

SACC CHURCH IN ACTION CAMPAIGN

Solidarity Fund report

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DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT ALLOCATED	AMOUNT SPENT
SACC Church in Action Campaign	R 4 000 000	R 4 000 000

01

CITIZENS IN SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN MANDATE

The Solidarity Fund was created on 23 March 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in South Africa. It is a platform for the general public and civil society – as well as the public and private sectors – to contribute to the consolidated effort to fund various initiatives.

The Citizens in Solidarity (CIS) campaign, which forms part of the Fund's overall communication campaign, aims to lower the spread of COVID-19 by strengthening the Fund's objectives of prevention, detection and care. All South Africans are invited to become Citizens in Solidarity by playing their part in preventing the spread of the virus.

Being a Citizen in Solidarity is easy: a few simple changes in behaviour saves lives. The key message of the campaign is straightforward:

“Wash your hands to protect your neighbours; wear a mask to protect your friends; keep a safe distance to protect your family; and just be kind.”

The CIS campaign helps to mitigate the growing sense of fear, anxiety, mistrust and grief that spread through communities as COVID-19 cases increased. The mandate of the CIS campaign is to leverage networks across key sectors of society to change simple personal behaviours that could significantly spread the rate of infection.

CITIZENS IN SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN: PHASE 1

During the first phase of the campaign, the Solidarity Fund established partnerships and programmes within the following sectors:



- **Business** – through partnering with the Return to Work Campaign, Business for SA (B4SA) and the Public-Private Growth Initiative (PPGI)
- **Traditional leaders** – through the National House of Traditional Leaders
- **Faith leaders** – through the South African Council of Churches and other interfaith leaders
- **Civil society** – through networks in the Eastern Cape hotspot
- **Education** – through a programme supporting school-management teams and school-governing bodies
- **Youth** – through the Six Million in Six Weeks campaign

About the SACC

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) is an established and trusted network with a strong and respected leadership structure. The content partner that was commissioned by the SACC is Heartlines, one of South Africa's best behaviour-change communication specialists. (Dr Garth Japhet was the founder of Soul City and Heartlines.)

Context

At the start of South Africa's lockdown in early 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa had the following to say about the pandemic:

While there is still much about the pandemic that is unknown, experts now agree that the virus will remain a threat to global public health for some time. We must therefore be prepared to continue to live with the coronavirus among us for a year or even more. We will need to adapt to new ways of worshipping, socialising, exercising and meeting that minimise opportunities for the virus to spread.

The SACC convened an emergency meeting of church leaders on 31 March 2020 to consider how the wall-to-wall church infrastructure could best be used for public education and connection with the health system. The meeting also considered how worship practices would have to change in light of associated coronavirus transmission risks.

The Church In Action Campaign was established to ensure that people had the most up-to-date and accurate information needed to stay healthy and stop the coronavirus from spreading.



Speed

Build networks across key sectors before the peak in order to reduce the peak and flatten the curve. All ideas needed to be quickly executed.



Targeted Hotspots

Phase 1 adopted a hotspot strategy where the energy and resources of various sectors of society would be harnessed in the fight against COVID-19. We initially started in the Eastern Cape due to the issues faced in the province at the time, with the intention to expand to Gauteng and KZN.



Resource efficiency

The PMO set up for this campaign has been tasked with ensuring effective delivery of contract requirements to enable maximum reach and impact.



Inclusion

The Fund aimed to reach vulnerable households through a wide variety of partners across civil society, private sector, and government. Partners included faith & traditional leaders, non-governmental organisations, care institutions and partners in business.



Safety

The Fund ensures that its partners adhered to social distancing and safety measures while engaging with citizens on the ground.



