basis in faith has not emerged as a predictor of engagement.

Moreover, mentioning wellbeing in an annual report is not a definitive measure of an organisation’s engagement of with the concept. Rhetoric is not the same as practice. It provides an indicator of its establishment in the rhetoric of development, and its currency and immediate relevance in the minds of report writers and editors. Further analysis is required, triangulated with other information and sources is needed to draw wider conclusions. The analysis suggests that organisational annual reports can provide a useful indicator of organisational thinking and priorities. A mixed methods approach is needed, however. Quantitative analysis provides an indicator of interest but lacks the contextual detail and richness of data about the usage of terms to provide a complete analysis. This piece of work adds to the current literature in a number of ways, developing the analysis of annual reports as a source and the use of content and narrative analysis in their study for NGOs.

What does this mean for policy or practice? There are some hints here, but to understand how and why an organisation engages with wellbeing, additional analysis is required.

**LOOKING IN DEPTH – THE CASES**

**A DISCUSSION OF METHODS**

Case studies are recommended as the preferred social science research approach when “how” or “why” questions are being posed about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 2003, p. 9). Yin stresses that case studies are a research strategy and not a method or technique. They encompass particular methods or techniques, can include both qualitative and quantitative evidence, and make use of different data collection techniques and tools (Yin, 2003, pp. 14–15). The distinguishing feature is a focus on a particular unit of analysis.

The ability to generalise from cases is debated (Blaikie, 2010). Yin argues this derives from a misconception of the case study approach. Case studies are often considered unique, the focus on an individual case in depth giving rich data on that case but having limited applicability to other cases. Yin argues that it is possible to generalise from a case study, but through the use of theory and an understanding of case studies as being more akin to experimental research than probability-based survey research (Yin, 2003, p. 38). At the same

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38 Note that Yin and Blaikie use the term “research strategy” differently. I have used Blaikie’s definition here.
time we should be conscious of the limitations of generalizing and be modest in our aspirations for this (Blaikie, 2010, p. 219).

The cases used for this research were identified deliberately in order to compare and contrast organisations occupying different positions on a faith-based typology. (See Fig 3.2 above.) The choice of cases is discussed in more detail below.

Gaining the permission of organisations and individuals to access information and interview them can be time-consuming, and is often unsuccessful. These practical challenges have to be balanced with the theoretical approach. In the case of this research a number of organisations were approached in order to be able to obtain a sufficient number of cases for the theoretical framework.

A Discussion of Sources

Yin identifies six principle sources for case study evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artifacts (Yin, 2003, pp. 83–97). Five of the six have been used for the case studies presented here, in differing mixes depending on the case. The principal sources of information for the cases have been publicly available documentation, grey literature, interviews with informants (staff, ex-staff, volunteers), and in the case of SCIAF, participant-observation.

Significant use has been made of organisational documentation, both publicly available and grey literature. The internet and organisations’ willingness to publish documentation has made a significant volume of material publicly available. This material has been used extensively. In addition, grey literature has been made available for the different case studies and from other organisations that shared information for the research. Organisations generate vast amounts of information internally. Knowing of its existence and accessing it is often impossible, even to those within the organisation.

All documentation needs to be critically assessed with the criteria set out by Scott (1990): authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (Bryman, 2016, pp. 546–54). This is true for both public and internal documentation. The issues around the public documentation of organisations are discussed above in relation to annual reports (Bryman, 2016; Conway et al., 2015; Fifka, 2013; Gammerschag et al., 2011; Gray et al., 1995; Kshitij and Irvine, 2018). These have some utility in guiding how these documents can be analysed and what conclusions might be drawn.

The analysis of documentation considered the purpose and meaning of documents and their content in relation to the themes and research questions. I have used a comparative approach, considering both the similarities and differences between these cases. I have included material from all of the sixteen organisations where relevant, even when the organisation is not treated as a full case.

Interview informants were identified using a snowball sampling approach, following suggestions from different interviewees about who could provide useful information. These were tempered by individual availability. Interviews were primarily carried out via the internet using either video or audio calls. I conducted this research from my base in Scotland, a significant part of it during the COVID-19 pandemic when travel was restricted. Identified respondents were geographically dispersed in the UK, Europe, Asia and Africa.
Many interviews were conducted via Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) such as Skype or Teams. As a research method there is relatively little written on conducting interviews via VOIP to date as it is still a developing area (Weller, 2015). This may be changing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic which greatly increased the need and the practical ability to use such applications, and people’s willingness to do so. The explosion of mobile phone and internet technology in Asia and Africa means it is now much more possible to conduct interviews in this way (Southwood, 2022). In the literature audio calls are considered similar to phone conversations, and video calls to face-to-face interviews. Weller suggests that the use of video is more likely to produce detailed disclosure than audio calls (Weller, 2015, p. 44). Bryman suggest that VOIP video calls more closely replicate face-to-face interviews and therefore have an advantage over telephone interviewing (Bryman, 2016, p. 492). The use of audio-only calls does mean that you miss out on body language and some physical cues. I attempted to use video calls as the literature suggests they provide fuller information than an audio-only call, and are more comparable with a face-to-face interview (Bryman, 2016, p. 492). However, internet connections rarely allowed for high quality video connections, and I have usually had to default to audio only calls. Those working in international development are familiar with Skype and other digital platforms, and this may make them more suitable as research tools in this sector than they might be in others. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic had the effect of increasing the use of these platforms and the shift to applications that make less demands on internet connections.

Interviews were carried out using a semi-structured approach, with a set of guiding questions related to the research questions. These were tailored to the particular interviewee, and the purpose of that particular interview. They were conducted in an open manner, allowing the informant to reflect and discuss their own experience and organisational reality. This is considered good practice for case study research (Yin, 2003, p. 89). All informants were provided in advance with an information sheet and a consent form. When they wished to speak “off the record” this was respected, the information used only for background purposes. (One informant made this request and is not referenced as an informant, even anonymously.)
When possible, they were recorded and later transcribed by the author. Where it was not possible to record, extensive notes were made of the interviews (including using shorthand) and were typed up and then coded in nVivo in relation to the themes that I identified in them. I then reviewed the codes and where appropriate combined, summarised and subsumed the initial codes in a set of focused, more conceptual codes (Charmaz (2006)). This coding process provided a valuable way of analysing data, particularly for those cases (SCIAF, CADECOM Malawi and Traidcraft Exchange) where I had interviewed a number of respondents, sometimes on multiple occasions. Where only individual interviews were available from an organisation these were also coded, but there was not the data set to carry out extensive coding. However, I did look across the interviews to see if there were issues of consonance or dissonance between them. Specific methodological issues are discussed in each of the individual case chapters and the concluding chapter.

A total of 34 respondents were interviewed, some multiple times, from the 13 organisations. (Two were independent researchers.) A common set of issues were explored in the interviews, although these were adjusted based on the respondent, the organisation and the stage of the inquiry.

In the case of SCIAF I played the role of a “Participant-Observer” (Yin, 2003, p. 93) being directly involved and responsible for some of the work under discussion. As a member of staff in SCIAF I have had good access to staff members and documentation for this research. Informants include those most directly involved in the writing of the IHD guide, and in the action research project. This included senior managers, Board members and members of the programme team, all based in the UK. (SCIAF operates only one overseas office, in Ethiopia.) I was also able to interview a number of current and previous staff members from CADECOM,

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**Fig 4.6. Overall Guiding Questions for Interviews**

(Note: these were tailored for each interview)

1. To start, please tell me about yourself, and your organisation.
2. Can you outline the work of your organisation in relation to wellbeing?
3. What does wellbeing mean to you and your organisation? What do you consider it to be?
4. Does your organisation promote wellbeing? If so, how does this influence how the organisation works and what it does? Do you have any examples?
5. Does the focus on wellbeing encourage the participation of intended beneficiaries? Does it give them an opportunity to influence what your organisation does and how it is done? Do you have any examples?
6. Has your organisation gathered information on people’s wellbeing? If so, how?
7. Has this information influenced what your organisation does? Has it influenced policy or practice? Has it led to any formal or informal changes in your projects?
8. Is wellbeing relevant to the people you work with? Can you explain why?
9. Has it improved outcomes for project participants?
10. Has the introduction of wellbeing been empowering for project participants? Has it given them greater voice or power in your projects?
including senior managers and project managers and field offers. Being a member of SCIAF staff and in some cases having existing work relationships with the individuals undoubtedly helped with access. Not always though – in the case of the IHD work in the DRC the key informant did not respond to requests for interviews. Having connections to other Caritas organisations and organisations in Cambodia also facilitated interviews with current and previous staff members of CAFOD and a Cambodian partner involved in the Batteries of Life project.

Choosing Cases

Yin argues case study selection should not follow a probability-based sampling logic but rather replication logic, “analogous to that used in multiple experiments” (Yin, 2003, p. 47 citing Hersen & Barlow (1976)). Yin recommends multiple cases where possible in order to test whether observed results are replicated or contrasting results are observed. From this theory can be developed as to the reasons for the replication or the contrasting results. The number of cases required to test findings depends on the level of certainty required, and the degree of difference between different explanations. Where differences are high and a high level of certainty is not required two or three cases may be sufficient; where differences are subtle and a high level of certain is required, five or six cases may be required (Yin, 2003, p. 51).

For the cases organisations were used as the unit of study (Blaikie, 2010, p. 218; Yin, 2003, pp. 22–26). Based on the findings of the sector overview I aimed to gather a set of case study organisations that took an explicit and deliberate approach to the promotion and measurement of wellbeing in their work but occupied different points on a spectrum of Christian religiosity and secularity. (See Fig 3.2.) As the organisations are similar in many ways the differences along the spectrum of religiosity would offer one possible explanation for the differences.

Potential cases were identified through a combination of the survey of the sector, internet searches, a literature review and snowballing during interviews. The aim was for up to six cases, and a minimum of three, drawing on Yin’s guidance and balancing the intense demands of an in-depth case study with my aim of generalizing from the cases to peer organisations.

The focus on particular types of organisations – Christian-rooted UK-based NGOs engaged in international development and emergency response – meant they had many factors in common. However, there remain significant differences. Within this group I looked for dissimilar cases (Lim, 2010), focusing on Christian-rooted organisations that exhibited different organisational factors (income size, income structure) and occupied different points on the faith-permeated – secular spectrum responded to wellbeing. I gathered additional but limited information on two Muslim-based and a number of secular UK NGOs for comparative purposes. The organisations identified during the research, and for whom staff or ex-staff were interviewed in relation to their wellbeing activities were:

1. Tearfund (an evangelical Christian NGO, faith-permeated)
2. SCIAF (Caritas Scotland – an official Catholic Church NGO, faith-permeated)
3. Traidcraft Exchange (now Transform Trade – a Christian background organisation, with a continuing reference to its Christian roots but possibly secularising)
4. HelpAge International / Age International (two inter-linked secular NGOs)
5. WWF (a secular NGO)
6. CADECOM Malawi (Caritas Malawi, faith-permeated)
7. Practical Action (a secular NGO)
8. Muslim Aid (a Muslim NGO, faith-permeated)
9. CAFOD (Caritas England and Wales, faith-permeated)
10. Trocaire (Caritas Ireland, faith-permeated)
11. Caritas Australia (faith-permeated)
12. Farm Concern Kenya (a secular partner organisation for Traidcraft)
13. CHEC Cambodia (a secular partner organisation for CAFOD and SCIAF).

In addition, secondary data was gathered on three additional organisations, but did not approach them for interviews:

1. CRS (Caritas USA, faith permeated)
2. Islamic Relief Worldwide (a Muslim NGO, a partner of CAFOD and SCIAF, faith-permeated)
3. Oxfam GB (a secular NGO, faith-permeated).

Three cases were identified for in-depth research (Tearfund, SCIAF and Traidcraft), chosen because they occupy different positions on the spectrum of religiosity, from an evangelical Christian faith-permeated organisation to a Catholic faith-permeated organisation to an organisation with an increasingly tenuous faith background. (Their relative positions on a spectrum of religiosity are set out Fig. 3.2 above.) Each has deliberately engaged with wellbeing in a significant way. In addition, they exhibit some differences in organisational structure, particularly income (size and structure).

Using Occhipinti’s typology Tearfund and SCIAF are both faith-permeated. However, there are significant differences in how faith is practiced internally within the evangelical organisation and the Caritas agencies, with the Catholic organisations practising a division of private and public spaces (Freeman, 2019). This has been partially represented in Fig 3.2 above, but Occhipinti’s typology struggles to capture this difference effectively.

As part of the case research other organisations were included (CADECOM Malawi, CHEC Cambodia, Farm Concern Africa) as partner organisations participating in wellbeing initiatives with these three principal case organisations. In addition, other organisations were identified as having engaged with wellbeing in a significant way and were investigated: Oxfam GB, Practical Action, WWF and HelpAge International. The four organisations are generally considered secular organisations. Insufficient information was gathered on the four organisations for a full case, but the information available has been referenced when it is relevant to the research questions or emerging themes. As such, the analysis does make some comparisons between Christian faith-permeated, Christian background and secular organisations.

It was not possible to collect equivalent levels of information on the three case-study organisations. The greatest amount of information was accessible for SCIAF, for two reasons. Firstly, the research was carried out while working for SCIAF and this gave a high level of access. Indeed, at times I occupied the role of participant-observer. Secondly, SCIAF’s engagement with wellbeing is linked to its membership of a global confederation and a number of “sister” agencies also engaged with wellbeing including CADECOM Malawi, CAFOD, Trocaire, Caritas Australia and Catholic Relief Services. I was able to gather material and interviews of staff and ex-staff from all of these agencies that provides additional, comparative data. However, significant information and documentation, and access were made available by Traidcraft, and to a lesser extent Tearfund, allowing for the development of three case studies. Less information and access were available for HelpAge / Age
International, WWF and Practical Action’s engagement with wellbeing, and they were not pursued for full case studies. However, some interesting similarities and dissimilarities were observed, and these have been mentioned where relevant. Muslim Aid, while interested in the topic, did not feel they had advanced sufficiently to participate (SCIAF Interviewee I17, 2020). They were excluded as a result, but reference has been made to some of the public literature on wellbeing from Islamic Relief Worldwide.

As well as theoretical considerations, practical constraints and opportunities influenced the course of the research. Gaining access to organisations proved a major constraint, and influenced the level of access to documentation and individual informants. Typically, it took several months to secure an initial interview, and follow-up interviews might also be months later. “Cold contacts” were rarely successful. Snowball recommendations tended to be more fruitful. Occasionally I recruited a third party to assist, providing an initial introduction to an individual in the organisation. Unfortunately, in most cases the initial interview did not lead to sustained dialogue or access to additional informants, either due to their own particular knowledge of the topic or other constraints. Individuals felt unable to provide more information, were too busy, or were just leaving the organisation in question. Indeed, turnover of staff is significant amongst NGOs both in the Global North and South, possibly exacerbated by the ubiquity of project funding. Often the staff involved in a wellbeing project have moved on.

**The Practitioner-Researcher: Insider Opportunities and Problems**

In undertaking this research I have played the role of a “practitioner-researcher” (Robson, 1993, pp. 445–463) and in the case of SCIAF a “participant-observer” (Yin, 2003, p. 93). Robson clearly and comprehensively sets out the potential advantages (“insider opportunities”, “practitioner” opportunities and “practitioner-researcher” synergy) and disadvantages (lack of time, research expertise and confidence, as well as “insider problems”) of playing such a role (Robson, 1993, p. 447).

Robson’s discussion of the advantages is relevant. My pre-existing knowledge and experience (thirty years’ experience of working in research, implementing and grant-making organisations) has been very useful. This gives me access to information and contacts, and an understanding of “how things work”, how and why official documents are prepared as they are. It can short-circuit steps from research to practice, and a set of real-world experiences against which to test data and theories. It gives me a knowledge of some of the history of work in international development, of how we got to where we are and why. It gives me a credibility with some informants which eases access and conversations. This has added a level of access, knowledge and understanding that an external researcher may not have had.

Yin explores the particular advantages and challenges of the participant-observer. The advantages relate to the high degree of access, and access to particular types of information which are not available to the external observer, such as the interactions between people and the ways in which events take place. This provides a particularly rich data set. The challenges relate primarily to problems of bias. I have sought to work reflexively, considering my own role as a researcher in the generation and analysis of data. Another challenge, not identified by Yin, is that in a multi-case study like this one, the data available for the different cases has varied. I have sought to balance the case studies but inevitably there has been a greater depth and volume of information available for the SCIAF case.
It has also given me a significant interest in undertaking this research. The disappointments of the participatory development movement and the challenges of distributing power more equally within international development have been recurrent themes and issues that I have experienced as a practitioner. In addition, I have seen for myself the fallacy of defining people by the poverty in which they live – no one who spends even a limited amount of time with people living in rural or urban poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa can fail to be moved and humbled by their essential dignity. Wellbeing’s positive orientation and person-centred approach, it’s acknowledgement of issues of politics and power, and its promise to take forward this agenda in a practical fashion is an attractive one to me as a practitioner.

At the same time, Robson’s discussion of “insider problems” (preconceptions about issues and solutions) is very relevant. Like any researcher, my experience to date will have encouraged me to see things from a certain perspective, unconsciously closing off other approaches. There is a temptation to avoid criticising the work of others I feel a professional affinity for, or I work with; and my own work where I am directly involved. I may have been trapped within the mental boundaries of my professional experience, and too forgiving in my assessments, aware of the pressures that practitioners face in getting through busy schedules and heavy workloads. As researchers we make conscious and subconscious choices about the issues we consider, the data we collect, the conclusions we draw from it. (Carr, 2018) This can be particularly true for social research conducted through interviews and the data that was generated through them (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2013). As a direct participant in some of the work under examination I have biases and preconceptions. Throughout I have sought to be fair, accurate and objective in my analysis.

LIMITATIONS

There are a number of limitations to this research:

- In my exploration of faith and wellbeing I have been limited to Christian-rooted organisations. As a result, important, alternative views and theological interpretations of wellbeing have not been addressed. I have sought where possible to draw on cases and information related to other faiths, but this has been possible only in a limited fashion. The thesis should be read with this in mind.
- It is limited to Anglophone organisations and literature, and does not reflect developments in French, Spanish or German speaking communities or those in the Global South.
- I have made a limited assessment of the Buen Vivir, Vivir Bien movement in Latin America, and how national NGOs in Malawi and Kenya have engaged with wellbeing.
- The difference in organisational access between organisation has meant the information base for the cases has been unbalanced, and not always easy to manage.
- My assessment has been constrained by circumstances including high levels of staff turnover in project-based organisations meaning in many cases staff who had worked on wellbeing related projects had moved on meaning some planned routes of investigation such as SCIAF’s partners in Rwanda and DRC could not be pursued.
- The COVID-19 pandemic severely constrained international travel between March 2020 and the middle of 2022. I would have made some follow-up with Malawian organisations had travel restrictions not been in place at that time.
- My position as an insider has imposed limitations, as outlined above.
CHAPTER 5: SCIAF, INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

INTRODUCTION

SCIAF is included here as a case of a faith-permeated organisation, where faith “is an integral component and is openly and explicitly expressed” (Occhipinti, 2015, p. 337). SCIAF – or Caritas Scotland – is one of many Caritas organisations around the world, an agency of the Catholic Church. In line with Catholic teaching, they make a deliberate policy of separating public and private spaces. Only the most senior staff are expected to be Catholics and while the organisations are explicitly Catholic, they are intentionally open to people of any faith or none. As official agencies of the Catholic church, in Occhipinti’s third typology of faith-based organisations, they are both formal structures within an organised religion and formally independent NGOs (Occhipinti, 2015, p. 341). The work by SCIAF - and Caritas agencies more generally - with Integral Human Development (IHD) is explored here as an example of how some of the more official Catholic NGOs have deliberately engaged with human wellbeing.

As part of the Church, they draw on Catholic social teaching (CST) for guidance. The approach has strong similarities with the emerging consensus on wellbeing, having a holistic, relational, and person-centred approach. This chapter gives primacy to SCIAF’s experience but makes reference to work by other Caritas agencies, some of which preceded and informed SCIAF’s work. The focus of agencies varies between better information and practice, and greater democratisation, and in doing so they provide useful comparisons. The explicit inclusion of faith and spirituality into wellbeing frameworks varies, and provides insights into how this can be addressed in such frameworks.

METHOD AND SOURCES

The methods used here are dealt with in Chapter 4. A wide range of sources have been used, from documentation publicly available to a wide range of grey literature. There has been repeated access to SCIAF staff, volunteers and Board members both present and past, as well as staff from “sister” agencies in Europe, Africa and Asia. As an insider I have been given considerable access and time, and have played the role of the participant-observer.

SCIAF – A BRIEF HISTORY

The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) is an international development and emergency charity based and legally registered in Scotland. It is an official agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland, and the Scottish member of Caritas Internationalis. In the British Isles it has two sister agencies: the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), which works in England and Wales, and Trocaire, which works in Ireland. (Both the Republic and Northern Ireland.)

SCIAF was established by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Scotland in 1965. This basis in the Catholic Church and its theology is a defining characteristic of SCIAF and its approach to wellbeing. In contrast to many non-governmental organisations engaged in international development SCIAF is part of a larger, global organisation and its commitment to human development (Caritas Internationalis and the Catholic Church). As such its values and IHD approach are rooted in a documented body of work external to it.
SCIAF is a relatively small international development NGO, with a reported income of just under £8 million in 2021 (SCIAF, 2022). Between 2011 and 2022 SCIAF’s income levels increased 22% in absolute terms, but in real terms have remained essentially stable. There has been a change in the structure of income with a significant increase in the proportion of institutional funding rising from 24% in 2011 to 38% in 2021 (SCIAF, 2022, 2012). SCIAF deliberately restricts institutional funding to a maximum of 40% of income in order to maintain organisational autonomy. While a small organisation, it’s place within a global confederation and structure gives it a dual nature which is important in understanding its nature and behaviour.

Reflecting the Catholic social teaching’s emphasis on “subsidiarity” SCIAF works solely through a partnership model, eschewing direct implementation of projects. It aims to mobilise resources to support projects originated from its partners, or to jointly develop projects that meet institutional funders’ requirements.

SCIAF has made a very explicit commitment to IHD both for its work overseas and in Scotland. Indications include the renaming of the overseas programme department as the Integral Human Development Department, and the publication in 2021 of the “IHD Parish Resource”, introduced by Bishop Toal, the Bishop President of SCIAF / Caritas Scotland. The resource aims to introduce the concept to parishioners, describing IHD as “the Catholic response to injustice, the destruction of our planet, and poverty more generally” (SCIAF, 2021, p. 2).

**THE CARITAS AGENCIES AND CST, IHD AND WELLBEING**

SCIAF’s work on IHD takes place in the wider context of Caritas’ engagement with CST and IHD. The current Pope has strongly encouraged Church members to promote IHD as a priority (Pope Francis, 2017).

Catholic social teaching is intended as a guide to analysis and practice (Deneulin, 2021, p. 92). The idea of living out one’s own faith by helping others is central to many Catholics’ personal code (Interviewee I5, 2019; SCIAF Interviewee I17, 2020). The establishment of a Caritas agency by most Catholic national authorities is an expression of an organisational commitment to put CST into practice. These agencies are created to provide assistance to people in hardship or those affected by disasters either within the country or outside it.

As outlined in Chapter 3 holistic, social and person-centred conceptions of human wellbeing are central to Catholic social teaching. There are strong similarities between Integral Human Development and the emerging consensus around wellbeing and international development (Deneulin, 2021). This becomes even clearer as we analyse below the conceptual frameworks and tools that Caritas agencies have developed. However, while there is much important common ground there are also significant fault lines on issues of gender, reproductive health and homosexuality, and the Church as a whole is working hard to dispel the mistrust created by major safeguarding scandals.

As operational agencies a number of Caritas agencies have made deliberate efforts to promote IHD, and to develop conceptual and practical tools to guide the work of staff. Several Caritas’ have for some time explicitly made the pursuit of Integral Human Development their

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39 Institutional funding refers to financial support from organisational donors such as governments, inter-governmental bodies, UN agencies and major philanthropic foundations.

40 A Dicastery is an official congregation of the Catholic Church, established to lead and administer a particular issue for the Church (CatholicCulture, 2021).
aim. CRS’s Strategy 2030 begins “our vision for integral human development” (CRS, 2018). Caritas Australia set out IHD as the overarching development approach for its international programmes, 2014 – 2018 (Caritas Australia, 2014, p. 2). The subsequent strategy (2021 – 2031) does not explicitly mention IHD but makes repeated reference to Catholic social traditions and sets out its first strategic goal to support people to “thrive” and its second that “all people, especially the most marginalised, experience wellbeing” (Caritas Australia, 2020, p. 10). SCIAF’s Strategic Focus 2021-2025 states that IHD is central to its work and that using a new IHD framework has helped to refocus its work on its central mission (SCIAF, 2020b). Other examples include Caritas Zambia (Caritas Zambia, nd) and Caritas Cambodia (Caritas Cambodia, nd).

There are a range of motivations and interests driving these efforts. Overall, the intention is to bring practice more closely in line with the theological understanding of human development, and through this achieve better outcomes for those affected by Caritas projects. Catholic social teaching suggests that people should be at the centre, they should have a voice in the process, and that they should be considered “in the round”.

Some Caritas’ have developed operational guidance for staff to integrated IHD with their projects. The best-known example comes from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) (Grassl, 2013; Keleher, 2018). CRS is one of the largest NGOs by budget in the world, and has produced a number of IHD guides and operational manuals, including for livelihoods, education and small-scale savings interventions (CRS, 2012b, 2007; Heinrich et al., 2008; Vanmeenan, 2006). CRS began development of its IHD approach in 2002 after staff identified the need for an organisational-wide programming framework, one that both better linked development and emergency response work, and which better integrated the organisation’s interest in social justice and structural change but was based in Catholic social teaching (Heinrich et al., 2008, p. 1). This followed a growing interest in the organisation in Catholic social teaching following the genocide in Rwanda (Calderisi, 2013, p. 212).

CRS’s approach makes significant use of the UK Government’s Department for International Development’s Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) (Vanmeenan, 2006, p. 14). The SLA promoted a people-centred analysis of livelihoods, with the aim of achieving increased wellbeing (DFID Livelihoods Team, 1999, p. 25). The framework uses a domain-set approach, identifying five “capitals” that individuals or households have and should be analysed to understand the resources farmers have and the strategies they use to exploit them (DFID Livelihoods Team, 1999). The SLA situates the individual within the context of social, economic and political structures and processes as well as shocks and trends. It considers how these interact with social capital, access and influence to determine livelihoods and wellbeing. It is a holistic, person-centred approach; it focuses on social relationships and an interdependence with the environment. Drawing on a multi-dimensional view of poverty, the SLA assumes that improved sustainable livelihoods is a way to achieve higher levels of wellbeing, but at the same time that the different asset areas can be ends in themselves, being both a means to achieve wellbeing, but also themselves constitutive of it. For example, human capital is both a building block to achieving livelihood outcomes and an end in itself. “Many

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41 Today, in the mainstream humanitarian sector this would be called the “Nexus” of humanitarian, development and peace-building interventions (European Commission, 2021).
42 DFID was replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in 2020.
43 Physical, social, natural, human and financial. See Gough (2004) for a challenge of the use of the terms “assets” and “capital” (Gough, 2004).
people regard ill-health or lack of education as core dimensions of poverty and thus overcoming these conditions may be one of their primary livelihood objectives” (DFID Livelihoods Team, 1999, p. 7).

CRS used the SLA as the basis for its own IHD model, but made several changes:

- eschewing the language of “capital” in favour of “assets”
- focusing social assets on social support networks
- creating a new asset area – political which expanded the link between the individual / household and the wider external factors
- expanding the human asset area to include mental abilities and faith (Vanmeenan, 2006, p. 14).
- adding explicit recognition of spiritual aspects of human life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DFID SLA Asset / Capital Areas and Definitions</th>
<th>CRS Asset Areas and Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Capital</strong></td>
<td><strong>Human and Spiritual Assets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives.</td>
<td>People’s knowledge, wisdom, skills / education, physical health, mental abilities and faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Capital</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Assets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The social resources people have, developed through networks and connectedness, group membership and relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchange</td>
<td>Social support networks and ties to family, tribe and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Capital</strong></td>
<td><strong>Natural Assets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The natural resource stocks that individuals and households own or have access to such as land, trees, etc.</td>
<td>Common and shared community assets including water, wind, forests, soil, pastureland and minerals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Capital</strong></td>
<td><strong>Physical Assets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The basic infrastructure, tools and equipment available to support livelihoods (transport, shelter, water, energy, communications and information).</td>
<td>Ownership or easy access to homes, land, wells, silos, roads, equipment and tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Capital</strong></td>
<td><strong>Financial Assets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial resources such as savings, income, investments, access to loans.</td>
<td>Livestock, crops, precious metals, cash and income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political Assets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power in the household and community, ability to claim rights and advocate for resources and change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast, the WeD research programme took issue with the language of social capital and the SLA approach, arguing that it recognised that such resources are understood as dynamic and socially and culturally negotiable rather than fixed, and encourage a bottom up approach (McGregor and Gough, 2007, p. 7). WeD instead drew on the Resource Profiles Framework (RPF).

