



**OPPORTUNITY**  
International

# HOLISTIC COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

An immersive  
story-capture approach

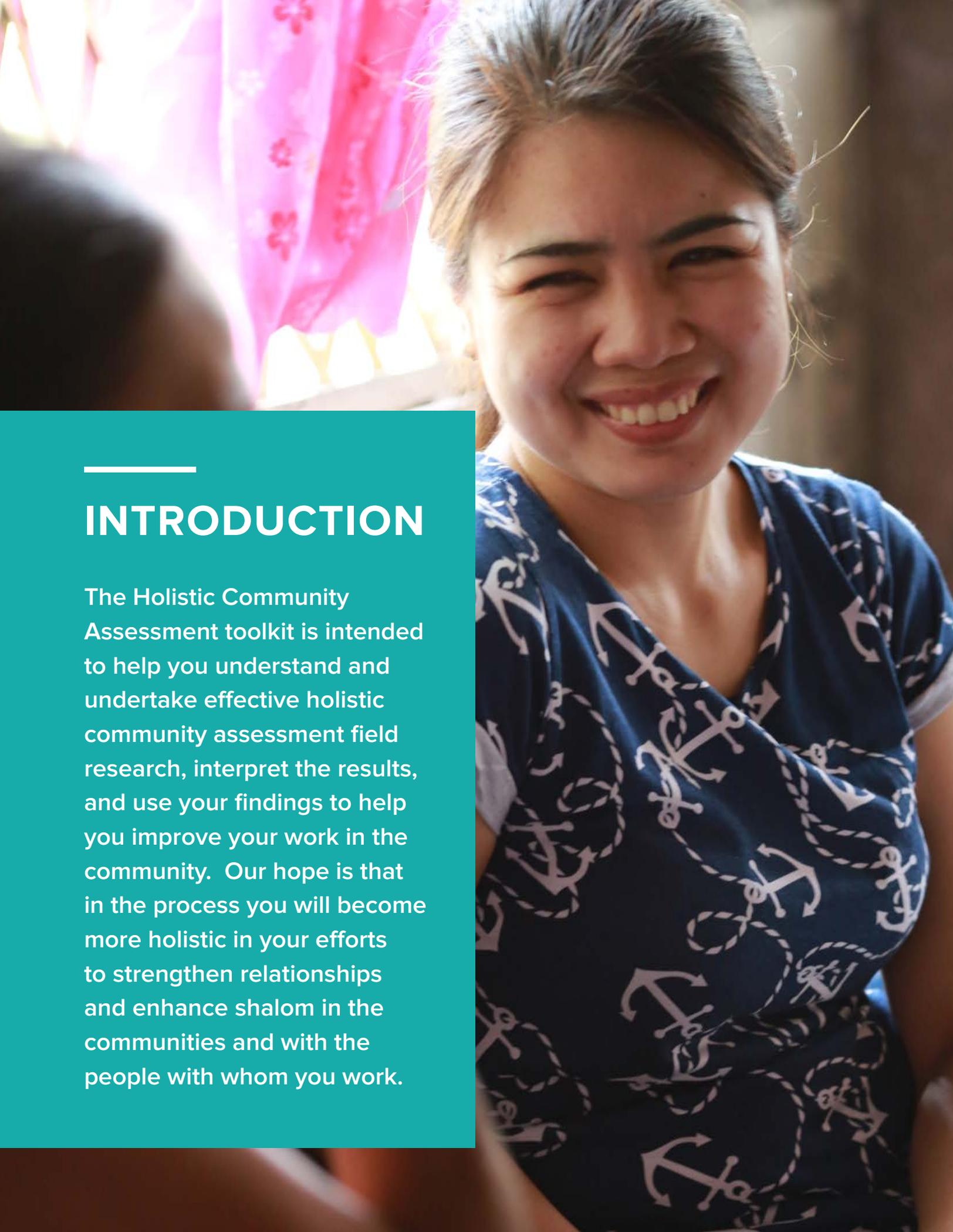
**USER'S GUIDE**



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## INTRODUCTION

The Holistic Community Assessment toolkit is intended to help you understand and undertake effective holistic community assessment field research, interpret the results, and use your findings to help you improve your work in the community. Our hope is that in the process you will become more holistic in your efforts to strengthen relationships and enhance shalom in the communities and with the people with whom you work.

## This toolkit includes various components:

- ▶ An **introductory video** which gives you an in-depth understanding of the intent, content, and usefulness of the toolkit.
- ▶ A **brochure** which provides a broad overview about the holistic community assessment approach, the toolkit content, and how to get further information and technical assistance should you require it when implementing your own assessment.
- ▶ Five **video stories** for discussion of the five shalom relationships in the holistic community assessment approach:
  - **Relationship with community** – Rachel Carraballo and Maribel Colina
  - **Relationship with environment** – Piedad Betancourt
  - **Relationship with family** – Mazo Oquendo family
  - **Relationship with self** – Julia Agámez
  - **Relationship with God** – Farides de Oro
- ▶ This **user's guide**, which helps you use all the pieces to implement the holistic community assessment approach. This includes simple guidelines to implement the four phases of the approach: Listen, Score, Interpret, and Mobilize, as well as the research tool itself.

The overall holistic community assessment approach is intended to be **simple, doable, and affordable** for most any organization, church, or group – even those relatively unfamiliar with or inexperienced at field research – with a limited amount of initial training.

### Action Steps:

- Step 1:** Watch and discuss introductory video.
- Step 2:** Read and discuss brochure.
- Step 3:** Read and discuss the next section titled “Holism and Shalom.”

If your organization or church is interested in conducting your own holistic community assessment, **Opportunity International's Knowledge Management** team is available to help, offering tailored solutions to your research requirements. We can help in a variety of ways:



### 1. Download and Check In

Download your free copy of the Holistic Community Assessment Toolkit at [opportunity.org/HolisticAssessment](https://opportunity.org/HolisticAssessment). Next consult with our team to ensure your independently-managed assessment is on track for success. [holisticassessment@opportunity.org](mailto:holisticassessment@opportunity.org)



### 2. Hands-on Training

Gain an in-depth understanding of the assessment approach with a training workshop.



### 3. Research Implementation

Entrust your assessment to Opportunity's Knowledge Management team, who can manage and run the research independently or in collaboration with your team.



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# HOLISM AND SHALOM

Around the world, many initiatives and projects start with the intention of being holistic, emphasizing both spiritual and physical development in an integrated manner. Some refer to this as “integral mission,” others as “integrated community development” or “holistic development.”



Even when programmatic intent is holistic, **many efforts are limited in understanding and practice due to an insufficient a priori understanding of all relationships within a target community.** Additionally, organizations may remain unaware of a broader range of innate strengths and existing challenges in the communities where they work.