Building a large network

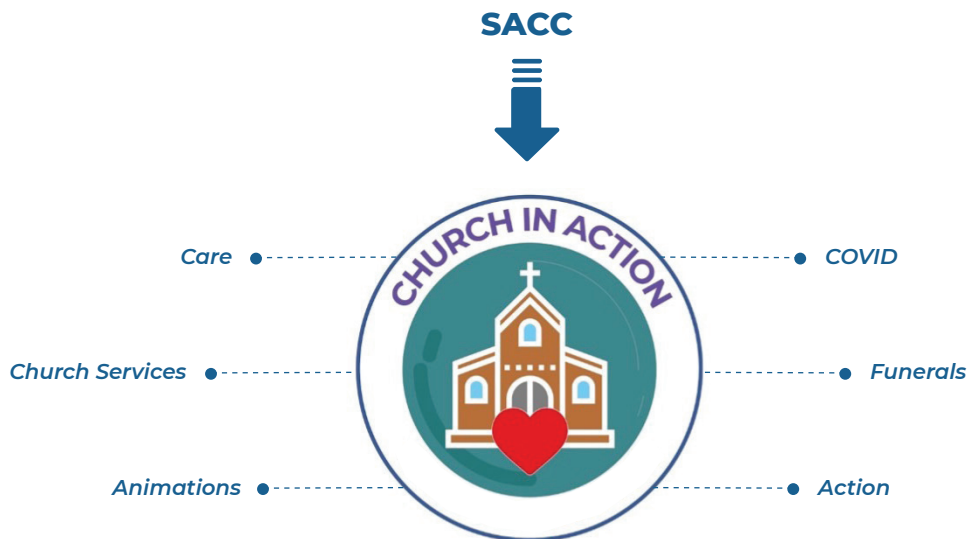
Build a large network of Citizens in Solidarity through harnessing the support of large sectors of society such as business, faith leaders, the youth, education and civil society. Scaffold a campaign with key behaviour change messages and activities.



Objectives

The central objective of the campaign was to produce, distribute and disseminate digital educational content to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The content was designed for user-friendly formats including animations, audio, documentary stories and other media. The content was distributed via WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, and was also housed on the 'Church In Action' website under the following five sections: care, COVID, church services, funerals and action.

Animations, posters and videos were used across the different platforms.



Programme description

COVID communications programme

The SACC and Heartlines set up an effective COVID communications response, disseminating critical information to both church leaders and the public at large. Communication outputs across various platforms included:

- Up-to-date information on the coronavirus and prevention guidelines – both for individuals and for group gatherings, such as church services and funerals
- Advice on care and support of 'the infected and the affected'
- Essential information to help church leaders and the public better manage the psycho-social impact of the epidemic, as well as:
 - Guidelines on mental and spiritual health
 - How to develop support structures
 - Financial management and advice

Community mobilisation through Local Ecumenical Action Networks

In addition to the communications programme, Local Ecumenical Action Networks (LEANs) were set up. These community-level, locally initiated and organised groups were created to provide a response to the particular issues that communities have faced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The groups each consisted of at least 10 local church leaders or organisers. After connecting with one another and registering with the SACC, the LEANs worked to mobilise their local communities to assess and respond to COVID-19-related issues.

Each LEAN represented a specific geographic area (e.g. a village, township, suburb, ward or section thereof). The LEANs' local context informed their activities. Training of LEANs took place across eight districts (35 municipalities) to equip church leaders in the following:

- Better understanding of COVID-19
- Understanding government regulations as they relate to church gatherings and funerals
- Funeral management skills

The LEANs plan focused on four pillars:

- Systems and structures for local organisation and bulk communication: A commitment was made to ensure that communities were well informed through an accurate, timeous and reliable system. Core to this was making sure that people at a local level got the correct information, so as to limit the impact of fake news around the virus. The rules and consequences of lockdown regulations were explained, while also providing encouragement to people.
- Crisis relief: Families were helped to access relief measures, such as food relief, that were available to their community during the lockdown period.
- Advocacy and support for rebuilding lives: Both government and private institution were engaged to help alleviate the plight of the vulnerable, and to extend social protection to people most adversely affected by the pandemic. This included engaging on price hikes and advocating for access to healthcare.
- Pastoral care support: This pillar included dealing with issues such as death, gender-based violence and mental illness.