Caritas Australia took a different approach to IHD, one more directly focused on democratising the process rather than gathering better information. Their documentation sets out the principles of IHD for integration into programmes, but without providing detailed
guidance for implementation\(^{44}\) (Davies et al., 2010). The implementation tools for IHD were developed as part of a five-year pilot of Strength-Based Programming that Caritas Australia began in 2011 in Malawi and Tanzania.\(^{45}\) In Malawi Caritas Australia worked with CADECOM.\(^{46}\) After several external reviews, country programmes in Africa and Latin America began to adopt the approaches after 2015. It’s advantages were said to be that it valued people and places as rich in resources rather than poor and dependent, that it engaged communities from the start, it focused on the community’s own priorities, strengthening ownership, sustainability and an active citizen-led approach where communities were agents of their own development (Winterford and Cunningham, 2017). Interest at a strategic level appears to have waned however - Caritas Australia’s current strategy document (2021 – 2031) makes no explicit mention of IHD (Caritas Australia, 2020) and one informant reported there has been a shift in direction under new leadership (Interviewee I5, 2019).

The SBA documents that Caritas Australia produced do not make explicit reference to wellbeing, IHD or DFID’s SLA but there are clear affinities, and this approach talks strongly to the second promise, of greater democratisation. It is a participatory, community-focused approach that aims to support community-identified objectives, arrived at through a series of visioning exercises with community sub-groups (such as women and men, children, people living with a disability). These encourage individuals and groups to “dream of a desired future” (Winterford and Cunningham, 2017, p. 13). The focus on a community's - and its individuals' - strengths is intentional, based on a belief in their innate dignity and a recognition that “nobody has nothing” (Caritas Australia, 2018). It seeks to see people in their totality, their strengths as well as weaknesses. The strengths are essentially the same as the assets identified in the SLA and CRS’s IHD framework.

An evaluation of the pilot in 2017 used the three dimensions of wellbeing identified in the WeD wellbeing framework (material, relational and subjective) (McGregor and Sumner, 2010) as a core evaluation framework. Calling them “dimensions of change”, they renamed the three dimensions as tangible, relational and attitudinal respectively:

- **Attitudinal**: ways of thinking/feeling about self and others, ways of thinking/feeling about the current situation and future
- **Relational**: ways of interacting / being with others
- **Tangible**: physical changes in the environment, knowledge or education, or changes in self (e.g. health, wealth) (Winterford and Cunningham, 2017, p. 24).

CAFOD (Caritas England and Wales) introduced a participatory wellbeing assessment tool, the Batteries of Life, into its HIV/AIDS programme in the early 2010s (Jones, 2014). The tool had four domains or “batteries”: Health, Psychosocial / Spiritual, Human Rights / Legal, and Livelihood Security. For each battery a number of components were chosen, reflecting suggestions from participants and project staff. As the components were developed in consultation for each project they varied in number. It was used in monthly meetings between the person living with HIV/AIDS and their support worker to review different aspects of their

\(^{44}\) Note that one of the authors of the document was also a co-author of SCIAF’s IHD Guidance document.

\(^{45}\) Strength-based and asset-based approaches had become increasingly popular in government-provided social and health care in Australia (Children and Family Intensive Support (CaFIS), 2016) and the UK (Foot and Hopkins, 2010) and became part social care legislation in the UK in 2014 (Social Care Institute for Excellence, n.d.). Strength-based approaches should be holistic, person-centred and outcomes-centred, with a deliberate aim to promote wellbeing (Social Care Institute for Excellence, n.d.).

\(^{46}\) The same partner that SCIAF would soon work with on IHD.
lives and how they were feeling. Respondents were asked to consider each component in turn and score themselves out of 10 for each battery. In this way it was a tool for both analysis and change, helping individuals see how their behaviour (eating, compliance with drug regimes, etc) affected their wellbeing (Interview I1, 2019). It was used in several countries in Africa and Asia.

Trocaire developed their own wellbeing tool in Kenya as a way for people with HIV/AIDS to assess and track change over time in core dimensions of their lives. Like the Batteries of Life methodology, this was featured in the Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways 2014 publication (O’Reilly, 2014). The Trocaire Wheel had six domains, each addressing a topic important for a good Quality of Life: wellbeing, health, prevention, income, belonging and coping. These were identified by Trocaire programme staff based on their experience and the results frameworks of HIV/AIDS projects. The Wheel focused on the individual’s knowledge, behaviours and capacities in these six areas and how they influenced their wellbeing / illbeing. For example, the wellbeing spoke covered lifestyle behaviours such as smoking, drinking, and taking exercise. The tool was used to structure a conversation between case worker and client. Each spoke had four points along it with an associated question. If the client answered yes to a question, they gained a point. A score of four on a spoke indicated that they were doing well in that area of life, a lower score indicated there were issues to be addressed. (O’Reilly, 2014)

The tool was to be used as part of an ongoing relationship, used in repeat conversations and thus tracking changes over time. Use of the tool was reported to provide valuable information at a client level, and by facilitating a joint assessment encourage individuals to adjust their behaviour to improve their wellbeing. It was said that gathering reliable data at a project or programme level was more difficult (O’Reilly, 2014).

Another example of Caritas agencies using a wellbeing approach comes from Syria where Caritas Syria uses a wellbeing framework to guide support for children surviving the civil conflict in the country.

![Fig 5.1. A Model of Psycho-Social Wellbeing](image)

**Fig 5.1. A Model of Psycho-Social Wellbeing**

Text from picture:

**Context 1: Social and cultural values**
- Beliefs and values
- Social cohesion
- Custom
- Traditions
- Cultural (unclear)

**Context 2: Family and Community**
- Family
- Play
- Pastime
- Learn
- Friends and Peers
- Basic Needs
- Safety and Security
- Social Role
- Unclear

**Individual Capacity**
- Knowledge and skills
- Physical Health
- Emotional wellbeing
- Development Stage
This model was being used by the Caritas Syria Children’s Education Unit in Aleppo in 2018. Faith, spirituality, and religion are not specifically mentioned, at least in the English translation. However, customs, traditions and culture are, and these are often intimately linked with religion. The absence of a direct reference may be because most of the children in the unit were not Catholic or Christian but Muslim. This is speculation – it was not discussed at the time. It is noticeable that the diagram encompasses the individual, the family and the community, and covers a range of material, emotional and social and cultural elements, much in the vein of wellbeing domain lists. The origin of the diagram, and the training that these social workers had undergone is not known.

SCIAF developed and piloted its own IHD framework from 2016. It was explicitly informed by the earlier work of CRS and Caritas Australia, and was similarly piloted with CADECOM in Malawi, as well as partners in two other countries.

**SCIAF’S IHD FRAMEWORK**

SCIAF’s formulation of its approach to IHD began as a diagram created in a “brainstorming” session by a small number of SCIAF senior and programme staff. The aim was to integrate CST into a programming framework capturing the key issues to be considered in a holistic assessment of a person’s life. (See Fig. 5.2. below.) It was influenced by the CRS model and through it the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. The IHD approach would complement the standard project results framework (logframe). Such results-based programming processes by design simplify the complexity of life to a limited number of actions and results. IHD assessments would complement this, capturing aspects of wellbeing not covered by the logframe metrics and allowing a level of self-definition by respondents.

People were put literally and figuratively at the centre - this could either be an individual or a group - along with two principles: that people are born with dignity and that they are social in nature. Around these were placed the three remaining key principles of CST: the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity. In an outer ring six key domains were identified, capturing key areas of influence on an individual's Integral Human Development:

- **Social** - including both close personal relationships and wider relationships in the community, gender norms and roles, and peace
- **Economic** - focussing on livelihoods and livelihood opportunities and economic policies
- **Political** (later renamed citizenship) - focussing on how an individual can influence the public policies that influence their lives; how capable, responsible and accountable the state is\(^47\); how the rule of law operates in relation to the individual.
- **Environment** - including access, usage and management of natural resources, environmental and climate change issues
- **Personal** - including food security, shelter, health, education and personal safety issues.
- **Spiritual** - including identity and culture, worship and pastoral activities of faith communities.

The model situated an individual's wellbeing in the individual and their relationships with others, and the way that the state and markets operate. It highlighted the impact of shocks and stresses. It suggested this can be relevant in stable and unstable contexts.

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\(^47\) This borrows from DFID’s work on defining good governance and effective states, and the capable, accountable and responsive (CAR) framework (DFID, 2006) (DFID, 2007).
Fig. 5.2 The IHD Framework, First Iteration. (Prepared for SCIAF by the Author.)

Note to Users:
Each area of capacities and assets (the outer ring) needs to be considered from the point of view of:
• the individual (men and women);
• systems and structures (the institutions, rules and social norms that we work within - e.g. the Church, government policy, market systems, gender norms and roles, etc);
• Risks (shocks and stresses)

You should also consider the context in relation to the continuum between emergency, recovery and rehabilitation and development.

Gender, HIV and Disabilities should be considered at each point.

 Integral Human Development Framework

Social
• Peace
• Family
• Community
• Relationships
• Gender norms and roles

Spiritual
• Identity and culture;
• Meaning;
• Worship
• Pastoral

Personal
• Food
• Home
• Health (including water)
• Education
• Personal Security

Social in Nature

Environmental
• Land
• Water
• Climate

Economic
• Livelihood
• Markets
• Financial services
• Economic policy

Political
• Participation
• State (capable, responsible, accountable)
• Rule of law

RISKS:
SHOCKS - sudden disasters
STRESS - long-term, climate change

Environment
• Land
• Water
• Climate
Table 5.2. Comparison between CRS and SCIAF IHD Frameworks and Ranis et al Domain List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human and Spiritual Assets</td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>HDI (education, health) Mental wellbeing Leisure conditions</td>
<td>Education &amp; Skills / Health / Life evaluation, feelings &amp; meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s knowledge, wisdom, skills / education, physical health, mental abilities and faith.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Assets</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social relations, Community wellbeing</td>
<td>Social Connections / Vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support networks and ties to family, tribe and friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Assets</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Environmental conditions</td>
<td>Environmental conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common and shared community assets including water, wind, forests, soil, pastureland and minerals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Assets</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Housing &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership or easy access to homes, land, wells, silos, roads, equipment and tools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock, crops, precious metals, cash and income.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Assets</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Political / Citizenship</td>
<td>Political Security, Political Freedom, Empowerment</td>
<td>Empowerment &amp; Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power in the household and community, ability to claim rights and advocate for resources and change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a clear convergence with the wellbeing domain sets identified in Chapter 2. Table 5.2 compares the SCIAF domain list with the CRS and Caritas Australia domain lists and the domain lists identified by Ranis et al and McGregor and Sumner. The principal differences are the explicit mention of spirituality or faith, and the absence of physical assets in Ranis’ list. (This may reflect the origin of many domain lists in the North, on which Ranis et al based their domain set.) Ranis et al suggested that domain lists are menus to be chosen from rather than prescriptions to be accepted, and they stress the importance of context and culture in framing and prioritising elements of domain lists (Ranis et al., 2006).

THE PILOT

SCIAF had an opportunity to test its ideas about IHD in an action research project supported by the UK Government’s Aid Match programme between 2016 and 2018 in the DRC, Rwanda and Malawi. After the programme began DFID suggested integrating an action research exercise focused on gender into it.48 SCIAF welcomed the opportunity and suggested

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48 The Aid Match programme had a specific focus on generating better evidence on “the different needs of, and the different impacts of interventions on men, women, girls and boys and on the relationships between them, as well as what works for promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment” (UK Government, 2016, p. 18).
combining a pilot of the IHD framework with an assessment of the changing levels of wellbeing amongst men and women.

This was an unusual opportunity for SCIAF, providing dedicated resources for an extended piece of action research that would help address two strategic priorities: firstly, better mainstreaming of women’s empowerment and secondly, integrating the Integral Human Development approach into projects. The pilot was an opportunity to develop a working model that could be replicated in other SCIAF projects.

As the project had started the pilot would not influence its design but would focus on assessing how project participants assessed the different aspects of their lives over the course of the project intervention. SCIAF had already recruited the project team, and these had been recruited as project managers and implementers rather than researchers. A small team of external consultants was hired to assist with the design of the research, providing research and gender expertise. They were hired for the length of the programme, providing the technical lead for the design and implementation of action research, and being responsible for the mid-term and final evaluations of the project. An IT company was contracted to provide technical support for digital data collection.

Over time DFID’s engagement dwindled, apparently due to high levels of staff turnover and the human resource requirements of managing a project portfolio.49 In the first year SCIAF dealt with three different Evaluation Managers with varied professional backgrounds and interests. Only the first showed interested in the action research. Later DFID outsourced management of the fund to a consultancy company. The procurement and transition processes themselves created significant work and disruption. Outsourcing meant SCIAF no longer dealt directly with DFID, and the consultancy company did not prioritise the research project. SCIAF continued with it, integrated into its programme work.

For the pilot the consultants proposed using the HIV/AIDS Wheel developed by Trocaire; repurposing it to reflect the six IHD domains and associated themes: social, citizenship, economic, environment, social, spiritual and personal. Each spoke had six questions, each related to one of the themes or to related elements of the project SCIAF wanted to track.

**Designing the Sampling Strategy**

While there was a dedicated budget for the pilot, resources were limited and the demands complex. It was to be used across four locations in three countries. Two European and at least five African languages would be used. Repeated large-sample probability-based surveys were not considered possible. Instead, it was decided to use a purposive sampling approach, identifying a panel sample of respondents who would be tracked over time. Respondents had to be participants of the programme, and consent to participate throughout the lifespan of the programme. The intention was not to have a statistically representative sample but rather to gather in-depth information on individuals with particular socio-economic characteristics that could provide an indication of their wellbeing over time and how the project might be influencing it (SCIAF, 2017a).

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49 In a change of approach in the early 2010s DFID moved from a programme approach, making multi-annual strategic grants to long-term partner NGOs, to a focus on project funding. The shift to project funding was intended to provide greater levels of donor control, and the competition created for project funds was expected to provide a spur for innovation, efficiency and effectiveness gains (UK Government, 2016). However, it is significantly more demanding on staff, and over time it became apparent that DFID did not have sufficient staff numbers to manage this growing portfolio. Moreover, there was significant churn in the individuals holding positions.
Selection was based on demographic criteria: whether or not the person was the household head, marital status, gender, age, poverty level, presence of disabilities and chronic ill-health, household labour availability and the nature of their engagement with the programme (e.g. lead farmer or participant farmer) (SCIAF, 2017b, p. 14). The respondents were purposively selected as representatives of eight specific types of project participant. (See Fig. 5.2. below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Type 1.</th>
<th>Two lead farmers – female and male.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Type 2.</td>
<td>Two widow small-scale farmers – young (below 35 years of age) and old (above 45 years of age). They must have family that live with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Type 3.</td>
<td>One small-scale farmer with disabilities, preferably female.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Type 4.</td>
<td>Two female small-scale farmers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Type 5.</td>
<td>One small-scale farmer living in extreme poverty – female or male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Type 6.</td>
<td>One small-scale farmer living with HIV and AIDS – female or male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Type 7.</td>
<td>One elderly (60+) small-scale farmer – female or male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Type 8.</td>
<td>Two women-heads of households – with small family (two/three children) and large family (five or more children).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (SCIAF, 2017a)

Originally it was planned to interview at least 194 respondents across the programme, with 48 respondents for each of the four partner organisations. It was planned to identify twelve cases from the eight types in four locations (villages) per partner. While not statistically representative it was judged this would provide a sufficient number of cases from the eight types from different locations to be able to identify themes and findings likely to be relevant to people in similar conditions. It was later decided 48 was too demanding and the number was reduced to 25 per partner. The priorities of project monitoring and reporting took precedence over this more experimental approach.

While a single assessment in time was seen as providing valuable information, the real value would be in assessing change over time, so repeat assessments with the same individuals were planned, to take place six-monthly. (See table 5.3. below.) This would have allowed for four rounds of surveys, with the last IHD Wheel survey taking place one month before the end of the programme.

Smartphones and tablets were to be used to collect data, which was then uploaded to a centralised database on the web. SCIAF did not have its own dedicated digital data collection staff it could send to train and mentor the four partners, and not across two languages (English and French). Accordingly, software and hardware were purchased for the partners and a South African IT company was contracted to provide support for this aspect of the project. Forms were written using a proprietary software provided by the consulting company, and staff were trained in their use. These decisions to use digital data collection technology and to collect data through a questionnaire-based survey had an important influence on the nature of the wellbeing assessment and its potential and limitations.

**DESIGNING THE SURVEY TOOL**

Each of the six domains had a number of sub-themes. The number varied between the domains; two having three, two having four, and two having five. Initially each of the domains
was initially intended to have six pairs of questions, distributed across the themes. The basic structure is set out in Table 5.3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.3. Domains, Themes and Questions for the IHD Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first survey design aimed to give respondents the freedom to answer in their own words and to select their own issues by using six pairs of questions for each domain. The pairs were made up of one closed question (set out in the table below), and one related open-ended question intended to gather additional information to aid interpretation of the response to the first question. This was a guided process - the framework already directed them to certain issues. A completely open-ended interaction might have had different results.

The process of drafting the specific questions was iterative and sought to address three principal priorities:

1. Eliciting information on the key domains and themes of the IHD framework
2. Gathering information on key aspects of the project interventions, including project monitoring indicators which had limited direct connection with an individual’s wellbeing
3. Meeting the practical requirement of six question pairs per spoke.

The final question set was drawn up by the SCIAF programme team, informed by Catholic social teaching, international development theory, the professional experience and knowledge of those involved, their own interests and biases, and the project logframe. The references were primarily internal at the start. Later, a limited review of the literature on international development and wellbeing, and IHD work by sister agencies took place,
including CRS, Caritas Australia, Trocaire, DFID and Sarah White’s work with Traidcraft. This tended to influence the detail rather than the overall structure. For example, one of the questions included in the Spiritual domain was borrowed from the Inner Wellbeing tool that featured in Traidcraft wellbeing framework: "Do you usually have peace in your heart at the end of the day?" (SCIAF, 2017c).

The spiritual domain question set proved the most problematic to draft. The individuals involved had different faiths or professed no religious faith. Some were practising Christians; others would call themselves cultural Catholics; some professed no religious faith or would regard themselves as agnostic, atheistic or possibly humanistic. (These issues were not explored explicitly.) Finding the right terms and concepts was difficult, and the final questions proved unsatisfactory to almost everyone (Interviewee I10, 2020; SCIAF Interviewee I17, 2020).

Finding terms for faith and spirituality appears difficult for mixed groups like this. For those with no religious faith, it may be difficult to engage with the concept when they do not “believe”, although they appreciate that others do. For those who do believe the resultant agreed language can feel inadequate. Many Christians have struggled with attempting to define what is distinctively Christian about their development work (Hollow, 2008). Aside from the aspect of encountering God, there is no clear distinction, and yet explicitly and specifically including this when engaged in conversations with those who either have a different faith or profess no faith can be divisive rather than inclusive (Freeman, 2019). The central issue is avoided, and other aspects, which are not distinctively Christian, are emphasised. As a result, in this framework the questions didn’t reflect well the domain name – “spiritual”. The questions covered spiritual and pastoral aspects – engagement in community activities, empathy and solidarity for others, freedom to follow your faith and be content. These focused on the ability to practice a faith and to act out some of the social, charitable and altruistic behaviours expected by religions – and other moral codes. The questions largely failed to address the personal, spiritual, transcendental aspects of faith that are important to many faith actors.

Some themes were left out (e.g., economic policy, health, home) – deemed to be too removed from the individual to generate useful information or felt not to be a priority.

Overcoming the practical constraints of balancing a six-spoke, six question framework with the varying number of themes per domain was challenging and only partially achieved. Robert Chambers discussed how “mental frameworks” that require a particular number of issues, can influence our presentation and analysis of complex realities (Chambers, 2002, p. 147). Some themes and questions deemed essential had to be included outside their designated domain simply for reasons of space. For example, peace, a theme from the social domain, was covered in the personal domain, while emotional health was included in the spiritual domain. Question 24 (see Table 5.3 below) might have sat more naturally in the social domain, but it appeared in the personal domain. The use of the capability, accountability, responsiveness (CAR) governance model suggested the need for at least three questions under the state theme and yet there was space only for two (Grant and MacArthur, 2008; Moore and Teskey, 2006). As a result, questions on capability, accountability and responsiveness were included in the citizenship domain across two themes. Arguably accountability was poorly addressed. Choices were made based on a negotiated weighting of priorities and importance, and a “good enough” approach (ECB Project, 2007).
Piloting the Wheel

The Wheel tool was piloted with SCIAF’s partner organisations in Malawi, DRC and Rwanda in February and March 2017. The pilot aimed to test the concept and the method, SCIAF and partners’ ability to use it, and the technology. It would assess the appropriateness and coherence of the questions. Feedback was collected from SCIAF and partner staff, data collectors, consultants, and respondents.

Partner staff were trained in the use of smartphones for data collection. The pilot survey was translated into French, Chichewa, Kinyarwanda and Mashi. Both the answers to the quantitative and qualitative questions were to be typed by hand on the smartphones. The questions were designed to assess an individual’s position against the domains and to be aggregated at a project and a programme level. For the purposes of the scoring, they were coded 0 for No, 1 for Yes, and the scores aggregated at the domain level, providing a sense of how completely or incompletely the identified drivers of wellbeing supported the individual’s or community’s wellbeing.

Community members were selected as data collectors and supervised by project staff. The data collectors were selected based on literacy skills and their availability (SCIAF, 2019b, p. 11). The same data collectors were used throughout the programme. It was intended that the repeated training would build new skills in these communities and create employment opportunities.

Community members were used as data collectors for several reasons. Some were practical and financial - the remoteness of villages meant transporting in enumerators would be very expensive in time and money. There could be both positive and negative effects on bias. It was hoped it would reduce bias in two ways: by using community members and not staff as enumerators it would reduce respondents’ inclination to make overly positive assessments in order to please staff; and as enumerators knew the respondents and their circumstances it would place a reality check on the answers. However, possible negative biases included the desire to report compliance with expected behaviours and attitudes, and a fear that negative reports would harm future prospects for support. The involvement of external consultants in the design, implementation and analysis stages was used to reduce bias, providing a level of independent critical analysis. However, the consultants were contracted by SCIAF, and had incentives to maintain a good relationship with SCIAF for financial and reputational reasons.

The pilot results were analysed by the external consultants. Results were triangulated against a separate socio-economic baseline survey carried out for the programme by the same consultants (SCIAF, 2017c, p. 9).

The pilot identified various methodological and practical issues. Despite the training not all data collectors fully understood the survey process or questions as intended. The written instructions were said to be too long - sometimes data collectors didn’t read them. Respondents in Malawi reported that follow-up questions were difficult to understand, duplicated earlier questions and made the interviews very long and often went beyond the planned 45 minutes. The open-ended questions and the slow speed of note-taking on smart phones increased the time required.

Data collectors at times seemed to use the qualitative questions to gather positive stories of the project rather than reflections on the survey questions, and they possibly influenced the answers respondents gave. MEAL work usually has the de facto role of demonstrating that a
project has succeeded rather than identifying learning. This was a challenge that the SCIAF lead for the pilot project grappled with (De Bernardi, 11.21).

Time constraints and positive bias threatened to undermine the reflective elements of the process. Many data collectors did not prepare a final summary of interviews or a feedback report. There were several problems with the digital technology. Data collectors found typing on devices very slow. Language problems figured in a number of ways. The need for multiple translations may have caused changes in meaning and misunderstandings, and certainly lengthened the time needed for interviews (Interviewee I9, 2020). Translating the digital output between languages added additional steps to the analysis of data (SCIAF, 2017c, p. 4).

Both data collectors and respondents expressed uncertainty about how some questions related to individual wellbeing. The questions on spirituality proved difficult across the four partners. Respondents were reportedly surprised to be asked about their faith and failed to see the connection with project activities. This caused some suspicion and resistance amongst data collectors and respondents (Interviewee I9, 2020). Muslim respondents wondered why a Catholic organisation was introducing these questions (Interviewee I11, 2020). The Close Relationships domain also proved difficult, though less so (Interviewee I9, 2020). The consultants suggested the purpose and meaning needed to be better explained to data collectors and respondents, and that the domain name be changed (SCIAF, 2017c, p. 12).

Although the pilot was primarily intended to test the tools, the results themselves proved of interest, showing significant similarities and differences between the locations. Some results challenged pre-existing assumptions. For example, it had been assumed that a diverse set of income sources was aligned with greater income and increased resilience to shocks. The Malawi results suggested that incomes could be very low even when there were multiple income sources. Similarly access to financial services appeared much higher than expected. Further analysis concluded the financial services question was too blunt. Assumptions on access to markets and engagement with farmers associations were also challenged (SCIAF, 2017c, pp. 9–10) The sensitivity of responses to localised and seasonal events was highlighted – indicating the need to triangulate results. For example, responses around access to water provided unexpected results which were explained by a localised drought prior to the survey (SCIAF, 2017c, p. 10). Responses about how respondents had used training received from the programme were considered overly positive, suggesting social desirability bias.

THE FIRST SURVEY (BASELINE)

The first survey was carried out two months later. The length of training was increased and adjusted to address the issues raised by the pilot. A number of changes were made to simplify data collection and reduce the time required of enumerators and respondents:

- The number of follow-up questions was cut from 36 to 13
- The requirement for an audio summary at the end of the interview was removed
- Open-ended questions and free-text answers were replaced with a menu of pre-determined options.

Major changes were made to questions in the Social and Spiritual domains, both of them seeing three of the six questions changed. The Spirituality question was adjusted to make it clear the purpose was not proselytisation. Changes to the economic, environment, citizenship and personal domains were mostly tweaks. While the changes had good practical reasons behind them, they had the effect of making the process more closed and externally defined.
The initial aspirations to allow respondents to frame their own analysis and answers were proving difficult to realise in practice and were not prioritised.

The first “baseline” survey took place later than planned - almost one and half years after the project had started (November 2015) as analysis of the pilot survey data and adaptation of the method and tools took much longer than anticipated (SCIAF, 2017b, p. 13). As a consequence, many results may have been affected by programme activities already implemented up to that point. For example, scores on access to financial services may have been affected as the programme deliberately promoted savings and loan groups and had been doing so for some time before the “baseline” data was collected. Efforts were made to account for such instances in the analysis.

The finalised questions for the Baseline Survey are set out in Table 5.4 below. Where a change was made from the Pilot Survey this is identified in the footnotes to the table.

### Table 5.4. IHD Wheel Baseline Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Citizenship - focussing on how an individual can influence the public policies that influence their lives; how capable, responsible and accountable the state is; how the rule of law operates in relation to the individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | In the last six months have you participated in formal village meetings, with local duty bearers, about the development of your community?  
Focus: participation & ability to influence policies |
| 2 | Did the local duty bearer take any action as a result of suggestions made by village members at this meeting?  
Focus: how capable, responsible and accountable is the state? |
| 3 | Are you able to access any government services for farmers? (bulking, provision of inputs, extension, credit) |
| 4 | Do you know what local government plans are for agriculture in your village?  
Focus: Access to Justice |
| 5 | Please assume that you have had a dispute with someone in this community over an unpaid debt or land. How likely is it that the local authorities can resolve the dispute to your satisfaction?  
Focus: Access to Justice |
| 6 | If you took an issue to the police, how confident are you that the police would respond appropriately to the issue?  
Focus: Livelihoods |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Economic - focussing on livelihoods and livelihood opportunities and economic policies influencing livelihoods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7 | How well would you say you are managing economically over the last 6 months?  
Focus: Livelihoods |
| 8 | Do you have alternative sources of income to rely on, if your main source is not enough?  
Focus: Financial services |
| 9 | In the last six months, have you accessed financial services, for example through VSLA, mobile money, or other ways?  
Focus: Market. |
| 10 | In the last six months have you invested in any activity that can generate income?  
Focus: Market. |
| 11 | In the last six months, have you marketed your goods beyond the farm gate?  
Focus: Market. |
| 12 | Are you able to market your goods as part of a farmers’ association?  
Focus: Market. |

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50 Pilot survey question: Do you participate in formal community meetings, with local duty bearers, about the development of your community?
51 Pilot survey question: Did the local duty bearer take action as a result of this meeting? This was changed to make it.
52 Pilot survey question: Do you know of any laws which affect you as a farmer?
53 Pilot survey question: If you have a dispute with someone, e.g., over land, do you think there are fair mechanisms for resolving disputes, quarrels, or conflicts?
54 Pilot survey question: Do you have access to financial services, for example through VSLA, mobile money, or other ways?
55 Pilot survey question: Have you invested in an IGA in the last 6 months.
56 Pilot survey question: Are you able to market your goods beyond the farm gate?
### Q Environment - access, usage and management of natural resources, environmental and climate change issues

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Do you have access to sufficient land to meet the needs of your family? (Any kind of land, e.g., customary, rented, communal, etc.)&lt;sup&gt;57&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>In the last six months have you taken any specific action to improve the fertility of your soil?&lt;sup&gt;58&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Do you have access to enough water for your crops and/or livestock?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>What kind of irrigation do you practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>In the last 6 months have you taken any new action to adapt changing weather patterns and hazards?&lt;sup&gt;59&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>If yes, have these adaptation strategies helped you to improve your resilience?&lt;sup&gt;60&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q Personal - food security, shelter, health, education and personal safety issues

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>In the last 4 weeks, how often were you able to eat two meals a day?&lt;sup&gt;61&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>In the past week, did you eat the following?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>In the last 6 months how would you rate the improvement in your farms due to new skills you have applied from the trainings received through this programme?&lt;sup&gt;63&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Are there skills you have learnt during the trainings received through this programme that you wanted to use but you could not?&lt;sup&gt;64&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Do you feel that your property is safe at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Can you trust people in your village beyond your immediate family to support you through bad times?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q Spiritual - identity and culture, worship and pastoral activities of faith communities

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Do you feel included in village activities?&lt;sup&gt;65&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>When do you deal with others outside your family, do you feel equal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Do you usually have peace in your heart at the end of the day?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Whatever your beliefs, are you free to follow your own moral, ethical and religious beliefs?&lt;sup&gt;66&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>In the last 6 months have you helped others with the knowledge and skills you have learnt in the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Do people from outside your immediately family come to you for support/advice?&lt;sup&gt;67&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q Social - close personal relationships and wider relationships in the community, gender norms and roles, and peace

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Are you free to attend community meetings and events without asking permission?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>57</sup> Pilot survey question: Do you have secure access to agricultural land?  
<sup>58</sup> Pilot survey question: Have you improved the fertility of your soil?  
<sup>59</sup> Pilot survey question: What steps are you taking to adapt to changing weather patterns and hazards?  
<sup>60</sup> Pilot survey question: If yes, have these adaptation strategies helped you to improve your agricultural production?  
<sup>61</sup> Pilot survey question: In the last month, was everybody in your household able to eat two meals a day?  
<sup>62</sup> Pilot survey question: In the past week, did all the members of your household eat something other than nsima/foofoo/ugali rice and vegetable?  
<sup>63</sup> Pilot survey question: Have you put into practice at least one of the things you have learnt during the trainings received through this programme?  
<sup>64</sup> Pilot survey question: Were there any skills that you learnt from the trainings, that you haven’t been able to put into practice yet?  
<sup>65</sup> Pilot survey question: Is the development of your community in line with your core values?  
<sup>66</sup> Pilot survey question: Are you able to meet your spiritual needs?  
<sup>67</sup> Pilot survey question: Do you work with others outside your immediate family to solve joint problems?
Who in your household generally makes the decisions about the management of the household resources? 68

Do you feel supported by the members of your family in your daily tasks? 69

In the last six months how would you describe inter-personal relations between members of your household? 70

In the last six months, how often have you taken action to make your village become a better place? 71

For your village, do you feel things will improve in the future? 72

Focus: gender roles and norms

Focus: Family

Focus: Community

Source: (SCIAF, 2019a, p. 85)

The survey was carried out in the four locations with 98 respondents. (Twenty-five from the two Malawi projects and 24 from DRC and Rwanda respectively.) Sixty-six (67%) were women.