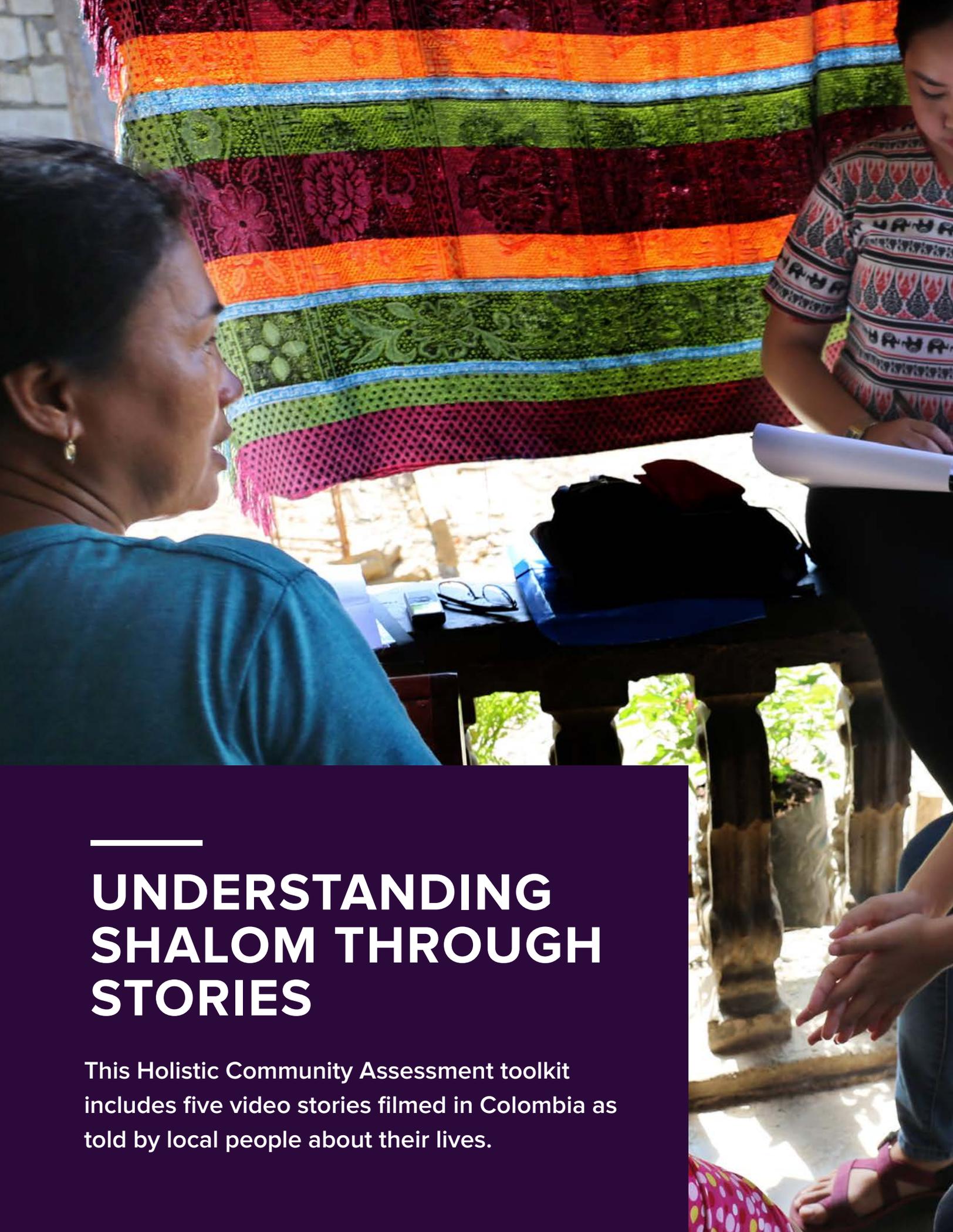
This holistic community assessment process is **designed to help you start your engagement** with a local community or target population by intentionally seeking to understand from the target population's own perspective and experience through their stories what they see as the strengths and weaknesses in the major relationships they maintain – with community, environment, family, self, and God.

We believe **peaceful and healthy relationships lie at the center of God's purpose for everyone.** When all these relationships are harmonious and as God intended, the Bible refers to this as "shalom." **The closer we get to shalom the greater the chance of positive holistic, integral mission, or integrated development outcomes.** The philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff emphasizes,

“

*[Biblical] shalom is the human being dwelling at peace in all his or her relationships: with God, with self, with fellows, with nature. . . . Shalom at its highest is enjoyment in one's relationships. Shalom is both God's cause in the world and our human calling.”*

The Bible asks us to “follow after the things which make for shalom” (Romans 14:19). Hopefully, **the holistic community assessment process will help you get going “following after the things which make for shalom” in a practical and useful way** – We hope **the Holistic Community Assessment will help you start “following after the things which make for shalom” in a practical, useful way** – by first seeking to understand the state of shalom relationships in a target community or population.



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# UNDERSTANDING SHALOM THROUGH STORIES

This Holistic Community Assessment toolkit includes five video stories filmed in Colombia as told by local people about their lives.



The video stories are included in the Holistic Community Assessment toolkit in order to help you:

- ▶ **Visualize what a good local story is** in each of the five shalom relationships investigated in the holistic community assessment research process – relationship with community, environment, family, self, and God.
- ▶ **Broaden and deepen your understanding of shalom** and the importance of the five shalom relationships by stimulating discussion of the details of the relationship in each of the five story videos in the kit (each of the five videos is intended to focus discussion on one of the five shalom relationships).
- ▶ **Practice scoring stories when training field researchers.** Research team trainers can choose to use the stories to practice scoring them with research teams before initiating field research.

Because the toolkit will be used in multiple contexts (organizational and cultural), **we recommend that you discuss the videos in a manner that best fits your context.** However, we do include some suggested questions for each video, and encourage you to use them with any other teaching methods you wish to utilize to **facilitate a vigorous discussion of each video.** The videos must be discussed in depth in order to maximize their effectiveness and impact as learning tools.

We hope the process of review and discussion of the videos will prepare your organization, church, and/or group to have a **deeper appreciation for and understanding of shalom prior to initiating the holistic community assessment process.** We also hope that it will make you better story-gatherers and story interpreters as a result – in effect, **more capable researchers concerned with assessing and then enhancing the state of shalom** in communities and with people with whom you live and work.

#### Action Steps:

- Step 1:** Show each video story.
- Step 2:** After viewing each video, stop to facilitate a group discussion using the questions provided.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNITY STORY

*Rachel Carraballo and Maribel Colina*

This is the story of how Rachel and Maribel, with the support, encouragement, and teaching of their local church, were called to give a lifetime of service to Nelson Mandela, a community formed largely of displaced people on the outskirts of Cartagena, Colombia.



### Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What did you think of the story? How did it make you feel?
- ▶ What has been happening inside the Nelson Mandela community?
- ▶ What did Rachel and Maribel do to respond to the needs in Nelson Mandela? How are they working to strengthen relationships with and within the community?
- ▶ What are some of the obstacles Rachel and Maribel have had to overcome in order to improve relationships with and within Nelson Mandela?
- ▶ Why do you think Rachel and Maribel have persisted for so long in Nelson Mandela despite all the challenges?
- ▶ If you were Rachel or Maribel, what would you do if it was your responsibility to work in Nelson Mandela?
- ▶ How has the discussion of this story helped you understand how you might better relate to your community?
- ▶ What are some of the things keeping you from addressing the challenges in your community?
- ▶ What are some of the things that would help you become more engaged in helping your community?





## RELATIONSHIP WITH ENVIRONMENT STORY

*Piedad Betancourt*

This is the story of how Piedad Betancourt makes a living recycling garbage. She describes how she came to the profession, what her daily routine is like, and how she believes God views her and her work.

### Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What did you think of the story? How did it make you feel?
- ▶ What has been happening in Piedad's life through her recycling work?
- ▶ What are some of the obstacles Piedad must overcome in order to make ends meet and contribute to the improvement of the environment?
- ▶ Why do you think Piedad continues to do the work she does in spite of all the challenges and misunderstandings?
- ▶ How do Piedad's actions reflect what she thinks about the environment?
- ▶ If you were Piedad, would you continue to work as a recycler? Why or why not?
- ▶ What are some of the things keeping you from recycling and improving the environment around you?
- ▶ What would help you become a better recycler and more concerned about the environment?
- ▶ How has the discussion of this story helped you understand how you might better relate to the environment around you?



## RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY STORY

*Mazo Oquendo family*

This is the story of how the Mazo Oquendo family was displaced from their farm in rural Antioquia Province, Colombia and moved to Bogota, Colombia's capital. The story illustrates how displacement has affected each member of the family and their reactions once they return to visit their farm seventeen years after they were displaced.



- ▶ How has Jorge (father) reacted to displacement? How did displacement affect him personally?



- ▶ How has Omaira (mother) reacted to displacement? How did displacement affect her personally?



- ▶ How has Marco (son) reacted to displacement? How did displacement affect him personally?



- ▶ How has Leidy (daughter) reacted to displacement? How did displacement affect her personally?



- ▶ How has Camilo (son) reacted to displacement? How did displacement affect him personally?



### Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What did you think of the story? How did it make you feel?
- ▶ What do you see happening inside the Mazo Oquendo family?
- ▶ What are some of the challenges that the Mazo Oquendo family must overcome in order to improve relationships within the family?
- ▶ What are some positive attributes you see in the Mazo Oquendo family that have helped them withstand previous challenges?
- ▶ If you were to work with the Mazo Oquendo family what are some of the things that you would do to help them overcome the effects of displacement on the family?
- ▶ What are some of the relational challenges that you face in your family?
- ▶ What are some of the things you think you could do to improve relations within your family?
- ▶ How has the discussion of this story helped you understand how you might better improve relations within your own family and/or help other families?

## RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF STORY

*Julia Agómez*

This is the story of how Julia, a cook, lost her job and decided to start her own business running a catering service for a local factory in Cartagena, Colombia. In the process, she had to overcome opposition, humiliations, and self-doubt. She now dreams of owning her own restaurant and is a leader in her own community.



### Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What did you think of the story? How did it make you feel?
- ▶ What do you see happening in Julia's life?
- ▶ What has Julia done to improve her sense of self? What is she doing to improve herself now and in the future?
- ▶ What are some of the obstacles Julia has had to overcome in her life? How have these obstacles affected her sense of self?
- ▶ Why do you think Julia has persisted in her efforts when so many others in her situation might have become conformist or defeated?
- ▶ If you were Julia, how do you think you would respond to the future?
- ▶ What are some of the things keeping you from making positive changes in your life?
- ▶ What are some of the things that you could do to help others improve their sense of self?
- ▶ How has the discussion of this story helped you understand how you might better improve your own sense of self?



## RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD STORY

*Farides de Oro*

This is the story of how Farides had to cope with the sudden murder of her husband and loss of all the family wealth. She finds comfort and discovers the importance of forgiveness through involvement in a local church and a growing relationship with God whom she loves and serves through music.



### Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What did you think of the story? How did it make you feel?
- ▶ What has happened in Farides' life? How has this affected her relationship with God?
- ▶ What did Farides do to strengthen her relationship with God after her husband's murder?
- ▶ What were some of the obstacles Farides had to overcome in order to improve her relationship with God?
- ▶ Why do you think Farides has such a positive relationship with God even though she has had many challenges in her life?
- ▶ If you were Farides, how do you think your relationship with God might have been affected if you experienced the same things she did?
- ▶ What are some of the things keeping you from improving your relationship with God?
- ▶ What are some of the things that would help you improve your relationship with God?
- ▶ How has the discussion of this story helped you understand how you might better improve your relationship with God and help others improve their relationship with God?







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## PREPARING FOR FIELD RESEARCH

Now that you have gone through the videos, you are ready to prepare for and start your field research.

## Here are some initial tips to get you started:

- ▶ The strength of your findings will rise and fall on your ability to **find researchers who are able to relate easily and conversationally with the population you will be researching.** Look for researchers who will make the people you are interviewing feel at ease, who are relational, empathetic, and good listeners. You want researchers who are able to get others to tell meaningful stories about themselves and their context. In many situations, people feel more at ease talking to women, especially if the majority of the people you will be interviewing are women.
- ▶ **You don't necessarily need "professional" researchers with advanced degrees for the field research.** You want good, relatable conversationalists and listeners who put others at ease and are able to talk about topics that might be painful or unpleasant.
- ▶ We have found that **research teams of two work the best**, composed of one primary interviewer and a scribe to take notes.
- ▶ **A research team of two people can usually manage two visits in the morning and two in the afternoon (four per day), assuming each visit lasts a maximum of two hours.** Visits work best where those interviewed feel most comfortable talking freely (privately). Usually, this is **within the home**, though if there are other family members around (spouses, children), interviewees are often reluctant to talk with them around – especially about family issues. Spend time ensuring you are meeting in the most comfortable and private place possible for the interviewee.
- ▶ **The research teams usually work best with one more experienced field supervisor** who ensures the field research is set up well, runs smoothly, and that the research teams understand and follow the research process and procedures. The supervisor should be free to float between interviews to ensure quality in the research process.
- ▶ **A sample size of 20 to 25 per community is usually sufficient to begin detecting the most important themes.** When choosing your sample, consider sub-samples within a community (e.g. youth, elderly, men, women, unemployed, etc.) and plan to interview 6-8 people per sub-sample.
- ▶ **With a sample of this size, a research team of four people can complete the research in three days of full-time field work.** This is assuming two research teams, each with an interviewer and a scribe, doing four interviews per day.
- ▶ **After you have selected the research team, spend a minimum of 2-3 days training before you begin the field research.** Usually this means:
  - Reviewing and debriefing the brochure, introductory video, and each story videocontent)
  - Examining the research instrument in detail
  - Studying each of the steps in the holistic community assessment process
  - Practicing the interview process with several subjects (e.g. community members or within the research team) and debriefing this experience
  - Practicing writing up and scoring each of the stories, then discussing this process.

