

Sustaining advocacy through the church

during the Covid-19 pandemic



tearfund

Tearfund is a faith-based organisation that envisions and strengthens local churches, denominations and church networks in more than 50 countries – to see communities developed, disasters responded to and governments held accountable.

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(Church and community transformation)

Read the full report here
www.tearfund.org/SATTCreport

Executive summary



Tearfund supports local churches, denominations and church networks globally as a key part of our church and community transformation (CCT) approach. This is born out of our belief in the church's limitless potential to bring change through and in its community.

After taking part in CCT training at Chirambi CCAP Church, Hamitoni Banda became a farmer and small business owner. Here, women from Hamitoni's local church in Salima, central Malawi, harvest ground nuts. **Photo:** Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

New public policies, laws and guidelines that introduced social, economic and political practices designed to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic have had a huge impact on society and the church.

Tearfund believes the church is a place of community, where everyone is welcome and relationships can be formed across social barriers. This makes it possible for Tearfund's church partners who are already mobilising communities to respond more effectively to the pandemic.



Children in Kanjanguite village, Angola, have benefited from training given by UIEA that has improved the community's understanding of HIV prevention and domestic violence. **Photo:** Tom Price-Ecce Opus/Tearfund

In responding to this global health threat, Tearfund's church partners have interwoven advocacy into their CCT approach, demonstrating the distinctive role the church can play in the public policy sphere by speaking up. This paper shows that when local churches, denominations and networks are strengthened with advocacy and social accountability skills and knowledge, they are able to sustain advocacy throughout a pandemic – as demonstrated through illustrative case studies from Tearfund's Covid-19 response.

The paper provides recommendations for Tearfund partners implementing the CCT approach on integrating advocacy as a key ingredient in Covid-19 response, recovery and rebuilding a better society. It also provides recommendations to inspire and challenge the church globally to play its distinctive role in influencing public policy.

The CCT advocacy case studies that inform this paper are predominantly from Christian-majority contexts. As new information and case studies emerge from other contexts where Tearfund works, we will document this learning too.

Learning review findings



The key findings of this learning review are that local churches and denominations who have already been involved in Tearfund CCT advocacy have:

- ➔ modelled compliance with government restrictions during Covid-19
- ➔ adopted innovative digital platforms for their advocacy
- ➔ influenced by having a united voice
- ➔ ensured no one was left behind
- ➔ made best use of existing relationships to strengthen their advocacy
- ➔ used existing relationships to influence governments to provide a humanitarian response meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.



📷 Lotsima Ukumu is the president of Nyamazaz Camp in Democratic Republic of Congo. **Photo:** Arlette Bashizi/Tearfund

Recommendations for churches



The church occupies a distinct space in communities, nations and the world. The reach, breadth and calling of the church mean it has huge potential to support governments in tackling poverty and addressing its underlying causes, which include health care challenges across the globe.

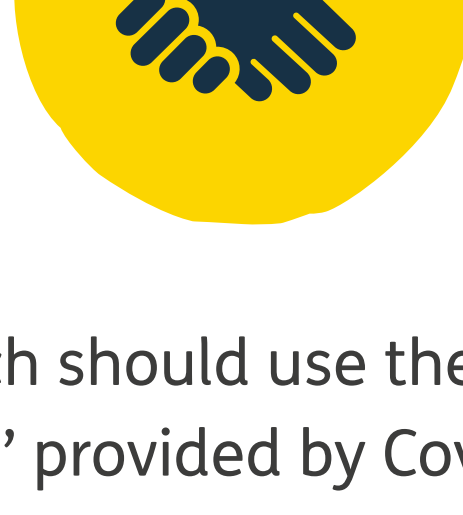
📍 Church leaders and self-help group members outside Shohe Kebele Church. Photo: Aaron Koch/Tearfund

As the world emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, the church can play a critical role through its influence in shaping laws and policies that define social practices and norms in ways that reflect Christ's promise in John 10:10, that people 'may have life, and have it to the full'.

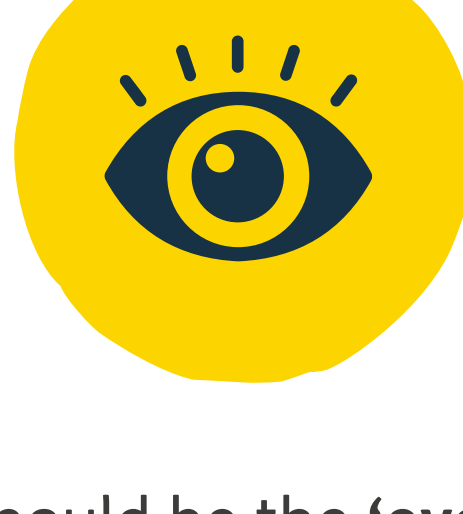


Churches should prepare.