**Methodology and limitations**

Analysis of the results followed two lines:

- analysis of numerical scores for individual questions, domains, and aggregated averages for domains, individuals and project locations
- analysis of individual Wheel diagrams.

Given the small sample and the purposive sampling strategy employed, the results were considered indicative rather than representative of local communities and targeted groups. It was expected that as longitudinal data emerged over time, they would reveal information about how people’s lives were changing in different domains, and this would give insights into the situation of people sharing certain characteristics. Analysis of the numbers was accordingly descriptive and aimed at providing an insight into the particular groups the programme was targeting.

The results were analysed by the consultants at individual and location levels. The results were triangulated with the household survey results, giving a thick data set (Alles and Vasarhelyi, 2014). They were discussed with each project team to validate and deepen the shared understanding of the results (See Creswell, 2013, pp. 244–253 for a discussion of validation strategies for qualitative research.). These discussions also reviewed the methodology, and possible project adaptations to respond to the results (SCIAF, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f).

**Project location findings**

Of those project participants identified for the pilot, the majority were women and a significant proportion were over 60, the age used to define older people for humanitarian action (ADCAP, 2015, p. 2). Across the respondents this stood at 21%, with significant variation between DRC (30%) and Rwanda (13%). A majority of informants were single – either never married, divorced or widowed. A large majority of respondents (86%) had either no formal education or only up to a primary level. (Author analysis of baseline results.)

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68 Pilot survey question: Do you think that a man should have the final word about decisions in his home?

69 Pilot survey question: Do you feel supported by the members of your family?

70 Pilot survey question: Are you able to take positions of responsibility or leadership in community groups if you want to?

71 Pilot survey question: Are you actively involved in making your community become a better place?

72 Pilot survey question: Do you feel you get practical benefits from attending community groups?
For each respondent numerical scores were generated for the domains and the themes within them based on coding of the responses. Average scores across all the domains were calculated as a summary of the individual’s score, taken as being an indication of their IHD status. These were aggregated and averaged for each of the four locations, but they were not aggregated across the programme as a whole. Interesting similarities and differences emerged between the four project locations. The results are set out in Tables 5.5 and 5.6 and Fig. 5.3. below.

### Table 5.5. Average scores varied by project location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Ave Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi Chikwawa</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi Dedza</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5.6. Results by Domain and Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pol</th>
<th>Econ</th>
<th>Env</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRC Mean</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chikwawa Mean</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedza Mean</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda Mean</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig 5.4. Baseline Domain Ratings by Project Location**

The Second Survey

A second survey was carried out in November and December 2017. Ninety respondents were interviewed (Rwanda 25, Chikwawa 17, Dedza 25, DRC 23). Analysis was again carried out by the consultants. Analysis suggested that there had been changes in individual wellbeing between the two survey points. In the DRC the project location averages suggested no change in the Spiritual and Citizenship domains, but improvements against other domains. In one of
the Malawi project locations the results were more ambiguous, with very slight declines against citizenship and economic, no change in the social domain, and improvements in the environment, spiritual and personal domains. Individual “wheels” were again produced for some respondents for illustrative and discussion purposes. These suggested there had been changes between the two surveys for these individuals. Changes were not positive for all domains, due to changes in personal circumstances and also seasonality and external factors.

THE THIRD AND FINAL SURVEY

METHODOLOGY CHANGES

The third and final survey was carried out in July 2018, roughly two years after the baseline. In preparation, further changes were made to the process:

- All remaining open-ended follow-up questions were removed.
- An identity check was introduced to ensure consistency of informant between surveys. During the second survey it was found that in some cases alternate household members answered the survey when the original respondent was not available. (Answers were anonymised.)
- A general health question was added as health was identified as a significant influence on scores. The results were not included in the overall scoring but were used for contextual analysis of individual “wheels”.
- The training of partner staff and enumerators was moved online (Skype) introduced as it was not possible to carry out the training “in situ”. This included trialling the revising tools. The consequences for training quality were not evaluated.

It was planned to survey one hundred respondents, 25 per location. In the end 98 were surveyed (25 in three locations and 23 in Chikwawa).

As noted above, in the second survey, for a number of households enumerators interviewed a different informant from the baseline survey. Consequently, in the third survey all results were used to calculate the question and domain scores but only data for confirmed repeat respondents was used for analysis of change over time at an individual level. Time constraints prevented the longitudinal case studies and the “deep dive” into the specific groups that had been planned (SCIAF, 2019b, p. 21). Time constraints prevented compilation of an individual report on each partner’s project. Instead, the analysis and discussion of results with partners was prioritised (via Skype) in order to validate the results, identify and explain any surprising results, and identify follow-up actions. One report for all of the locations was prepared following that discussion, rather than individual reports for each location.

Survey fatigue was reported to be an issue amongst both community members and staff, as the IHD assessments came alongside the externally facilitated mid-term review and final evaluation, each of which had its own survey interviews.

FINDINGS

The results were analysed at a number of levels:

- Averages across all domains for a project location
- Averages for individual domains at a project location
- Responses to individual questions within domains
- IHD Wheels for individuals.
The results were discussed with the project teams and triangulated against results from data from the mid-term and final evaluations. Where results were inconsistent or surprising further explanations or follow-up actions were planned. Results were not aggregated or analysed at a programme-level (i.e., across the four project locations).

The economic domain saw improvements in all four locations, and saw the largest reported change. Only one other average score saw an increase greater than 1 (for the personal domain in Rwanda) - the next highest score was 0.8. Some negative change was reported – in one location respectively for environment, personal and spiritual.

| Table 5.7. Overall Change by Domain and Location between Baseline and Survey 3 |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                 | RWA | DRC | Chikwawa | Dedza |
| 1. Citizenship  | 0.3 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.2 |
| 2. Economic     | 0.3 | 1.0 | 1.9 | 1.0 |
| 3. Environment  | -0.2 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.0 |
| 4. Personal     | 1.1 | 0.5 | -0.4 | 0.5 |
| 5. Spiritual    | 0.5 | -0.2 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| 6. Social       | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.1 | 0.1 |

Overall, the reported IHD scores were often higher than expected. Non-economic factors pushed the average scores upwards. The spiritual and social domains were generally scored highest. Personal, Environmental and Citizenship (political) domains were somewhere in the middle. The principal deficit area in Malawi and Rwanda was the economic domain, whereas in DRC it was in the citizenship and personal domains. This talks to Stewart’s concern that a wider view of wellbeing might obscure material inequalities (Stewart, 2014).

At the same time the economic domain saw the greatest increases, reflecting presumably the focus of the projects and that this domain is potentially one where change is easiest to achieve within a project lifecycle.

The results represent the self-reported assessments of a small number of purposively-sampled respondents. They indicate a trend of “direction of travel” as perceived by the individual respondents. However, the small number of respondents means changes in individual informants can have a significant effect on the results. Consequently, the results were treated with caution, and where possible additional corroborating data was used when coming to conclusions. The results were useful starting points for reflection, and were triangulated with other information from different sources. Given the sampling strategy generalisations to other project participants were limited and cautious.

**Project location findings**

The four diagrams below show average results for the four locations. Similarities and differences are immediately apparent. They are compared and discussed below by theme. The scores for Chikwawa/Nsanje were only for the baseline and third survey. (Series 2 in the diagram refers to the third survey.)
Citizenship. In all four locations the Citizenship domain results tended to start high / very high and stay at similar levels. The six questions explored how participants engaged in local governance, how responsiveness local government was to their concerns, the level of knowledge and access informants had to government agricultural services (those relevant to their principal livelihood), and their confidence in the local authorities and police to deal with disputes. Overall informants reported high levels of engagement with and confidence in local government at the village-level, and through the project where access to government services was low it tended to rise.

However, as distinct and different issues are included in the domain a more detailed view by location and question revealed differences. For example, in Rwanda participation in local government and perceived responsiveness of local government began very high and remained so. Confidence in the local authorities and police to deal with disputes was lower but still high to very high. Access to agricultural extension services and knowledge of agricultural plans increased from a high to very high level. In one Malawi project location there was a slight decline in one access to justice indicator, while the second remained

73 Very high = 21 – 25, High = 16 – 20, Middling = 11 – 15, Low = 6 – 10, very low = 0 – 5.
74 Like other questions, this may have been influenced by desirability bias.
75 When describing changes in the scores I have used the following general convention: increase signifies an increase of around 2-3 informants, significant increase signifies an increase of around 4 – 7 informants, and a very significant increase signifies a greater change. An increase of 1 is regarded as essentially unchanged. The changes referred to are between baseline and endline surveys. Negative changes are treated in the same way.
unchanged – both were very high. At the same time there were significant increases in reported participation in and perceived responsiveness of local government, and access to agricultural extension services (all high to very high). There was a contradictory decline in reported knowledge of government plans for agriculture which we were not able to investigate. The second Malawi project area reported different results, possibly reflecting the more geographically remote location on the very margins of the state’s geographical boundaries and a particularly poor area. Here respondents reported high and largely unchanged participation and responsiveness of local government, and very high to high confidence in local authorities and police services which did not change. However, informants reported declining access to government agricultural services (very high to high) and only middling knowledge of plans. The DRC informants reported very high levels of participation and responsiveness of local government, and increased confidence in local government dispute resolution (high to very high). Confidence in the police rose, from low to middling. Access to government agricultural services reportedly increased significantly from a very low to a middling level, and knowledge of government agricultural plans increased from a low to middling level.

**Economic.** The economic scores tended to be lower than the Citizenship scores at start but consistently rose. Questions related to how well they felt they were managing economically, the diversity of livelihoods and levels of usage of financial services, selling to market and participating in cooperatives. The assumptions were that increased use of financial services (and more formal services like microcredit institutions and banks) indicated progressively greater incomes and assets and financial sophistication, which would also indicate more profitable and resilient livelihoods. Greater levels of selling to market and participation in cooperatives would suggest similar changes. The four locations are quite different economically, with Chikwawa / Nsanje being particularly poor. Their different histories and locations affect opportunities and responses to them.

The Rwandan informants reported they were managing better (moving from high to very high between the first and third surveys) and had significantly diversified their income sources (low to high). Access to financial services began very high and remained so, as did reported investments in income generating activities (IGAs). However, there was a shift in the type of financial services used, with a significant increase in reported use of microcredit institutions and banks, suggesting larger incomes and savings or changes in financial practices. There was also a reported increase in selling to market (from low to very high) and participation in cooperatives (from low to high). The Ntcheu (Malawi) informants reported they were managing better (from low to high), although there was relatively little increase in the number of already high number of income sources (from high to very high). Reported use of financial services increased (middling to high) and investments in IGAs remained very high. There was a significant increase in the use of microcredit institutions, less so for banks. There was a significant increase in selling to market (low to middling) but a very low participation in cooperatives. The second group of Malawi informants (Nsanje) reported a slight improvement in their economic situation (low to middling) and incomes sources increased (remaining high). Access to financial services increased a little and investment levels remains almost unchanged, (high and very high respectively). With financial services there was an increased use of informal savings groups and particularly microcredit institutions and banks. There was a significant increase in selling to market (low to middling) and increased participation in a cooperative (very low to low). In the DRC the informants reporting they were
managing well rose from high to very high, and the range of income sources remained stable at very high/high. The use of financial services increased significantly from high to very high, while reported investments remained very high/high. Usage of microcredit institutions and banks was very low but informal savings groups increased significantly. Selling to market and participation in cooperatives increased very significantly, from middling to very high in both cases.

Overall, the results suggested more profitable and resilient livelihoods, with higher levels of inter-household collaboration, either through informal savings and loans groups or cooperatives. The lower results reported in Chikwawa matched the lower levels of economic activity in the area compared with the other three. As these were areas of focus for the projects these results were hoped for, and matched data collected in the separate and externally conducted socio-economic survey.

**Environment.** Reported environment scores were consistently high at the start and remained largely unchanged. This domain covered both the situation of informants as they saw it (access to sufficient land and water for agriculture) and gathered explicit information on how informants interacted with the project. There were questions about improvements to soil fertility, to what extent they were able to put training they received into practice, actions taken to adapt to climate change and their views on their success. These questions provided information on how participants perceived the project activities and their success, rather than how they assessed aspects of their own wellbeing.

Looking at locations in turn, differences emerge. Rwandan informants reported low access to land throughout, and very high levels of activity to improve soil fertility. (One of the practices promoted by the project.) They reported declining access to enough water (low to very low), and consistently very high levels of using water for crop production.\(^76\) (The decline is water sufficiency may have been due to increased demand.) Very high and consistent numbers of informants reported taking efforts to adapt to changing environmental conditions. In Malawi, the first informant group reported high and slightly declining access to sufficient land, and increasing but consistently very high levels of soil improvement. Declining levels of access to sufficient water (very high to high) were reported, and unanimous levels of using water for crop production. Consistently very high levels of informants reported taking successful action to respond to climate change (such as changing crops and using manure). In the second Malawi location there was no change in the number of informants reporting they had sufficient land (high) but a decline in the number improving soil fertility (very high to high). Reported access to sufficient water rose from low to middling, but the use of water in agriculture dropped slightly, though it remained very high. Levels of climate change adaptation remained very high throughout but did have a slight decline, and informants who felt their efforts were successful dropped from very high to high. In the DRC reported access to sufficient land rose from high to very high, and soil improvement remained very high throughout. Access to sufficient water remained consistent and high, and use of water for agriculture increased slightly but was very high throughout. Actions to adapt to climate change, and perceived success both rose from high to very high between the three surveys. Again, this could reflect a level of both desirability bias and project influence as the projects deliberately raised awareness of climate change and adaptation techniques to respond to it.

\(^76\) The large majority used only a watering can or bucket.
The location analysis demonstrated quite different situations in the four locations, reflecting very different realities in the four countries. Population densities vary significantly between them, with headline national figures varying between 571 people per km2 in Rwanda, to 222 in Malawi and 45 in DRC (Using UN data Worldometer, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c). Naturally these vary within the country but the indicate very different pressures on land and natural resources.

**Personal.** The domain covered a range of distinct and different issues: food security and diet diversity, project-level skills training, perceptions of personal security and community solidarity. The training question related more to project activities than wellbeing. Local differences were again apparent. Aside from the DRC, where it was already very high, strong improvements in food security were noted. Informants generally reported feeling their property was safe and they would be supported by their communities in difficult times. The increases in food security showed a similar pattern to the reported economic status in the economic domain, although the strength of increases varied.

In Rwanda informants reported a significant improvement in food security (low to high), and improved farms (low to middling). Throughout almost all informants reported feeling their property was safe and they could trust their communities to support them in bad times. The Malawi respondents reported a very significant increase in food security (low to high) and a good diversity of diet (very high). The number of respondents reporting their farms were improving rose of middling to very high. Throughout almost all informants reported feeling their homes were secure, and a high number reported confidence in support from their communities in bad times. The second Malawi informant group reported a similar increase in food security (low to high), but a reduction in protein consumption (very high to high). An increased number reported improving their farms (middling to high). They reported a perceived reduction in home security (very high to high), but an increased confidence in community support (middling to high). The DRC results were a little different. From the start a very high level of informants reported food security and this increased slightly. Protein consumption rose from middling to high. Perceived home security rose slightly from high to very high, and there was a slight increase in reported confidence in community support (high).

**Spiritual.** The spiritual domain scores covered a range of issues related to a person’s place in the community – did they feel included and treated as equals, were they free to follow their own faith and values, and how much did they consult with / advise others. In addition, there was a general question about personal wellbeing – did they feel peace in their heart at the end of the day. The domain’s title is a misnomer – only one of the questions deals with faith directly and none deal explicitly with spiritual aspects of faith or human life. The results varied but generally suggested high levels of engagement and confidence in their communities. Reported feelings of having “peace in your heart” were generally high and rose significantly in Chikwawa.

In Rwanda there was consistently a very high level of perceived involvement in village activities, matching the social domain responses. The reported perception of “feeling equal” rose from high to very high. Feeling free to follow your own beliefs was consistently very high. The number reporting feeling “peace in their heart at the end of the day” rose from high to very high. Almost all informants reported helping others throughout, and an increased number reported being consulted by others (very high throughout). Results in the first Malawi location were both similar and different, with a consistent and high level of feeling included in village activities, and an increased but middling level of feeling equal. Like Rwanda
there was a consistent and almost unanimous feeling of being free to follow your own beliefs, and a largely unchanged level of peace (high). Informants reported a significantly increased level of helping others (high to very high) and a slightly increased level of being sought out for support. In the second Malawi location respondents reported a high but declining feeling of being included in the community and a more dramatically declining level of equality (very high to high). There was a decline in the number reporting feeling free to pursue their faith (very high to high), but an increased number feeling peace at the end of the day (middling to high). The number who assisted others hovered over the border between very high and high, but the number that reported being consulted by others rose significantly from low to middling. In the DRC the informants reporting they felt included remained largely stable at high, and those feeling equal was very high and increased slightly. Feeling free to pursue your faith started high and rose to very high, while those having peace in their hearts was consistently very high. Almost all informants reported helping others, but the number reporting others sought them out for advice declined dramatically from very high to middling.

Social. The Social themes domain aimed to explore close relationships in the family, and gender issues in the home and the community. There was some triangulation with the questions in the Spiritual domain. As the large majority of respondents were female, reported levels of engagement in the community and feeling equal would either correspond or differ from those reported here. The reports appear consistent. The high levels of women’s autonomy came as a surprise. Across the locations there were high to very high levels of optimism about the communities’ future. In only one location did this decline, but still remained at a very high level.

In Rwanda informants reported very high levels of positive relationships and mutual support within families. They also reported high and increasing to very high levels of community action, and very high levels of optimism about their communities. Informants reported increasing levels of freedom to autonomously participate in community events (high to very high) and joint decision-making by men and women in the home. The first Malawi location saw very high levels of positive family relationships, but only middling levels of sharing household tasks. Levels of community work were reported to be middling. All respondents reported optimism for the future. Reported autonomy to attend community events was very high and increased slightly, matching the level of joint decision-making in the home. In contrast, the second Malawi group reported deteriorating relationships in the home (very high to middling), but in contradiction increased sharing of daily tasks (middling). Levels of community action reduced (both high) and optimism for the future declined but remained very high. Again, there were contradictory results with a reduced level of autonomy to attend community events (very high to high) but an increased sharing of tasks (middling to high). In the DRC intra-household relationships were reported to have improved (high to very high) and perceived sharing of tasks rose from low to high. The numbers reporting they took action to improve their communities a rose little from middling to high; optimism for the future rose from high to very high. Personal autonomy remained consistently at the top end of very high; joint decision-making declined slightly from very high to high.

Individual wheels

Individual wheels continued to show significant and varied change against the different domains, both positive and negative. Different individuals exhibited quite different profiles, which were lost when results were aggregated at the location or programme levels. Two cases from each of the four locations are presented in Fig 5.6 below for illustrative purposes. Only
the baseline and third survey results have been presented as these are the most comparable in terms of agricultural seasons.

The variation in profile shapes is striking, and there are noticeable changes, both positive and negative, between the two surveys. This may appear greater than expected as only 12 – 14 months elapsed between surveys. However, the causes will be varied and many, perhaps most, will have little or nothing to do with the project given the range of issues being examined and the limited contact points between individual and project. This level of detail illustrates the very different assessments that individuals make, and provides a basis for follow up by project teams to understand if there are issues common to particular types of people that inhibit people’s wellbeing and benefits from the intervention and that might be addressed through changes to the intervention.
Fig 5.6. Individual Wheel Diagrams, Baseline Against Endline

Bukavu, DRC

Case 2061, Female, Age 54

Case 6011, Female, Age 33

Chikwawa, Malawi

Case 100, Female, Age 75

Case 365, Female, Age 30

Dedza, Malawi

Case 142, Male, Age 66

Case 212, Female, Age 36

Rwanda

Case 360, Female, Aged 87

Case 349, Female, Aged 39
**DISCUSSION**

**IHD FRAMEWORK AND GUIDE**

A convergence of external and internal factors, and a combination of particular individuals, influenced SCIAF’s explicit engagement with IHD. External factors encouraging this initiative included expectation and pressure from the Church hierarchy for Caritas organisations, alongside increased competition for the support of Scottish Catholics. Internally, there was a genuine desire to see greater integration of Catholic social teaching in the organisation’s work. It was thought this could also be a useful way to deepen support in the Church and amongst Scottish Catholics. There were also personal reasons, including reputation-building in the confederation. The coincidence of a critical mass of senior staff and Board members with a personal commitment to Catholic social teaching, alongside these external pressures and perceived opportunities was critical.

Fundamental to this was a desire to have a more distinctively Catholic approach to international development, distinguished from secular approaches. The aim was to ensure that development is person-centred, holistic and social, and is undertaken with a view to the common good (including the planet and future generations). Reflecting the values of human dignity and subsidiarity, it aims to promote people’s agency and autonomy, and emphasises giving participants a voice in the design and assessment of projects, through community and partner-led approaches. Relationships are foundational to all spheres of human endeavour and constitutive of wellbeing. Doing it is about how we think and feel and relate as much as any technical questions (Interviewee I5, 2019). It is truly person-centred, eschewing abstractions and focusing on the person (Interviewee I10, 2020). Complete integral human development includes a full relationship with God, but Catholic social teaching is not directly concerned with promoting this relationship (Calderisi, 2013; Grassl, 2013).

Some staff, volunteers and Board members in SCIAF feel these issues in a very real and personal way, motivating their work both in terms of aims and means. Work for Caritas should not be a technical exercise but one that recognises the whole person, our interconnectedness with each other, and our frailty – which should lead to a generosity of spirit. It should deal with the reality and complexity of people and not abstractions (Interviewee I10, 2020). True “Caritas” is seen as “a giving of oneself, radical empathy” (SCIAF Interviewee I17, 2020). It is by “giving yourself to another, you find yourself” (Interviewee I5, 2022). Importantly this was not about proselytising, but living one’s faith. Catholicism does not generally evangelise through proselytism but through demonstration. Freeman (2019) suggests that some Christian humanitarian organisations, including the Caritas family, are comfortable with the separation of religious and humanitarian activity. This allows Caritas organisations to engage with secular humanitarian organisations (for example in the formulation of the humanitarian benchmark the Sphere Standards) in a way that is more problematic for faith-based organisations that do not share this view of separate private and public lives (Freeman, 2019, p. 74).

Secular and faith-based approaches are seen as different (Gordon, 2021), with secular approaches deficient because they are impersonal, contractual, and lack the radical empathy and basis in love that underpins CST (Interviewee I5, 2019; Interviewee I10, 2020; SCIAF Interviewee I17, 2020). It is said that Caritas agencies should be more than “just an NGO” (Caritas Belgium, 2023). There is a discomfort with the language of human rights, although as a Confederation Caritas embraces this language. Rights language is seen by some as reducing
people to a bundle of rights and obligations, failing to recognise the centrality of love and compassion (Interviewee I10, 2020). (Note that these differences are expressed as between faith-based and secular, not between Catholic or Christian and faith-based.)

Since at least the late 2000s there have been calls within the wider Church community for Caritas organisations to be “more Catholic”, including from the Pope himself (Calderisi, 2013, p. 219). Pope Benedict was concerned that charitable activities should not eclipse the spiritual work of the church, and that they should be distinctly Catholic and not “just another form of social assistance” (Gifford, 2015, p. 97).

SCIAF is both an institution of the Church and a Scottish charity. In these roles it both collaborates and competes with other organisations for recognition, support and funding. It has to distinguish itself from others and demonstrate its ability to use funds to good effect, in order to attract and sustain support. An explicit adoption of IHD could make the Catholic nature of SCIAF’s work clearer both with the Church hierarchy and with Church members, better justifying SCIAF’s requests for support.

In the early 2000s SCIAF’s senior management decided it could raise its profile and funding in Scotland by exploiting its perceived position at the time as the only significant truly “Scottish” international development agency, as opposed to Scottish branches of UK-wide agencies. SCIAF rebranded itself as “Scotland’s Aid Agency”. By the early-mid 2010s this was judged to have been unsuccessful. SCIAF had failed to make significant inroads into the non-Catholic community, and at the same time had possibly alienated itself from both the Clergy and some Catholics. SCIAF also faced increased competition from a new Scottish NGO which cleverly positioned itself across the faith-secular divide and demonstrated strong strategic vision and skills in mythmaking. This new competitor, skilfully using Catholic imagery and terminology, and declaring itself rooted in the Christian Catholic faith of its founder but open to all faiths and none, presented an image of a grassroots and radical agency (Mary’s Meals, NA). This has proven very engaging for many Catholic church goers.

In response SCIAF refocused on its core support and origins. From the mid-2010s SCIAF deliberately sought to re-engage with and deepen support from the Catholic clergy and laity in Scotland. A focus on IHD – and thus a distinctively Christian approach to international development – has provided a way to dialogue with both the Clergy and laity (SCIAF, 2021). It has supported the Bishops to educate their congregations on the teachings of the new Pope. The new Pope and his Encyclicals have been useful tools to use for advocacy within the Catholic community.

Finally, for small Caritas’ like SCIAF there are possibilities to gain recognition and leadership in the wider Caritas confederation by contributing to intellectual debates of wider relevance. This can contribute to both organisational and personal prestige, particularly important within a confederation where some senior positions are elected.

HOW WELL WERE THE PROMISES OF WELLBEING AND FAITH REALISED?

SCIAF’s experiments with Integral Human Development have been deliberate but a little disjointed, reflecting the contingent nature of policy and practice in organisations, and the primacy of project implementation over research, the organisation’s partner-led approach to project design and management, and the limited resources available.

The IHD pilot outlined here focused on developing an operational tool based on the framework. In doing so the broad principles of the Framework were further defined and
turned into a measurement tool. This was seen as one possible articulation of the framework, specific to this programme. One of the key writers of the original framework described it as a “guide, not a blueprint” – it would be adapted and applied as appropriate (Interviewee I5, 2019).

The criteria for success of the IHD pilot and the process for reviewing it were not defined in detail at the start. There was no formal review at the end that drew a line under the pilot and gave a view on its success or failure. However, given the significant cost involved in such research for NGOs and community members there needs to be a commensurate benefit. Suitable criteria from research literature for the IHD Wheel as a monitoring and evaluation tool are: the trustworthiness of the information (its accuracy or validity, reliability or dependability) (Bryman, 2016, pp. 383–390; Creswell, 2013, pp. 244–247), its usefulness and acceptability, and its practicality and affordability. For our purposes here, we also need to consider if it delivers on the promises of better information and practice, democratisation, and a distinctively Catholic form of development.

**Better information? Better practice?**

**Trustworthiness**

The IHD framework’s domains and themes are closely aligned with the emerging consensus on wellbeing domain lists, and based on that alignment appears to provide a reasonably holistic coverage of the key drivers of human wellbeing (Austin, 2020; Norton and Sumner, 2012). No significant gaps were identified in the domain or themes except for health.

The literature suggests that good practice should include an exercise to ground these broad domain lists in local realities and the priorities and understandings of particular communities (Camfield and Roelen, 2015; McGregor, 2018; McGregor et al., 2015b; Rowley, 2014). However, the domain set was not developed with the communities, and there was no deliberate review with communities of their relevance and completeness, so some issues or local priorities may have been missed.

The individual questions were tested and adapted over time to be clearer, to avoid leading informants, and to more accurately address the issue of concern. Some were problematic or needed refinement – particularly the Spiritual and the personal domains. The spiritual domain proved notably controversial where communities have different faiths to the organisation. Why was a Catholic agency asking about faith? What was the motive for this? The “political” domain was renamed “citizenship” due to concerns it might be misunderstood at a community level, being seen as about partisan politics rather than governance in general.

