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## Advocacy case studies

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN UGANDA

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<b>COUNTRY:</b>	<b>Uganda</b>
<b>THEMES:</b>	<b>Children and education; corruption; disaster management; governance; health</b>
<b>ADVOCACY APPROACHES:</b>	<b>Building relationships; church and community mobilisation; government budget tracking; government officials: meeting with; social contracts and social accountability</b>

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The village of Owii in northern Uganda is a small community which is learning how to lobby local government through church and community mobilisation advocacy – and reaping the benefits. The pastor at the local church received training from Tearfund’s partner Pentecostal Assemblies of God, then he in turn trained his community, informing them about their rights and the responsibilities of local government, and showing them how to engage constructively with local leaders. This led the community to set up an advocacy committee to identify issues in their local area requiring an advocacy response. Subsequently, they wrote to the sub-county-level government to request a ‘community dialogue’ meeting.

Initially, local government officials were unresponsive and suspicious: they even asked the police to arrest the Owii leaders. The police refused because they could see that the community simply wanted to meet with their local leaders. However, because the government officials had reservations, the police offered to accompany them and provide protection for them at the meeting.

At the gathering, community members outlined issues that they had identified, distinguishing between those they were responding to themselves and those which required the government’s input. The government officials could see that the community wanted to bring them constructive solutions to their development needs, so their response changed. Instead of being confrontational, officials became supportive and committed to providing mobile health services to the community, and to others nearby too.

Over time, the relationship between the community and local government continued to improve, and further developments came as a result of the community’s advocacy work. The government provided the community with a new school, desks and teachers, as well as emergency food relief after flooding.

Furthermore, the community’s advocacy work highlighted that the Ministry of Health was paying for drugs for a health centre in Owii which did not exist. In short, funds were going missing. To avoid this happening again, central government ministries began to provide information on their plans and trained Owii councillors in how to monitor their implementation. They also supplied councillors with

mobile phones so government ministries could check whether services were being delivered at community level, and the community started participating in the local government planning cycle.