Spiritual Integration Implementation Guide
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Why Create This Guide?

HOPE International is a network of microfinance institutions and savings and credit associations operating in 17 countries around the world. Our mission is to invest in the dreams of the poor as we proclaim and live the Gospel in the world’s underserved communities.

Since our founding in 1997, we have been on an adventure of trying to understand how the Gospel and the Kingdom of God should permeate every aspect of our work in microenterprise development. We have made a lot of mistakes in this effort, but we have landed on a core framework that we hope may serve as a useful tool for your organization’s integral mission efforts.

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual Transformation is an Organic Process

Have you ever noticed that when Jesus talked about the Kingdom, He almost always used organic language? He told stories by saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like ...” a mustard seed, sheep and goats, wheat and tares, the list goes on and on. He even compared Himself to living things:

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing.” John 15:5

At HOPE, we believe that by consistently focusing on living things, Jesus was teaching us how transformation works in His Kingdom. True life change depends on connection with Him and can never be manufactured by people or organizations.

We are called, however, to faithfully engage in God’s transformative work as He ushers in His Kingdom. The framework presented here represents our best attempt to implement an integral system that helps us to: (1) abide deeply in Christ, (2) assess the clarity of our integral model, (3) hold ourselves accountable for our part, and (4) measure spiritual fruit.

You Get What You Measure

We’ve found that monitoring our spiritual transformation effort with the same intentionality and diligence that we apply to tracking our financial and operational metrics is critical in pursuing a truly integral mission.

Practically, we have rolled out this framework to all of HOPE’s programs. Field leaders submit their assessment of each component of the framework, and discussion follows in monthly and quarterly business reviews. This is an ongoing effort that has proven to be very helpful, and we are excited to collaborate with others to make it more effective.
CHRIST-CENTERED CULTURE

Jesus Christ is our first and greatest priority. The best models or measurement systems will be meaningless if we are not abiding in Him.

1. Life-on-Life Discipleship
We encourage, but do not require, staff to engage in personal discipleship relationships. One new way that we are emphasizing this is through a network staff development effort led by H.R.

2. Programmatic Spiritual Formation
Staff Prayer & Devotions – Corporate prayer 3-5 times per week and one all staff devotion per week to study and apply God’s Word. Inductive Bible study and small-group discussion are emphasized.

Faith in Practice – Bi-monthly network-wide themes created by spiritual integration staff. These guides provide flexible spiritual leadership tools for busy leaders to use with their teams.

3. Team Selection (Board and Staff)
Other than our connection to Christ, the single most critical factor in achieving our mission is who we bring onto the team. This has been a huge area of emphasis for HOPE in the past few years.

Discussion

GENERAL
To what degree is our organizational culture centered on the person of Jesus Christ (Strong, Average, Poor)? What is the trend (Improving, Neutral, Declining) and why?

What are the regular ways that our organization monitors staff culture in order to drive intentionality and not become satisfied with the status quo?

Do our priorities, time, and budgets focus on Christ first?

What role does prayer play in our: Strategic planning? Day-to-day management? Working through difficult challenges?

LIFE-ON-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP
Do we believe that life-on-life discipleship occurring within our staff is important or even essential to accomplishing our mission?

If yes, is discipling others on the team a practical commitment of our leadership? If so, how is this accomplished?

PROGRAMMATIC SPIRITUAL FORMATION
What are our current spiritual formation practices in seeking God as a staff? Are these universally applied throughout our organization?

Is time in the Bible and prayer prioritized above other options?

TEAM SELECTION
How do we assess spiritual fit for potential hires? Have we developed ideal profiles for the gifts and talents needed in each role?

When looking for specific technical skill sets, particularly those that are difficult to find, do we compromise our commitment to Christ?

Are our board members selected for their passion for the whole mission?

Does our board provide spiritual leadership to the executive team and to the organization as a whole? If so, how is this demonstrated?
INTEGRATED MODEL

With HOPE’s spiritual integration efforts, after evaluating our culture for Christ-centeredness, we ask, “How clear is our model in pursuing transformation in each aspect of our work?” We are convinced that the organic life we are trying to foster will not thrive without clarity about how God has specifically called us to pursue all aspects of the mission.

Our spiritual transformation efforts must move beyond a vague desire to see life change to models that are clearly designed and well understood by all staff and partners.

As our conviction about the need for clarity and simplicity has grown, we have needed to clarify and, at points, rethink aspects of our theory of change. This term “theory of change” refers to a specific method for planning and evaluation that defines long-term goals and then works backwards to identify necessary preconditions to achieve them. It is a foundational practice for relief and development organizations, though we observe that it is not often applied to spiritual transformation.

At HOPE, our operations team has spent considerable time praying and thinking about the best way to integrate our microenterprise services with our calling to alleviate spiritual poverty. We landed on the following:

1) Contribute to the discipleship of our staff
2) Contribute to the discipleship of our clients in regular operations
3) Partner with the church to make disciples who multiply

Our unifying goal for spiritual transformation is growth in discipleship among staff and clients. We evaluate each of the three steps by asking field and U.S. leadership to collaboratively assess how clearly these steps are being pursued in conjunction with the other aspects of our mission. In addition to assessing clarity, we include a trend arrow to indicate if the model is increasing in clarity, staying the same, or declining.

This process removes the fog around what we are trying to accomplish and creates a regular forum for refining aspects that are unclear or poorly understood.

Discussion

1. Have we created a holistic model that clearly articulates how spiritual transformation occurs within our operations? If so, what is the model(s) and who is involved in executing it?