The accuracy of results appeared reasonable. Some questions were designed in part to triangulate with others in the survey and confirm or challenge the responses provided. The results were validated with programme teams and triangulated with other surveys and secondary data. Independent reviews were carried out by the external consultants. Triangulation took the form of using different analysts (internal and external), different types of data and different sources, and involving various individuals from different groups in design, analysis and review (Yin, 2003, pp. 97–99). The triangulation of results increased confidence in the accuracy of results (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). It is worth noting that project participants and informants were not involved directly.
Reliability or dependability here relates to the methodology employed rather than reproducing the same results at a later date (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). We would not expect people’s answers to be the same each time they are surveyed. Indeed, if we expected no change there would be no purpose to this exercise. Considerable joint effort was put into the design and improvement of the methodology. It was documented in detail and repeated trainings were provided to those involved.

The reported results, and the changes seemed broadly in line with what we might have expected. In that sense they seem valid (or accurate) and reliable (or dependable) (Creswell, 2013). When unusual results were identified further research provided plausible explanations.

**Usefulness and Acceptability**

Respondents reported the IHD Wheel generated a range of new, additional information that was useful for understanding how project participants were doing, and how they were being influenced by the project. The domains focused attention on participants rather than project metrics, generated significant volumes of data, and looked at the project from a user’s perspective. There were detailed discussions between SCIAF and partner staff about these results, whether they were accurate, what might be influencing the responses, and what implications there were for the project. Frequently partner staff suggested follow-up investigation either with individuals and group discussions (SCIAF, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f). Project staff informants valued the additional opportunities to reflect on the project, and the new forms of information available.

The focus on the individual, and the range of issues involved, encouraged thinking about they experience the project in quite different ways, and what this meant for project design and implementation. The way that the emotional and mental health of the individuals affects their ability and willingness to engage with development interventions was noted (Interviewee I30, 2019). In this way the framework encouraged a more rounded view of the individual, their place in a social environment and interaction with the project – and a different perspective on the project, and a recasting of normal analysis. If someone was not benefitting, was it because their circumstances (health, wealth, etc) were obstacles? And what were the implications for this?

The focus on the individual did not ignore the individual’s context. The state’s capability, accountability and responsiveness, access to services, and law and justice for example. The survey questions gave significant space to cultural norms, and particularly gender relations and women’s equality, and provoked thoughtful discussion about whether the project was having its intended results and a questioning of the gender approach.

The process provided valuable learning moments for some of those involved. The opportunity to hear the results and discuss them was "very helpful" (SCIAF, 2017f, p. 6). The IHD domains focused attention on a range of issues that might not have been addressed otherwise - for example possible advocacy over government priorities and services (SCIAF, 2017e, 2017d) or over gender issues at the household level (SCIAF, 2017f). The process facilitated a dialogue, increased knowledge and understanding amongst the wider programme team about the programme’s participants, put individuals at the centre, and inspired changes in its design and implementation. These moments are not inherent to the IHD framework, but this particular process did create unusual spaces for reflection.
Partner organisation staff found the Wheel tool useful. All those consulted, whether in SCIAF or CADECOM Malawi, felt that a person-centred, holistic approach to human development was relevant to communities in Malawi. However, there were differences about how best to operationalise this approach within development projects, and particularly how to ensure the second promise of greater democratisation.

Despite this, there were limitations of design and implementation which limited the usefulness of the data. In terms of design, the small sample size and the purposive sampling strategy prevented generalising results across the participant group as a whole. There were risks of bias in the responses due to the phrasing and ordering of questions and desirability bias in responses (Copestake et al., 2019b, p. 8). Efforts were made to minimise these risks. No problems with question order were identified – but this was not specifically assessed. Efforts were made to minimise respondent bias, but it is unlikely it was eliminated.

While the domain set itself, broadly reflected the consensus on wellbeing domain sets, the question set within the domains was more problematic. It focused on a range of issues – from overall self-assessments of individual wellbeing to assessments of aspects of wellbeing, to comments on how well individuals interacted with the project. As discussed above, some topics had more questions than others. Some concepts demanded more, for example citizenship which used the CAR framework. The use of the Wheel, and the requirement to have six domains with six questions also influenced the question set. As a result, not all themes (sub-domain) had the same number of questions. Arguably the questions in the Spiritual domain focused on non-spiritual issues. This presented no problem when analysis results on a question level, but aggregating and presenting results at a domain or wheel level was more problematic.

Quantifying the responses, and using those numbers to measure IHD, was largely undebated within SCIAF. Project monitoring and evaluation relies heavily on quantitative results (such as reported increases in income), and it was natural that efforts would be made to measure the IHD results numerically. Project monitoring and evaluation has multiple purposes, principally project management and accountability to various stakeholders. Learning and adaptation is often an aspiration, but so is demonstrating success in order to maintain support for projects and individuals from internal and external stakeholders. Doing so usually involves the communication of simple, clear and unambiguous measures of achievement. Quantitative measures are useful for this purpose. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, as the numbers are aggregated, they become increasing abstract and disassociated from their source, open to unwarranted to interpretations or at odds with the meaning the respondent intended. Secondly, the varied nature of the questions in the framework – most related to issues of personal wellbeing but some to project indicators - meant some should have arguably been excluded from any aggregate scores. Numerical coding turned these into apparently equivalent and equally weighted items contributing to an IHD score, but this is not justified. Of the 36 questions five were project indicators and should have been excluded.

The planned longitudinal cases (individuals and participant “types”) and study of identified types of project participant offered strong potential for understanding the situation of key groups of people. These was only partially realised, and this was a major loss for the pilot. In addition, the domain sets and questionnaires were not developed with or chosen by the communities they were applied to, and the original intentions to have a very open-ended process, which would have mitigated this risk, proved impractical. The framework was progressively reduced to a questionnaire model.
PRACTICALITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Implementation of the pilot proved extremely challenging from a practical perspective, even with dedicated resources. The scope and ambition proved more than was possible to achieve and there were various reductions in the scope of the data collection and analysis. There were also delays in implementation.

Timing influenced both design and implementation. The introduction of the pilot after project start-up, meant it did not influence project design. Instead, it was used solely for monitoring and evaluation, and the elements of the Wheel had in part to fit the design of the project rather than vice versa. In addition, the original aspirations for the scope and frequency of data collection and analysis proved unrealistic. Significant changes were made between the first and third surveys to reduce the time involved in collecting and analysing data. The number of questions was reduced - particularly open questions. It proved impossible to keep to the planned schedule of surveys. (See Table 5.8 below.) In large part these changes were due to resource constraints and the primacy of operational over research objectives. Surveys were delayed or cancelled, and the team struggled to maintain surveys at a consistent point in the calendar. In such a short period of time little change would be expected in some of the domains and themes. In addition, it put added pressure on the teams and participants. Time for data collection and analysis was limited. Large volumes of data were generated – analysing it was a significant challenge and it was not possible for all the data, increased by the need to work across several languages. Follow-up research on individuals was more limited than hoped for (SCIAF, 2019b, p. 21). The independent action by enumerators to replace the original respondents in some households in the second survey meant efforts to have longitudinal cases was compromised.

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<th>Table 5.8. Planned Data Collection Schedule</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
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Staff turnover was a significant constraint. Local organisations rely on project funding. Employment is timebound, and core wages often very low. This limits reflection and learning, and few staff were available for follow-up work after the pilot.

The complex and at times contradictory nature of the data was an inevitable feature of the approach. However, it did present a challenge at times. Results might need further information to understand, to clarify or to confirm. Contradictory results needed explanation. This required follow up that could not be done. Moreover, it is not always easy to square this information with the simplified narratives that project reporting requires.

77 Seasonality is a critical influence on wellbeing in rural, rain-fed agriculture-dependent communities. The largely urbanised HQ staff of NGOs often overlook this, primarily concerned with their own or donor-defined schedules and timeframes. This is despite long recognition of this problem (Chambers, 1983). Assessing wellbeing results should keep this in mind - wellbeing is likely to be higher post-harvest and lower in the lean seasons. In Malawi the main harvest comes between April and August. Wellbeing should be highest towards the end of this period and post-harvest, and lowest in the lean season, typically between November and March. (FEWSNET, nd)
Overall, the experience suggests that even relatively modest action research exercises are extremely demanding on available resources and skills within an NGO, and plans need to be modest and targeted.

The use of the Wheel produced new information, and created spaces for reflection. Changes were made to projects as a result. The baseline led to changes in emphasis in the locations. There were examples of significant budgeted changes or additions to the programme in response to feedback from the communities (Interviewee 111, 2020). For example resources were found for the construction of a warehouse for a cooperative (SCIAF Interviewee 117, 2020). There were also some changes in practice. Some may have been informal and hard to capture in the data sources available to this research.

Timing in the project cycle proved important. These changes were possible as the pilot involved an ongoing process of reflection which encouraged change in priorities and activities. The choice to focus on joint reflection rather than documentation were made in part because this was more likely to lead to change in practice than external learning by others (Fourie, 2014; Mannone, n.d.; Prakash et al., 2019; Race, 2020).

**VOICE, AGENCY AND SHIFTING POWER**

For the second promise, greater democratisation or a shift of power, progress was much more limited. It should be said that shifting power was not an overt objective of the pilot. The Wheel did give greater space for the voice participants, but on issues and in spaces defined by the project, and decision-making remained with the project team. The process did not engage participants in a deep reflection on their own wellbeing and actions to improve it. It did not involve them in deciding which domains were important for them. It was consultative more than participatory, and there was limited if any transfers of power.

The original intent had been more open, but choices in the face of different priorities narrowed the scope and manner of the data collection and analysis. The use of the Wheel reflected this. Unremarked at the time, when adopting the Trocaire Wheel for the pilot, the way it was used was changed from a tool for a collaborative self-analysis and personal change to a framework for survey data compiled and analysed by staff alone. The results were not analysed or validated by participant themselves, either as individuals or groups. This limited the possibilities for democratisation and personal transformation through the process. The use of survey questionnaire approach tended to reduce the role of respondents to an informant in someone else’s data collection exercise - rather than an actor in their own.

The principal champion of the Caritas Australia / CADECOM Strength-Based Approach in Malawi was involved in both pilots, and saw a difference between the two. While both aimed at promoting wellbeing and integral human development, he felt the SBA better embodied the positive, empowering aspirations than the IHD Wheel approach SCIAF adopted (Interviewee 116, 2020). Caritas Australia deliberately aimed to recast normal development discourse from a focus on what people lacked to what they aspired to, and the resources they could mobilise. One method of disrupting normal development relationships and power dynamics between agencies and project participants was to train community members, staff and government officials in the SBA methodology together in an effort to deliberately cast both staff and community members equally as learners, not teachers and learners as is usually done (Winterford and Cunningham, 2017, p. 18). This set it apart from the IHD Wheel approach which seemed to focus on needs rather than strengths (Interviewee 116, 2020).
**FAITH**

For the principal objective, demonstrating a distinctively Catholic version of development, the results were mixed. The framework itself clearly reflected the person-centred, holistic and social concept of human wellbeing. However, attempts to incorporate a spiritual domain proved problematic. The theme and question set for the spiritual domain proved difficult to frame and use in practice. Despite its title, the question set focused difficult to capture in questions, and is probably misnamed. Only one of the six questions in that domain clearly refers to the practice of religion. The others relate to levels of community engagement, solidarity, individual good works, and general wellbeing. While relevant to Catholic social values they failed to get to grips with spirituality or transcendence. The drafting panel, made up of Christians, agnostics and atheists, struggled to find the words and questions to deal with the spiritual aspects of human life and faith, and largely focused on the social aspects of CST. Noone was particularly happy with the result. And yet it seemed that the domain name was sufficient to cause confusion and questions when used in communities. The challenge of incorporating spirituality into wellbeing frameworks has been documented elsewhere (See for example Ranis et al., 2006).

**CONCLUSIONS**

SCIAF’s experiment with integral human development provides insights into how faith-based approaches to human wellbeing share common ground with more secular approaches, and the extent to which it has been able to achieve the different promises of wellbeing. It highlights the practical challenges, and the trade-offs between different priorities. Comparisons with work by other Caritas agencies provide complementary and contrasting experiences, and highlight the commonalities and differences with the emerging consensus on wellbeing in international development.

The core values and domain set of IHD frameworks are largely the same as those for wellbeing. The basis in a person-centred, holistic and social conception of human wellbeing are common. For many champions of a wellbeing agenda, the Catholic church’s championing of economies that work for people, rather than vice versa, and conception of human wellbeing as entwined with the environment and future generations, there is even greater shared ground (Bertina, 2013; Deneulin, 2021; Pope Francis, 2020; SCIAF, 2020a).

SCIAF’s elaboration of the IHD Wheel aimed to provide a more complete view of human wellbeing in order to assess change over time, and use the information to assess project performance and adapt projects to better meet the needs of project participants. The use of a domain-set approach has provided a more complete picture of project participants, and contributed to changes in practice and projects. They have provided a valuable addition to standard project management tools. However, generating and analysing the information has proven extremely demanding. Various choices were made in response that narrowed the scope of the pilot, and reduced the space to ground assessments in the priorities and understandings of the communities, and to allow for more open, consultative data collection. Moreover, the complex and contradictory nature of the information that is generated can be at odds with the simplified narratives of success or failure that are often demanded.

While aiming for a more consultative and open process, SCIAF’s pilot did not explicitly aim at creating greater voice or shifting power. Other initiatives by Caritas agencies have sought very deliberately to shift power and decision-making, and the contrast between the SBA and IHD pilots is informative. Not because the IHD approach is inherently less open to this promise,
but because the way in which it was implemented in this case prioritised information over democratisation.

Throughout this work there has been a driving intention to give voice to a distinctively Catholic approach to human development. The success of this is mixed. Catholic social teaching is expressed through the person-centred, holistic and relational approach. However, efforts to articulate and use the Spirituality domain proved problematic. As outlined above, when working with groups that have different belief systems, these can be difficult to frame or implement beyond a recognition of the right and need for the freedom to be able to pursue beliefs as long as they do not interfere with others.
CHAPTER 6: TEARFUND, THE LIGHT WHEEL AND WELLBEING

INTRODUCTION

Tearfund is a UK-based international NGO, part of an international alliance of evangelical Christian organisations. Tearfund is included here as a case of a faith-permeated organisation, where faith “is an integral component and is openly and explicitly expressed” (Occhipinti, 2015, p. 337). In contrast to the Caritas organisations Tearfund belongs to the evangelical Christian tradition, and furthermore is not an official agency of a particular organised religion.

METHODS AND SOURCES

The methods used here are dealt with in Chapter 4. The principal sources for the case study have been interviews and publicly available documents on the LIGHT Wheel approach. There are several practice manuals to support partner organisations in their work. These include the LIGHT Wheel, the Church and Community Mobilisation programme and Umoja manual, which is used to support self-help groups. Deena Freeman’s recent book on Tearfund (Freeman, 2019) and Mike Hollow’s earlier history of the organisation (Hollow, 2008) have been useful sources. Also of interest has been Tearfund’s collaboration with Bath Social and Development Research Ltd, a consulting company linked to the University of Bath and its Wellbeing and Development (WeD) research programme (Copestake et al., 2019b). Tearfund’s Annual Reports have been a rich source of information. The strengths and weaknesses of these documents are discussed in Chapter Four. As well as their annual reports, gaining access to Tearfund staff took time. Between 2017 and 2020 Tearfund staff in their Head and Scottish offices were contacted enquiring about the LIGHT Wheel project, without success. In 2020, with support from the academic supervisor contact was made with the relevant staff members within Tearfund. As with Traidcraft, this began with senior staff members and in time access was given to the LIGHT Wheel team. As a result, two interviews were carried out and a number of documents not in the public domain were made available.

This discussion of Tearfund’s engagement with wellbeing, and particularly its attempt to assess changes in wellbeing through the use of the LIGHT Wheel approach is based on a limited range of data sources and informants. Wherever possible information has been triangulated, but this limitation should be borne in mind.

TEARFUND – A BRIEF HISTORY

Tearfund began as The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund – TEAR Fund, then Tearfund – in 1968 in the UK (Freeman, 2019, p.41). Tearfund was originally an independent charity based in the UK with the “ministry … ‘ to serve Jesus Christ by enabling those who share evangelical Christian beliefs to bring good news to the poor” (Tearfund, 1995). Its faith roots are clear, and it has since worked to find a way to do “Christian Development” (Freeman, 2018).

In pursuit of its mission of combining proclamation of the Gospel and social action (Hollow, 2008) Tearfund has four main areas of work:

- Responding to emergencies, working with church partners and its own professional emergency response teams
- Transforming Communities, working with church and community partners
- Mobilising Churches to adopt “integral mission”
CHAPFER 6: TEARFUND, THE LIGHT WHEEL AND WELLBEING

- Changing society to tackle poverty and injustice through advocacy and holding policy and decision-makers to account (Tearfund, 2021).

Tearfund has grown significantly in size since its early days, increasing its funding and its scope of work. It began “with a handful of people sitting around a table in London in 1968” (Hollow, 2008, introduction note) and a fundraising concert at the Royal Albert Hall with a fundraising aim of £1,500 (Hollow, 2008, p12). In 2019/20 Tearfund reported an income of more than £85,000,000 (Tearfund, 2021). In absolute terms the organisation has seen more than a four-fold increase in income. In real terms it has more than doubled since 1994.78

Tearfund’s income structure has changed significantly since the early 1990s with project grant funding growing significantly as a proportion of overall funding. In 1993/4 private donations and legacies represented 98% of the organisation’s income and grant income was less than 1%. During the 2010s grant and contract income peaked at around 36% of income [author’s analysis of annual accounts]. Tearfund has been successful in raising significant grant funding for its emergency work (Tearfund, 2021, p49). The change in income structure is important because it can affect what organisations can or are willing to do. What is noticeable about Tearfund is that alongside a significant increase in grant funding they have also increased their private donations, keeping institutional grants to a minority of income and thus maintaining significant levels of institutional autonomy [Author’s analysis].

This autonomy may be particularly important for a faith-based organisation that sees itself differentiated from these fundamentally secular donors. Freeman argues that both the acceptance of funds from governmental donors, and their engagement with the modern, secular institutions of international humanitarian and development action constrains Tearfund’s ability to fully live out its own theology in its work, encapsulated as “Integral Mission”, maintaining a dualism between the public and private, the spiritual and the secular, evangelism and social action (Freeman, 2018). Tearfund plays an active part in key elements of the international and UK-based humanitarian system such as the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and the UK’s Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC). This dualism and the internal tensions it creates will feature in the discussion of its wellbeing work below.

THEOLOGY, VALUES AND ACTION

Tearfund is an avowedly Christian organisation from the evangelical tradition. This has central importance in terms of its mission, what it considers “development” – and wellbeing – to be, how this is promoted, and how it relates to other actors in the humanitarian world including secular organisations and institutions.

Tearfund sits within an evangelical tradition which considers faith to require both religious and social action (Chester, 2002). During the 1980s and 1990s Tearfund was influenced by, and latterly adopted, the Latin American evangelical theology of Integral Mission – which argues Christians should practice both religious devotion and social action, and engage with the world as Christians all of the time (Tearfund, 2006). It rejects the separation of public and private and argues that evangelism and social action are both key elements of achieving God’s Kingdom on earth. In adopting Integral Mission Tearfund sets itself as distinct both from some evangelical Churches which do not focus on social action, and from more mainstream

Protestant and Catholic churches that are comfortable with the modern division between personal pursuit of faith and public secularism (Chester, 2002; Freeman, 2019).

Development itself is defined as transformation – an aligning of individuals and communities so that they are in harmony with God, which will allow us to flourish as individuals, communities and a planet (Freeman, 2018). It is only partially about material aspects of life, encompassing physical health, education, social relationships, mental and emotional health, and spirituality.

This theology, and the adoption of Integral Mission has influenced how and with whom Tearfund works. In the 1960s and 1970s its work was largely delivered through specific projects delivered by development agencies of Church organisations. With the adoption of Integral Mission in the 2000s Tearfund sought to work directly with local churches and their congregations with the aim of encouraging them to “re-envision” themselves as having social as well as spiritual missions, to adopt Integral Mission and become agents of social change within their communities. Drawing on increasingly popular ideas of participatory and asset-based community development Tearfund sought to work with churches to facilitate participatory processes of assessment, goal setting and social action by communities themselves. In doing so it hoped to build a worldwide movement for transformation, rooted in local communities and sustained by local commitment rather than external funding.

Over time this approach has been documented as the Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) programme (Freeman, 2019). Tearfund reported that in 2008 about 75% of its programmes “work with, or through, local churches and we see that as a key element in addressing poverty at the point of need and delivering long-term sustainability” (Tearfund, 2009, p2). By 2021 Tearfund was reporting that it had mobilised more than 15,000 local churches in the previous year through the work of over 6,600 Church and Community Transformation (CCT) facilitators (Tearfund, 2021, p17).

For many in Tearfund it has been important to be able to see this Christian faith directly in their work, and to distinguish it from what secular international development organisations do, defining what it does as “Christian development” rather than “Christians doing development” (Freeman, 2018; Tearfund, 2004, p. 4). Freeman suggests there was significant internal debate, and strong lobbying by relatively junior members of the organisation in favour of a distinctively Christian approach to development in recent years (Freeman, 2019, pp. 95–6).

Tim Chester, who worked with Tearfund between 1998 and 899 to define the characteristics of “good Christian development”, suggested the distinctive characteristic of Christian development is “our commitment to reconciling people to God” and involved promoting a reconciliation of both rich and poor to God, proclaiming the gospel, working with the local church and maintaining a focus on both spiritual and material poverty (Chester, 2002, pp. 7–12). However, from the projects implemented by development wings of Churches to the participatory community development of CCM, the practical processes and results are striking similar to those used and delivered by secular agencies. The partners are often but not always different – indeed sometimes the partners are also supported by organisations from other faiths or secular organisations; there may be references to the Bible and scripture;

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79 These characteristics were: compassion, justice, character, cultural sensitivity, cultural transformation, accountability, leadership, empowerment for service, participation, sustainability and integration.
but the work and the results themselves can look indistinguishable. This has been disconcerting for many within Tearfund (Freeman, 2019).

As discussed in relation to SCIAF, for many Christians involved in international development there is a desire to differentiate Christian development from secular development. However, doing so can prove challenging. A binary distinction between faith-based and secular organisations ignores the differences between faith-based organisations and the strong faith-influences on many secular organisations. Indeed Chester argued in 2002 that the characteristics of “good Christian development” were shared by many non-Christians involved in development work and that they “often practice them more consistently than Christians” (Chester, 2002, p7).

Many faith-based organisations are able to navigate this challenge by accepting the post-Enlightenment separation of public and private spheres, with religion firmly in the private sphere. For those from an evangelical tradition this runs counter to their theology. Yet introducing their faith into the public sphere can cause tension and opposition with other actors, either from other faiths or a secular tradition and lead to accusations of proselytising (Fountain, 2015). One potential path through these tensions for Tearfund has been to suggest that while the mission is “integral”, different elements of it can be delivered by different parts of the organisation. So humanitarian action can be technical and focused on the material and be largely secular in its formulation, while CCM and partnerships with the Church can also address the spiritual aspects of the mission. This does not satisfy everyone within Tearfund however – some see this as inconsistent with Integral Mission and their desire to proclaim the Gospel as well as address material poverty (Chester, 2002). Tearfund is a very real site of debate and contest between these views. Tearfund has to walk a careful line, responding to its own sense of mission in a wider world. In the publicly secular UK, it must ensure it does not fall foul of charity law, more generally it must maintain commitments to international codes of humanitarian and development practice based on secular presumptions of the separation of public and private spheres of life. Communities in many of the countries in which international development is “done” are far more overtly religious than Tearfund’s home country. In such contexts churches and faith leaders may be important local actors, central to development (with a small “d”), and increasingly partners in formal development initiatives. In such a context, where Tearfund’s evangelical tradition matches that of the community, an explicitly Christian development may be unproblematic, but as many communities are either mixed or non-Christian, this may be contentious (Freeman, 2019).

**Tearfund and Wellbeing**

Tearfund’s theology fits well with the emerging consensus on wellbeing and international development. Tearfund has seen the interest in wellbeing as an opportunity to promote its own notions of human development in this debate, has integrated wellbeing as an objective in its development’s interventions, and developed a method and tools for deliberately promoting wellbeing in communities.

Tearfund is committed to a holistic, whole-person, relational and positively-oriented approach to development, aiming to address “material and spiritual poverty” and contribute “to the economic, physical, psychological, social and spiritual transformation of people” (Tearfund, 2011, p2).

At Tearfund, our goal is to bring about ‘whole-life transformation’ in the individuals whom we serve in the world’s poorest communities. We want to see ‘thriving and
flourishing individuals and communities’: we pursue ‘holistic development’. Through our work we aim for change in every aspect of a person or community’s well-being – including both spiritual and physical aspects (Tearfund, 2016a, p3).

Wellbeing is fundamentally relational, individual wellbeing influenced by relationships with others, with the environment, and with God. In common with other faith-based organisations, problems in life and “development” are in part caused by broken relationships in these different aspects of life – relationships with yourself, with others, with the planet and with God (Tearfund, 2019, p2). Tearfund does not attempt to deal with all aspects of a person or community’s life – rather it deals with specific elements that contribute to wellbeing, but in the context of an understanding of life as complex and inter-related.

This holistic, relational conception of wellbeing is largely compatible with the emergent consensus on wellbeing and international development outlined in WeD (Copestake et al., 2019a) and the formulations by Caritas and Traidcraft. Where Tearfund’s conceptualisation differs is in the prominence it gives to “living faith”, (Tearfund, 2016b) and its explicit interest in Christianity and Christian church communities. This reflects Tearfund’s theology of development which sees the mending of relationships with ourselves, each other, the planet, and with God, as the route to wellbeing. The independent QUIP evaluation of Tearfund’s work in Uganda described Tearfund’s Light Wheel approach as QUIP plus “living faith” (Copestake et al., 2019b, pp. 124–5).

Tearfund saw the widespread interest in wellbeing as an opportunity to contribute an evangelical Christian perspective to these debates, setting one of its advocacy priorities for 2012/13 to “contribute expertise to debates on … wellbeing” (Tearfund, 2012, p6). The joint publication with the Theos Foundation and CAFOD titled “Wholly Living” was an important intervention in this effort:

This report offers a distinctively Christian approach to the debate on human flourishing and wellbeing and argues that people are most fulfilled when they are productive, creative and have strong relationships with others. Wholly Living calls for a holistic approach to development that recognises that economic growth is an important - but not the only - driver towards human fulfilment and that unless growth is sustainable, it can do more harm than good (Tearfund, 2011, p5).

Tearfund does not use the term wellbeing a great deal. Text analysis of 16 Tearfund annual reports between 2005 and 2020 found the term wellbeing mentioned only seven times. As elsewhere wellbeing is used in a variety of senses. For example, the CCM Facilitator’s Manual uses wellbeing in two senses – as related specifically to mental and emotional health, and to a broader meaning as the opposite of poverty (Njoroge, 2019). Tearfund appears to prefer the terms transformation, flourishing, and whole-life transformation. These terms seem to have stronger roots and greater resonance in their Christian tradition (as in Caritas and elements of Traidcraft). However, wellbeing does appear as an explicit objective in some of Tearfund’s principle strategic programmes and tools, including the Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) Programme and the LIGHT Wheel (discussed below).

Church and Community Mobilisation is Tearfund’s approach to encourage and support local churches to implement Integral Mission – spiritual devotion and social action – and makes specific reference to promoting wellbeing. CCM grew out of an earlier participatory community development approach (Njoroge, 2019, p1). It is implemented by church communities themselves with the aid of a trained facilitator. It has five steps: Church
Awakening, Church and Community Description, Information-gathering, Information Analysis, and Decision. Wellbeing is an explicit and overall objective for its CCM programme:

when the church is envisioned to provide a space for people to be empowered, to understand their self-worth, to build relationships with others and work together for change, initiatives and projects will bring about a change in holistic well-being (Tearfund CCM Theory of Change (ToC) (cited in James, 2016, p1)).

The headline result cited in a recent evaluation of CCM in Uganda was that “75 per cent felt that their general well-being had improved over the last five years” (Tearfund, 2018, p12). I will focus below on the way that Tearfund has sought to conceptualise and assess changes in wellbeing.

**Tearfund’s LIGHT Wheel Project**

Having adopted wellbeing as an objective at a strategic level, Tearfund sought to find a way to measure or assess changes in wellbeing. This was delegated to a headquarters-based technical team which developed the LIGHT Wheel guide and toolkit in the 2010s. Tearfund cites a range of influences on the LIGHT Wheel, including the University of Bath, spiritual metrics from Eastern University, USA, and a methodology called Outcome Stars from Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise (Freeman, 2019). The 2014 publication by White and Asybakera seems to have been particularly influential - see table 7.2 below.

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<tr>
<td>Material assets and resources</td>
<td>Economic Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation and Influence</td>
<td>Agency and Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Connections</td>
<td>Social Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Relationships</td>
<td>Close Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional and mental well-being Tearfund</td>
<td>Physical and Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>NA (included above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capabilities</td>
<td>Competence and Self-Worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Faith</td>
<td>Values and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship of the Environment</td>
<td>Environment - discarded after pilot research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The LIGHT Wheel has received increased corporate priority, support and resources, allowing for the creation of these high-quality resources. No overall statistics for usage of the LIGHT Wheel have been made available. However, the CCM approach is widespread. Tearfund reported working with over 15,000 local churches in 2020 and more than 2.4 million people being reached through their community development work. Promotion of the LIGHT Wheel has been increasingly resourced since 2018 and efforts made to disseminate the tool and make it increasingly accessible and appropriate. Regional teams have been trained in the toolkit and work with local churches to introduce and support its usage. In 2018 a full-time staff role was created to focus on promotion of and support for the LIGHT Wheel. Development has continued with an e-learning video module being piloted in 2020. The LIGHT Wheel was first mentioned in the 2020 Annual Report. Whole-Life Transformation as a phrase also first appears in the 2020 AR.