The Covid-19 pandemic caught the world and the church unaware. However, this cannot be an excuse to remain in a state of unpreparedness.



The church should use the 'strategic window' provided by Covid-19 to **strengthen its collective voice in the public sphere**. This is a wake up call for the church to leave its comfort zone and take its rightful position in society.



Churches should be the '**eyes and ears**' of society as governments continue to respond to Covid-19, continuously identifying advocacy issues affecting the most vulnerable.



The church has a golden opportunity to **amplify its voice and influence society to build back better**, embrace social justice and protect people on the margins.



Churches should take advantage of their reach and breadth to **establish and strengthen structural advocacy systems** that inform decision-making at local, national and global levels.



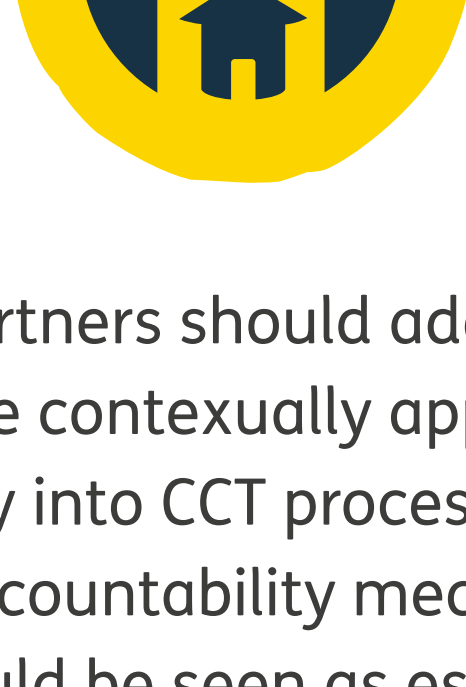
The church must embrace and gain knowledge on advocacy in the **digital space and learn more about digital governance**. As society and government increasingly 'go digital', this opens up great opportunities but also poses risks to freedoms and to inclusion.

Advice for CCT partners

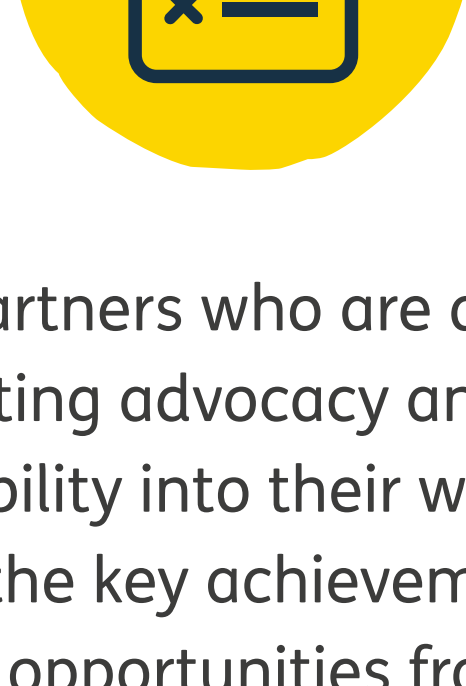


Adapting existing church and community mobilisation advocacy to make it more contextually appropriate by using social accountability tools is a key strategy for scale-up.

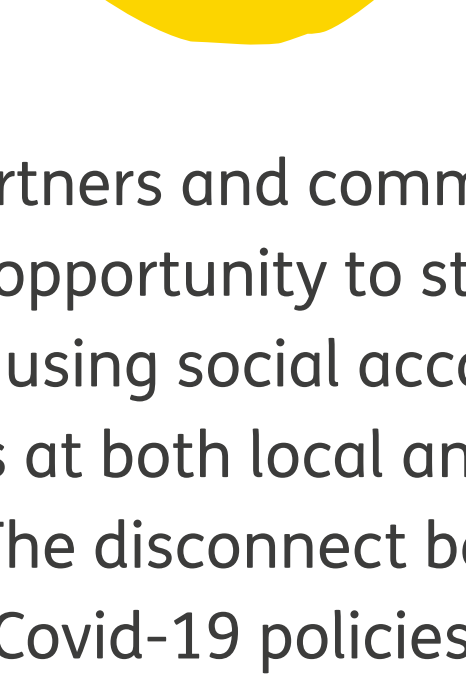
During this pandemic, local churches, denominations and church networks have continued to catalyse their communities to engage in advocacy as part of their Covid-19 response. Drawing learning from different case studies collected globally, here are our advocacy recommendations for partners implementing CCT.



