

Developing Spiritual Impact Metrics

A thorough, iterative process was undertaken by ICM to develop core impact metrics for spiritual formation

Abstract

As a data-driven organization, ICM upholds the core values of effectiveness and innovation in everything it does. To measure impact, ICM conducts regular monitoring and evaluation processes during every program period, keeping track of the organization's success indicators and ensuring that the organization continues to deliver positive change towards the communities being served. This monitoring and evaluation methodology continues to evolve as ICM seeks to innovate and improve on its processes.

This paper highlights the iterative review process conducted by ICM to identify and develop core impact metrics for the organization's spiritual formation initiatives.

Overview

- **Topic(s):** Spiritual Formation Indices, Spiritual Metrics Evaluation
- **Location:** Philippines
- **Date:** 2013 ~ ongoing

Context

ICM's vision is to see ultrapoor families released from all forms of poverty, and one of the key facets is spiritual poverty. ICM recognizes that living in extreme poverty is often characterized by a lack of hope, which is why the organization aims to transform the spiritual lives of the ultrapoor and allow them to experience renewed hope for their future. Through the 15-week core Transform program, ICM partners with pastors to provide a Biblically-based values curriculum, allowing participants to discover who God is, how much He loves His people, and what He graciously offers to those who have faith in Him.

ICM places importance in cultivating the spiritual formation of ultrapoor families. Because of ICM's desire to continuously grow and steward the families God has entrusted to the organization, ICM invests in implementing and developing monitoring and evaluation tools used to assess *Transform's* spiritual values component.

Since 2011, over 140 questions have been employed to better understand where people are in their faith journeys and whether attending Transform has made a difference in their relationship with God and their understanding of salvation. In 2014, a scoping review of measures designed to assess spiritual health and maturity was conducted. In this review, Engel's scale was identified as a promising tool and also recommended by other organizations. Engel's scale provided a framework to develop specific questions for the Philippine setting. During this time ICM also partnered with Back to the Bible to develop questions on spiritual disciplines and Bible engagement. These questions were then trialed in ICM's baseline and endline participant surveys from 2014 to 2018.

In 2018, ICM was introduced to the Kingdom Impact Framework developed by EIDO research, to help the organization measure spiritual impact. A short version of this tool was tested in subsequent surveys to give the organization a snapshot of the participants' spiritual formation before and after the program.

After undergoing several different iterations of spiritual health metrics, a thorough review of all spiritual measures used in the past decade was conducted, initially in 2019 and then completed in 2021, to reach a concise module of spiritual health questions that address ICM's core measurement needs.

Design and Results

Design

The process of the spiritual metrics review were as follows:

1. Gather anecdotal enumerator feedback on the usability, translation quality, and acceptability of the survey questions and constructs being evaluated;
2. Refresh ICM's spiritual values theory of change (ToC) with the implementation team and review all spiritual metrics used against the latest theory of change;
3. Identify patterns of change across the batch-by-batch pre and post survey results;
4. Assess all available survey data for high-value questions or metrics; and
5. Review analysis and discuss the results with key ICM leaders to finalize core spiritual impact measures.

Results

A total of 128 questions were examined over this period spanning from questions about the participants' (1) understanding of God's grace and salvations, (2) beliefs about prayer and the Bible, (3) beliefs about who God is and His sovereignty and love, (4) perceptions and attitudes towards the state of their religiosity and relationship with God, and (5) church engagement. From these, questions that were scarcely used, questions that were generating inconclusive and inconsistent results, and questions that were difficult to understand based on enumerator feedback were removed from the roster of survey items being closely considered. Additionally, upon reviewing ICM's spiritual values ToC with the implementing team and strategic leaders, a second round of questionnaire culling was

done to generate a short list of questions that were aligned with the ToC. The key outcomes identified through this ToC process are the following:

1. To understand salvation by grace,
2. To increase church engagement, and
3. To increase the practice of spiritual disciplines.