- ▶ The research team should **dress as if you are visiting a friend or relative** so that the interviewee feels it is as natural and normal a visit as possible. Don't overdress. Don't wear anything "corporate" or items that may identify you as belonging to an organization (e.g. caps, hats, notebooks, name tags, shirts, etc.). This helps shift the dynamic of the interview to "conversational" and away from "official."

**Don't send people into the field to do the research until you feel they are fully prepared.** If you feel you may need help with initial training, feel free to contact Opportunity International who will put you in contact with a suitable trainer.

Now that you have read these tips on how to prepare for the field research process, continue on in this User's Guide to review the research instrument.

#### Action Steps:

- Step 1:** Print out copies of the research instrument and scoring scales (pages 20-30) for distribution to your research team.
- Step 2:** Discuss the content of the research instrument and scoring scales with everyone on your research team. .

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# HOLISTIC COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT RESEARCH INSTRUMENT



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## Sample Script for Interviewer:

Hi, it's so great to meet you! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm from \_\_\_\_\_. I really appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to meet with me today. Our conversation today should take from one to two hours. Usually when someone visits you from \_(institution's name)\_ they are mostly interested in talking to you about things they want or are thinking, but today is going to be a bit different.

Today I am here to ask questions about your life so that we can get to know you better because you matter to us! I am especially interested in stories you can tell me about the most important things that have happened to you in the past year. This is because we want to hear about what you think and what has happened to you!

We will make sure that what you share with us is kept private. Nothing you say today will affect your relationship with \_(institution's name)\_ or others. Would it be okay if I do it okay if I record your stories so that we remember all the details later?

## Key points to communicate as you introduce yourself and the research:

- ▶ Be personal and friendly. Introduce yourself and try to establish a personal connection before you start. (e.g. "This is such a great photo of your family! I come from a big family, as well. I am one of seven siblings!")
- ▶ Clarify that you are NOT here to talk about their relationship with the institution you represent.
- ▶ Explain that you are interested in getting to know them better and understand their life.
- ▶ Reassure them that their information will be kept private, and that it will not be shared. Also reassure them that what they share will not affect their relationship with your institution or others in any way.
- ▶ If consent/photo waiver forms are necessary, introduce them at this time.

Interviewer's Name:

Date of Interview (Day, Month, Year):  /  /

## Personal Information

Participant Name:

ID Number:

Telephone Number:

Participant Address: (including street, municipality, region, country, etc.)

Participant Age:

Participant Gender

(Choose One):

Male

Female

Program Status:

(Choose One):

Participant

Non-Participant

Participant Location:

(Choose One):

Urban

Semi-Urban

Rural

How many children  
do you have?

(Choose One):

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10+

Civil Status

(Choose One):

Single

Married

Widow/Widower

Separated

Divorced

Committed partner  
(not legally married)

# SECTION ONE: THE INTERVIEW

## Holistic Community Assessment Guidelines and Tips:

Our goal is that each story collected will be full and complete. It should accurately describe—

- ▶ The context of the story
- ▶ What values or motivations the respondent is articulating or alluding to (either at the time of the event, or now that they reflect on it)
- ▶ What the respondent did

The following questions will help you check to make sure your story is complete, or help the respondent fill in gaps in their story.

	ASK YOURSELF	SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE RESPONDENT
<b>CONTEXT</b>	<i>Do I understand the “scene” of this story? What situation is the respondent describing, or were they responding to?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you give me an example of a time when _____?</li> <li>• Where did ____ happen? Who was there?</li> </ul>
<b>INTERNAL</b>	<i>What was the respondent thinking or feeling during this experience? What does the respondent value? What motivates them?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you choose to share this experience?</li> <li>• How did you feel when _____?</li> <li>• What made you choose to _____?</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION</b>	<i>What did the respondent do? How did they take action?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you respond when _____?</li> <li>• What did you do next?</li> <li>• What were the main reasons you chose to _____?</li> <li>• Did you understand the level of sacrifice involved?</li> </ul>

## STORY ONE

### RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNITY

**1) Story One:** Can you tell me a story about the MOST IMPORTANT way you have helped or disrupted your community in the PAST YEAR, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?

**Sample Follow Up Questions** *You do not have to ask the respondent every single one of these questions. However, they may be helpful to keep the conversation flowing!*

- a. Where did this happen? When did this happen? Was anyone else involved?
- b. How did this experience make you feel? What were you thinking at the time?
- c. What did you do, specifically? How long did you help? What did that involve or require of you?
- d. Why did you choose to share this experience?

#### First Impression Scores

CONTEXT	INTERNAL	ACTION

## STORY TWO

### RELATIONSHIP WITH ENVIRONMENT

**2) Story Two:** Can you tell me a story about the MOST IMPORTANT way the place you live or work has changed in the PAST YEAR, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?

**Sample Follow Up Questions** *You do not have to ask the respondent every single one of these questions. However, they may be helpful to keep the conversation flowing!*

- a. Where did this happen? When did it happen? Was anyone else involved?
- b. How did this experience make you feel? What were you thinking at the time?
- c. Were you involved in or did you respond to this change?
- d. Why did you choose to share this experience?

#### First Impression Scores

CONTEXT	INTERNAL	ACTION

## STORY THREE

### RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY

**3) Story Three:** Can you tell me a story about the MOST IMPORTANT way your relationship with your family has changed in the PAST YEAR, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?

**Sample Follow Up Questions** *You do not have to ask the respondent every single one of these questions. However, they may be helpful to keep the conversation flowing!*

- a. Where did this happen? When did it happen? Who all from your family were there?
- b. How did this experience make you feel? What were you thinking at the time?
- c. Were you involved in or did you respond to this change?
- d. Why did you choose to share this experience?

#### First Impression Scores

CONTEXT	INTERNAL	ACTION

## STORY FOUR

### RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

**4) Story Four:** Can you tell me a story about the MOST IMPORTANT way your own life has changed in the PAST YEAR, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?

**Sample Follow Up Questions** *You do not have to ask the respondent every single one of these questions. However, they may be helpful to keep the conversation flowing!*

- a. What do you believe caused this change? When did it happen? Was anyone else involved?
- b. How did this experience make you feel? What were you thinking at the time?
- c. Were you involved in or did you respond to this change?
- d. Why did you choose to share this experience?

#### First Impression Scores

CONTEXT	INTERNAL	ACTION

## RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

**5) Story Five:** Can you tell me a story about the MOST IMPORTANT way your thinking or feeling about God has changed in the PAST YEAR, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?