An Introductory Guide and Toolkit were published in November 2016 to provide standardised approaches and toolkits for Tearfund teams and Church facilitators across the globe (Tearfund, 2016a, 2016b). As described by Tearfund:
We believe that the LIGHT Wheel helps churches to understand the different kinds of transformation that we hope to see in communities in a biblical way. This is because it acknowledges:

1. That poverty is complex and has many aspects
2. That transformation takes time and will happen in stages
3. That different outcomes and kinds of transformation will be a priority in different communities and situations

The spokes of the LIGHT Wheel identify different aspects of poverty and help us to think about what transformation looks like in each of these areas of life. The image of a wheel with spokes reminds us that each aspect is connected to each other and that the full transformation that enables people to live ‘life in all of its fullness’ (John 10:10) requires transformation in all of these areas.” (Tearfund, 2016a, p4)

The documents describe what it means to “flourish” and what constitutes “whole-life transformation”. Like the emerging consensus it takes a domain set approach, it uses both objective and subjective data, and considers material, subjective and relational aspects of life. Like the WPP approach it uses a Wheel as an image and as an organising method for the framework. It sets out nine domains which have an influence over an individual or community’s ability to “live well, flourish and be resilient” (Tearfund, 2016a, p12).

The nine domains are largely consistent with those set out in the wider wellbeing literature, aside from the emphasis on “living faith”:

1. **Social Connections**: how unified or fractured the community is, how well it is connected externally and able to access government services and resources for the common good
2. **Personal Relationships**: the existence and quality of personal relationships.
3. **Living Faith**: explores whether Christians are living out their faith as individuals and as a Church.
4. **Emotional and mental well-being**: how the past has impacted on the present and expectations of the future, and people’s ability to cope.
5. **Physical health**: how healthy people are, what services they access and inequalities within the community.
6. **Stewardship of the Environment**: the relationship of the community with the natural environment.
7. **Material Assets and Resources**: the material resources that people and communities can access.
8. **Capabilities**: the skills, expertise and knowledge that people have.
9. **Participation and Influence**: the extent to which people can express themselves and they can influence decisions – their ability to take control over their own destiny.

These domains form the nine spokes of the Wheel. Like the IWB, indicators and associated questions are defined for each of the nine domains. In all there are 81 indicators. In order to be able to reduce the scope of the questionnaire these are divided into key and optional indicators – 31 are mandatory. Of the 31, 22 are self-assessed by informants.
The analysis includes contextual factors as important in influencing wellbeing and suggests that Institutions, Law, Society, Environment, Technology, Politics, Services, Security and Economy be analysed.

The high level of elaboration in the tools mean they set out of what a good life or a mature community are. This introduces a more normative aspect to the tools and some others. This is most pronounced in the Maturity Model which defines how a mature community / individual would perform against the nine domains.

Within the domains indicators address a mixture of general and specific elements of wellbeing. (See Fig. 7.1 below for a complete list of the key questions.) The indicators are a mixture of material issues that can be objectively verified (e.g., what kind of toilet someone has, what assets they own); others are purely subjective in the sense that they concern a person’s thoughts and views (e.g., whether the future will be better than the present). Some indicators are clearly relevant to a person’s subjective wellbeing (e.g., the percentage of people who regularly feel lonely). Others are related to more general concerns such as protecting the environment and those related to project monitoring (e.g., the percentage of households that have acted to reduce soil erosion).

The tools are designed to gather self-reported and observable data (i.e., subjective and objective) in a variety of ways, either as surveys or as participatory processes within communities. They can thus be used for consultative purposes – hearing people’s own views or for more participatory processes where communities use the tools to assess their situations, define their priorities, and seek support to address them. The LIGHT Wheel is described as a tool for change – for “whole life transformation” – as much as a tool for assessing change, relevant at the personal and community levels (Interviewee I14, 2019b). As an approach that encourages an individual or a community to consider their lives in relation to the nine domains, to score them and put them on a scale in terms of how good they are, and to compare them against a normative framework as set out in the maturity model, this is an approach that can be part of an on-going process of reflection and assessment. It is intended to lead to action.

Tearfund does not make reference to the promises of wellbeing but the aim of improving information and practice, of encouraging people to self-assess and make change themselves are evident in their documentation and approach. Most importantly, it is clear that engagement with wellbeing presented an opportunity to give expression to a Christian view of wellbeing and including the practice of religion as constitutive of that.
### Fig 6.1. Tearfund’s Nine Domains and Key Indicators

1. **Social Connections**
   a. **Exclusion**: % people who think that over the last year their life has been disadvantaged by being excluded.
   b. **Violence**: % people who have suffered from violence over the last 12 months.
   c. **Collaboration**: % people who within the last 3 months have worked together with others in the community as part of a shared endeavour.

2. **Personal Relationships**
   a. **Feel Valued**: % people who feel valued by their spouse or (if single) parent/carer.
   b. **Handling Disagreement**: % people who feel that disagreements in the household are resolved satisfactorily.

3. **Living Faith**
   a. **Personal Practice**: % people who have undertaken a religious practice such as individual prayer, reading a spiritual book, singing or listening to religious songs in the last 7 days, apart from regular or formal religious services.
   b. **Service**: % people who have helped someone in the community (excluding members of their own household) in the last seven days without expecting a reward.
   c. **Place in the Community**: % people who believe that the local Christian churches exert a positive influence in the community.

4. **Emotional and mental well-being**
   a. **Ability to Share**: % people who feel able to share their concerns and worries with their family or others.
   b. **Loneliness**: % people who regularly feel lonely.
   c. **The Future**: % people who feel that the future will be better than the present.
   d. **The Past**: % people who feel that events in their past continue to have a negative effect on their present.

5. **Physical health**
   a. **Child mortality**: The number of children per HH who have died in the last 3 years before 5 years of age.
   b. **Adequacy of diet (Malnutrition)**: Food consumption score.
   c. **Sanitation**: % HH using improved sanitation (flush/pour flush, VIP / pit latrine with slab, composting toilet).
   d. **Water source (quality)**: % households who draw drinking water from a protected source that provides safe potable water.

6. **Stewardship of the Environment**
   a. **Cooking Fuel**: % HHs that cook on wood, charcoal or dung.
   b. **Water Management**: % HH that have, in the last year, completed activities to make more effective use of water.
   c. **Soil Erosion**: % HH that have, within the last year, completed activities to reduce soil erosion.

7. **Material Assets and Resources**
   a. **Assets Owned**: % HH that own at least one of the following assets – radio, TV, telephone, bike, motorbike or fridge – and do not own a car or tractor.
   b. **Shelter (floor)**: % HH whose houses have floors made of dirt, sand or dung.
   c. **Shelter (roof)**: % HH whose houses have roofs made of corrugated iron, concrete or tiles.
   d. **Savings**: % HH that were able to save some money in the last week.
   e. **Unaffordable Expenses**: % HH that have gone without one of the following due to lack of funds over the last 12 months: food, medicine, education.

8. **Capabilities**
   a. **Primary attendance**: % children per HH aged between 6 and 13 who currently attend primary school.
   b. **Girls education (primary)**: The ratio of girls to boys per household between six and 13 who currently attend primary school.
   c. **Literacy and Numeracy**: The proportion of people aged over 18 in a HH who are ‘functionally literate’.

9. **Participation and Influence**
   a. **Ability to change**: % respondents who believe that they are able to change things in their community for the better if they want to.
   b. **Influence**: % community leaders who rank community members among the top 3 influences on decision-making.
   c. **Achieving change**: The number of communities that can give examples of positive changes in their community in terms of resource allocation, service provision or policy changes as a result of their intervention.
   d. **Representation**: % of people who feel that government decision-making bodies represent fairly the views of people like them.

Source: Tearfund 2016a
### Table 6.2. LIGHT Wheel Maturity Levels (Summarised)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Connections</td>
<td>A community characterised by groups separated by issues such as caste,</td>
<td>Members of the community are actively reaching out to others from</td>
<td>Cross-community dialogue and community action are the norm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ethnicity, tribe or faith group.</td>
<td>different groups to establish networks to address issues of mutual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>concern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Relationships</td>
<td>Personal relationships tend to be based on power and can sometimes be</td>
<td>Relationships are increasingly based on respect, with each party being</td>
<td>A community exists that is made up of people who demonstrate a commitment to building and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>abusive, with one party dominating.</td>
<td>valued.</td>
<td>sustaining loving, equitable and affirming relationships, and which is capable of managing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>conflict constructively to uphold and promote the common good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Faith</td>
<td>The environment is hostile to faith in general or strongly favours one</td>
<td>While the environment does not discriminate against faith groups, it</td>
<td>The environment recognises the positive contribution of faith (of any type) in both the private and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>faith and is hostile to others; open violence or persecution of faith</td>
<td>doesn’t openly support or defend the place of faith in public or private</td>
<td>public sphere and actively includes faith perspectives in its decision-making processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>groups is common.</td>
<td>life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional and Mental</td>
<td>A community where painful issues are hidden and not discussed.</td>
<td>Individuals are addressing past hurt and have an increasing sense of</td>
<td>A supportive community made up of people at peace with the past and with hope for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td></td>
<td>peace about themselves; self-esteem is growing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>Physical health indicators are poor compared to national and international benchmarks.</td>
<td>There are improvements in many physical health indicators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship of the Environment</td>
<td>Individuals make use of the environment to meet their own short-term needs, with little thought for the needs of others or the longer term.</td>
<td>Resources are recognised as finite and so are valued.</td>
<td>A community where people actively engage with others who access natural resources both to understand how natural resource systems operate and to ensure their sustainable use for the common good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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80 The model has five levels but for brevity I have included only three as my aim is to show a "direction of travel" rather than replicate the table. For the same reason I have included here only the first sentence in each level. This gives a taste of the approach, but they are more comprehensive in the full version.

81 How faith should influence the public sphere is a fault line with "modern" and secular world views where faith is primarily a private, personal affair. Such an affirmation to public influence is less likely to be controversial where one faith is shared by the large majority of people, but it is more likely to be contested where there are many faiths with significant support.
## Material Assets and Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A community that is suffering from material poverty.</td>
<td>Working creatively together, existing material assets and resources have been recognised and are increasingly being used to improve livelihoods and address levels of poverty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Capabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levels of skills, expertise and knowledge within the community are either low or not recognised.</td>
<td>The level of skill, expertise and knowledge within the community is increasing as the community recognises and makes use of the capabilities that they do possess, creatively finding new ways to apply their expertise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Participation and Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communities have little say or influence over the decisions that affect them, with decision-making power residing in a select few.</td>
<td>Decision-makers increasingly seek out and respect the views of different elements of society, including the most vulnerable and those who have been traditionally excluded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Tearfund, 2016b)
PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

There are no statistics available from Tearfund about the extent of use of the Light WHEEL within their programmes and projects. However, a number of examples are available in the public domain. It has been integrated into evaluations of CCM programmes in Tanzania (Christian Council of Tanzania, 2017), Uganda (Copestake et al., 2019a; James, 2016; Tearfund, 2018), Sierra Leone (James, 2018) and Bolivia. The evaluations in Uganda, Sierra Leone and Bolivia used the Quality Impact Protocol (QuIP) methodology, adapted to include the nine domains from the LIGHT Wheel (Copestake et al., 2019b). Only the Ugandan assessment is publicly available.

Tearfund’s strategy for promoting the LIGHT Wheel has been long-term and flexible. Tearfund has sought to “follow the energy” (Interviewee I14, 2019a), using an opportunistic approach, spotting and taking advantage of expressed interest rather than trying to enforce usage. There is a high level of flexibility in how the tool can be used. One method to achieve this is by setting out “non-negotiables” and “areas for adaption”. Mandatory elements include the nine domains and the key indicators – the other areas are open to negotiation. This is deliberate, to allow it to be adapted in different places, while promoting an overall standard approach. It aims to support localised and longitudinal reflection rather than high-level aggregation. In this way it is consistent with the “bottom-up” process underpinning CCM. Some regional facilitators are said to have embraced the toolkit and found it useful in their own lives as well as for the church communities they work with (Interviewee I14, 2019a).

The LIGHT Wheel is reportedly used in different ways. There is limited information available on usage by the humanitarian department. The perception is that they have found it less useful and engagement with it has been limited. When used it has been in a technical way, focused on monitoring and evaluation (Interviewee I14, 2019b). The Tanzania country team reportedly used the tool for project monitoring and evaluation purposes. In West Africa however it is primarily used by church groups as part of the CCM process, and there it is reportedly used in a more process-oriented, open-ended manner. The perception is that the approach has been more acceptable to the community-based church communities than it has to the professional teams engaged in the more mainstream processes of international development (Interviewee I14, 2019a).

There are both practical and contextual reasons for these differences. The Church-based groups do not have the relatively short-term, results-based frameworks that particularly emergency teams deal with. They have limited space and time for longitudinal studies or participatory processes, and they have different stakeholders with institutionally funded emergency and development work having to report back to donors. There are also differences of objective.

Our Church work is very much a process, not projects; it’s about transformation; it’s about theology (Interviewee I14, 2019b).

In the Light Wheel approach there is an emphasis on process rather than “academic rigour” (Interviewee I14, 2019b). It aims to facilitate community-led processes, and expectations for monitoring and evaluation are less demanding. It is intended give a “flavour or a sense” rather than be precise, to facilitate a long-term conversation as part of an action-oriented process rather than be a snapshot in time for accountability purposes. “[S]omething that people can reflect upon longitudinally” (Interviewee I14, 2019b). These can be difficult to integrate into externally-funded development, and particularly emergency, interventions.
We live by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7, cited in (Tearfund, 2021, p50.)

Tearfund does hope to be able to compare and contrast across its partners, seeing how different communities are performing in relation to wellbeing or whole-life transformation but this appears a secondary objective to having a process which works for those doing it, inspiring and supporting reflection, planning and action within communities and building integral mission. The nature of the partnerships within the CCM – which are open-ended in both objectives and timeframe – give the space to dialogue and contextualisation.

At the same time the Wheel can be used to look across the piece. The number of communities at a particular maturity level, the number of communities or individuals reporting high levels in the different domains, can be used as indicators of the direction of travel. A way to compare but using locally, contextually defined criteria. The approach embraces the complexity of wellbeing and does not seek to reduce it to simple metrics. The emphasis is on “summarisation rather than aggregation” (Interviewee I14, 2019a). There is no attempt to reduce wellbeing to a score or a single measure.

It has not been universally accepted, and some adaptations reflect resistance to the toolkit. Even with the emphasis on process and relaxed and light monitoring and evaluation, Church mobilisers are said to be often unconvinced. They sometimes reject the demands, processes and formats that professional aid workers take for granted. Church communities see them as “‘reporting to donors’ rather than seeing how our own work is doing, celebrating our successes and getting us back on track when we are going wrong” (Interviewee I14, 2019a). There have also been practical challenges, most noticeably with the materials said to be difficult to use for people with limited literacy.

DISCUSSION

WHY THE FOCUS ON WELLBEING?

Tearfund’s purpose has been to find a way to integrate an understanding of wellbeing or whole life transformation into development, both to promote change in all these aspects and to be able to assess if change is happening in response to action. It is more about action than about measurement.

Tearfund’s interest in wellbeing has been prompted by both internal and external factors. Internally the interest in wellbeing and its practical realisation in the LIGHT Wheel has been both to elaborate the organisation’s view of Christian development and help put it into practice. Externally Tearfund engaged in the early 2010s in the wider debate on wellbeing in order to influence it and make the case for this Christian view of development. The strong overlap between Tearfund’s view of human development (holistic, relational, dynamic, and informed by both material, subjective and spiritual factors) and the emerging consensus on wellbeing and international development provided a strong basis for this engagement. It provided an opportunity to challenge the dominant modernist, secular, individualised view of human development, and the neoliberal, capitalist economic model that was seen to be leading to harm to people and the planet (Theos et al., 2010b). They saw similar views and

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82 Summarisation: “the act of expressing the most important facts or ideas about something or someone in a short and clear form, or a text in which these facts or ideas are expressed”. Cambridge Dictionary, accessed 9.4.21, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/summarization; Aggregation: “the process of combining things or amounts into a single group or total”. Cambridge Dictionary, accessed 9.4.21, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/aggregation.
concerns in the wider wellbeing debate, whether those came from other faith-based actors or from secular sources (Tearfund, 2012).

**How well were the promises of wellbeing and faith realised?**

**Better information and practice**

Limited information is available on usage of the LIGHT Wheel to date. However, some information is available from interviews but also from evaluations of Tearfund projects either using the approach or integrating the approach into evaluation frameworks.

**Trustworthiness**

Tearfund’s domain set was a good match to the consensus on wellbeing domains. The approaches and tools set out for data collection and analysis are standard in the sector. The quality of guidance materials is high. The tool has been validated by external researchers, including those involved in the WeD programme. The framework proved compatible with the Quality Impact Protocol (QuIP) – another tool developed to assess change in wellbeing over time as a result of international development projects. Using the Wheel in an evaluation in Uganda the QuIP team reported it was “largely compatible with the domain structure of previous QuIP studies conducted in rural areas, except that ‘living faith’ was added” (Copestake et al., 2019a, pp. 124–5).

Tearfund’s objectives in terms of monitoring and evaluation have been both modest and ambitious. They have been modest in that they have not sought to measure an intangible state of being as the IWB originally did. Rather it aims to generate information on communities against a series of indicators, each treated separately, and to assess the overall level of wellbeing of a community or individual. They are ambitious in the aim of being able to compare these assessments as a means to track progress across a portfolio of projects and communities. The tool appears suitable for these purposes, its results both accurate and reliable.

**Usefulness and acceptability**

There is great enthusiasm about the LIGHT Wheel with those charged with its promotion, while at the same time a recognition that there is scepticism and even resistance in parts of this large and complex organisation. This is to be expected.

As noted above, different sections of the organisation appear to have had differing responses based on professional and institutional priorities and compatibilities. The humanitarian and professional development teams have demonstrated limited interest. Church communities and mobiliser have shown greater interest, although there remain some doubts about the relevance and the practical demands of the frameworks (Interviewee I14, 2019a).

At the same time there are reports that participants in LIGHT Wheel training have found the process interesting and engaging, and see relevance to their own lives and self-development (Interviewee I14, 2019a). The framework is apparently delivering useful information to communities, including on the environment. While this was dropped from the IWB because it proved difficult to collate information that showed environmental change in the time period involved. Tearfund’s experience has been quite different - that the environment spoke is useful in the analysis of a community’s situation. Communities have reported declining environmental resources and changes in the climate as undermining their livelihoods and wellbeing (Interviewee I14, 2019a; James, 2018). This may be an issue of timing – concerns
about climate change are significantly higher now than they were in 2011. In addition, many organisations are deliberately seeking out information on climate change impacts at a community-level.

Tearfund’s experience again demonstrates that assessing wellbeing produces complex, and at times apparently contradictory results that challenge simple narratives. For example, the QuIP evaluation in Uganda noted:

The data reflects the complex nature of interrelated positive and negative changes, with the same respondents often citing both increased and decreased assets and resources and both improved and worsening relationships in different areas over the five-year period – particularly in relation to food production. Positive and negative drivers and outcomes are both a reality for respondents who described how one may mitigate the other; for example increased livelihood vulnerability sits alongside references to improved livelihood resilience where this has served to mitigate what could have been a worse situation (James, 2016, p4).

The report also noted respondents reported improvements in wellbeing even though economic indicators worsened.

Wellbeing was also deemed an area of positive change by 75% of households, despite the severe food crisis and crippling schooling costs ... These positive changes were largely attributed to training, particularly in human rights, gender equality and PEP [participatory evaluation process]; involvement in local savings groups; and becoming a Christian, actively pursuing the Christian faith and increased involvement with the church (James, 2016, p18).

This talks to Stewart’s concern that a focus on subjective wellbeing could obscure material poverty and inequality (Stewart, 2014). However, with such analysis it suggests that it can capture both the positive and the negative and better capture the complexity of human wellbeing.

**Practicality and Affordability**

Tearfund has invested significant resources in developing a clear framework and making attractive and accessible resources for the promotion and use of the tool. The materials are a high quality, presenting these complex and complicated ideas in engaging ways, using graphics and language that communicates easily and effectively – at least to educated, Global North audiences. Tearfund has developed their tool to be compatible with range of methods for collecting and generating data, as well as the key and optional questions (indicators). The methods can be used alone or in combination. They include household surveys, group discussions, direct observation, participatory methods, analysis of secondary data, and predesigned digital data collection formats. They are intended for small-scale community dialogues or for large-scale household surveys. They have been designed in order to be usable in participatory community-dialogues, while the results can be incorporated into reporting on logframes. The method should work for both a professional aid worker audience and church communities.

The imagery is powerful. They make reference to theology and biblical examples. The ideas include inter-connectedness, external influences and dynamism and change over time. The wheel analogy illustrates well how these areas are inter-connected. If a spoke weakens or breaks, the wheel cannot roll well. If several weaken or break the wheel may not roll at all.
The imagery of the wheel incorporates the idea of a journey and thus the changeable, dynamic nature of wellbeing. A wheel rolls. It is not just about where you are, but where you are going. It reflects the dynamic nature of wellbeing. It also includes the inevitable influence of the environment. A wheel rolls on the ground, and interacts with different elements of the environment. The road may be bumpy, you may be going uphill or down, the going may be hard or easy. Conditions may be wet, windy, or dry. Likewise, in a real-life situation, an individual or community is affected by the economy, by laws, by their environment, by their access to services, by their level of security etc (Tearfund, 2016, p3). Relationships and the language of relationships recur – relationships with others, with the environment, and with God.

However, the LIGHT Wheel tool has still proven too complex and costly for some intended users. The cost and effort involved are significant and are a reported barrier to acceptance. Efforts have been made to simplify the method around core, mandatory elements, and thus reduce the time and cost involved. To “reduce it down to its bare minimum to help people own it” (Interviewee I14, 2019b). Survey questions have been cut – 150 to 50 - with the aim of keeping to a maximum of half an hour per household. Focus group discussions have been streamlined, with only two compulsory indicators per domain. Use of the current LIGHT Wheel toolkit is said to require a high level of literacy in English, another barrier to take up. Consequently, there is increasing use of imagery – both verbal and visual.

The challenges have not been solely financial or practical. Church mobilisers and community members reportedly do not always see the point of such tools, asking why it is necessary to collect such data (Interviewee I14, 2019b). Staff turnover is also reported to be a significant challenge in implementing the LIGHT Wheel, as staff trained in the approach and familiar with it leave the organisation. Rates of pay are said to be low compared with some other development organisations, and staff turnover a significant challenge.

There appears to be strong and sustained interested at an organisational-level in the use of the LIGHT Wheel as a programming tool. The adoption of the LIGHT Wheel, and the use of the QuIP approach to evaluate projects has generated new information and suggests that some of the interventions Tearfund supports have been successful in improving reported wellbeing (James, 2018).

Changes in practice and outcomes may be resulting from the process and the information generated. There are anecdotal reports that use of the LIGHT Wheel provides a framework and a process that encourages reflection on the whole of life and can prompt and support deliberate efforts to make change (Interviewee I14, 2019a). Internal evaluations reportedly found that group-based processes have led to self-reported improvements in relationships, self-worth and wellbeing, and that these improvements come naturally from the process of working with others to achieve individual and common goals (Interviewee I14, 2019a).

However, there are no citable examples of projects being adapted or changed as a result of LIGHT Wheel assessments. The CCM evaluation in Tanzania, using the LIGHT Wheel approach, has been cited as a factor supporting changing priorities in the Tearfund Tanzania country strategy, leading to a stronger focus on climate change and the environment. However, the level of influence is unclear, and the reference to the evaluation findings as a justification may

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83 This seems ambitious with even 50 questions.
be more about the standing of the LIGHT Wheel within Tearfund than the direct influence on the evaluation results on this decision.

**Voice, Agency and Shifting Power**
The LIGHT Wheel approach includes an explicit intent to promote participatory community-led processes for local development. The expressed priorities are in favour of locally-led processes (be they individual or community) rather than measuring or evaluating projects. Mitigating against this emphasis is the standardised nature of the method and tools. However, the signs are that the method and the tools are being increasingly adapted in response to this feedback from country teams and communities. Regional LIGHT Wheel champions are being established and given some autonomy to adapt the tools to their context. For example, choices on what are the compulsory indicators have been decentralised to the regional level in West Africa. This speaks to the wellbeing and development literature's emphasis on balancing the local and the universal (McGregor, 2018). Tearfund appears comfortable with the idea of a broad, shared framework that is contextualised in order to be locally-owned and relevant.

**Faith**
Perhaps the core motivation for the LIGHT Wheel was to articulate and operationalise a Christian vision of wellbeing and human development. The organisation has sought to find ways to operationalise its theological commitment to “whole life transformation”. The LIGHT Wheel appears to do this relatively well, embodying the core aspects of Tearfund’s view of whole-life transformation.

Tearfund appears to have been able to articulate its vision of the spiritual domain in a clear and uncomplicate way. It’s core questions unambiguously address personal religious behaviour, social good works, and the role of the Church in the community. (See Table 7.1 above.) Tearfund appears comfortable articulating these issues and by extension promoting them with individuals and communities. Its focus on working with the Church and church communities (in the CCM programme) means these have a natural place in the dialogue between Tearfund and these partners.

This isn’t the case with all parts of the organisation or all partners. The part of the organisation that interfaces with the mainstream humanitarian sector may feel a tension between some elements of the framework and secular norms in the humanitarian sector. In addition, Freeman suggests that in communities that have a variety of faiths, or strongly non-Christian ones use of this approach is problematic (Freeman, 2019).

Discussions of wellbeing, and particularly the eudemonic or flourishing conceptions can implicitly or explicitly include a normative aspect, suggesting what a good life would look like based on a set of potentially particular moral values. Sen recognised this when he refused to identify a set of capabilities; Nussbaum argued it was practically necessary to do so and set out 10 Central Capabilities which she considers universal (Nussbaum, 2011).

Tearfund’s formulation of wellbeing in the LIGHT Wheel and particularly its maturity model, give a strong sense of what it considers makes a good life and how it might be achieved. This is reflected in the way that it is talked about as a tool for change rather than as a tool for measuring change. This is noted by Copestake (2019) when describing how they had used Tearfund’s LIGHT Wheel approach in their evaluation in Uganda:
[The evaluation framework] was also influenced by an initiative within Tearfund to develop a standard normative framework for assessing ‘whole-life transformation’ across its entire programme of activities called the Light Wheel (Copestake et al., 2019a, pp. 124–5).

CONCLUSIONS

Tearfund has deliberately adopted wellbeing and attempted to both promote and assess it. There has been a high level of investment by the organisation in wellbeing. This appears driven primarily by internal stakeholders and interests – a determination to be able to define and communicate a Christian version of development. Wellbeing offers this by providing a holistic vision of human progress which includes faith and a spiritual life. As Tearfund’s view of human progress includes developing a true relationship with God this is fundamental. It also sets it apart from secular approaches to wellbeing or human development.

Tearfund views the LIGHT Wheel approach as primarily a tool for change as much or more than a tool for data generation and analysis. It generates better information in the sense that it is more complete – reflecting the whole person. However, information on changes to projects or interventions as a result of assessments is very limited. This may be related to the nature of the work, locally-owned. Or to the way it is used, influencing the choice of what is done.

Tearfund has used wellbeing as an opportunity to elaborate a vision of Christian development and of what mature communities would look like. This has a strong normative element to it. This can be problematic. It appears use of the approach has been most straightforward in the organisation’s development work, carried out with churches and faith communities. It has been more problematic in the organisation’s humanitarian work which is implemented in the largely secular humanitarian context and is often funded by secular donors. When used with communities of mixed-faiths it has also been problematic at times (Freeman, 2019, pp. 147–9).

Tearfund’s elaboration of a universal, and quite detailed, normative framework suggests a centralised approach. However, as Tearfund aims to use the approach primarily as part of a participatory, community-led development process, there are strong opportunities for achieving the shifting power that wellbeing approaches promise. The continued adaptation of the approach based on feedback from stakeholders and informants, the decentralised support structure that is being established, and the decentralisation of the choice of indicators suggest that progressively there is a sharing of power and a willingness to have a universal framework that is locally contextualised. Tearfund’s significant and flexible financial resources give the organisation significant autonomy and the ability to pursue a long-term devolved process in this way.

While much of the motivation for a wellbeing approach has been internal, the form has been influenced by external thinking. Tearfund has drawn significantly on the work of the WWP Programme and includes the Batteries of Life tool piloted by CAFOD in its manual. In addition, Tearfund has seen in the wider debate on wellbeing opportunities to promote its own views of wellbeing and has also sought to influence the wider wellbeing debate. It was co-sponsor of the influential Theos report in 2010, and set out deliberately to contribute a Christian perspective to the wellbeing debate (Tearfund, 2012).
CHAPTER 7: TRADECRAFT AND WELLBEING

INTRODUCTION

TradeCraft Exchange is included here as a case of an organisation with Christian roots, but one that would be categorised as having a “faith background”, i.e. is loosely tied to a faith tradition through historical ties or values, but with few overt references to faith otherwise (Occhipinti, 2015, p. 338). A “Christian-inspired” organisation, its Board held the responsibility of giving this inspiration meaning in the organisation’s work, but in its day-to-day running the organisation functions largely without reference to faith. Illustrating Occhipinti’s point that organisational identities are dynamic, TradeCraft may in fact be shifting further towards a more secular identity, at least in terms of symbolism. Its 2022 rebrand as “Transform Trade” included the loss of its previous logo which included a nod to the Christian cross. (See Fig 6.1 below).