From 128 questions, a final list of 27 questions were identified to be most informative in measuring spiritual formation and aligned with the updated ToC.

Upon narrowing the selection down to 27 questions, a third round of thorough assessments was employed, involving batch-by-batch comparisons from 2011 to 2019 *Transform* data and short reports in order to further dissect the patterns of change and each question’s ability to measure the core spiritual outcomes identified from the ToC review process. In this review stage, 11 high-value questions were identified by key ICM strategy leaders due to their alignment with ICM’s core spiritual values constructs and their ability to elicit consistent responses and generate consistent pre to post trends across *Transform* batches. These 11 questions showed the most potential in serving as ICM’s core spiritual impact measures¹:

Success Measure / Core Outcome	Construct	Question/Indicator	Indicator Type
Participants understand salvation by grace	Understand Salvation by Grace	Why do you feel that you are going to heaven?	Primary
		Are you confident that you are going to heaven after death?	Validation question
		There are many beliefs about what happens after death. Which of these statements is closest to your own belief?	Secondary
		Eternal salvation is possible through grace, not works.	Validation question
Increased church engagement	Expressed allegiance to Christ through ICM church engagement	What type of church do you belong to?	Primary
	Participants start to attend a Protestant church		
	Participants start to attend any church	Do you belong to a church (Sunday service)? Do you belong to religious meetings (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)? (outside of Sunday service)	Secondary
	Participants start to engage with the local evangelical church	How active are you in this church (Sunday service)? How active are you in this religious meeting (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)?	Secondary

¹ A detailed list of the questions, including the success outcome and construct it measures and the choices for each question, can be found in the appendix.

Increased practice of spiritual disciplines	Increased prayer habits	In the past 7 days, how many DAYS did you pray?	Primary
	Increased Bible engagement	In the past 7 days, how many DAYS did you read or listen to the Bible?	Primary

The results of the batch-by-batch and across-batch trend analysis of the 11 selected questions are summarized in the table below, reflecting consistent improvements / positive findings post-*Transform*:

Question/Indicator [n = 7,230 to 31,032]**	Baseline (Min-Max)	Endline (Min-Max)	Absolute Change	Relative Change	Trend
Why do you feel that you are going to heaven? <i>Response: I am sure because I am saved by grace through faith in Jesus.</i>	43%* (41%-45%)	55.5%* (51%-60%)	12.5%	28.5%	All Positive
Are you confident that you are going to heaven after death? <i>Response: I am totally certain I'm going to heaven / I am pretty sure I'm going to heaven</i>	56%* (54%-58%)	59%* (57%-61%)	3.0%	5.5%	All Positive
There are many beliefs about what happens after death. Which of these statements is closest to your own belief? <i>Response: I will go to heaven because I am saved by grace through faith in Jesus / I have accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior</i>	39.7%* (28%-53%)	53.9%* (41%-69%)	14.2%	39.6%	All Positive
Eternal salvation is possible through grace, not works. <i>Score</i>	0.75 (0.74-0.77)	0.79 (0.77-0.82)	4.3%	5.7%	All Positive
What type of church do you belong to? <i>Response: ICM Pastor's Church</i>	35.4%* (15%-56%)	58.5%* (37%-90%)	23.1%	95.6%	Mostly Positive
Do you belong to a church (Sunday Service) or religious meetings (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)? <i>Response: Yes (to at least one of the questions)</i>	79.7%* (60%-100%)	83.1%* (67%-91%)	3.4%	6.9%	Mostly Positive
Do you belong to a church (Sunday Service) or religious meetings (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)? <i>Response: Protestant Church (to at least one of the questions)</i>	76.3%* (55%-96%)	80.4%* (67%-90%)	4.1%	8.5%	Mostly Positive
How active are you in this Church (Sunday Service) or the religious meetings (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)?	47.2%* (14%-88%)	51.1%* (39%-61%)	3.9%	13.4%	Mostly Positive

