

Advocacy case studies

AMPLIFYING A COMMON VOICE DURING COMPLEX CRISES IN SOUTH SUDAN

COUNTRY:

South Sudan

THEMES:

Health; peacebuilding

ADVOCACY APPROACHES:

Government officials: lobbying; working in alliances and coalitions; mobilising people and campaigning; church and community mobilisation

At the onset of Covid-19, South Sudan was navigating a fragile peace process in the country and facing security challenges, as there had been an increase of violence in parts of the country. Furthermore, a locust plague and flooding were devastating the nation's food security during this time. The Covid-19 pandemic further exposed the already deteriorating healthcare system, which had been almost non-functional for decades. As cases of Covid-19 increased, there was limited testing and the health facilities lacked expertise and equipment to address and respond to the pandemic.

In response, Tearfund coordinated an advocacy letter with their partners, including churches and faith actors. The letter provided recommendations relating to the humanitarian response during Covid-19. This was shared with various UN agencies and embassies in Juba. The partner organisations who signed the letter included the Diocese of Kajo-Keji, the Diocese of Liwolo, Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan, Episcopal Church for South Sudan/South Sudanese Development and Relief Agency (ECSS/SUDRA), Sudan Evangelical Mission, Africa Development Aid (ADA), Islamic Relief, and African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM). The letter highlighted the importance of local faith communities and faith-based organisations in humanitarian preparedness and response, and called for sustained humanitarian support for the most vulnerable groups.

Juma Mabor, Programme Coordinator for Building Peace, Justice and Reconciliation at ALARM, said that ALARM had decided to sign the letter to demonstrate their commitment to helping prevent the spread and effects of Covid-19 in communities with whom they work. Due to ALARM's critical peacebuilding work in the most remote areas and with marginalised communities, they have been able to amplify the voices and particular needs of marginalised communities whose voices do not often get heard in international arenas. Juma Mabor said, 'It is great to see that the partners involved in this joint advocacy letter work in many different areas – WASH, livelihoods and peacebuilding.'



They represent a wider and comprehensive coverage of communities affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.'

This coordination by local faith-based organisations to influence the international UN agencies and national embassies in South Sudan would not have been possible without Tearfund building the capacity of these partners through a 'Bridge Builder' model, based on a more detailed report called [Bridge Builders](#). This global campaign to empower local faith-based organisations in humanitarian responses combines small grants and high quality mentoring to bring together local Christian and Muslim faith leaders and international humanitarian agencies to increase understanding, trust and coordination by strengthening each other's skills and capabilities. The overarching goal of the model is a more effective and timely response to best support those affected by humanitarian crises.

Tearfund's Country Director in South Sudan, Anthony Rama, said, 'Churches and people of all faiths live in the communities they serve before, during, and after times of crisis. They can offer long-term sustainability and are uniquely placed to understand the needs and possible solutions for the communities that they serve and belong to.' Through these local faith communities and faith-based organisations joining together in advocacy on the response to Covid-19 in South Sudan, the foundation has been laid for more sustainable and effective solutions to complex crises – not just in South Sudan, but around the world.

Lessons Learnt:

- Linking local, national and international advocacy can be a powerful force in shaping long-term policy.