Programme delivery

COVID communications programme

Content was produced every week over a 26-week period and distributed across the following platforms:



Facebook
@churchinaction



Newsletter
info@churchinaction.org.za



Instagram
church_in_action



WhatsApp
011 241 7800



Website
churchinaction.org.za



Radio
Christian community radio



What was delivered

Summary of content created

TYPE OF CONTENT	BREAKDOWN	TOTAL COMPLETED
Posters	30 x 11 languages: 300 4 in English	304
Videos	English only	13
Animations	6 x 11 languages	66
Audio	Voice notes 6 x 11 languages: 66 Radio inserts 4 x 11 languages: 44	110
Social media post	Facebook: 100 Instagram: 40	140
Newsletters		8

Additional programmes added

Radio

The SACC was able to make budget savings with the Solidarity Fund grant, which enabled the campaign to include both a radio and television programme. A total of 18 community radio stations were identified across South Africa drawing on Heartlines' existing relationships. A series of four inserts were planned per station, conducted by experienced Heartlines facilitators. The following topics were covered on the radio stations:

October: Mental health awareness

- Caring for yourself
- Caring for others

November: Festive season

- Safe socialising
- Living with faith, not fear

Television programme

As another add-on to the Church in Action communications platforms, the SACC decided to increase its reach using television. A 'safe socialising' animation was developed and broadcast on SABC TV 1, 2, 3 and on e-TV over December 2020 and up to 15 January 2021. The SABC also gave the campaign a value-added slot-in addition. The schedule was monitored, and the animation was aired according to the schedule on both platforms. A large number of messages were received on Facebook following the airing of the animation, with people wanting to find out more about the project.

Community mobilisation through Local Ecumenical Action Networks

From the beginning of September 2020 until mid-November, eight districts/metros (covering a total of 35 local municipalities) had an opportunity to receive training.



DISTRICT/METRO	TOTAL NUMBER OF CHURCH LEADERS TRAINED
ALFRED NZO	
Umzimvubu Mt Frere	98
Ntabankulu (Ntabankulu)	
Mbizana	
OR TAMBO	
King Sabata Dalindyebo	244
Mhlontlo	
Nyandeni	
Port St Johns	
Ingquza Hill	
JOE GQABI	
Walter Sisulu	92
(Aliwal North)	
Senqu	
(Barkley East / Lady Grey)	
Elundini	
(Maclear)	
CHRIS HANI	
Sakhisizwe (Cala/Elliot)	249
Engcobo	
(Engcobo)	
Intsika Yethu	
Emalahleni and Enoch Mgijima (Queenstown)	
Inxuba Yethemba (Cradock)	
SARA BAARTMAN	
Makana	162
Ndlambe (Port Alfred)	
Sundays River (Kirkwood)	
Blue Crane (Somerset East)	
Kouga (Humansdorp)	
Somerset East	
Dr Beyers Naude	

DISTRICT/METRO	TOTAL NUMBER OF CHURCH LEADERS TRAINED
NELSON MANDELA METRO (PART 2)	
Port Elizabeth	120
BCM METRO (PART 2)	
King Williamstown/ East London	96
ADM (PART 2)	
Mbhashe (Idutywa)	201
Mnquma (Butterworth)	
Great Kei (Qumra)	
Amahlathi	
Raymond Mhlaba	
Ngqushwa	

Targets and reach

Facebook

The metrics used to assess performance were:

- Total number of page followers (which is remarkably like total number of page likes)
- Total reach (number of people who saw the post)
- Total page views
- Post engagements (determined by the number of likes, comments, and shares per post)

Top-performing content

Posts featuring scriptures, mental-health-related advice and resources, and also COVID-19-related advice all performed well. Content related to gender-based violence (GBV) saw high engagement due to its controversial nature.