**Sample Follow Up Questions** *You do not have to ask the respondent every single one of these questions. However, they may be helpful to keep the conversation flowing!*

- a. Where did this happen? When did it happen? Was anyone else involved?
- b. How did this experience make you feel? What were you thinking at the time?
- c. Were you involved in or did you respond to this change?
- d. Why did you choose to share this experience?

### First Impression Scores

CONTEXT	INTERNAL	ACTION

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# SECTION TWO: STORY SCORING

Story scoring is completed after the interview process has been completed by the interviewer. The respondent/interviewee should not participate in or be aware of the scoring process.

**The scores should be recorded on the same sheet as your notes from each story capture questions.**

## SCORING RUBRIC ONE:

The CONTEXT RUBRIC scores on the situation or circumstance described in the story

## SCORING RUBRIC TWO:

The INTERNAL RUBRIC scores what the respondent was thinking or feeling during the story

## SCORING RUBRIC THREE:

The ACTION RUBRIC scores the actions taken by the respondent during the story



**RUBRIC #1 CONTEXT SCORE:** For this story scale, consider two main factors:

1. What level of need or conflict was present?
2. How dependent was the recipient on the respondent's assistance?

**Note: This score is NOT meant to measure the level of involvement or actions of the respondent. That is Rubric #3.**

5	The story had an <b>extremely positive context</b> where the respondent had a <b>joyous experience</b> in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	<p style="color: #009688; font-weight: bold;">Domain Categories</p> <p><b>Community Story</b> ... relationship with community</p> <p><b>Environment Story</b> ... relationship with environment (e.g. natural surroundings, work, home)</p> <p><b>Family Story</b> ... relationship with extended or immediate family.</p> <p><b>Self Story</b> ... relationship with themselves.</p> <p><b>God Story</b> ... relationship with God.</p>
4	The story had an <b>exceptionally positive context</b> where the respondent had a <b>thrilling and amazing</b> experience in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
3	The story had a <b>strongly positive context</b> where the respondent had an <b>uplifting</b> experience in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
2	The story had a <b>moderately positive context</b> where there the respondent had a <b>great</b> experience in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
1	The story had a <b>slightly positive context</b> where the respondent had a <b>good</b> experience in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
0	The respondent could not think of a story in their <i>insert domain here</i> OR the context of their story was neither positive nor negative ( <b>neutral</b> ).	
-1	The story had a <b>slightly negative context</b> where <b>minor need or conflict</b> was present in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
-2	The story had a <b>moderately negative context</b> where a <b>need or conflict was present</b> in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
-3	The story had a <b>strongly negative context</b> where <b>remarkable need or conflict was present</b> in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
-4	The story had an <b>exceptionally negative context</b> where <b>extraordinary need or conflict was present</b> in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
-5	The story had an <b>extremely negative context</b> where <b>astronomical, multi-dimensional need or conflict was present</b> in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	

**RUBRIC #2 INTERNAL SCORE:** *How did this story affect them personally? What values are reflected in their thinking or feeling? What do they value, or what motivates them? What do they find meaningful? Does it sound like they internalized a lesson that they will apply later in life?*

5	The respondent demonstrated <b>extremely positive</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	<p style="color: #008080; font-weight: bold;">Domain Categories</p> <p><b>Community Story</b> ... relationship with community</p> <p><b>Environment Story</b> ... relationship with environment (e.g. natural surroundings, work, home)</p> <p><b>Family Story</b> ... relationship with extended or immediate family.</p> <p><b>Self Story</b> ... relationship with themselves.</p> <p><b>God Story</b> ... relationship with God.</p>
4	The respondent demonstrated <b>exceptionally positive</b> values and/or motivations.	
3	The respondent demonstrated <b>strongly positive</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	
2	The respondent demonstrated <b>moderately positive</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	
1	The respondent demonstrated <b>slightly positive</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	
0	The respondent demonstrated neither positive nor negative values or emotions in this story in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	
-1	The respondent demonstrated <b>slightly negative</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	
-2	The respondent demonstrated <b>moderately negative</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	
-3	The respondent demonstrated <b>strongly negative</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	
-4	The respondent demonstrated <b>exceptionally negative</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	
-5	The respondent demonstrated <b>extremely negative</b> values and/or motivations in their <i>insert domain here.</i>	

**RUBRIC #3 ACTION SCORE:** *What action did the interviewee take? How did they respond to a situation or circumstances that arose in their life?*

**Note: This score is meant to measure the action’s level of EFFORT, NOT level of IMPACT.**

<b>5</b>	The respondent's action involved <b>extreme effort</b> (e.g. overcome multiple challenges, <b>significant personal sacrifice</b> ) to positively change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	<p style="color: #009688; margin: 0;"><b>Domain Categories</b></p> <p><b>Community Story</b> ... relationship with community</p> <p><b>Environment Story</b> ... relationship with environment (e.g. natural surroundings, work, home)</p> <p><b>Family Story</b> ... relationship with extended or immediate family.</p> <p><b>Self Story</b> ... relationship with themselves.</p> <p><b>God Story</b> ... relationship with God.</p>
<b>4</b>	The respondent’s <b>action involved exceptional effort and valuable sacrifice(s)</b> (e.g. time, money, material goods) to change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>3</b>	The respondent’s action involved <b>strong effort</b> and required them to step outside their comfort zone for a limited amount of time to change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>2</b>	The respondent’s action involved <b>moderate effort</b> . The respondent <b>acted in a manner that does not normally occur</b> to positively change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>1</b>	The respondent’s action was <b>not unusual</b> and involved <b>slight effort or personal sacrifice</b> to positively change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>0</b>	The respondent <b>took no action</b> in the story they shared in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>-1</b>	The respondent’s action was <b>not unusual</b> and involved <b>slight effort</b> to negatively change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>-2</b>	The respondent’s action involved <b>moderate effort</b> to negatively change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>-3</b>	The respondent’s action required <b>strong effort</b> to negatively change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>-4</b>	The respondent’s action required <b>exceptional effort</b> to negatively change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	
<b>-5</b>	The respondent’s action required <b>extreme effort</b> to enact negative change or respond to the situation at hand in their <i>insert domain here</i> .	

## HOLISTIC COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SCORECARD

**Name:**  **Date:**

Story	Brief Description	Scores		
		Context	Internal	Action
Story 1: Community				
Story 2: Environment				
Story 3: Family				
Story 4: Self				
Story 5: God				

**Name:**  **Date:**

Story	Brief Description	Scores		
		Context	Internal	Action
Story 1: Community				
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Story 4: Self				
Story 5: God				





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# GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RESEARCH PROCESS



### Action Steps:

- Step 1:** Read through all the guidelines for each of the four steps (listen, score, interpret, and mobilize) with your research team.
- Step 2:** Discuss each of the four steps and identify any areas that aren't clear to everyone for further discussion and clarification.
- Step 3:** Get started doing your own holistic community assessment.

