

PART 1.

Saluti dal Kansas. Grazie mille per avermi permesso di partecipare alla discussione di oggi. (Greetings from Kansas. Thank you very much for allowing me to be part of the discussion today.)

Digital technologies have become pervasive and part of everyday life globally. Things that would have been regarded as science fiction just a few decades ago are taken for granted, such as smart phones, GIS, GPS, or virtual reality. People are becoming ever more dependent on digital technologies and infrastructure. Financial, Health, Education, Manufacturing, sectors as well as utility grid management, and other personal information are increasingly relying on digital networks and cloud-based databases. The global relief and development sector are more and more reliant on technology for communication, asset management, logistics, education, and training as well. Our organization is no exception.

Digital technologies are critical to the success of the work of our organization. Affecting Change International (ACI) works to mobilize individuals and non-governmental organizations to improve the physical, emotional, and economic conditions of the underprivileged and underserved. In partnership, we assist developing communities through asset-based development programs around the world. At this stage of our global engagement, we work through our partner project The Unfinished Task Network (UTN). Our primary delivery method of the training we provide to individuals and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in-country and on the ground is via an online or digital training curriculum developed by UTN's founding leadership. Information Communication Technologies (ICT) are vital in meeting the telos of our work by multiplying our global impact in the most cost effective and efficient way.

The end goal is best described as holistic and transformational development of entire communities. This contrasts with the common practice throughout the world of distinguishing social action by FBOs, separating "church ministry" from community transformation. We strongly believe that is not sustainable or appropriate. Instead, in our specific case, Christ's compassion was inseparable from His effort to seek justice for individuals. Compassion for the poor compelled Him to bring good news to them. Compassion for captives compelled Him to seek their release. Compassion for the blind compelled Him to return sight to them.

Compassion for the oppressed compelled Him to enact deliverance on their behalf. In other words, we train individuals and FBO's to initiate living, thriving, prophetic communities in being the conduit for whole-life transformation in the lives of individuals and the communities in which they live.

For far too long, the global organized faith communities have appeared irrelevant to the challenges and needs in villages and communities. Churches have been seen as a place to attend for worship and teaching, but to address real needs in the community, villagers either had to turn to the government or non-government organizations. While acknowledging that the Church is an imperfect institution, churches are the organizations with the greatest potential to reshape the lives of the communities where they are located. These FBOs are made up with members of the local indigenous community, so they are aware of the needs and struggles of that community. Local leadership is trained using our digital platform on the role of the organization, the process of transformation, and the assessment process of sustainability. In the end, any successful development program or process must be able to evaluate the long-term success by the sustainability by the ability of the local population to carry on the change and transformation long after any and all outside individual or organization has gone.

We use digital technologies to train the process of Asset-based development, which focuses on what the community has rather than what it doesn't have. Asset-based development recognizes that God has blessed every person and community with gifts, such as land, social networks, animals, savings, intelligence, schools, creativity, production equipment, etc. An asset-based approach puts the emphasis on what people already have and asks them to consider, "What is right with you? What do you have that you can use to improve your life and that of your community?" The use of appropriate digital technologies serves as tools in the development toolbelt. From gathering asset information digitally to planning and scheduling project elements, as well as providing global access for training and development for agriculture, health, e-commerce, and much more. In the end, helping restore the human dignity to individuals and entire communities caused by years of exposure to dependency-based development models.

Grazie mille. (Thank you very much)

PART 2.

In our research, we have identified three different ways of involving the community, in increasing levels of effectiveness.

1. Faith Based Organization (FBO) working **FOR** the community

The church does the work itself, leads the process and makes decisions on what work the church will do in the community. Community members are there as beneficiaries only but have no involvement as decision makers nor do they sit on the committee. They are passive recipients.

2. FBO working **WITH** the community

The church works closely with the community to affect change. The church begins as a facilitator and mobiliser of the community. Together, the church and community members form a committee and work to bring change in their community. The work is still done by the church and sits under the church leadership, but community members sit on the committee with church members, and together they decide how to move forward.

3. FBO working **AS A CATALYST** for the community

The church is envisioned to get involved in their community. They mobilize and envision their community to get involved in transformation in their community. The role of the church is not as implementer; however, the church still plays a key role as catalyst and can also be involved in the work of the community. The church, therefore, plays a prophetic role in speaking into their community and getting people to transform their community, even as they release the work out into the community to do. The church's primary role is as a catalyst, with members from the church involved as community members in the work.

Research from Kenya has indicated that the more the community is involved, the greater the impact on the people targeted; the wider community and the church grow both numerically and spiritually. This is because when the church reaches

out and walks in real relationships with others, people come to know the living, life-giving God. Also, as church members connect with more non-believers, their faith is strengthened and challenged.

PART 3.

The Project: *Transformation Process*

Working with the Person of Peace, allow him or her to help gather key village leaders and lead them in the following discussion:

1. Imagine in a perfect community. What do you think are some of the first things that need changed?

1. Food insecurity?
2. Widows and orphans?
3. Strengthen families?
4. Promotion of safe drinking water, adequate housing and food, health services, garbage and sewer systems, and decent roads?
5. Education of children and adults?
6. Alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling, and other addictions?
7. Spousal and child abuse?
8. Improving relationships between people?

From your list, what is the issue that you feel most impressed to address first?

2. Consider possible spiritual root causes of the needs/problems identified.

“One hack at roots equals one thousand hacks at the branches.” — French proverb

Looking at this specifically from a faith-based perspective, if we understand the spiritual context during the identification/assessment phase, we are better able to design programming where ministry is integral throughout the project.

3. Identify what resources are available in the community to resolve this issue.

Make a list of available resources. Include the identity of the person or entity that is the steward of the resource.

4. Distinguish truth from lies in ownership of resources. An example would be the lie that you are lacking or don't have the ability—we all have unique talents, skills, and ability. Using all you have been provided, you can transform your community. What other lies are prominent in the community?

5. Educate the community on the vision and transformational aspect of the work. Create ownership in the community.

1. Form a leadership group from the village and the FBO team. Develop a structure to guide this. Avoid people with personal interests; find people with the right heart and passion.
2. Involve the community in sustaining the work. Involve them from the beginning. Build relationships with community people. This can be done by visiting homes, having an open discussion, or sharing a meal together.
3. Listen and appreciate the views of the community.
4. Involve the government. When any difficulties arise, the government knows the work, and there is already a relationship.
5. Do not compromise your integrity and witness. It is perfectly acceptable to have criteria for committee members. For example, do not get drunk, do not be violent, etc.
6. Implement the project in the community.
7. Don't be afraid to begin with small seed projects. Examples include: a community garden, community clean-up, cleaning a local water source, building a local house for a vulnerable family, organizing a feeding program for the most vulnerable in the community, conducting a one-day feeding event, planning an awareness campaign (for example—good hygiene, proper sanitation, etc.).