Fig 7.1. The TradeCraft / Transform Trade Rebrand (Timson, 2022)

TradeCraft Exchange’s engagement with wellbeing carried a number of objectives: to articulate and implement a more Christian-inspired version of development; to improve its project monitoring, evaluation and reporting; to build its credibility with key institutional funders; and to increase the voice and influence of project participants in its work. In this it embodied most of the wider ambitions of the wellbeing and development project. The work began at the end of the 2000s, influenced by the enthusiastic wider discussions on wellbeing, the wellbeing and development research programme at the University of Bath, and the publication by CAFOD, Tearfund and Theos of their views on Christian-inspired development and wellbeing (Theos et al., 2010a). The efforts were sustained throughout the 2010s.

METHOD AND SOURCES

The methods used here are dealt with in Chapter 4. TradeCraft proved very open with both staff time and internal documents. The main sources for this case study have been interviews with 12 informants from staff and partners, a feedback session with three members of staff, published documents and internal project documents and reports. A version of this case, co-authored with the MEAL Manager from TradeCraft, has been published (Adams and Williams, 2022). Recognising that the organisation has different sections, a UK head office and country offices in Africa and South-East Asia, and partners in these regions, informants from different points within TradeCraft (strategic, technical, operational; HQ and country office based) were sought out, as well as people with different types and levels of involvement in the wellbeing work (design, implementation; high and low levels of involvement), and with different perceived levels of support for and investment in it. These included current and ex-staff and Board members of TradeCraft, and consultants. Efforts to identify suitable representatives of partner organisations succeeded in identifying only one individual that was available for interview.
TRAIDCRAFT – A BRIEF HISTORY

Traidcraft is a UK-based charitable organisation, dedicated to fighting poverty through transforming trade. Traidcraft was established in 1979, emerging from an organisation called Tearcraft (Adams, 2022), which became the fair trade arm of Tearfund. At the time it had a very clear Christian basis. The founders were committed and active members of the Church of England (Adams, 2022). It’s first catalogue in 1979 stated:

Traidcraft is a company founded and run by people trying to put into practice some of the implications of their own Christian faith. We feel that there is every opportunity to demonstrate God’s desire for love and justice in the world through responsible and fair trading. Traidcraft is supported by, and accountable to, people of all denominations who believe that redressing economic injustice in the world is part of their responsibilities (Osman, 2020).

Traidcraft has been hugely influential in the UK, promoting through advocacy and the demonstrative effect of practical work an alternative vision of trading arrangements that has proved extremely popular. Best known as a pioneer of the fair-trade movement in the UK, its activities have spanned the fields of trade, development and trade justice. Traidcraft engages in advocacy and service delivery projects to meet these objectives. The focus of this research has been on their projects implemented in countries in Africa and South-East Asia.

Traidcraft is financially a small international development NGO. In 2019 its income was around £3.2 million (Traidcraft Exchange, 2020). Its income has remained largely stable during the 2010s and a significant majority comes from institutional funding. Traidcraft the charity would also expect to receive funds from its trading arm, but during the 2010s that business suffered significant declines in income. Addressing these and finding a sustainable future for the organisation in the medium to long-term has been a major focus for the leadership of the two organisations. They began this period with a joint leadership, but it was decided to split the two and in the late 2010s they functioned as distinct organisations, albeit with shared values and purpose, and an ongoing institutional connection at a Board-level. Consequently, Traidcraft has been reliant on institutional donors to a major degree to fund its activities, and this constrains its ability to resource work like its engagement with wellbeing outside funded projects.

The organisation has undergone significant change since its formation. In 2022 it rebranded as Transform Trade, and while acknowledging its roots “as a Christian response to poverty” (Transform Trade, 2022) it now describes itself as a movement, a “global community for working farmers, collectives, supporters and campaigners” working to transform trade so everyone benefits. While the organisation acknowledges its Christian roots, faith currently appears to play a limited role in the organisation’s daily life. The organisation employs staff of any religious faith or none, and on a day-to-day basis operates to all intents and purposes as a secular NGO. The Trustees and CEO were, at least until recently, required to be practising Christians and were charged with ensuring the organisation “is living its Christian identity” (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). However, the Christian nature of the organisation has been contested internally (Interviewee I13, 2023). Managing this relationship between the organisation’s Christian inspiration and its modern reality influenced how it engaged with wellbeing in the early 2010s. For example the term wellbeing was deliberately chosen over the preferred term of flourishing because it was considered more acceptable to those in the organisation who were not avowed Christians (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018).
TRAIDCRAFT AND WELLBEING

Traidcraft’s engagement with wellbeing was inspired by both internal and external factors. In 2010 Traidcraft Exchange published a new strategic plan - "From Fair to Flourishing" (Traidcraft Exchange, 2010). The plan committed Traidcraft to contributing to "a world freed from the scandal of poverty, where trade is just and people and communities can flourish". Traidcraft had been influenced by the Report “Wholly Living: a new perspective on international development” (Theos et al., 2010b). This report, prepared by Theos, CAFOD and Tearfund, drew on an avowedly Christian tradition, and argued that development as conceived and experienced in both “developing” and “developed” countries was flawed and ultimately harmful, and that “we desperately need to regain a fuller, more realistic vision of human flourishing – of humans as creative, productive, responsible, generous beings – if we are ever to address the problems of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation that threaten the world” (Theos et al., 2010a).

Regarding the term flourishing as too steeped in the Christian faith, Traidcraft’s Board and leadership looked to the concept of wellbeing as a way to advance a Christian-influenced approach to development that was acceptable to secular staff and supporters. They saw wellbeing encapsulated the same holistic concept of human development but used language more familiar and acceptable in secular discourse (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). Traidcraft’s work with wellbeing reflected and engaged with the wider interest in wellbeing at the time, seeing it as an opportunity to advance a Christian-perspective outside the Christian community. It was the zeitgeist of the age (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018).

The Board tasked a senior Traidcraft manager with investigating how they could operationalise the ideas of promoting flourishing/wellbeing. They were asked to find an operational definition, and to identify how it could be implemented in practice, assessed and reported on. Traidcraft wanted a low-cost and easy to implement methodology that would provide statistically significant data in a manageable way and at a cost that was commensurate with project budgets. They wanted to look beyond the standard monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approach which was considered too narrow, “failing to capture all the things we wanted to know about or should know about” (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018).

At the time there was also a lot of interest in improving impact measurement across the international development NGO community. BOND - the UK network of international development NGOs - was taking a leading role in coordinating work on this, and Traidcraft invested significantly in improving monitoring and evaluation in general. BOND is closely aligned with the UK Government’s overseas aid agency (at the time DFID), and DFID was one of Traidcraft’s principal funders and had expressed a desire for clearer evidence of the positive impact of aid projects. These two elements combined in Traidcraft’s engagement with wellbeing.

The Traidcraft team concluded that as a small organisation they needed external support to develop a framework, and they looked externally to academic institutions engaged in wellbeing research to provide an intellectually rigorous approach (Interviewee 27, 2018). Discussions took place with the University of Oxford’s Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), which had developed a wellbeing framework and tool. This framework
was focused on the macro-level and was not felt to be a good fit with Traidcraft’s projects. An alternative was identified at the University of Bath, where Sarah White was leading an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)/DFID-funded research project titled Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways (WPP). The WPP programme itself developed from the Wellbeing and Development (WeD) research programme at Bath. The WPP programme was working with a number of NGOs and there was an opportunity for Traidcraft to participate (Interviewee 27, 2018; Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018).

**THE INNER WELLBEING FRAMEWORK**

The WPP programme ran from 2010 to 2014 (University of Bath, 2010; White et al., 2012b, 2012c). It built on the work done by the earlier Wellbeing and Development (WeD) programme at the University of Bath, which the lead researcher, Sarah White, had been part of. The WeD programme laid some foundational elements of the emerging wellbeing and development framework, based on extensive theoretical work, and empirical studies in relation to Latin America, Asia and Africa. Of particular relevance was its elaboration of a concept of wellbeing that combined subjective, material and relational elements (Gough et al., 2006), its emphasis on cross-cultural issues, and a person-centred approach that valued human agency and autonomy. The WPP programme drew on this conceptualisation of wellbeing, developing their own concept of Inner-Wellbeing (IWB) - "a multidimensional model of wellbeing which incorporates both subjective and objective perspectives" (White et al., 2014). The WPP programme aimed to test the IWB framework through research with rural communities in India and Zambia in collaboration with interested NGOs (White, 2010a). Traidcraft joined this collaboration in 2011.

Drawing on the WeD research, the IWB approach critiqued the increasingly popular subjective wellbeing (or happiness) approach as too strongly focus on the individual, having a Eurocentric perspective, and being too narrowly focused on one aspect of wellbeing – an individual’s reported self-evaluation. Sharing the critique of economic measures like GDP for being too narrow, they argued subjective wellbeing was similarly limited (White et al., 2014). Instead the WPP programme proposed a multi-domain psychosocial model called Inner Wellbeing (IWB), capturing “what people think and feel they are able to be and do” (White et al., 2014, p. 724). They aimed to develop an approach that would:

- emphasise people’s grounding in a particular material, social, political and cultural context, rather than focusing only on internal psychological processes
- be applicable outside the “affluent West”
- engage at least to some extent with how people think and feel about their lives and understand how this affects what they achieve
- engage with people as active objects of their own wellbeing, and not passive subjects (consumers)
- provide a scale to measure IWB (White et al., 2014, p. 724).

The IWB framework was developed through the combination of a Quality of Life framework (WEDQOL) developed by the earlier WeD programme, and a social justice approach to wellbeing developed by the Psycho Social Assessment of Development and Humanitarian Interventions (PADHI) at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka (White et al., 2014). The model identified eight domains:
In particular they sought to test the idea that an intangible state - *inner wellbeing* - which could not be directly observed or measured could be measured through proxy indicators and reported as a single number. It used a domain list approach to create a composite indicator, and sought to quantify respondents assessments of the eight domains and (initially) calculate an overall “single factor inner wellbeing index” (White et al., 2012c, p. 8) that would measure an individual’s Inner Wellbeing. The resultant index would be comparable between different populations. The expectation was that the results would be attractive to, and credible with, policy-makers and senior decision-makers in the international development sector (White, 2014a, p. 7).

Concerned to combine a focus on the individual with a recognition that contextual and structural factors influence what people aspire to, and what they are able to be and do, the framework included contextual factors: peace / conflict, social institutions, services, infrastructure, physical environment, economy, political systems, and policy regime which were regarded as important influences on individual and community wellbeing (White, 2014b).

Having defined the domains, the team tested the framework through two rounds of questionnaire-based surveys in Zambia and India between 2011 and 2013. One domain, the environment, was dropped because the surveys found insufficient change reported over time. Statistical analysis of the results suggested the final version of the IWB scale measured seven distinct, interrelated domains and provided considerable empirical support for the conceptual model (White et al., 2014, p. 742).

Importantly the WPP team quickly came to the conclusion that averaging scores across the domains at the individual or group level was methodologically questionable and did not convey any useful information. They concluded that the seven domains were valid, that they provided rich data to explore variability between respondents and context, but that the single index “tells us very little”, instead recommending that analysis focus on the domains (White et al., 2012c, p. 8). In subsequent writing White developed this theme further, stressing the importance of process (White, 2014a), relationships (White, 2017c) and culture (White, 2017b), and apparently abandoning the idea of measuring an intangible state of being, *inner wellbeing*. The practical guide published in 2014 stressed a pragmatic approach to Quality of Life and wellbeing assessment. It presented a range of different approaches from participatory to survey-based, used for different purposes, suggesting a pragmatic and practical approach to wellbeing assessment. It stressed the equal importance of data and process.
PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Traidcraft felt the IWB model was particularly appropriate for their purposes. The combination of a focus on the micro-level would work in projects, and the academically-validated, quantitative approach would be credible with institutional donors. The explicit promises of both better information and a greater influence for project participants on interventions attracted senior Traidcraft staff (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). It also took account of the role of faith and spirituality in determining wellbeing which was a key consideration and privileged the WPP method over that of the OHPI (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). One respondent from a secular NGO that considered using the framework suggested the framework was more suitable for faith-based than secular organisations (Interviewee I6, 19).

PILOTING

In collaboration with the University of Bath team, the IWB framework was adapted into a draft method and set of tools for Traidcraft between 2011 and early 2012. Some significant modifications were made to fit it to Traidcraft’s purposes:

- The survey was shortened from 38 questions to 19. Sixteen questions covered the seven domains and three general questions gathered overall views of personal wellbeing
- An innovative group-based survey method replaced the standard individual survey in order to reach the minimum number of respondents needed for credible quantitative analysis (100) with the resources available
- Symbols replaced some words in the questionnaire to assist people with low levels of literacy
- The contextual factors were removed to simplify the questionnaire, although the WPP team felt this weakened the framework (Interviewee I18, 2019).

The tool was piloted in Rajasthan and Delhi in early 2012 by two consultants associated with WPP. Subsequently further minor changes were made, after which the tool was judged ready for a full pilot.
Figure 7.2: Timeline of Traidcraft’s Engagement with Wellbeing to 2019

- **2010**: Theos ‘Wholly Living’ Report published / Traidcraft Strategic Plan 2011 - 2014 published: “From Fair to Flourishing” / Board asked Lisa Stevens to see how to measure people’s flourishing, beyond income.

- **2011**: Partnership with Uni of Bath team starts.

- **2012**: APONE Project WB Baseline, Bangladesh. (September)

- **2013**: BEET Project Rufiji WB Baseline Survey, Tanzania. (February) / Paul Chandler, CEO TX and TPLC, leaves. (March)


- **2015**: FIVE Project WB Baseline, Kenya. (February) / APONE WB Endline Survey, Bangladesh. (March). / BEET Project Rufiji and Tabora WB Endline Surveys, Tanzania. (June) / Sustainable Farms, Sustainable Futures Project WB Baseline. (June)

- **2016**: KHT Project WB Endline Survey, Kenya. (September) / Robin Roth appointed CEO TX and TPLC. (October) / Equalite II and Equalite UKAM WB baselines.

- **2017**: FIVE Project Wellbeing Assessment Report, Kenya. (Oct)

- **2018**: Robin Roth becomes CEO TPLC only, Charlotte Timson becomes CEO TX. (New independent structure.)

- **2019**: SAWA Project WB Baseline Survey, Kenya. (January) / Sustainable Farms, Sustainable Futures Project WB Baseline. (March) / CCP Project WB Baseline Survey, Tanzania. (TBC)
IMPLEMENTATION

Traidcraft teams in India, Bangladesh, Kenya and Tanzania were trained in the framework and methodology between 2011 and 2015 and carried out a number of baseline and endline surveys with support from the WPP team or consultants trained specifically for the task.

The first full pilot – a baseline survey – was carried out in Bangladesh in September 2012. The second survey, another baseline, in Tanzania involved surveys in two different project locations, administered between November 2013 and February 2014. A third baseline survey in India was administered in 2014 and a fourth in Kenya in 2015. 2015 saw the first endline surveys for the Bangladesh and Tanzania projects. In 2017 the endline survey for the Kenyan project was carried out. There was no endline assessment for the Indian project.

By 2019 Traidcraft had carried out full or partial wellbeing assessments for six projects in four countries in two continents. Seven of these used the stand alone, original methodology; others used a modified version.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Year of baseline</th>
<th>Year of Endline</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APONE in Bangladesh</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Complete cycle, IWB methodology (Group based survey).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EqualiTee II (Christian Aid supported, northern Bangladesh)</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incomplete cycle, IWB methodology (Group based survey), no endline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EqualiTee UKAM, Bikash, Bangladesh</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Incomplete cycle, IWB methodology (Group based survey), no endline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEET in Tanzania (two locations)</td>
<td>2013 &amp; 14</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Complete cycle, IWB methodology (Group based survey).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going Green in India</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Not done.</td>
<td>Incomplete cycle, IWB methodology (Group based survey), no endline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya Horticulture Project (KHT), Kenya.</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Complete cycle, IWB methodology (Group based survey).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Farms, Sustainable Futures, India. (Big Lottery Support)</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Complete cycle, IWB methodology (Group based survey).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEWEL, Bangladesh</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Not done</td>
<td>Not done due to both the BLF’s monitoring system which didn’t have impact level statements, and cost considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAWA, Kenya</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Baseline only (endline not due), integrated into HH survey, 3 domains not 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP Tanzania</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>baseline only (endline not due), 3 domains, not 6. HH Survey used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further details of the different assessments are set out below.

Further changes were made to the methodology in this period:

- Removal of the Close Relationships domain. It was found that social expectations played too strong a role in the way people answered the questions and it did not seem
possible to ensure the credibility of the results (White et al., 2014). This reduced the number of questions to 16.

- A shift from the group-based survey approach to a conventional household survey
- An in-depth interview with one respondent was replaced with a group interview of all informants around three specific questions exploring broader issues affecting people’s wellbeing. The use of open-ended questions allowed the team to explore the extent to which people attributed changes in their wellbeing to activities implemented through the projects. This was not possible for those assessments where the wellbeing questions were integrated into a general household survey.

Some programme teams chose either not to use the wellbeing framework at all or unpacked it and integrated elements into standard project’s MEL system. These changes were either negotiated between the country teams and head office, or just made at the country-level. For example, it was decided not to carry out a final endline assessment for the APONE project in India, ostensibly due to cost considerations. This was probably influenced by a significant degree of scepticism about the approach, and disagreement about the validity of the wellbeing approach as a whole (Interviewee I26, n.d.). In the Kenyan SAWA and Tanzanian CCP projects an alternative decision was made – to unpack the framework and integrate those elements considered relevant to the project into the standard MEL survey linked to the logframe indicators. The two projects chose different domains to integrate. Both retained the economic resources and social connections domains along with some of the life evaluation questions. In addition, the Kenyan project used the agency and participation domain while the Tanzanian project used the competence and self-worth domain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.2. SAWA and CCP Wellbeing Elements</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking all things together how happy would you say you are these days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well would you say you are managing economically at present?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If guests come to your home can you look after them in the way that you want to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you say something do people listen to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident do you feel that (along with other) you will be able to bring change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have contacts with people who can help you get things done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much can you trust people beyond your immediate family to be with you through bad times?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If something happens in your area when do you get to hear about it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering the last twelve months, how well would you say you are doing money-wise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you say you are doing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84 The use of the term “happy” suggests this is an affect question, but this is mediated by the other parts of the question: “Taking all things together” and “these days”. This is a life evaluation question rather than an affect question.
How well have you been able to face the troubles that have come so far? | X | Competence and self-worth
To what extent do you have confidence in yourself? | X | Competence and self-worth

Interestingly both projects retained the three key elements of the WeD / Inner Wellbeing framework:

1. objective | economic resources
2. relational | social connections; agency and participation
3. subjective | life evaluation; competency and self-worth.

In the first years, there was significant external validation of Traidcraft’s wellbeing work, gratifying and valuable for both the organisation and the individual’s involved. Traidcraft’s work attracted external interest and gave Traidcraft the opportunity to share ideas and information with other organisations engaged in efforts to operationalise holistic measures of human wellbeing. It raised Traidcraft’s profile and credibility. Traidcraft participated in an NGO workshop hosted by CAFOID in London in May 2013; the DFID PPA (Programme Partnership Agreement) Learning group in London in July 2013; and a conference hosted by the Wellbeing & Poverty Pathways international research project at the University of Oxford in January 2014. One staff members was invited with Sarah White to speak about Traidcraft’s work on wellbeing at Educo’s conference in 2015 in Madrid (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). Traidcraft (along with a number of other organisations) was invited to contribute a chapter to a book being prepared by White and Abeyasekera in 2014 (White and Abeyasekera, 2014). Anecdotal evidence suggested that representatives from DFID staff remarked that they WPP/Traidcraft approach because of its quantitative nature, contrasting it positively with some of the qualitative, participatory approaches being trialled by other agencies (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). Collaboration with the WPP programme gave Traidcraft this opportunity.

Traidcraft’s experiment with wellbeing was influenced by changes in leadership and staffing in Traidcraft, and the emergence of a major threat to the organisation’s survival. After a change of leadership in Traidcraft in 2013 the focus on wellbeing at a policy-level waned. The outgoing CEO had been a driving force behind the approach. The incoming Director’s focus was on economic aspects of Traidcraft’s work with project participants. The wellbeing framework was, at a strategic level, put “to one side and we started again” (Interviewee 28, 2021). Reportedly this was because the approach had not “taken root” amongst the programme teams. The new CEO was lobbied by both MEL staff to keep the wellbeing framework and programme staff to side-line it as it was an expensive and unnecessary burden (Interviewee 28, 2021). By 2018 the institutional focus on wellbeing was said to have largely "petered out" (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). It has not been consistently included in new projects. There has been no requirement from head office that projects use the framework (Interviewee I26, n.d.). Programme and project designers were able to include or exclude, or use an amended version or no version. There had been a plan for a formal review of the wellbeing pilot, originally pencilled in for 2015, but was not carried out due to changes in staffing and the pressures of other priorities. It might have provided an opportunity to take stock and to define a more deliberate way forward than the rather ad hoc approach that emerged.
Analysis of Traidcraft Exchange annual reports between 2014 and 2021 confirms the waning interest at the corporate level. The word wellbeing - as a proxy for official interest in the concept – appeared less frequently over time. There were 16 references to wellbeing in the 2014 report. There were only two references in the 2015 report, and four in the 2016 report. There were no references to wellbeing in the 2017 and 2018 or the 2021 reports. (Traidcraft Exchange, 2021, 2019, 2018a, 2016a, 2015; Traidcraft PLC, 2017).

The shift in focus was not just due to a change in leadership. Wellbeing was no longer the hot topic it had been by the mid-2010s, and Traidcraft was facing major financial problems. It was no longer such a priority for external funders, and organisational survival required the attention of senior managers. Wellbeing no longer seemed a priority (Interviewee 28, 2021).

At the same time the organisation continued to emphasise its commitment to shifting power to those living in poverty (Traidcraft Exchange, 2021, p. 2). Interestingly, wellbeing per se was not necessarily seen as advancing that agenda, or perhaps not deliberately enough (Interviewee I21, 2019).

However, wellbeing did continue to be referenced as a high-level impact objective and indicator in many projects. Indeed, several informants cited this as a long-term influence of the wellbeing work (Interviewee I21, 2019; Interviewee I26, n.d.). Analysis of a sample of Traidcraft projects since 2014 found wellbeing appears in objectives at the impact or outcome level in roughly half of the projects. For example, the Sustainable Livelihoods project in northern Bangladesh beginning in 2016 had two outcome level indicators, including the "number of farmers who perceive an improvement in their wellbeing" (Traidcraft Exchange, 2016b). The JEWEL project in Bangladesh starting 2016 had the objective of "promot[ing] the well-being of textile artisans" (Big Lottery, ND). The SAWA project designed in 2018 similarly had as its outcomes "increased household income and improved wellbeing" (Traidcraft Exchange, 2018b).

Table 7.3. Breakdown TX Projects that include wellbeing in logframe, since 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Traidcraft, June 2019

**DISCUSSION**

**WHY THE FOCUS ON WELLBEING?**

The Inner Wellbeing approach was attractive to Traidcraft for a number of reasons: it is person-centred, it is positive in its outlook, it recognises the importance of relationships in wellbeing, of agency and participation, and of values and morals (and spirituality and faith). Inherent in the view of inner wellbeing were three principle promises: better information, a more democratic process (White and Jha, 2014) and the opportunity to explore and promote a holistic and faith-inclusive vision of human development as an alternative to the perceived mainstream focus on economic growth and economic woman. (This is often referred to in the shorthand of “Beyond GDP”).

There is widespread agreement within Traidcraft that increasing the wellbeing of project participants should be an objective of its work, and therefore the organisation should assess
changes in wellbeing as a result of interventions. This is true largely without exception. It was said to be important to listen to project participants’ own views, and mix quantitative and qualitative information in order to understand how they perceive and evaluate a project’s performance and impact on their lives (Interviewee I21, 2019).

Traidcraft’s interest in wellbeing had several motivations, outlined above. These included its own interest to give a more Christian sense to its work on international development, to improve its MEL and reinforce its credibility with important donors, and to influence its practice through an increased voice for project participants.

However, those influences have themselves changed. Already functioning as a largely secular organisation, at a strategic-level Traidcraft appears to have moved further away from an explicit focus on its Christian inspiration. The external influences have also moved on. UK government support for international development changed significantly in the 2010s, with quite different priorities and emphasis.

As an objective it is valued internally. However, the practicality of integrating it into project MEL has been challenging. Within Traidcraft there have been on-going efforts by staff in headquarters and country programmes to assess aspects of wellbeing in projects, using all or part of the IWB framework. The focus on wellbeing has apparently shifted from the “strategic apex” of the organisation to its “middle line” and “operating core” (as defined by Mintzberg, 1979), from policy statements to operational practice. Leadership of the process has become more diffuse and shifted towards country offices, with less central direction but continuing communication, collaboration and support. There appears to be increased ownership of a changed and adapted approach to assessing wellbeing, one that more closely reflects the realities of the organisation (Interviewee I21, 2019; Interviewee I22, 2019; Interviewee I29, 2019).

Traidcraft’s experience illustrates the contingent nature of policy formulation and implementation in an organisation.85 Introducing a new methodology and conceptual framework across an organisation will – like any change - cause concern and even resistance. Legitimate questions about cost, workloads and value will be asked; in addition, there will be inevitable reluctance to change. Organisations are heterogenous – particularly organisations engaged in work across countries. Debate and dissension are inevitable. The wellbeing approach in Traidcraft was no different. It emanated from the Board and senior management via the MEL team, and it faced some resistance in other parts of the organisation. Questions concerned the value of taking on wellbeing in general, and the particular approach that had been adopted. Conceptually, not everyone was convinced by the inner wellbeing methodology.

The Traidcraft case illustrates how organisations are arenas of debate and contest, with competing views about what is important, what should be done, and how it should be done. These debates continued and were never fully resolved. Changes in leadership, internal and external events, and shifting priorities provide opportunities for decisions to be challenged and reversed, and new priorities established. The Traidcraft experience also demonstrates that there may be multiple objectives, or at least multiple understandings of what the objectives are amongst different people in the same organisation.

85 I use contingent here in two senses: subject to chance and occurring or existing on if certain circumstances are the case. Oxford Language Dictionary. https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=contingent+meaning
HOW WELL WERE THE PROMISES OF WELLBEING REALISED?

BETTER FORMATION AND PRACTICE

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Traidcraft deliberately chose to adopt a framework developed by a credible academic institution, grounded in significant theoretical and empirical research. It worked with an academic team to develop and test its own framework and method, and was therefore confident that the design would deliver accurate and reliable information. The first assessments in Bangladesh and Kenya were carried out alongside the more standard socio-economic surveys that included income data and there was a strong correlation between the answers to the socioeconomic survey and the overall wellbeing score. Both reported improvements, suggesting that the IWB results were reliable and valid if implemented as planned.

However, further research by the WPP team and issues arising from implementation highlight the need for a more critical and sophisticated approach. The WPP team concluded early on that the overall index score was not useful and suggested analysis be done at the domain level rather than attempt to create an overall average score (Fernandez et al., 2014; Helguero et al., 2014). Researchers involved in WPP later questioned whether the domains and questions in the IWB model were in fact too diverse to be able to measure an underlying condition such as wellbeing (Interviewee I19, 2019). The construction of these composite indicators is fraught with theoretical and methodological difficulties and the influence of assumptions on final results can be significant (Interviewee I18, 2019; Ravallion, 2012).

Traidcraft continued to calculate a wellbeing score from both the IWB assessments and the reduced set of indicators. This is an issue that should have been reviewed for the framework as a whole, based on the WPP conclusion that it would be wiser to examine the domains or question responses in their own right (Interviewee I19, 2019), and certainly for the unpacked sets of indicators which did not measure IWB even if the original framework did. Being able to report impact of an intervention through a quantitative method was one of the original attractions of the IWB approach (Interviewee 27, 2018). It needed some adjustment in response to these changes and the conclusions of the WPP.

USEFULNESS AND ACCEPTABILITY

The majority of those consulted reported the assessments generated valuable new information and insights (Interviewee I22, 2019; Interviewee I24, 2019; Interviewee I25, 2019; Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). The assessments complemented the income and household survey data that was collected, provided opportunities to reflect and gather new information, and to systematically focus on issues which in other circumstances might not receive attention (Interviewee 27, 2018). Without the wellbeing assessment this information would not have been available.

You don’t know unless you ask. So you have to ask “how do you feel?” You cannot say “he’s possibly feeling good” ... that is very important. You have to ask (Interviewee I24, 2019).

Assessing wellbeing is seen as adding to Traidcraft’s understanding and knowledge of the reality of project participants’ lives. Looking beyond the narrow confines of the logframe is desirable and needed (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). It provides additional
information that improves the organisation’s understanding of participants’ lives. “It allows us to look at other perspectives of our target beneficiaries from ... non-economic dimension” (Interviewee I22, 2019).