<i>Response: Leader / Very Active in a Protestant Church (to at least one of the services)</i>					
In the past 7 days, how many DAYS did you pray? <i>Average Number of Days</i>	5.88 (4.07-6.33)	6.04 (4.3-6.49)	1.56	2.8%	Mostly Positive
In the past 7 days, how many DAYS did you read or listen to the Bible? <i>Average Number of Days</i>	1.93 (1.51-2.33)	2.34 (1.75-2.84)	0.42	23.1%	Mostly Positive
In the past 7 days, how many DAYS did you read or listen to the Bible? <i>Response: Read/Listened to the Bible for 4 to 7 days in the last 7 days</i>	26.5%* (12%-39%)	33.3%* (21%-59%)	6.8%	30.3%	Mostly Positive

*Proportion of participants that selected the correct responses

**Sample size varies per question as not all questions were asked in every batch

ICM was encouraged to see such promising results from the 2011 to 2019 batch-by-batch trend analysis that showed strong indications of participants' spiritual change through *Transform*. As seen in the table, an increase in the number of participants engaged in their local protestant churches is observed across most batches after *Transform*, affirming ICM's strategy in using *Transform* as a vehicle to introduce participants into their local church.

Apart from this, frequency of prayer and Bible engagement also seem to increase across the majority of the batches. While a positive change in spiritual disciplines is a significant indicator of growing faith, the results from the in-depth investigation highlighted two key findings about participants' spiritual disciplines: (1) the baseline frequency of prayer is already quite high, suggesting that even before the program has begun, participants have already report to be praying for 5 to 6 days a week; and (2) the pre- to post-*Transform* improvement in average Bible reading frequency is minute. The results stood out to the organization and three hypotheses surfaced: (1) the baseline statistic on prayer may be capturing the innate cultural religiosity of a Christian country like the Philippines, (2) while the baseline statistic on prayer may suggest that participants already pray regularly, the nature of the question omits the object of prayer that ICM had in mind - God - suggesting that participants may have approached this question with different understanding on what *prayer* in the question meant, and (3) the lack of access to and ownership of Bibles may be the primary reason behind the minute improvement in participants' Bible engagement frequency. These hypotheses led the organization to ponder that while spiritual disciplines is a key determinant of growth and the success of evangelism programs in most contexts, measuring this may not necessarily be as informative or indicative of true life change because of the context of the communities ICM is serving (i.e. culture of religiosity and access to Bibles).

Despite this, the results that were most encouraging to see were the consistent improvements in the participants' understanding of grace and confidence in their salvation. The primary purpose of ICM's values strategies is to lead people to Christ. Hence, the pre to post change in the grace indicators serve

as ICM’s core success metric to gauge whether the organization is faithfully completing the mission to serve as God’s ambassadors of hope and grace.

Overall, these promising results encourage the organization to remain good stewards of its mission by continuously seeking to improve its program and impact metrics. ICM is in the process of designing a research exercise to validate these core spiritual impact measures through a mixed methods study involving cross-validating and comparing participants’ responses to select spiritual values questions against results from extensive participant interviews. Additionally, ICM will also be re-conducting a scoping review to keep abreast of the latest spiritual health surveys and impact metrics in order to continuously improve and develop ICM’s core metrics moving forward.

Additional Documents/Publications

[Landing the Plane Summary Document](#)

[Landing the Plane Data Summaries](#)

[Spiritual Values Questionnaire Roster](#)

Appendix

Table 1. Core Spiritual Impact Metrics: Survey Questions and Choices

Success Measure / Core Outcome	Construct	Question/Indicator	Indicator Type
Participants understand salvation by grace	Understand Salvation by Grace	Why do you feel that you are going to heaven? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I am sure because I tried to be involved in church, pray, and live the way I think God wants me to ○ I am sure because I am a good person ○ I am sure because I am saved by grace through faith in Jesus ○ None of these responses match my belief system 	Primary
		Are you confident that you are going to heaven after death? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I am totally certain I'm going to heaven ○ I am pretty sure I'm going to heaven ○ I am not sure if I'm going to heaven ○ I don't think that I will go to heaven ○ None of these responses match my belief system 	Validation question
		There are many beliefs about what happens after death. Which of these statements is closest to your own belief? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is no life after death 	Secondary