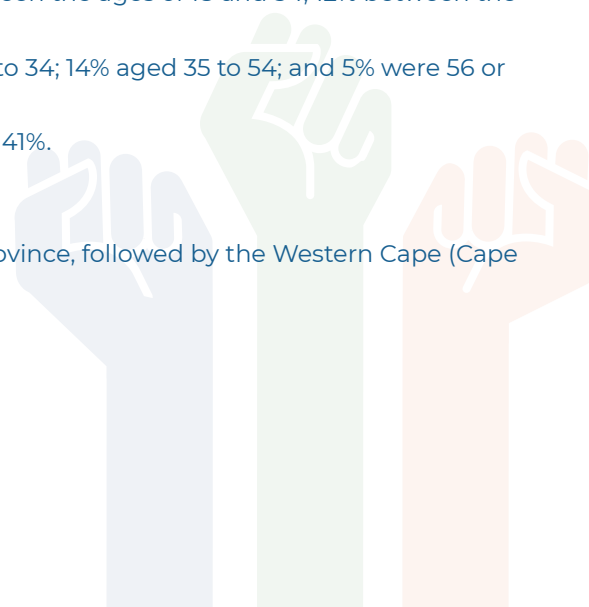
Audience demographics

Age and gender:

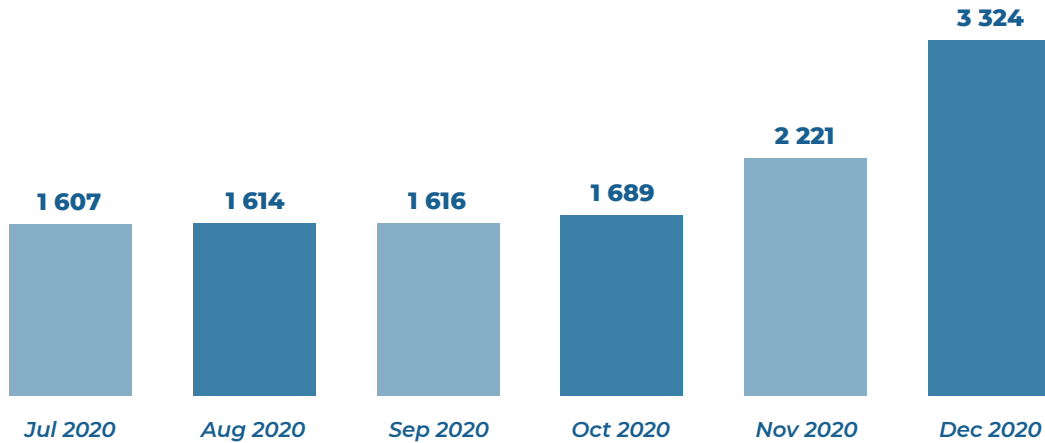
- Women: 35% percent of this audience were between the ages of 18 and 34; 12% between the ages of 35 and 54; and 6% were 56 or older.
- Men: 36% percent of this audience were aged 18 to 34; 14% aged 35 to 54; and 5% were 56 or older.
- Women made up 59% of the audience, and men 41%.

Location:

- The majority of followers were in the Gauteng province, followed by the Western Cape (Cape Town specifically) and KwaZulu-Natal.



Number of followers at beginning of the month



Total Page Followers: 3,925



Church In Action
September 21 · 🌐

Dealing with death in a time of Covid
What are the guidelines on how to organise a funeral?