Now that you have thoroughly reviewed the research instrument and the story scoring guide, here are some guidelines for implementing the four steps (**listen, score, interpret, and mobilize**) in the research process so that the data you gather in the holistic community assessment field work is as helpful as possible to your work going forward.

## Step One: Listen

Active listening presupposes good interview techniques. Here are a few tried and tested interview techniques to help make sure you are listening to meaningful stories:

- ▶ **Prepare for the interview by reading the interview protocol carefully.** Remember each of the five stories told by the interviewee should correspond to one of the five shalom relational dimensions.
- ▶ **Take the time before you start the interview to get to know the person you are interviewing and make them feel comfortable.** Most people are nervous or afraid before being interviewed. Start by being properly introduced, ideally by someone who knows the participant. Next, start with some light small talk and share a bit about yourself. It's best if you can find something that gets people laughing! This will help them feel relaxed and comfortable before sharing their stories.
- ▶ **After establishing good rapport, check with the person you are interviewing to see where they would feel most comfortable talking.** This will help them feel like they are an active part of the conversation and show them that you value their opinion. Additionally, you may learn a lot in the process! We have had cases where people do not want to be seen by neighbors or family members, or have an aversion to a particular place. You want them to be comfortable in the place you choose while still prioritizing a location that is quiet and private.
- ▶ **Try to minimize distractions and excess noise before you start the interview process.** Ask people if it's okay to turn off the TV or limit other distractions, such as family members passing through the room. All of these things are easiest

to negotiate before you start the interview. Bringing up distractions partway through may interrupt the person being interviewed and keep them from feeling totally relaxed.

- ▶ **Ask people for permission to record the interview.** We have normally recorded the conversations for future reference, though always ask permission to do this first. In most places, consent is given, but in certain circumstances (i.e. post-genocide Rwanda) people have not always been comfortable speaking with a recorder present. Don't worry about keeping exhaustive notes during the interview process as you will be able to fill in gaps later with the recorded content. The most important thing is that the overall interview environment feel relaxed, private, and natural.
- ▶ **Always start the interview by thanking people for their time.** Often people are giving up time from work or multiple other things they could be doing. Normally we call in advance to confirm visit times for the interviews.
- ▶ **Once people begin telling their story, ask questions that keep the narrative going.** Follow-ups like: "Why?" "And then what happened?" are often useful and keep them telling the story. You want the stories to feel authentic and natural, which is why getting people into "narrative mode" is so important. When things feel natural and conversational, people lose themselves telling their own story, which is often when the most important details emerge.
- ▶ **Ask follow up questions that reference what people have already said previously so that they know you are listening and help them expound further.** These questions have the added value of clarifying things further and help people become even more colorful and descriptive in their comments. Some examples: "You said earlier that you were not afraid when you started your business. Can you tell me why you were not afraid?" Or another: "You just told me an interesting story about what you did when you had no money. That takes a lot of courage. I would not have done the same

in your shoes. Why did you decide to take that action even though it was hard and many others like me would not do the same?"

- ▶ **Remember to ask people how an experience made them feel. Show empathy if they become emotional.** As people are sharing their story, stop and ask them how they were feeling or what they were thinking in a particular moment. This makes for good, useful story content. Don't shy away from questions that may make them laugh or cry during the interview, as well. Do not try to manipulate their emotions, but be prepared for emotional situations and respond with empathy. Some interviewers carry tissues with them to offer their interviewees, as needed.
- ▶ **Don't be afraid of being a little bit provocative / aggressive in your questions, without being offensive.** One thing that usually works is to say, "I can't believe what you are telling me! Did you really do that?" Or: "Wow! That seems almost impossible! Why did you decide to do that anyway?" These questions work when the person interviewed feels you are being a challenging listener, but also empathetic and reacting in a normal way that any active listener would in a two-way discussion.
- ▶ **During the interview, always show empathy demonstrate that you are paying close attention, even when you may not fully understand or agree with what the person is saying.** Some of the things we do (without making any sound): maintain eye contact, nod your head, show empathy, follow gestures, lean in. In short, help the person being interviewed lose themselves in the moment as they tell their story.
- ▶ **Gently bring people back to the main story line that emerges when they digress.** People will often go off on tangents or tell multiple stories simultaneously. Keep these from going on too long by asking a question that brings them back to the main narrative in the story that is most relevant to the particular shalom relationship you are assessing.

- ▶ **Always remember to talk less and listen more.** You are there to hear their story, their opinions, their experience – not to share yours. Even if you do not agree with something they are saying, do not say anything or act in a manner that conveys your disagreement.
- ▶ **When the interviewee finishes their story, leave some silent time before continuing on with the next story.** Sometimes, the silence will encourage the interviewee to say additional interesting things.
- ▶ **Always thank the interviewee after the interview and praise their effort no matter how it went.** Some people will just naturally be better storytellers, more forthcoming, and on topic than others. Thanking someone at the end of an interview shows that you are grateful for their time, you value them as a person, and you appreciate their stories. We have found that a small gift is deeply appreciated (it doesn't need to be expensive), which could be something as easy as a pre-packaged snack. Avoid providing financial remuneration.
- ▶ **Quickly write up the stories after the interviews.** We recommend the research team of two consult together on the main, relevant features of each of the stories and write them up as soon as possible after conducting the interviews – preferably the same day as the interviews are conducted. Each story should be between two and four paragraphs in length and, as much as possible, reflect the voice of the storyteller. You can organize the story for logical flow, but don't try to edit the original voice of the storyteller. You can use the recordings as memory aids, as necessary/desired. Some teams have chosen to transcribe the recordings in full, then edit for clarity or length. Doing so allows for direct quotes from interviewees to be used later in the scoring and interpretation phases.



## Step Two: Score

**Score the stories you have gathered to gain a broader perspective of the stories collected as a whole.** Most research teams end the interview process feeling as though they have gained an incredible amount of personal insight from the interviews they completed. However, they often lack a clear sense of how to synthesize learnings from all the people they interviewed, much less across all interviews conducted by the research team. Scoring stories is at the heart of the research process and should be undertaken carefully using the process and methods we recommend.

▶ **Assign each of the five stories three scores.**

The Context score, Internal score, and Action score are each on a scale from +5 to -5. The purpose of each score is as follows:

- **Context Score:** Indicates the situation or circumstances in which the story takes place. Note that you are scoring the context at the beginning of the story.
- **Internal Score:** Indicates the importance of the values and/or motivations demonstrated by the respondent in the story and as they reflect on the story's meaning. Note that you are scoring the team's interpretation of their internal/motivations, NOT attempting to capture the respondent's own reflection on their values/motivations.
- **Action Score:** Indicates the level of effort action(s) taken by the respondent required. Note that you are NOT scoring the level of impact of the respondent's actions.

