

## Advocacy case studies

# Ensuring Covid-19 testing in a sensitive location in Africa

**Country:**

Sensitive location, Africa

**Themes:**

Health

**Advocacy approaches:**

Demonstrating good practice; church and community mobilisation; educating community members; working in alliances and coalitions; government officials: lobbying; social accountability

When Covid-19 began to spread in one of the African countries Tearfund works in, it was not the first pandemic the country had faced. Church leaders, who were crucial in fighting the previous Ebola epidemic, were quick to respond by raising awareness in their congregations and communities about Covid-19 prevention through radio broadcasts, mass text messages, and observing social distancing. This good rapport built by the church leaders with the government during crises, in partnership with other international organisations and local partners helped the provincial governments listen to the church leaders and partners' requests.

Widely available Covid-19 testing in communities was vital to stopping the spread of the virus. The national government had a duty to provide this testing to their citizens. Such testing would prevent the healthcare system from being overloaded, which would have led to many more deaths from Covid-19 and other diseases. It would also enable the economy to continue functioning, which would prevent many from deeper poverty.

Therefore, Tearfund and our partners submitted joint letters to the provincial governors. The letters urged them to ensure wider testing for Covid-19 and the installation of testing laboratories in their provinces. The advocacy letters also encouraged the government to increase the involvement of religious and traditional leaders in the Covid-19 response.

As a result of the letter, the provincial governments established laboratories for Covid-19 testing. These laboratories are operational in their provinces. The increased capacity for Covid-19 testing in these

communities has reduced death rates and protected the local economy. Moreover, the involvement of church leaders in Covid-19 responses is increasing. For example, the governors specifically requested church leaders to mobilize their congregation in curbing the spread of the pandemic. Additionally, once the government lockdown measures were lifted, one of the governors Tearfund and our partners lobbied, convened all church leaders to discuss the role of religious institutions and expectations of the government in the continuous fight against Covid-19.

The church leaders' and partners' demonstrating good practice and relationship building with strategic decision-makers throughout previous crises, paved the way for their effective advocacy during the Covid-19 response in this nation. This success has also further opened the civil society space for church leaders to collaborate more with the government to benefit their communities.

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