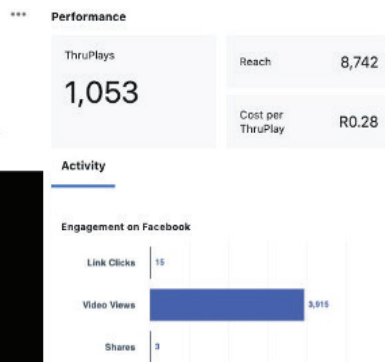
Watch the video and let the Bishop answer your questions
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USzj5D9cEVk>

Click on the link below to download a helpful funeral guide for families an... [See More](#)

Resume Video
Send WhatsApp Message
WhatsApp

WHATSAAPP
What are the guidelines on how to organise a... [Send WhatsApp Message](#)

13 · 11 Shares



Date: 21 September 2020
Reach: 8,742 people

Heartlines
August 22 · 🌐

Meet Sam and learn how to keep yourself, your friends and family safe during #Coronavirus

Click the link to download and participate in ten languages:
<https://bit.ly/2C3Gpw1>

🔗 See original · Rate this translation

Ukubaluleka kokuhlala siqelelene
02:12

5,922 People Reached
242 Engagements [Boost Post](#)

👍❤️👍 17 · 1 Comment · 3 Shares

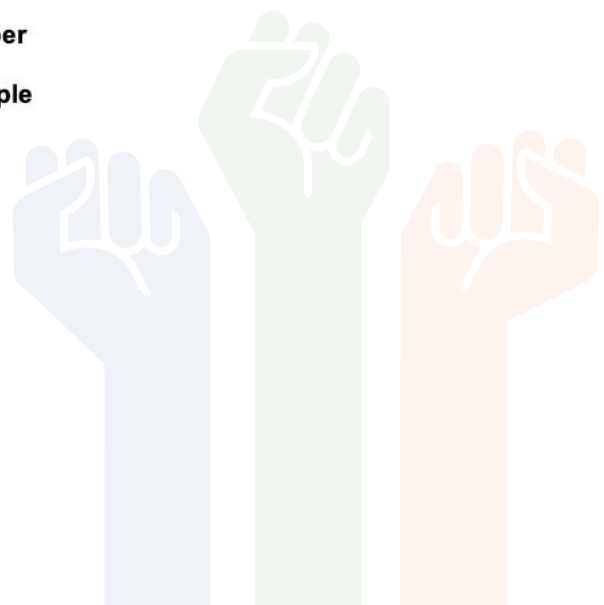
👍 Like · 💬 Comment · ➦ Share · 🌐

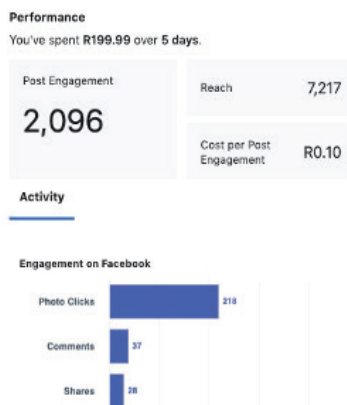
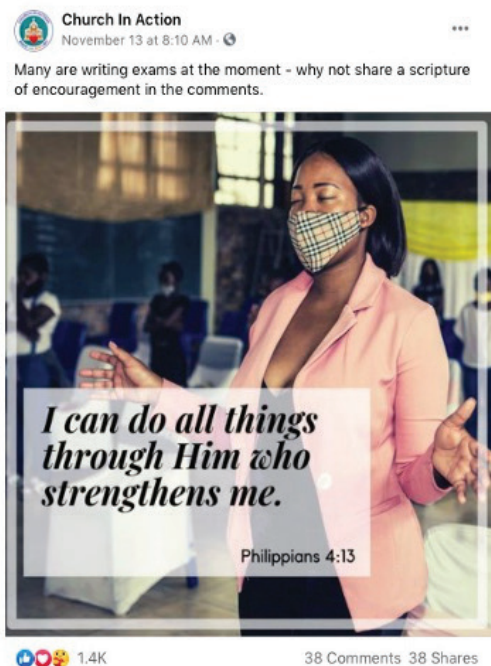
Most Relevant

[Comment as Heartlines](#)

