

Reasons why the church's involvement in advocacy can be strategic

Church leaders carry influence. National church leaders often have national, and even international, recognition beyond that of Christian NGO leaders which gives them significant clout to influence policies. In fact, the church is "now accepted as a valid and valued actor in shaping national policies" by the international development community. Particularly in parts of the world where the church is strong numerically, such as East Africa and Latin America, church leaders carry significant political influence.

Churches represent large numbers. Churches have the ability to mobilise large numbers of people to pressurise for change, and national church leaders are able to speak out with some credibility, given the number of people they represent.

Churches have a recognised moral voice. In many countries church leaders are recognised as having a legitimate role to speak out on moral issues, and when this is informed by the experiences of church members in grass-roots communities, this can be particularly powerful.

Involvement broadens the vision of the church. Enabling the church to speak out on issues, and influence decision-makers, at a national and international level helps to ensure that church responses to poverty issues are not just at the micro, community level, but are also about addressing structural and political root causes of the issues.

Source: The Role of the Local and National Church in Tearfund's International Work; Tulo Raistrick, 2005