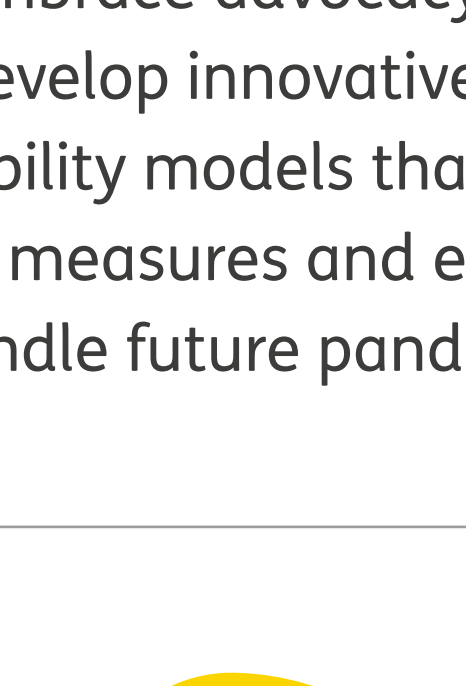
CCT partners should adopt and integrate contextually appropriate advocacy into CCT processes using social accountability mechanisms. This should be seen as essential to enable holistic transformation within communities.



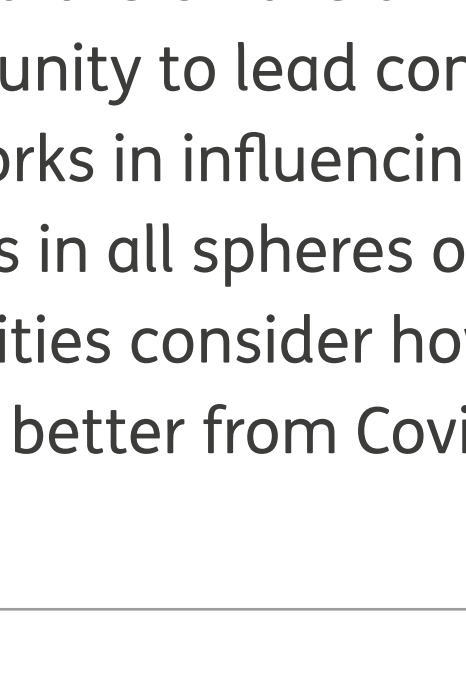
CCT partners who are already integrating advocacy and social accountability into their work should identify the key achievements and missed opportunities from their Covid-19 responses. They should take stock and use their learning to galvanise further advocacy.



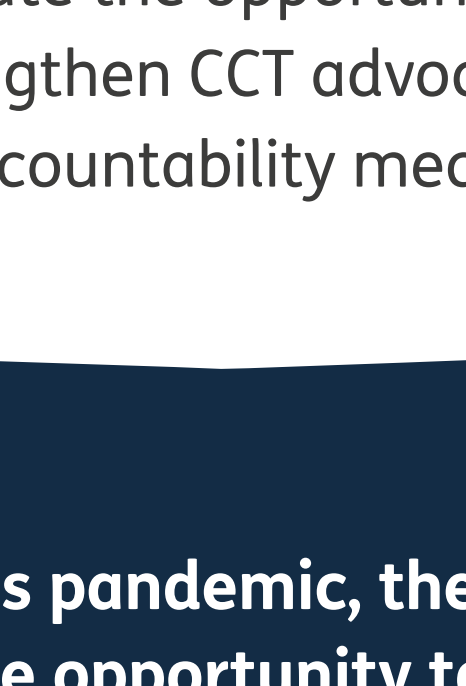
CCT partners and communities have an opportunity to strengthen advocacy using social accountability structures at both local and national level. The disconnect between national Covid-19 policies and laws and the reality of their devastating impact on poorer communities is evident in our case studies.



CCT partners and communities should embrace advocacy research and develop innovative social accountability models that will build resilience measures and equip them to handle future pandemics.



CCT partners have a window of opportunity to lead communities and networks in influencing decision-makers in all spheres of life as communities consider how to build back better from Covid-19.



The illustrative stories in this learning paper, and the wide range of tools that are being developed through Covid-19 responses, demonstrate the opportunity to learn and strengthen CCT advocacy using social accountability mechanisms.

Through this pandemic, the church has a unique opportunity to invest further in communities that have suffered immensely, and to help build back better societies, ensuring that no one is left behind. More specifically for Tearfund, as it focuses on strengthening the CCT approach through Covid-19 lessons, there is a need to equip churches, denominations and networks on integrating advocacy, and providing the relevant tools for that, in existing CCT communities. It also needs to build advocacy capacity in new CCT communities.