At the same time there were a number of concerns within Traidcraft. The calculation of a number to represent wellbeing was frequently cited as a concern, by both those charged with championing the wellbeing assessment process within Traidcraft and those who were more sceptical (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). There have been persistent questions about the validity and value of putting a number on wellbeing (Interviewee 27, 2018; Interviewee I21, 2019; Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). Traidcraft staff have struggled to find meaning in the wellbeing scores (Interviewee I29, 2019; Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). However, project donors reportedly valued the “slim” data these scores provided.

Wellbeing as a project objective was relatively new for many informants. There were questions and differences internally about how wellbeing should be understood and framed. Would it create demands on the organisation it could not meet? Was it relevant to people living in material poverty. One senior staff member in the Bangladesh programme suggested that material needs should be prioritised over the other aspects of wellbeing, along the lines of Maslow’s hierarchy of basic needs (Maslow, 1970; McLeod, 2018). He argued Traidcraft’s target groups had a different view of wellbeing, based on socio-economic and cultural issues. He suggested “the perception of wellbeing to us is completely different to the perception of wellbeing by our beneficiaries” (Interviewee I24, 2019) and that the questions used to investigate the domains were unduly influenced by Western culture and values. On “an empty stomach you cannot even dream. Your dream will not come” (Interviewee I24, 2019). However, even this critic felt that overall, the framework was useful, and aligned strongly with Traidcraft’s focus on participatory, women-focused development.

The limited ability to attribute a reported change in wellbeing to a project intervention was seen as an important weakness of the approach (Interviewee I22, 2019; Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). For project staff who are expected to justify their projects with success, and are implicitly and explicitly in competition with others for resources, this was a key concern.

One unusual but important comment was that perhaps development interventions, such as those empowering women and challenging gender relations, may make people more dissatisfied – indeed may actively try to do so as it seeks to raise awareness about a deficit in the realisation of rights amongst women and a challenge to existing power for men (Interviewee I29, 2019). In which case is wellbeing or happiness the correct objective for development work? If development interventions set out to change people’s life-goals, and they are no longer consistent with themselves or their environment, it is likely that SWB and psychological need fulfilment may suffer (Gough et al., 2006, p. 32 citing Ryan et al (1996) and Sheldon et al (2004)). What is the role of development work in such a context?

This recognition of the complexity of change involved in development is what wellbeing approaches in part seek to capture. But this also proved a challenge. Squaring the complex and contradictory information that can come out of wellbeing assessments with the simplified and controlled narratives required of much project documentation could be challenging. The results of the wellbeing assessments often presented differing results for different elements of the wellbeing frameworks, with trends running in different directions
or showing no particular change. Given the complex, complicated nature of people’s lives reported wellbeing may improve while incomes deteriorate. For example, many of Traidcraft’s project participants work with commodities that have a volatile price, and incomes can rise and fall due to global shifts. A wellbeing assessment could capture this – but also improvements in other areas of people’s lives. However, reporting such complex and at times apparently contradictory information to an organisation’s funder or supporters can be difficult, and is certainly seen to be. Projects are necessary simplifications of a complex reality, both for management purposes and to gain and maintain support. The narratives around them are generally simple and brief. The messy narratives that can come from wellbeing assessments can feel uncomfortable and challenging to manage in the context of representing “success” for a project. (Mosse, 2005)

Occasionally informants in wellbeing assessments raised issues like domestic violence that made programme staff uncomfortable because they lacked the knowledge, skills or resources to respond (Interviewee I22, 2019; Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). This left staff concerned and upset that they could do little or nothing to respond, and had perhaps made the situation worse. While it is only reported as having happened once it clearly impacted on those involved in a significant way.

Some informants reported it was unclear whether Traidcraft’s partner organisations welcomed the focus on wellbeing or felt it was relevant to their communities. Traidcraft staff were unsure - one stated that the partners they worked with felt it was unnecessary additional work (Interviewee I22, 2019). It was only possible to identify one suitable informant from Traidcraft’s partner organisations who could talk knowledgeably on the issue due to the time-bound nature of many Traidcraft relationships with partner organisations and the turnover of staff within them. This respondent was however very positive about the experience and reported that Traidcraft’s introduction of the approach has led to wider use of it by the organisation (Interviewee I24, 2019).

**Practicality and Affordability**

The practical and financial challenges of implementing the original Inner Wellbeing approach proved a major challenge, and was the principal concern of informants. Despite expectations that it would be easy to use, implementing this stand-alone survey was actually very resource intensive (Interviewee 27, 2018). The original wellbeing methodology required a high level of skills both in qualitative and quantitative research, strong facilitation and analytical skills for the group discussion work, and a good level of quantitative, statistical analysis capacity for the survey data analysis. These kinds of skills are often in short supply within an NGO. Standing outside the normal project MEL system made it feel like an additional burdensome task. Not only was this seen as a requiring time and money which were in short supply, but also burdening programme and partner staff and project participants (Interviewee 27, 2018; Interviewee I22, 2019; Interviewee I26, n.d.; Interviewee I29, 2019). Traidcraft staff frequently expressed a wish to avoid burdening project participants and community members with surveys unless there was a strong business justification.

Implementing a standardised research methodology across countries and teams is challenging. Although Traidcraft has a small team of trained and experienced facilitators, and a central MEL team that provided support with analysis, it was difficult to ensure that project staff and local enumerators were trained and supervised adequate for a consistent implementation of the method. Finding sufficient time for them to do so was difficult. Often
trainings were cut short, limiting understanding of the approach and methods. Inevitably there was a level of variability amongst group facilitators and enumerators, and the training which of facilitators and enumerators, and the potential for data to be influenced through question framing and presentation. Initially Traidcraft was able to access these resources through the collaboration with WPP, and subsequently through in-house staff and a network of research associates. However, maintaining this capacity requires organisational commitment and resources.

The practical and resource challenges of implementing the IWB assessments led to a series of changes in the framework and practice. The initial IWB framework was simplified and tailored to Traidcraft's needs and capacities through the elimination of one domain and the introduction of the group-based survey method. Over time further changes were made to reduce its scope and resource demands. An alternative approach emerged whereby programme teams unpacked the framework. This was a pragmatic response to the practical challenges of implementing the IWB model in Traidcraft’s organisational context. The domains and questions were used not as one whole, but as a menu of individual questions targeting particular elements of wellbeing that could be integrated into project monitoring and evaluation as appropriate for a particular project.

It is interesting that this pragmatic choice of a reduced set of indicators tended to maintain coverage of the three key elements of inner wellbeing model: material, subjective and relational. The continued use of these three elements and the broad domain list suggests they appeared relevant to programme staff. Designers and users of these assessments are in a very real sense both the researchers and the researched as we are all experts in our own wellbeing. The choice of questions related to these aspects of people’s lives suggests these aspects resonate with the individuals designing the surveys (Bryman, 2016).

Ironically one innovation introduced to reduce the resource demands of the IWB model - the group-based survey – has not generally been adopted by programme teams. Introduced to speed up the process and reduce cost while meeting the minimum 100 informants required for probability sampling while at the same time creating space for more in-depth discussions, and providing support to individuals to participate in a knowledgeable and informed manner. The risk of social desirability bias and bias in the selection of respondents, was considered manageable. However, because this required teams to have a separate data collection exercise, involving additional cost and expertise, in a number of cases programme staff have chosen instead to integrate a small number of wellbeing questions into household surveys being undertaken for baselines and evaluations (Interviewee I22, 2019).

For time series assessments it is important to maintain consistency in the timing of data collection exercises (Interviewee I24, 2019). However, this was rarely achieved. Furthermore, in some cases the period between surveys was quite short. These are common problems for project-related data collection - within typical project timeframes it is very difficult to gather time series data over long periods of time at regulated points in the agricultural cycle.

the use of the Inner Wellbeing framework had influenced Traidcraft in a number of ways. Most concretely many projects now explicitly set out the promotion of wellbeing as the sole or one of a small number of aims (Interviewee I21, 2019). In addition, in many cases Traidcraft seeks to assess changes in wellbeing as a result of its projects either through the IWB approach or by integrating a number of wellbeing indicators into project MEL processes.
(Interviewee I24, 2019). The conceptualisation of wellbeing as influenced by material, subjective and relational factors also appear to survive.

**SUMMARY**

Traidcraft’s engagement with wellbeing aimed for better information and better practice. It certainly generated new, additional and more complete information, and provided the organisation with ways to assess and report on its projects that includes a broader view of the lives of project participants, and given those participants an opportunity to express their views on matters outside predefined project indicators. Traidcraft continues to include the promotion of wellbeing as a goal of many of its projects, and to assess the wellbeing of project participants and to seek their opinions on changes in their lives as a result of projects. While there were significant challenges the continued engagement with wellbeing has continued to put the promotion of wellbeing as the objective of many interventions, and to include these self-assessments in the evaluation of projects.

Wellbeing data is often complex and contradictory. Positive changes in one domain may not be matched by similar change in others. Responses about non-material aspects of their lives may suggest people are happy when materially they are doing badly. This reflects the reality of people’s lives. More profoundly some respondents suggested, if development interventions encourage people to change their situations *for the better,* does that mean they will be more dissatisfied with their present than less. Will they be unhappier because of an intervention? Such complex and contradictory narratives about a project sit uneasily with the simplified logic of projects, and requirements on organisations to present neat, brief and positive representations of projects. This can be an uncomfortable place for NGOs and their staff – as they compete for resources and support. Such complex narratives may be unwelcome and unhelpful. But this reflects the messy, complex and contradictory nature of human existence.

Traidcraft’s experience supports the assertion that wellbeing is relevant to people in Africa and Asia, and that assessing wellbeing can provide valuable additional information to that captured in Traidcraft’s more traditional project monitoring and evaluation. It suggests that income and subjective wellbeing are correlated, particularly for the poorest. However, collecting additional information about the experience of people participating in projects, and in particular their views on the process and the results can provide important information to judge success or failure and adapt and improve interventions. Asking people their views on their own wellbeing can provide a more complete and possibly different picture, showing if there are unanticipated, unmeasured, non-material factors that influence self-perceived wellbeing, and if there are unanticipated consequences of interventions, both positive and negative. It has given valuable additional information to the necessarily simplified and controlled logic of project results frameworks.

Due to the timing of the surveys in the project cycle (baseline and endline) the information is evaluative in nature. It occurs after a project has started, and once it is concluded. It does not therefore influence the design of the project or its implementation. Future projects may be influenced by the results. No specific examples were identified by informants, or the documentation of projects being adapted or changed in response to results. This was not the focus it was said, and monitoring systems did not seem focused on capture such changes if and when they did occur.
**DEMONCRATISATION**

The Chief Executive of Traidcraft in 2010 and one of the original driving forces behind the wellbeing work emphasised that the key test for the success of the approach was whether or not it influenced the design of projects (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). That was the litmus test of success in fact for the CEO that led the process. However, this objective was not firmly established and seemed overlooked in time (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). The process and information generated has not been deliberately used to change projects, and few examples were cited where wellbeing assessments had led to changes in policy or practice, and the manner in which assessments were built into the project cycle made this difficult. Success in achieving a more consultative, democratic process is less clear.

Members of staff that engaged at the beginning of the pilot reported finding assessments enjoyable and enlightening, and felt participating community members felt the same. For most, if not all, this was the first time that they had been asked for their views on these kinds of questions. It was an intriguing and interesting experience, and an enjoyable one (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). The IWB approach and the training it provided in the pilot was said to have built the skills and attitudes of staff to be more participatory, and encouraged a respectful, inquisitive way of working for Traidcraft and partner staff (Interviewee 27, 2018).

However, such experiences can’t be said to have been empowering. Participants have no power over what is written down. It is others who take action. Moreover, as noted above, the weak linkage with project design and implementation means participants had only very indirect influence over project design and actions, at best. In addition, participation in the group sessions is subject to the usual constraints of any such process - social, cultural and power dynamics. With the adaptations to the process and the move to a questionnaire-based survey these moments also became less prominent in the method.

The wellbeing assessments were reported to be useful for exploring issues of power and agency with project participants (Interviewee I22, 2019). Issues of power and agency became an increasing interest of the Traidcraft programme team and there were efforts being made to see if the questions within the wellbeing framework could provide useful information on them (Interviewee I21, 2019).

Several respondents expressed their concern over whether the aim is to measure wellbeing and changes in order to prove to others that interventions have worked, or to facilitate a participatory process whereby people consider and assess their own wellbeing and changes in it in response to the interventions with the aim of learning and improving? (Interviewee 27, 2018; Interviewee I29, 2019) There was a feeling amongst respondents that Traidcraft has prioritised the former over the latter (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018), and this may have limited the level of behaviour change.

Timing in the project cycle was highlighted as a major constraint on using results to adapt practice, and this was in part constrained by resources. Use of wellbeing assessments, and potentially co-creation of project design in pre-project feasibility phases was proposed. However, the funds to undertake such feasibility studies are not available, and donors are rarely willing to fund pre-project work.

**FAITH**

Like giving greater voice and agency to project participants in the design of projects, realisation of the third promise of promoting a holistic and faith-inclusive vision of human
development, also lost ground against the objectives of better information. The initial gains were in the framework. Traidcraft has adopted a person-centred, holistic vision of human development. However, faith is rarely if ever mentioned. Despite Traidcraft’s roots in the Christian faith, and the engagement with wellbeing in part being inspired with this faith, religion has featured very little in the wellbeing assessments. In large part this seems to be because it has not been deliberately looked for in the assessments. However, as a vehicle for articulating Traidcraft’s Christian roots the engagement with the wellbeing approach has had little effect. Given the organisation’s apparent trajectory towards greater secularisation that is not surprising. A technical tool will not have reversed a change taking place at the strategic level.

Conclusions

Traidcraft took an ambitious step to pilot inner wellbeing. The experience has highlighted the contingent nature of policy development and sustained implementation, the importance of both internal and external factors, and how different parts of an organisation contest and negotiate policy change. A policy shift introduced at the senior leadership of the organisation has been adopted but significantly adapted over time by different parts of the organisation. A general agreement about the value of looking beyond observable, financial measures of development has not prevented significant disagreement about the best way to do this, and indeed when and if it is a priority. However, Traidcraft continues to assess wellbeing using the Inner Wellbeing framework and through the use of a few selected indicators from the framework, integrated into project monitoring and evaluation processes.

Of the core objectives only one – better information and practice - has been well realised. A clearer basis in the organisation’s Christian roots and a stronger voice and agency of project participants in the organisation’s projects have not been achieved. Traidcraft’s direction of travel appears to be towards greater secularism, and in this context, while the IWB was faith-compatible and in and of itself represented a holistic, person-centred approach, it has not pushed Traidcraft towards a more distinctively Christian approach to international development. Not has it given project participants greater voice and agency in decision-making or influence on project design. While it has generated significant new information and given a clear voice to self-reported assessments, it does not integrate these into decision-making. Ironically, giving greater voice and agency to project participants is in the 2020s a major priority for Traidcraft. Traidcraft has made efforts at using the wellbeing approach to develop indicators of power and agency, and the WeD approach to wellbeing and international development is consistent with this emphasis. It may be that this objective will see greater realisation in the future.

This engagement has taken place over a significant period of time (2010 – 2019) during which the organisation itself underwent significant change. The varied achievement of these objectives reflects changing influences on the organisation and within it, and how these have interacted. It reflects the importance and difficulties of articulating objectives clearly and sustaining them over time in the face of these changes and disruptions, scarce resources, differing views on priorities, and the implications of practical issues such as the positioning of assessments within the project cycle.
CHAPTER 8: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NGOs, FAITH AND WELLBEING - CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

Robert Chambers suggested in 2014 that wellbeing had become “part of the rhetoric of development” (Chambers, 2014, p. xi). Similarly, one of my informants suggested wellbeing had become one of the defining ideas of the time in the industry, its “Zeitgeist” (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018). As this research project demonstrates, UK-based international development NGOs have indeed increasingly embraced the rhetoric of wellbeing in the past 10-15 years.

References to wellbeing have increased significantly in the documents of international development NGOs during this period, and a majority now reference wellbeing in their annual reports as part of mission statements, strategic objectives, and in project and budget terminology and titles. Using a longitudinal Content Analysis approach to review organisational annual reports (Fifka, 2013; Kshitij and Irvine, 2018; Neuendorf, 2019), the research demonstrated that in 2020/2021 a significant majority made reference to the promotion of wellbeing as an objective of their work or a key concern for their staff and volunteers and the people they ultimately aim to benefit. And the number of organisations referencing wellbeing has increased over the period. Fifty-seven percent of sampled NGOs referenced wellbeing in their annual reports for 2020/2021, compared with 37% in 2015/16 (Chapter 3).

In line with Content Analysis, the research considered the frequency of mentions in annual reports as an indicator of the level of interest in wellbeing, with a higher number suggesting a greater interest. This led to some useful lines of enquiry – for example, an examination of Age International / HelpAge International’s work on wellbeing. However, while the frequency of references does have some association with an organisation’s level of interest, it has its limitations as a metric (Neuendorf, 2019). It is a poor tool for identifying how organisations have engaged with wellbeing in their actual policy and practice. It can also miss cases, or suggest a passing mention means a more profound engagement than it actually does. Conclusions must be tentative given these limitations and the gaps in the source documents, particularly as we go further back in time. Complementing the quantitative Content Analysis approach with a qualitative assessment of how organisations use the term in their documentation, alongside triangulation with other data, increases the ability to draw stronger conclusions about an organisation’s engagement with wellbeing (Neuendorf, 2019).

Veenhoven and White argued that the terms wellbeing and Quality of Life describe a field of associated ideas rather than a single concept (Veenhoven, 2012; White, 2014a, p. 4). The review of annual reports confirmed that NGOs use a variety of terms for wellbeing, and use the term wellbeing in a variety of ways, often in association with other terms and concepts. The most significant include wellbeing, Quality of Life, thriving and flourishing. The use of differing terms is particularly noticeable between secular and faith-based organisations, as they draw on different vocabularies. Organisations may be discussing similar concepts but with different terms. (For example, “wellbeing” versus “flourishing” as the term of choice.) However, the research suggests that these are complementary terms, not rivals, and are increasingly common across these different organisations. Those organisations using the term
wellbeing tend to use the other terms as well, rather than insisting on different terms. Sometimes this reflects a conscious choice to communicate beyond these secular and faith-based divisions. The example of Traidcraft’s deliberate choice of the term wellbeing over flourishing is a case in point (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). In other cases, it is due to the resonance that terms like flourishing and thriving have, a resonance that transcends divisions between faith-based and secular actors.

The term wellbeing is also used in a variety of ways, and in association with other terms. Wellbeing may be used to refer to an overall state, to an aspect of the human condition, or in association with other terms. For example, Oxfam talks of “safety and wellbeing”, “livelihoods and wellbeing”, “psychological wellbeing”, “financial wellbeing” and “mental wellbeing” (Oxfam GB, 2021).

This variety of usage contributes to the ambiguity that surrounds the term, but should not obscure a strong commonality between organisations in what they appear to mean by wellbeing and its associated terms. There are relatively few attempts to define the term in organisational reports. It has such common parlance that it seems to be assumed that we will understand and agree its meaning. When it is defined it tends to refer to a focus on the state of being of an individual, considered in the round (holistic), and as part of social relationships. It is often contextualised in relation to the external environment, both man-made and natural. Sometimes it is positioned within inter-generational relationships. It often appears in discourses that also refer to person-centred approaches. Organisations tend to view the term in a relatively complex way, linked to a sense of flourishing and at times living life “with purpose”. Such eudemonic conceptions are associated with moral frameworks, and are consequently a natural fit with faith-based – and values-based – organisations. Secular organisations too often appear to subscribe to a eudemonic view of wellbeing. See for example, HelpAge International’s definition of wellbeing (above). It is frequently associated with an alternative challenge to the dominant, modernist and neoliberal capitalist development paradigm.

The literature on corporate behaviour suggests a number of factors influence reporting behaviour by organisations: including the size of an organisation, the type of work it does, the attitudes of key managers and internal stakeholders, the governance structure, the income structure, public and media pressure and criticism, and the wider political and socio-economic environment. Legitimacy Theory suggests that organisations will endeavour to present themselves as complying with the expected norms of the societies within which they operate. These criteria were developed for profit-making organisations but have recently been applied to NGOs (Conway et al., 2015). These influencing factors are both internal and external to the organisation. As Fig 3.6 above illustrates, these factors can combine in different ways at different times in different organisations, so predicting organisational behaviour is difficult. However, patterns can be discerned, and provide a set of key issues to consider when analysing organisational behaviour and communication.

This research found that larger organisations mention wellbeing more consistently than smaller organisations. Legitimacy Theory has usually been applied to larger organisations, and might suggest this is likely, in part because larger organisations are more exposed than smaller ones to external trends, and particularly public and media attention and criticism – and thus more likely to adopt the language and topics of the day.
External influences do appear to have been important in prompting organisations’ references to wellbeing, both directly and indirectly. Legitimacy Theory suggests this is likely as wellbeing has become a significant element in the zeitgeist of the age, and provided a policy debate and vocabulary that organisations could adopt and respond to. The extent to which organisations have referenced wellbeing in the context of safeguarding and COVID-19 – two of the key concerns of the last five years – suggests organisations do indeed respond to the ideas and events in their context.

The COVID-19 pandemic became associated with wellbeing in many NGO annual reports. As it has in international development, wellbeing has increasingly entered the rhetoric of human relations and employment in the UK (CIPD, 2021; IBM, 2020; Skerik, 2021). Management theory increasingly argues that people are an organisation’s greatest resource and encouraging high levels of wellbeing is a route to organisational success (Kowalski and Loretto, 2017). Moreover, staff increasingly expect organisations to promote their wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns presented unprecedented challenges for organisations as staff worked remotely, in a variety of situations, many very challenging both to individual wellbeing and productivity. Organisations lost many of their normal processes and tools for managing work and supporting wellbeing. The rise of cloud-based applications and internet meeting spaces made homeworking possible, as well as helping to keep tabs on staff. NGO annual reports frequently mentioned wellbeing and COVID-19, and the gathering of information about wellbeing, as well as the delivery of services and support to help remote working staff maintain their wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The proliferation of digital survey applications made regular gathering of people’s views easier, cheaper and routine within organisations. In the annual reports this is consistently presented in a positive and supportive light.

NGOs have experienced significant public criticism as a result of failings to effectively safeguard the rights of vulnerable adults and children, or prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by staff (UK Parliament Select Committee on International Development, 2018). Such direct criticism is seen as a powerful influence on organisations (Fifka, 2013), and is arguably particularly important for charitable organisations. Criticism has led to significant falls in public donations and to the withholding of funding from Government bodies. This has sharpened the need to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all those within organisations and those affected by projects, and to demonstrate this to a range of stakeholders. The review of NGO annual reports found many references to wellbeing are associated with statements on safeguarding the rights and dignity of children and vulnerable adults, suggesting they are responding to these criticisms.

In the sector survey there was little support for the idea that types of work, or a secular or faith-basis, made engagement with wellbeing more or less likely. The attitudes of managers and leadership could not be explored in the overview of the sector, and income structures were not analysed for all 202 organisations. As a result, we cannot know how this influenced engagement. However, the case studies were able to provide greater insights into these aspects for the organisations concerned. External influences are clearly important, but it is also clear that internal influences have been critical, determining which external influences organisations respond to and how they do so.

Faith-based organisations do not appear to have adopted the language of wellbeing or related terms to a greater or lesser degree than secular organisations. But, as the cases investigated in this thesis illustrate, for some Christian-rooted organisations there is a strong interest in
wellbeing, and they have engaged with the concept in a significant way. Moreover, the cases analysed here from across the faith-based spectrum suggest some Christian-rooted organisations have embraced wellbeing as an opportunity to better articulate and operationalise their views of Christian, as opposed to secular, development. They have seen very similar ideas to their own in the emerging consensus on wellbeing, and thus an opportunity to express a vision of human development and wellbeing more consistent with their theology. This association of wellbeing with an alternative agenda for international development is frequently and explicitly articulated in discussions of wellbeing and human development from a Christian-faith perspective (Atherton et al., 2011; Pope Francis, 2015; Theos et al., 2010b). Wellbeing has thus provided both an opportunity to define and champion a Christian-approach to human development, as well as build bridges with secular actors sharing common values and concerns.

Faith-based organisations have not however been the only ones to seize this opportunity. HelpAge / Age UK International, Oxfam GB, Practical Action, and the World Wildlife Fund have all sought to operationalise wellbeing as either a programme or advocacy tool, or as “a guiding star” to their work (Interviewee12, 2020).

**Case Study Comparison**

Analysing and comparing cases is a particularly useful way to explore how and why certain events or processes occur (Yin, 2003). The three cases for this research were chosen to explore how Christian-rooted organisations occupying different positions on the faith-based spectrum typology (from faith-permeated to having a faith background) have responded to the wellbeing agenda. The three cases are augmented with observations from other organisations on this spectrum, from faith-permeated to secular. The cases exhibit a number of commonalities, and important points of difference, and their place on the spectrum of religiosity appears to have influenced how they have engaged with wellbeing. At the same time, other factors have clearly had an influence.

SCIAF’s engagement with wellbeing was driven by its interest in operationalising Catholic social teaching and the concept of Integral Human Development in its work. This had two streams – one a general guide that set out principles for the integration of IHD into all aspects of the organisation’s work; a second that sought to create a method and tool for project design, monitoring and evaluation. The latter, a pilot of an “IHD Wheel”, was used in a multi-country, multi-annual programme in Sub-Saharan Africa. Introduced after programme design, it was used primarily for monitoring and evaluation purposes in a longitudinal approach throughout the project cycle. Based on a conception of human development as fundamentally holistic and social in nature, it used a person-centred approach. It used a domain set derived from Catholic theology and livelihoods frameworks to capture information on project participants’ own assessments of identified factors influencing their wellbeing and development. This included a domain of spirituality. As well as capturing information on the pre-established domain set, it aimed to capture the views and priorities of project participants in relation to wellbeing through a qualitative, open and ongoing process, and use these to adapt the programme to their needs and priorities. In response to the pressures of time and resources, and the priorities inherent within an institutionally-funded project, the scope of data collection was reduced, and the more qualitative and open aspects were removed over time. As a result, in the pilot the focus was primarily on monitoring and evaluation. However, as it occurred multiple times during the project cycle, the repeated collection of data and reflection on it by project teams (made up of citizens of the respective countries and often
people from the particular locality), meant there was significant learning. It prompted a focus on the person, and a growing appreciation of the differences between project participants (on issues of gender, age, disability, etc) and how they were or weren’t benefitting from the interventions. Adaptations were made to the projects as a result.

Tearfund, as an explicitly evangelical Christian organisation, has similarly been driven primarily by an intention to give practical meaning to the idea of “Christian development”, as distinct from “secular development”, aiming to address “material and spiritual poverty” and contribute “to the economic, physical, psychological, social and spiritual transformation of people” (Tearfund, 2011, p2). Tearfund developed the LIGHT Wheel approach with reference to several influences, including the WPP’s Inner Wellbeing framework with appears to have provided the basic foundation. However, Tearfund adjusted the model to give greater prominence to faith and spirituality, renaming the “values and meaning” domain “living faith”. Tearfund considers the LIGHT Wheel “unique in its consideration of the role of faith in a community or individual’s well-being” (Tearfund, 2016a, p. 3). Tearfund is a large organisation, engaged in both humanitarian and development work, and internally there is some distinction between these different areas of work. The LIGHT Wheel has primarily been used within its Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) programme, and it has been used for both evaluation and participatory community-development purposes. It is primarily seen as a “tool for change” (Interviewee I14, 2019a), facilitating a holistic, participatory process of human development at an individual and community-level by local Churches and communities. Within the process is a “purposive disempowerment of Tearfund and its partners in the developmental process” (James, 2019, p. 5) i.e. a deliberate effort to shift power from the organisation to communities. The LIGHT Wheel has received significant organisational support, and as its usage grows elements are being decentralised to regional hubs, including contextualising the domain set (Interviewee I14, 2019a). The model has apparently had less take up by the humanitarian section. It is perhaps seen as less appropriate for the technical demands of results-based management and the preferences of institutional funders, important in the humanitarian sector.

Traidcraft, occupying a quite different position on the faith-based typology – that of having a “faith background” – chose to adopt the Inner Wellbeing model because of its perceived direct relevance to Traidcraft’s work, its credibility with institutional funders (the principle funding source) (Interviewee 27, 2018; Traidcraft Exchange Informant 13, 2018) and its inclusion of faith and spirituality. The Chief Executive wanted to see how the organisation could capture the impact of its work in supporting people to “flourish” in a way that was consistent with the organisation’s Christian basis, would be embraced by both Christians and non-Christians alike in the organisation, and would lead to changes in practice as the organisation learned better what encouraged “flourishing” (Traidcraft Exchange Informant 23, 2018). It was seen as a framework that bridged the faith-based and the secular, giving clear space to faith but in a way that was acceptable to secular members of staff. The framework has been used repeatedly in a range of projects in Southeast Asia and East Africa, exclusively for monitoring and evaluation. Like SCIAF, the original methodology included significant elements of qualitative and open-ended discussion with project participants to determine what they considered important for wellbeing. However, pressures of time, resources and the demands of institutional funding, limited the space for this. Most information has been gathered through household surveys and focus groups. Traidcraft’s reliance on institutional funding has limited use of the tool to baseline and endline data.
collection for evaluation purposes, and the hoped-for influence on project design has not been possible. Organisational support has been ambiguous over time – originally there was strong strategic support, but a combination of leadership changes, differing priorities amongst teams, lobbying of the changing leadership for and against usage of the stand-alone wellbeing model, and major challenges to organisational survival from the external environment undermined this support. Traidcraft continues to use the wellbeing model and separately its indicators, and has sought to adapt it to assess and measure increasing power and agency of project participants. However, there is no longer the strong organisational support it began with.