Three rubrics have been created (one for each category) to help with scoring. Once you become practiced at scoring, you will likely spend no more than fifteen minutes assigning scores to all stories for a single respondent. These three rubrics can be found starting on page 27 of the User's Guide.

- ▶ **Assign preliminary scores the same day as the interview.** While the stories are still fresh in your mind, each pair (or group) of researchers should discuss the stories and assign them preliminary scores. This should ideally be done on the same day that the stories were gathered, while still in the field (e.g. while driving to the next interview or on the way back to the office). The score card on page 30 can be printed and taken to the field to help you capture and review these scores later at a glance.
- ▶ **Calibrate scores later with the whole team.** Later, once the interview process is completed, the entire research team should meet together to compare scores and discuss challenging scoring situations. This period of discussion and debate is essential for ensuring consistent scoring between researchers and can also be quite fun! Researchers should revise their preliminary scores accordingly following these group discussions.
- ▶ **Overcome common scoring challenges.** The following pointers will help your research team navigate a number of challenges faced by research teams:
  - **You are not scoring how "good" a story is.** Many teams are prone to be disappointed when their early interviews result in lots of stories with +1s or +2s. In fact, many teams are prone to exaggerating early scores for this reason. Remember that the +5s and -5s are not always the "best" stories you will hear, and that stories of any score will supply your organization with useful information.
  - **This is not an evaluation of your organization's effectiveness.** Many teams will become discouraged when they do not find stories of extreme change or growth when talking to beneficiaries of their organization. Recall that this is a purposefully broad assessment, and we are focusing on the last year. It is not realistic to expect drastic examples across every domain for each person you interview, as we would not expect the same in our own lives.

- **Scoring is subjective.** There will almost certainly be differences of opinion among members of your team – this is entirely normal. As long as people’s scores on a story are similar, the team can simply decide by popular vote or use the average. Typically, over the course of discussing similar stories, scoring trends will emerge that provide a point of reference.

- ▶ **Finalize story scores and input transcribed stories, scores, and participant information into a spreadsheet.** A sample spreadsheet can be downloaded at [opportunity.org/holisticassessment](http://opportunity.org/holisticassessment)



## Step Three: Interpret

**Interpretation comes about when you thoughtfully engage the stories that you have heard to draw useful and meaningful conclusions about what is happening in a given population.** There are many different ways to look at and use the data. Some analyses can be conducted with the research team following the post-interview scoring session. Other analyses, however, involve quantitative and qualitative data manipulation and will require fewer researchers to invest dedicated time for analyses. When the time comes to produce a summary report, we strongly recommend that an appropriate visual presentation of data be included for each analysis proposed below.

Discussions that leverage the thoughts and insights from the full team can make time for team analysis invaluable. Some possible activities are noted below. We recommend that these exercises use easel paper or a whiteboard, pens, and sticky notes to enable the team to articulate insights in various ways. We also recommend photographing different moments of this group analysis process.

- ▶ **As a group, see if the findings can identify common patterns, situations, or personas.** Begin by identifying the main issues/themes across the five relationship domains, group the issues/themes that are related together, and then label the groupings. This can be an easel paper or whiteboard with sticky notes exercise. What gets produced can then be transferred schematically to a report.
- ▶ **As a group, identify the issues and themes that are most common from the most positive to the most negative scores.** Having done that, see if there are common patterns, situations, or personas. Note any causal relationships between identified phenomena, issues/themes that are positive as well as those that are negative, even if they cross over into or from other domains. Prioritize the urgency of different issues/themes.

Following the interviews, the team scoring, and the team analysis discussions, the team should send the data and materials to the researchers

tasked with further analysis. Further analyses that can be done by a smaller group are noted below. We recommend that the full research team be invited to summarize key data points within the stories they have captured to make the process of data compilation/aggregation easier for the researchers conducting further analyses. Some of the work may involve systematic analyses of the insights from discussion with the full team.

- ▶ **Group the stories by story score and see what common themes emerge in each of the groupings.** (e.g. What does a -5, 0, or a +5 context score for the relationship with family story usually mean?). What is the frequency of these different scores across the sample? Build “thematic tables” for each of the stories showing score frequency across the themes represented in the scores. Build a total of 15 such thematic tables for the range of scores (5 stories x 3 scores/story).
- ▶ **Identify illustrative story examples based on your scoring and thematic grouping work.** Identify stories with extreme and average scores, stories that touch on commonly-expressed themes, and any stories that are particularly rich or distinct. Such stories can be rich and educational; and, combined with photos if appropriate, may prove very useful in providing a human dimension to reports and presentations.
- ▶ **Identify the variety of people, happenings, or organizations that show up in the stories when aggregated.** These can have positive or negative roles in the stories. Because they are the primary actors that inhabit the most important stories, they help us understand the key elements that shape their lives. These can be presented pictorially when the time comes to present/report.
- ▶ **Identify common goals and fears that exist in each life domain.** Where are the commonalities? Where are there differences? What accounts for commonalities or differences? Does the data point toward different demographic segments or different personas? These can be presented as prose in a table.

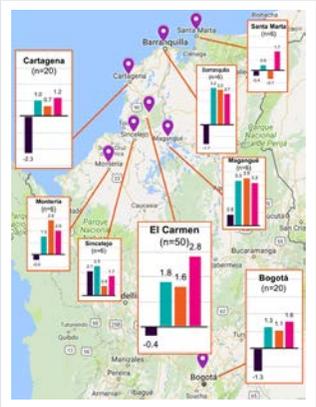
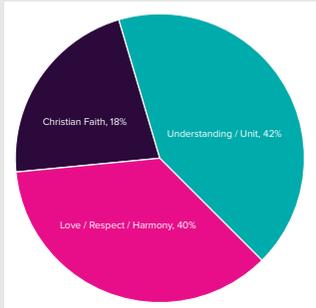
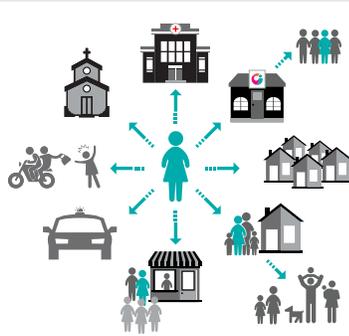
► **Consider whether the stories – when aggregated – present problems, solutions, and outcomes for certain thematic issues.**

If these can be systematically noted, one can build a “theory of change” that is held or perceived within the community. If true, these may provide insights into interventions; even if they are just perceptions, this can provide insights into how to engage. These can be presented as theories of change that are understood, perceived, felt by clients.