INTERNATIONAL CARE MINISTRIES FOUNDATION INC.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When I die, I will go to heaven because I tried my best to be a good person & live a good life ○ When I die, I will go to heaven because I am saved by grace through faith in Jesus ○ When I die, I will go to heaven because I tried to be involved in my church, pray, and live the way I think God wants me to ○ I am not sure what happens when I die 	
		<p>Eternal salvation is possible through grace, not works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strongly Disagree ○ Somewhat Disagree ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree ○ Somewhat Agree ○ Strongly Agree 	Validation question
Increased church engagement	Expressed allegiance to Christ through ICM church engagement	<p>What type of church do you belong to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ICM-affiliated church or ICM pastor's church ○ Other Protestant or Born-Again church (Evangelical, Baptist, etc.) ○ Catholic ○ Muslim ○ Iglesia Filipina Independiente ○ Iglesia Ni Cristo ○ Jehovah's Witness ○ Mormon ○ Buddhist ○ Others ○ Don't know ○ Refused 	Primary Primary
	Participants start to attend a Protestant church		
	Participants start to attend any church	<p>Do you belong to a church (Sunday service)?</p> <p>Do you belong to religious meetings (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)? (outside of Sunday service)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes ○ No 	Secondary
Participants start to engage with the local evangelical church	<p>How active are you in this church (Sunday service)?</p> <p>How active are you in this religious meeting (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leader ○ Very Active ○ Somewhat Active ○ Not Very Active 	Secondary	

**Key responses are highlighted in bold*

Question/Indicator	Batches	Sample Size
Why do you feel that you are going to heaven?	2016 Batch 3, 2019 Batch 3	7,230
Are you confident that you are going to heaven after death?	2016 Batch 3, 2019 Batch 3	7,230



INTERNATIONAL CARE MINISTRIES FOUNDATION INC.

There are many beliefs about what happens after death. Which of these statements is closest to your own belief?	2014 Batch 2 to 3, 2015 Batch 1 to 3, 2016 Batch 1 to 3, 2017 Batch 1 to 3, 2018 Batch 2 to 3	25,266
Eternal salvation is possible through grace, not works.	2014 Batch 2 to 3, 2015 Batch 1 to 3	11,475
What type of church do you belong to? / Is this the church of the ICM pastor?	2011 Batch 1 to 3, 2012 Batch 1 to 3, 2013 Batch 1 to 3, 2014 Batch 1, 2016 Batch 1 to 2, 2017 Batch 1 to 3, 2018 Batch 2 to 3, 2019 Batch 1 to 2	31,032
Do you belong to a church (Sunday Service) or religious meetings (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)?	2016 Batch 1 to 2, 2017 Batch 1 to 3, 2018 Batch 2 to 3, 2019 Batch 1 to 2	13,748
How active are you in this Church (Sunday Service) or the religious meetings (Small groups, bible study, choir, etc.)?	2016 Batch 1 to 2, 2017 Batch 1 to 3, 2018 Batch 2 to 3, 2019 Batch 1 to 2	13,748
In the past 7 days, how many DAYS did you pray?	2014 Batch 2 to 3, 2015 Batch 1 to 3, 2016 Batch 1 to 3, 2017 Batch 1 to 3, 2018 Batch 2 to 3	25,266
In the past 7 days, how many DAYS did you read or listen to the Bible?	2014 Batch 2 to 3, 2015 Batch 1 to 3, 2016 Batch 1 to 3, 2017 Batch 1 to 3, 2018 Batch 2 to 3	25,266