

5. Acting as a mediator and peace-broker

Local churches can act as an important force for reconciliation in a community. The church brings a strong values base and theology that is sympathetic to reconciliation. Admittedly, this isn't always acted upon and churches have been guilty of serious abuses, but generally, there is an underlying ethos towards peace.

Examples

Whilst the facilitators of the reconciliation process in communities in Southern Sudan were outsiders from the New Sudan Council of Churches (sometimes ex-patriates/ sometimes bishops), the local churches owned the process, gave it their support and were often involved in the logistics of the event. By doing so, they gave the process legitimacy and helped it not to be seen as an outside, alien initiative. The presence of external facilitators was however essential – the issues were too sensitive and risky to be handled by those within the communities themselves.

In food delivery during relief times, the local church occasionally acts as a mediator between the relief provider (often the church denomination) and the community, ensuring there is fair distribution of food and challenging any corruption.

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