Other organisations making deliberate efforts to integrate wellbeing into their work have been identified in this research. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), as a conservation organisation, advocates for a shift from development policies that “prioritise economic growth ... [towards] long-term societal and environmental goals: wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability” (Hoekstra, 2022). It has attempted to operationalise this in its projects, seeking to balance a focus on conservation with an effort to promote and measure improvements in human wellbeing. WWF UK developed a Social Indicator Scorecard to be used by projects to assess changes in human wellbeing as a result of conservation projects. WWF considered using the IWB framework but concluded it was too demanding on resources to be usable, and more appropriate to faith-based organisations. However, the Scorecard adopted a domain-set approach with strong similarities to the emerging consensus in the literature. It focuses on both material and subjective measures, including self-assessments of general wellbeing (Interviewee I16, 2020; WWF, n.d.). Usage has been problematic due to the pressure of time and resources, and apparently the professional biases of some staff who tend to prioritise conservation over wellbeing indicators (Interviewee I14, 2019a, p. 16, 2019a, p. 16).

Age International emerged as the greatest user of the term wellbeing in the sector review. Along with its overseas operational arm, HelpAge international, it has made very deliberate efforts to develop and integrate an approach to wellbeing in its strategy and work (Interviewee I31, 2021; Interviewee I34, 2023). HelpAge International defines wellbeing in clearly eudemonic terms: “we have a sense of wellbeing when we are able to lead fulfilling lives with purpose and meaning to them” (HelpAge International, 2020, p. 9). They have a holistic, person-centred approach to human wellbeing (Interviewee I34, 2023). The organisation takes a bottom-up approach. It does not specify faith or religion in its documentation. However, it recognises that these are an important, sometimes central part of life for many of the older people that they work with (Interviewee I34, 2023) and the concept of “spiritual wellbeing” has arisen in some assessments in India (Bertfelt and Dusseau, 2016, p. 12). HelpAge is seeking ways to operationalise wellbeing in its projects and programmes. An early initiative, the Health Outcomes Tool (HOT) (Bertfelt and Dusseau, 2016) is currently in abeyance, as HelpAge considers other approaches, such as WHO’s Health Ageing model (Interviewee I31, 2021). Oxfam GB developed a wellbeing assessment tool for community assessments and advocacy work in Scotland called the Humankind Index. This domain set-based approach considered both subjective and objective measures of wellbeing, relationships and contextual factors. Used twice in Scotland in the early 2010s it provided a powerful alternative assessment of community wellbeing in an effort to encourage more person-centred, holistic and sustainable policies for people living in Scotland (Dunlop and Swales, 2012; Oxfam, 2013). It contributed to the interest in wellbeing and wellbeing economies in Scotland’s devolved government
(Heins and Pautz, 2021; WEALL, 2022a) and has apparently been overtaken by measurement systems developed by the Scottish Government itself (Scottish Government, 2022b).

The case studies confirm that for some NGOs wellbeing offers sufficient promise as an objective of development that it is worthwhile investing significant resources into articulating and operationalising the concept. They demonstrate strong commonalities both in terms of their conceptualisation of human wellbeing as person-centred, holistic and relational, and their association of it with alternative agendas to the mainstream neoliberal capitalist and modernist development paradigm. As the Theos report sets out: there are “profound problems in our current situation and in particular with the current model of development based on economic growth and faith in markets” (Theos et al., 2010b, p. 14). In this they share a common agenda with others writing on wellbeing (notably those working under the banner of “Beyond GDP” and wellbeing economies). These three factors – person-centred, holistic, relational - when simply stated, sound commonplace, but individually and combined they can have profound implications for international development policy and practice (McGregor, 2007).

For the faith-rooted organisations studied here, despite occupying quite different positions on the spectrum of religiosity, common to them all has been the desire to give greater expression to a vision of human development more consistent with Christian theology than the secular mainstream of development. Wellbeing has offered an opportunity to do this. The role played by the Wholly Living report (2010) in linking these three cases is noteworthy. Co-authored by the Theos Foundation, Tearfund and CAFOD (SCIAF’s sister Caritas agency in England and Wales), it was a key inspiration to Traidcraft’s board to focus on the promotion of human flourishing as an objective for the organisation. The first words of the document refer to Integral Human Development, illustrating the commonality of vision across catholic and evangelical traditions (Theos et al., 2010a, p. 8).

In their approach to wellbeing the three organisations have much in common with the emerging consensus on wellbeing and international development. In particular they have drawn on or been influenced by the outputs from the WeD and WPP programmes to varying degrees. This overlap was facilitated by the shared conception of human wellbeing as being person-centred, holistic and relational. In the context of the Christian faith, flourishing is as much about “living a good life” as it is about “living well”, and they gravitate to a eudemonic approach to wellbeing, as many secular NGOs do. Relationships are fundamental to Christian faith, and their visions of wellbeing are situated within a web of relationships, including with God (Chester, 2002). For both Tearfund and SCIAF these relationships extend to the planet (“God’s creation”, for which humanity is the custodian).

Ultimately, we flourish as humans when the conditions that allow us to live in right relationship and contribute generously to our common good are met (Theos et al., 2010b, p. 12).

At the same time there have been differences in priorities and approaches between the three. These do not define the organisations, but do provide interesting comparisons. Organisational contexts and pathways are very different, and there are varying degrees of information available on their wellbeing journeys. However, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn on how the three organisations have operationalised wellbeing in their interventions, how this has been influenced by their faith, and the degree to which they have
delivered on the promises of better information and practice, stronger voice and influence (shifting power), and alternative visions of human development and wellbeing.

The cases suggest that adopting a wellbeing approach does generate new, additional and useful information. The experience of Traidcraft, SCIAF and Tearfund is that adopting such a person-centred and holistic approach does focus attention on the person and aspects of their lives that have been previously neglected, and which have importance in terms of how they interact with and benefit from development interventions. SCIAF’s use of individual “wheels” gave project staff an insight into the very different experiences that people had, and built a greater appreciation and understanding of this. It provided a way to assess change at the individual, domain, project and programme level. Tearfund’s assessments, using the LiGHT Wheel approach as part of externally-led evaluations, similarly generated new and valuable information which helped evaluate how people’s lives were changing both positively and negatively (James, 2019, 2018, 2016). Traidcraft’s IWB assessments and the unpacked use of indicators provided project-level reporting on change for project participants by domain and project.

From a practical perspective the experience suggests that wellbeing assessments can be aligned with and used for project design, monitoring and evaluation purposes, and with the more traditional results-based management tools.

However, there are challenges. All three organisations found that wellbeing assessments using this domain approach generated complex and at times apparently contradictory information. For example, informants may report decreased food availability while reporting a positive change for material assets and resources overall as they have diversified their livelihood strategies (James, 2019). Given the complexity of people’s lives and the range of issues covered in the domain sets this is to be expected, but it makes for demanding data collection and analysis, and requires a mixed methods approach to be able to contextualise and understand the data. It also necessitates an appreciation that life is complex and contradictory, and does not necessarily align with the simple and unidirectional narratives that international development actors often rely upon.

The experience of the three organisations suggests that, as Stewart feared, using a range of wellbeing indicators can produce an assessment of overall wellbeing that is higher than an objective assessment of material poverty would suggest (Stewart, 2014). They have all found that non-economic wellbeing domains can be scored higher than economic ones by informants, potentially masking material poverty and inequality. For example, in Bolivia the evaluation of a Tearfund-supported project found that “a strengthened Christian faith (evangelical or Catholic) … may help to mitigate against more significant effects, allowing positive outcomes to occur where you might expect more negative ones” (James, 2019, p. 6). This was observed earlier by McGregor, Gough and Camfield when they noted that “even alongside deprivations, poor men, women and children are able to achieve some elements of what they conceive of as wellbeing” (McGregor et al., 2007, p. 3). Similar results were observed in SCIAF assessments.

However, this surely does not mean that we should ignore these other aspects of human wellbeing. Rather it suggests that this mixed approach, using a multi-domain assessment, allows for a more complete picture. Ensuring that we use a mixed methods approach that includes both subjective and objective assessments, and an appreciation of the individual within their context allows us to recognise and reflect some of the complexity of human
wellbeing without obscuring issues of inequality, material poverty and context. We should be better able to achieve wellbeing based on such a complete picture.

Another common and significant difficulty has been the time and cost involved in collecting and analysing data. This is challenging for organisations charged with implementing or supporting the implementation of projects, and consistently led to the narrowing of the scope of data collection. NGOs engaged in this kind of work judge information largely by its relevance to action. Often this led to a reduction in spaces for informants to influence what data was collected, what the priorities were, and how it was analysed. It reflects who holds the power to decide, and whose priorities prevail.

Thus, while these experiments with wellbeing have improved information, there are fewer examples of changed practice, and they have not necessarily led to greater voice and agency for project participants. Clear cases of changed practice were hard to identify and few in number. This appears due to the purposes to which wellbeing was deployed, which purposes took precedence, the methods and practices used, and where they were deployed in the project cycle. These were influenced by the nature of the organisation’s financing, and the nature and length of the partnerships with local organisations and communities. Traidcraft’s IWB, despite the principal objective and measure of success (for one important stakeholder) being changes practice as a result of wellbeing assessments, over time it focussed primarily on the evaluation of projects. Its timing in the project cycle, its use as an assessment external to project monitoring and evaluation systems, and its focus on a survey method, ultimately limited its ability to engender adaptation in projects or to give project participants voice or power over project design and implementation. These elements were influenced by the nature of Traidcraft’s funding and its partnerships. SCIAF’s IHD pilot had similar limitations, but these were in part mitigated by a different process. Having repeated assessments carried out during the project cycle, with the results reviewed and validated by the project teams, themselves national or local staff in local organisations, allowed for reflection, learning and some adaptation. Other organisations have found such “cycles of deliberation” can support adaptation to the priorities of project stakeholders (Buell et al., 2020). SCIAF’s long-term partnerships with the national organisations involved may also have assisted this process. Tearfund took different approaches, one using it as a framework for project evaluation, another using the LIGHT Wheel as a tool for change. In this latter approach they have sought to deliberately shift power to communities (from both itself and partners), eschewing classic results-based management tools like objectives and logframes, and designing the evaluation process to match. In this they have used a similar approach to Caritas Australia and Caritas Malawi’s strength-based approach, which similarly prioritises community-led participation and ownership. Such work requires long-term partnerships and long-term, flexible funding, as well as a deliberate intention to shift power.

Drawing clear conclusions on the extent of changes in projects as a result of the wellbeing approach is thus difficult. There is a lack of information because these questions were not a focus of monitoring for the organisations. Due to the nature of the IHD pilot, and the information made available, SCIAF was able to identify one or two; Tearfund and Traidcraft were unable to. However, there are suggestions that adaptations have been made. SCIAF’s longitudinal process of data gathering created moments of reflection on this richer, and person-centred data set that led to ideas for different project interventions and ways of doing things that might be more appropriate to individual needs. When using the LIGHT Wheel in a participatory, community-led process Tearfund supports interventions rooted in community
priorities. Further useful research could be carried out on this aspect, perhaps using the “cycles of deliberation” as a framework.

How international NGOs operate, how they are resourced, and the nature of partnerships they have are important considerations in answering these questions. The organisations operate in quite different ways. The typical image of an international development NGO is of an “operational” organisation with offices and staff in countries, directly implementing projects. These exist but in many cases a country office will identify and work with national partner organisations. This may also be done from a headquarters in the home country. Faith-based organisations may work in more embedded relationships with local churches or local church structures, rather than through stand-alone, funded partnerships. (Some secular organisations also have such long-term relationships.) The three cases provide interesting and contrasting examples – Traidcraft works with partner organisations selected for their ability to deliver particular interventions, SCIAF and Tearfund will work with partners for similar reasons but at least some partnerships may be more embedded in the local church structures (Tearfund) or the Caritas structures (SCIAF). These partnerships may be long-term in nature, and fostered around shared values and visions – quite different to partnerships limited to the length of a funding contract. Moreover, power may be shared. In the case of SCIAF, it is allowed to support projects in a particular location only with the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese in which the project is located. This creates a countervailing power to the financial resources that a Northern Caritas such as SCIAF has, and influences the nature of partnerships. It reflects the value of subsidiarity set out in Catholic social teaching. While this distributes power between partners, it does not necessarily shift power to communities or project participants. The deliberate efforts by Tearfund in its CCM project to shift power from its and its partners is significant in this context. These long-term partnerships provide a basis for pursuing wellbeing programming which may be more difficult with relatively short, time-bound projects. HelpAge International and Age International’s alliances with organisations of older people may provide similar bases for engaging on wellbeing (Interviewee I34, 2023), and may diffuse power in the partnerships. However, in this research while there have been many intentions to shift power, clear and concrete examples have been limited.

Comparison of the three cases illustrates many of the issues that emerged from the literature on organisational behaviour, and provides additional depth to the analysis of the sector. Leadership and governance have been important factors in the organisations’ engagements with wellbeing. Changes in leadership, and subsequent changes in priorities and direction have been referenced in the cases of Traidcraft and Caritas Australia. Staff turnover affects the continuity of initiatives and is repeatedly mentioned in the case studies. The literature is clear that a key form of leadership is positional, but stakeholders in different positions in the hierarchy can exercise leadership grounded in other forms of power. In SCIAF and Traidcraft the initiative came from the strategic leadership of the organisation. In Tearfund the original decision-makers are not known, but Freeman suggests they came from different parts of the organisation.

Income structures have been important in enabling or constraining these engagements with wellbeing. The three organisations have quite different income structures. Tearfund has the greatest income, and the majority of its income comes from donations. SCIAF has a much smaller budget, but again the majority of its income comes from donations. Traidcraft has the smallest income, and is much more dependent on grant income. These differing incomes and income structures suggest Tearfund, and SCIAF to a lesser degree, have significantly greater
freedom to pursue their internally determined priorities than Traidcraft, and to undertake longer-term and more exploratory initiatives. Traidcraft is more closely tied to the processes, timing and priorities of externally-financed project cycles.

The cases illustrate the complex, dynamic and contested space that organisations represent, and the consequently contingent nature of policy and practice. While we can identify a number of organisational characteristics that influence these processes, it is necessary to study them together in the particular context of an organisation to understand why and how policy and practice are made, sustained or abandoned.

On the third promise – providing the space for alternative visions of human development – wellbeing has clearly created such a space and has been exploited to do so. The Wellbeing and Development programme certainly saw in it such an opportunity (McGregor, 2007), and secular organisations have deliberately used wellbeing as a way to challenge economic and political policies and processes that are seen to treat people, animals and the planet as secondary considerations (Dunlop and Swales, 2012; Hoekstra, 2022). Organisations engaged in international development and environmental conservation, from secular and faith-based traditions, have often combined around the Beyond GDP agenda and wellbeing as a way to argue for alternative goals, metrics and policy agendas (European Commission, 2007; Pope Francis, 2015). This is not necessarily true for all – HelpAge International has not articulated these concerns – but it is clear that wellbeing has a strong association for many with such agendas (WEALL, 2022b).

For faith-based organisations the growing recognition of culture, faith and religion in development has created an enabling environment, and wellbeing provided an opportunity to put forward ideas for a more holistic, person-centred and relational vision of human development and wellbeing. The research confirms that many people who subscribe to a religious faith find it important to be able to distinguish between faith-based and secular versions of development (Chester, 2002; Freeman, 2018). Caritas organisations continue to do so publicly and privately (Gordon, 2021; Interviewee I5, 2019; Interviewee I10, 2020; SCIAF, 2019a). At times they have done so together with evangelical organisations (Theos et al., 2010b). At heart this difference is that true human wellbeing and development will only be achieved when an individual has a good relationship with God (Fuller, 2019; SCIAF Interviewee I17, 2020). Tearfund calls this “whole-life transformation” – an aligning of individuals so that they are in harmony with God, allowing them to flourish (Freeman, 2018).

The three organisations occupy quite different positions on the spectrum of religiosity, and this has influenced how and to what extent they have sought to include faith and religion in their wellbeing framework. SCIAF and Tearfund, as faith-permeated organisations, have deliberately set out to develop the religious and faith aspects of the domain sets. They have done so in different ways however, reflecting their different traditions. Tearfund, rooted in evangelical Christianity’s rejection of the notions of public and private spaces may have found this elaboration more straightforward than it was for SCIAF or Traidcraft. Certainly, it seems Tearfund found it easier to design the Living Faith element of its framework than SCIAF. For SCIAF, as a Caritas agency with a greater notion of public and private space and mixed teams of staff of varied faiths or “none”, drafting the IHD Wheel proved a difficult and rather unsatisfactory process. This was in contrast to the overall IHD guide which was written by a more homogenous group. Traidcraft, occupying a quite different position on the typology, and arguably on a different trajectory in terms of religiosity, did not include overt references to spirituality in its framework. Instead it was sufficient to refer to “values and meaning” and
ask if informants “had peace in their hearts at the end of the day” and “to what extent they felt life had been good to them” (Spencer et al., 2014, p. 93). Traidcraft deliberately chose the term “wellbeing” over “flourishing” in order to avoid concern for non-religious members of staff. Clearly, as well as being an opportunity to distinguish Christian visions of development from secular ones, wellbeing offers an important bridging point between secular and faith-based actors. How this is done depends in part on the nature of that faith-basis.

In attempting to more clearly articulate faith and religion within the wellbeing domain set Tearfund and SCIAF have encountered some challenges. SCIAF’s partners experienced problems when working with communities using the spiritual domain of the Wheel. Feedback suggested it was difficult to use in practice with communities as both enumerators and informants questioned why a faith-based organisation was asking such questions. Freeman suggests in her study of Tearfund that the LIGHT Wheel’s living faith domain was uncontroversial within evangelical church communities but was viewed with some suspicion in communities of mixed-faith groups (Freeman, 2019). The LIGHT Wheel evaluation in Bolivia reported tensions between evangelical and Catholic communities (James, 2019), and personal experience includes similar tensions in Uganda between evangelical NGOs and the Catholic church (author). There are clearly difficulties in balancing an explicit recognition of faith and religion’s relevance and importance to wellbeing and avoiding concern and upsetting sensitivities about proselytising. It reminds us that the division of public and private spaces was in part put in place to manage such differences – breaking them down may create new difficulties.

The risk of becoming overly normative, even prescriptive, is another important consideration when developing wellbeing frameworks, and particularly eudemonic frameworks. Sen stressed this as a major concern for the capabilities approach, refusing to draft a universal set of capabilities. However, Nussbaum argued that the reality of policy work requires such a list. The WeD programme concurred, but emphasised the need to balance universal frameworks with local realities (McGregor, 2018). In the three cases we can see that domain sets were developed externally and applied to project communities. While they are unlikely to have caused harm, they may have been less appropriate than was possible, and this certainly undermined the promise of shifting power, and enabling voice and agency. The tendency to use externally derived wellbeing frameworks, and the organisational challenges to contextualising them, risks weakening the quality of information, and undermines intentions to increase the voice, agency and power of those the work is intended to assist. In addition, the more elaborated the domain sets are, the more normative they may become, setting out visions and definitions of what is desirable and what should be desired. SCIAF’s overarching approach to IHD centred on principles – when developed into monitoring and evaluation tools it became more defined. Tearfund has defined its vision to a considerable degree – particularly its Maturity Model - and in doing so runs such a risk. At the same time, the request from its regional staff and Tearfund’s agreement to decentralise the choice of indicators in order to contextualise the tool, is perhaps a reflection of this tension and a clear sign of willingness to adapt.

The focus of this research has been on Christian-rooted organisations which, while it has given a useful entry point into issues of faith and wellbeing, is an acknowledged limitation to the research. Many of the people that international development NGOs work with are not from a Christian-background, and ascribe to different cultural and moral frameworks with potentially different understandings of wellbeing. While there is a consensus around a
relatively limited set of wellbeing drivers (domains), it is also the case that these are often understood, prioritised and achieved in different ways in different contexts and cultures, and by different people within them.

CONCLUSIONS

International NGOs in the UK have increasingly engaged with wellbeing, influenced by both internal and external factors. Wellbeing has become a zeitgeist for the times, and has gained significant power as a result. This is true for both secular and faith-based organisations. Some Christian-rooted organisations have particularly engaged, seeing an opportunity to articulate and promote a Christian vision of human development and wellbeing.

Wellbeing has clearly consolidated its position as a successful policy concept in the rhetoric of international development since the 2000s. The increased references to wellbeing by NGOs over the last 10 - 15 years demonstrates this. At the same time there has been significant work to operationalise wellbeing - to put that rhetoric into practice. The principal examples reviewed in this research relate to faith-based organisations, but there are other significant efforts including by HelpAge / Age International, Oxfam and WWF. Christian organisations do not appear any more likely to engage with wellbeing than secular organisations, but some have seen in wellbeing, and particularly eudemonic conceptions of wellbeing, an opportunity to articulate and advance Christian views of human development and wellbeing.

The foundational reasons for wellbeing’s popularity is its inherently positive nature, and its universal applicability (White and Abeyasekera, 2014). It refers to an issue – how we “are” as individuals or communities, how “good” our lives are, what we are able “to be and do” - which is relevant and important to us all. It’s a term we can all connect with. There is an essence at the heart of wellbeing which is both broadly understood and appealing. At the same time, each of us interpret it in our own particular way. This appeal gives it some of its power as a policy concept (McGregor, 2006, p. 316) as does its ambiguity, another key criterion for a successful policy concept (Mosse, 2005, p. 35). It has also been used to draw together different strands of international development thinking into a coherent approach to international development that is offers an alternative to the mainstream (McGregor, 2006) – and in this it bridges secular and faith-based critiques of modernist, neoliberal capitalist models of development (Atherton et al., 2011; Theos et al., 2010b). It carries a heavy burden, with promises to improve our information and understanding, improve our practice, enable greater voice, agency and influence of service users, and advance more equitable, sustainable approaches to human development.

The case studies illustrate significant areas of shared conceptual ground between the case study organisations, but also differences in objectives and priorities. This has influenced achievement of the promises of better information and practice, and stronger voice, agency and democratisation. Taking a wellbeing approach has focused attention on the individual and their experience, generated more holistic and person-centred information. In doing so it has influenced thinking and encouraged adaptation of what is done and how it is done. However, clear examples of adapted practice as a result of wellbeing assessments have been thin on the ground. This is in part due to limited data capture, but it also reflects the existing power imbalances in the aid sector, some of the structures and processes of project design and management, limitations imposed by financing models, and the prioritisation of “proving” over “improving”. As a result of these assessments project participants are consulted more extensively, but they do not necessarily participate more, or exercise greater
power. Some examples of deliberate efforts to shift power have been identified. It is clear that adopting a wellbeing focus does not necessarily shift and share power – for that to happen choices must be made and sustained. To enable that to happen there must be a level of flexibility in relation to resourcing, timing and duration, and objectives and means.

Our understanding of wellbeing, and our ability to apply it as a policy and operational concept, has continued to evolve over the last thirty years. While subjective wellbeing and happiness gave it significant momentum in the 1990s and 2000s, it has become increasingly understood as relational – reflecting people’s social nature and the importance of relationships, culture and faith. These framings of wellbeing have much in common with Christian conceptions of human development and wellbeing. Some Christian-based NGOs have seized on the opportunity both to distinguish their own visions of Christian development but also establish significant common ground with other faiths and secular organisations. At the same time, they have demonstrated that faith-based NGOs are not the same, and the level of religiosity, alongside other factors, affects how they approach wellbeing. They have also demonstrated that integrating religion and faith into wellbeing frameworks can be hard to articulate and controversial in application. Much as faith and religion have rightly gained a place in international development in the last 40 years, secularism perhaps needs greater attention, and particularly a form of secularism that provides for and guarantees religious freedom for all (An-Na’im, 2005). A firm commitment to wellbeing’s central focus on the person, her dignity and rights, should prove an important mediating factor but the evidence of this research is that without sustained commitment local contextualisation may well be lost in the face of other priorities. To conclude, wellbeing has truly entered the rhetoric of development, but practice has yet to fully realise the promises of that rhetoric.

This research has contributed significantly to the literature on wellbeing and international development by exploring the role that religion and faith plays in conceptualizing and assessing wellbeing, and how some Christian-rooted organisations have seized on wellbeing as a policy space in which to advance awareness of Christian interpretations of human wellbeing and development. Its focus has been partial – on Christian-rooted organisations and faith traditions. It has made only passing reference to other faith traditions and organisations rooted within them. However, it provides a starting point and some comparative and critical reflections between organisations reflecting different Christian traditions and points on a typology of religiosity. It has tested Occhipinti’s typologies of faith-based organisations and found considerable utility in the three typologies but suggested areas of refinement. It has also highlighted two key challenges of explicitly elaborating faith and religion (or any particular moral value system) in wellbeing frameworks. The first is the risk of taking an overly prescriptive and normative approach and ignoring local conceptions of wellbeing and priorities. The second is the challenge of doing so in mixed-faith spaces where there are varied conceptions of wellbeing and explicit discussion of faith and religion can raise concerns about proselytising. The literature is increasingly acknowledging that secularism itself has values and norms which need to be unpacked and critically considered, and that proselytising is not limited to faith traditions. This research suggests further consideration of faith and secularism’s role in promoting wellbeing and navigating these tensions would be worthwhile.

There are several significant avenues for further research arising from this research project. These include exploring further the differences and commonalities between faith and secular approaches to promoting wellbeing; and addressing the limitation of a focus on Christian-
rooted organisations by exploring how non-Christian faith-based NGOs conceptualise and operationalise wellbeing. The sector overview identified a number of Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh organisations that have explicitly referenced wellbeing as one of their objectives, and appear to have made efforts to deliberately pursue this in their work. The concept of “cycles of deliberation” would be a useful focus for exploring how better information can be more directly translated into project adaptations. Switching away from an organisational perspective, it would be valuable to explore from the perspective of the end user how effectively these wellbeing frameworks reflect their priorities, and whether using them does in fact contribute to improved outcomes and increased voice, agency and shifts in power. Further research could be undertaken on the level and longevity of the influence of popular ideas (the “zeitgeist”) on organisational rhetoric and behaviour, looking in greater depth at those organisations that referenced wellbeing at the beginning of the period but not at the end. Finally, it would be worthwhile exploring the question asked by one informant, which is reminiscent of Francis Stewart’s concerns about “happiness” as a development goal – should some development work in fact aim to make people unhappy with their lot, and desirous to change it? There remain a significant number of important areas for further research in the field of faith (and secularism), international development and wellbeing.
APPENDIX 1. INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Information Sheet and Consent Form

Mark Adams, International Development,
School of Social and Political Science
University of Edinburgh

You have been contacted to take part in a interview as part of a PhD research project. This sheet provides some background information into the research, who is carrying it out, and how you can contact the researcher or the University if you have concerns now or in the future.

My name is Mark Adams. I am undertaking research for a PhD in International Development at the University of Edinburgh in the UK. I am looking at wellbeing and international development and emergency work, and how an explicit focus on this influences the work of international NGOs.

I would like to talk to you about what place the concept of wellbeing has (or does not have) in Age International’s work; and if it does, why; how it is conceived; how it is deployed; and what results are hoped for.

As a student at the University of Edinburgh my research is bound by the University’s rules on confidentiality and ethics, and I would treat all information you provide in confidence, except where agreement has been reached with you allowing wider dissemination.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the interview at any point for any reason. If you decide you wish to withdraw you can ask that I delete all information provided to that point, and I will do so, and not refer to you or your information in my research.

I will be taking notes and recording the session. If you have any objection to this, let me know.

If you have any concerns now or later on you can contact me at the University or contact the University itself. Contact details are below.

On the reverse of this form is a consent form which I request you complete and sign if you are in agreement.

Mark Adams s1686871@ed.ac.uk

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE, THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH. SPS.RECEPTION@ED.AC.UK
Consent Form

1. I agree to participate in a research project conducted by Mark Adams. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about views on well-being, international development and emergency response.

2. My participation is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time, solely at my own discretion.

3. I understand that if at any point I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

4. A recording of the dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be recorded, I will request this but it may mean that I am not be able to participate in the study.

5. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview without my express permission, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Only anonymised excerpts will be shared with other researchers, except for confidential audit processes which will respect these commitments to anonymity and confidentiality.

6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant:

Name: ____________________________ Signature: ______________________ Date: _______

Contact Details: s1686871@ed.ac.uk
APPENDIX 2. EXAMPLE, GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

The guiding questions were tailored to each interview, based on the organisation and their role. This schedule of guiding questions is from one of the early interviews with Traidcraft.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary question</th>
<th>Secondary question / Issues</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Could you outline the background to Traidcraft Exchange’s interest in wellbeing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How and why did Traidcraft develop the working relationship with Bath University and begin use of their Inner Wellbeing framework?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What made the Bath University framework suitable?</td>
<td>What enabled it? What challenged it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I know you left after just two baselines had been completed, but in your time with Traidcraft did you feel it was promising? Proving useful?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What were the specific benefits you were hoping for?</td>
<td>For Traidcraft? Projects? Participants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Have these been realised?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Did you have any concerns about the process or where it might lead?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What was the response of the different parts of the organisation? Of the Board?</td>
<td>Resistance? From particular areas of the organisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What made the process go smoothly - or not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. From your perspective, do you feel that Traidcraft has been influenced in any way as an organisation?</td>
<td>Strategy? Policy? Programmes and projects? Ways of working? Outcomes for participants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Are these changes likely to last? If so, why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Did you plan for or expect a process of organisational change or was this a more discrete initiative?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. In retrospect, would you do it again? differently? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Any additional thought? Comments?</td>
<td></td>
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