**Examples of visuals to communicate the data:**

**Thematic Breakdown for Family Story by Context Score, Malawi**

5	Generous husband, unity
4	Stopped drinking, united financial responsibility, spouse stopped cheating, forgiveness, unity
3	Business/financial success
2	Unity, better finances, peace, new house, basic needs met
1	Good communication, unity, financial stability, mutual support, love, iron roof
0	No family change
-1	Polygamy, rudeness, single parent, financial disputes
-2	Business failure, quarrels, sickness
-3	Divorce, physical distance, drunkenness, infidelity
-4	Quarreling, separation, abandonment
-5	Rebellious children, death of spouse, drunkenness



CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS	OUTCOMES
<b>Mobility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unpaved roads</li> <li>Limited transport options</li> </ul> <b>Safety</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gangs</li> <li>Violence</li> <li>Theft</li> <li>Illicit drug abuse</li> </ul> <b>Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flooding (homes, roads)</li> <li>Homes in disrepair</li> <li>Lack of utilities</li> <li>Distrust of neighbors</li> <li>Few business opportunities</li> </ul>	<b>Mobility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pave roads</li> <li>Provide public transportation</li> </ul> <b>Safety</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minister to youth</li> <li>Advocate for police involvement</li> </ul> <b>Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reroute water source</li> <li>Install electric, water, sewage</li> <li>Neighborhood legalized</li> </ul> <p>Likely requires community organizing and advocacy</p>	<b>Mobility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taxis will enter community</li> <li>Can travel more easily to jobs, family, events, etc.</li> </ul> <b>Safety</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police present to deter crime; prosecute criminals</li> <li>Youth have greater opportunities outside of community</li> </ul> <b>Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals build and renovate homes</li> <li>Property values increase</li> </ul>

## Step Four: Mobilize

The end goal of this holistic community assessment approach is to mobilize your organization to respond more holistically and in a way that is tailored to existing needs and capabilities in the communities and contexts you are working. In order for this research to influence your organization to improve their response, various steps must be taken – some even before you begin the research.

- ▶ **Before you begin the research, help key people in your organization understand and be receptive to qualitative research.** You can do this by noting the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research – noting that even quantitative approaches require qualitative understandings to be useful. Explain how valuable stories can be to understanding local viewpoints and context. Help people understand the type of stories you will be gathering, why you are gathering them, and what kind of research outputs to expect.
- ▶ **Consider bringing program leaders or representatives of key internal teams into the research process from the beginning.** Design the research process and build the research team so that there are multiple, diverse stakeholders from your organization involved in shaping aspects of the research (e.g. the group to study), doing the field research, and discussing findings and application. This creates broader ownership and understanding of the nature and value of holistic community assessment, making it more likely that the research process leads to improvement in organizational practice and effectiveness as well as a more holistic understanding of the communities and target populations with whom you are working.
- ▶ **Value the dynamic internal discussions that this holistic community assessment approach fosters and encourages.** Unlike survey-based research, this approach involves much more human engagement and discussion. This interaction (across teams, across functions) can be very valuable for

strategic insight, consensus building, and organizational alignment. Create a space for mutual respect, mutual learning, friendly debate, and hearing from all participants.

- ▶ **Strategize how you will socialize research findings to promote organizational change.** After the field research, scoring, and initial interpretation have been completed, plan how the team will engage leadership and diverse functional areas within the organization. Consider the length and style of presentation that will best suit the audience and establish time frames for feedback and next steps. By appropriately socializing findings you can successfully promote organizational change through creative solutions informed by your research findings.
- ▶ **Evaluate which issues are within the scope of the organization's mission.** Some issues may not be within the organization's scope. However, it is important to note that non-target issues may be part of the causal chain for target issues (e.g. domestic violence



may not normally be within the scope of an economic development organization, yet, it may be very salient for the client's economic success). For those not within the scope of your organization, is there a way to point them to the right organizations for help on those issues? Would nurturing connections/partnerships to cover those areas be appropriate?

- ▶ **For issues that are in areas that your organization addresses, other questions can be asked.** Are the problems that are within the scope of your organization's mission being addressed? Is there room for further program optimization? Are there new ways to target these issues? Create a schematic to capture this.
- ▶ **Some possible interventions or adjustments may be readily apparent.** If your organization is already targeting the issues identified by the research, certain ways to optimize your initiative may be easily identified. Plan who to bring into the conversation to consider next steps.

- ▶ **Additional analysis may be required if solutions are not immediately apparent or if more ideas for optimizing interventions are desired.** One possible place to begin is by analyzing the theory of change produced by the stories and by reviewing the organization's theory of change. Theories of change often require testing, research, and adjustment. Identifying causal relationships between factors across the five dimensions may offer a starting point.
- ▶ **Identify which teams or individuals must be brought in to craft solutions.** Often, the researchers are not the only ones equipped to provide insights regarding strategy or tactical implications. The more the findings impact operations across various teams, the more important it is to invite the relevant teams to engage the research findings as well as invite their input to craft solutions. It may be appropriate to invite different teams to discuss different issues that were identified.



- ▶ **Carefully choose a team of researchers to produce the final report.** This exercise should not rest on one person alone. The team should be capable of moving the process forward, have the trust of the larger research team, have the respect of the organizational leadership, and have at least one person who would be able to present the information articulately before key stakeholders.
- ▶ **Produce a final presentation (deck and/or prose report) that incorporates key components needed by the audience.** The form and content of the final report should be dictated by what the audience will find compelling and easiest to digest. Generally, the report should move systematically from findings, to interpretation, to theory of change, to possible solutions, and then finally recommendations. It should provide practical insights into lives and situations. The data in these reports should be translated into a

graphical/visual form whenever possible (as emphasized in the previous section). Photos and illustrations should be used wherever possible to provide the audience with a tangible sense of the people being served and of the research process.

- ▶ **Include possible practical next steps with your recommendations.** In your recommendations section, consider the multiple steps your organization may need to take in order to effectively implement your recommended solutions.
- ▶ **Once the report is completed, socialize the final document/presentation with key organizational leadership and staff.** Start with those who may already be open to these approaches and work progressively toward all who need to hear the report. At every step, gather feedback – regarding recommendations as well as how to enhance the presentation.

**Nurture the research team.  
Spend time eating, relaxing,  
and enjoying being together!**





# IS YOUR ORGANIZATION INTERESTED IN CONDUCTING YOUR OWN HOLISTIC COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT?

Opportunity's Knowledge Management team is here to help, offering tailored solutions to your organization's research requirements.



## 1. Download and Check In

Download your free copy of the Holistic Community Assessment Toolkit at [opportunity.org/HolisticAssessment](https://opportunity.org/HolisticAssessment). Next, consult with our team to ensure your independently-managed assessment is on track for success. [holisticassessment@opportunity.org](mailto:holisticassessment@opportunity.org)



## 2. Hands-on Training

Gain an in-depth understanding of the assessment approach with a training workshop.



## 3. Research Implementation

Entrust your assessment to Opportunity's Knowledge Management team, who can manage and run the research independently or in collaboration with your team.



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By providing financial solutions and training, we empower people living in poverty to transform their lives, their children's futures, and their communities.

### Vision

A world in which all people have the opportunity to achieve a life free from poverty, with dignity, and purpose.

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