

Advocacy case studies

CREATING COVID-19 SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR BOREHOLES IN MALAWI

COUNTRY:	Malawi
THEMES:	Health; water, sanitation and hygiene
ADVOCACY APPROACHES:	Government officials: educating; government officials: lobbying; government officials: meeting with; building relationships; working in alliances and coalitions

In rural Malawi, boreholes are the main source of water for many communities. Before Covid-19, as many as 200 families could access a borehole every day to collect essential water for their households. However, at the outbreak of Covid-19 there were no safety measures in place at these boreholes to prevent the spread of the virus, even though this was a high contact point in many communities across the country.

When Tearfund partner, Eagles, identified this as a risk for the vulnerable communities they serve, they met with a strategic leader in the NGO community who is part of Malawi's Presidential Task Force on Covid-19. Lobbying this strategic leader led to him championing this issue at the national level. Eagles mobilised other stakeholders, such as NGOs and government officials, to create a space for those affected by this issue in rural communities to discuss creating guidelines that would help prevent the spread of Covid-19 via boreholes. There has been positive engagement in this initiative from all the stakeholders.

From this experience – and by being one of the first responders in rural communities in Malawi – Eagles learned that stakeholder engagement and analysis across sectors is very important. They have found their role in being the bridge to connect these sectors, while advocating for more robust safety guidelines for Covid-19 at rural communities' boreholes. This has highlighted the importance of building alliances and relationships to further engage in advocacy. Also, risk analysis is critical, as NGOs and policy makers didn't understand at first where the risk was highest in the rural communities. Therefore, assumptions need to be critically analysed when planning a response, which can often be encouraged by including vulnerable voices from the communities.