2. How well does our staff understand our spiritual transformation model? (Assess the underlying components and the model as a whole.)
   - Clear
   - Somewhat clear
   - Somewhat unclear
   - Unclear

3. What evidence leads us to this conclusion? Do we need to create an anonymous survey or other method of auditing how well the staff understands our integral model?

4. If we recognize gaps in clarity, what are we going to do about it?

5. How are we ensuring that all of our staff continue to understand and stay engaged in the full transformational model? What is our communication plan?

Exercise

- What is our organization’s mission? Does it include the desire to bring about spiritual transformation in the lives of those we serve?

- How do we define success in spiritual transformation?

- How do we measure it?

- How much success are we seeing?

- Are we satisfied with this?

- If not, what has to change?
ACCOUNTABILITY

The Lord Will Hold Us Accountable

God calls us to serve as faithful stewards of the resources and opportunities He has entrusted to us (Matt. 25:14–30, 1 Cor. 3:10–15, 2 Cor. 5:10). We embrace that we have an active part to play by intentionally assessing our faithfulness in planning, executing our work in God’s way, and reporting on what we are learning and doing.

“So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.” Rom 14:12

Our Approach

The third component of HOPE’s spiritual integration system focuses on accountability. Along with assessing our Christ-centered culture and integrated model clarity, we also track an accountability score for each program. This score is assessed quarterly by field and U.S. leaders and consists of the following components that have been collaboratively defined for the entire network:

- What percentage of key transformation inputs are in place?
- How well are holism and discipleship lived out in our daily work?
- Are we executing planned activities?
- Are we reporting on these activities clearly and consistently?

In organic terms, the accountability component of the framework is analogous to a farmer inspecting how he has gone about his work in the fields. Was the seed planted correctly? Are the crops free of weeds and pests? Is there anything else that can be done to help the plant to grow well and produce fruit?

Discussion

GENERAL MONITORING
1. Is our organization’s monitoring system holistic?
2. Do we tend to monitor some aspects of our mission more than others, inadvertently sending the wrong signal about our priorities?
3. Are staff at all levels of the organization tangibly held accountable to pursuing the whole mission, including the spiritual transformation components of the work?

ACCOUNTABILITY WITH SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS
1. Have we identified the key inputs we believe should be in place to foster spiritual transformation (e.g., staff, training, guiding principles, spiritual practices)? How are we ensuring that those are consistently in place?
2. How do we regularly assess the quality of how staff members go about their work—whether they are working in a manner that is Christ-centered, loving, prayerful, and effective?
3. How do we ensure that we faithfully execute the spiritual transformation plans that the Lord has led us to make over the short and long term?
4. Have we put reporting in place that facilitates intentionality and accountability for our spiritual transformation efforts?
5. Are we capturing and sharing best practices? Are we a learning organization in the area of spiritual transformation?
EVALUATION

During our most recent strategic planning process, HOPE’s leadership determined to develop and implement a physical and spiritual monitoring and evaluation (M&E) program across the network by 2015.

We began the process by asking clients, “What changes have occurred in your life since you began to receive HOPE’s financial services?” Their feedback identified four key domains for measurement: spiritual, material, social, and personal. These correspond closely with the perspective that poverty is a result of broken relationships with God, self, others, and the environment (Myers, Walking With The Poor, 1999, p. 27).

With help from a variety of organizations and practitioners, we created a survey that we piloted and refined throughout 2013-2014. Full rollout will occur in 2015.

So how does our survey attempt to measure these four domains?

Spiritual domain: Questions targeting (a) knowledge of God and (b) actions indicating steps in discipleship.

Material domain: The Multidimensional Poverty Index and Progress out of Poverty Index are used to measure overall material well-being. In addition, we perform income evaluation of businesses for select clients.

Social domain: Questions measuring the strength of relationships within a group or with field staff.

Personal domain: A set of statements with Likert scale responses which measure clients’ attitudes and beliefs about themselves.

Our Best Indicator for Spiritual Transformation

As we shared earlier, the third step in our spiritual integration model states that we “partner with the church to make disciples who multiply.” These discipleship opportunities occur outside of our microfinance meetings and are completely optional with no incentives provided. We work with church partners to design these discipleship initiatives and feel that client participation may be the best indicator we have for real transformation.

Discussion

1) Does our organization have clearly defined goals for performing impact evaluations?

2) What evaluation tools will help us meet our impact evaluation goals? Where should we use quantitative surveys, qualitative focus groups or interviews, or mixed methods to obtain our evaluation data?

3) Is our approach to evaluation in line with our mission? Is it holistic?

4) How do we currently assess the fruitfulness of our work? What does this specifically look like in the area of spiritual transformation?

5) Have we clearly identified areas (domains) of transformation we want to measure? Is feedback from our clients, staff, and the community included in our view of transformational impact?

6) Do we view our evaluation process as part of our ministry or is it a distinct, impartial measurement exercise?

7) Are there components of our spiritual transformation/discipleship approach that, while not proving spiritual change, may serve as a strong proxy?

8) What is our budget for M&E? Is there a certain percentage of our annual revenue that we feel should be set aside for this?
RESOURCES

Christ-Centered Culture
HOPE Faith in Practice Initiative
HOPE Hiring Guide
Prospective Board Nomination Form - Appendix 1 in Mission Drift by Peter Greer and Chris Horst

Integrated Model & Accountability
HOPE Spiritual Integration Program Dashboard

Evaluation
Engel Scale - J.F. Engel and W.H. Norton, What’s Gone Wrong With the Harvest?
www.spiritualmetrics.com

For further collaboration on spiritual integration or to request any of the HOPE-specific resources above, contact:

Matthew Rohrs, Director of Spiritual Integration
Phone: 717-464-3220 x.286
Email: mrohrs@hopeinternational.org
www.hopeinternational.org