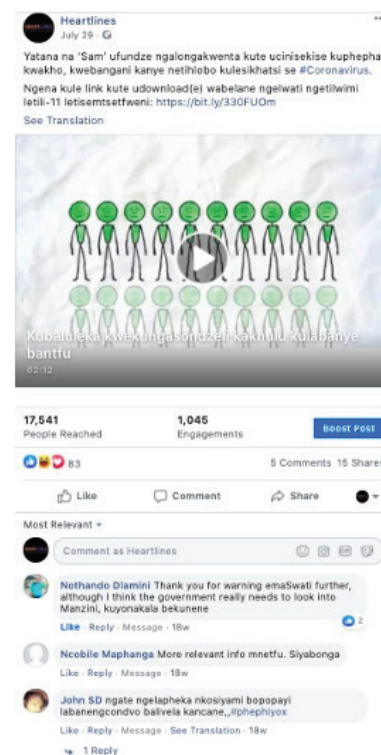
Bheksta Dadeejay Bkz Woow this I like this... The creativity is lit on this 🙌🙌🙌

Like · Reply · Message · 14w · 1





Date: 13 November 2020
Reach: 7.217



Instagram

Interest in content

One of the measurement metrics that Instagram uses is the 'bookmark' function. This allows the user to save posts as a reference to return to at a later stage, and indicates a strong interest in the content. As with Facebook, mental-health-related content performed especially well in this sense. Only the author of the content can see the number of times that content has been bookmarked and it is completely anonymous. This also makes it a good way to gauge interest in topics that may have stigma attached to them.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF POSTS	TOTAL BOOKMARKS
Mental-health-related content	4	98
Exam-related content	5	67
GBV-related content	2	12
Scriptures and prayers	5	63
COVID-19-related content	4	9



Top-performing content

The number of follows and bookmarks indicate true engagement with the content. Two posts on mental health were bookmarked 39 and 32 times respectively. The two studying and exam tips posts led to many new followers for the Church in Action Instagram account (130 and 129, respectively).

Audience demographics

Age and gender:

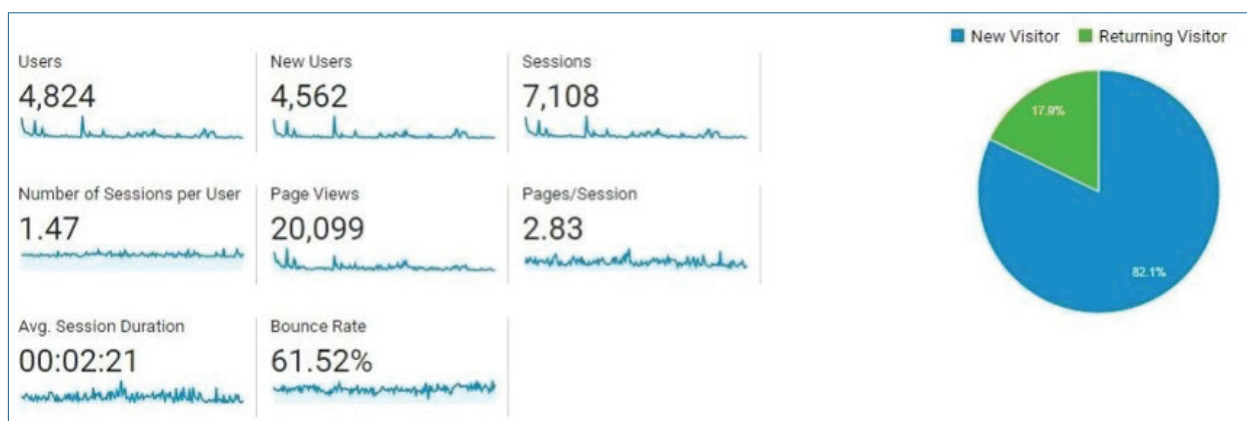
- 37% were aged 25 to 34, and 30% were between 18 and 24 years old.
- 59% were women, and 41% were men.

Location:

- 18% were in Johannesburg;
- 13% were in Pretoria;
- 7.6% were in Durban;
- 6.8% were in Cape Town; and
- 3% were in Polokwane.



Website



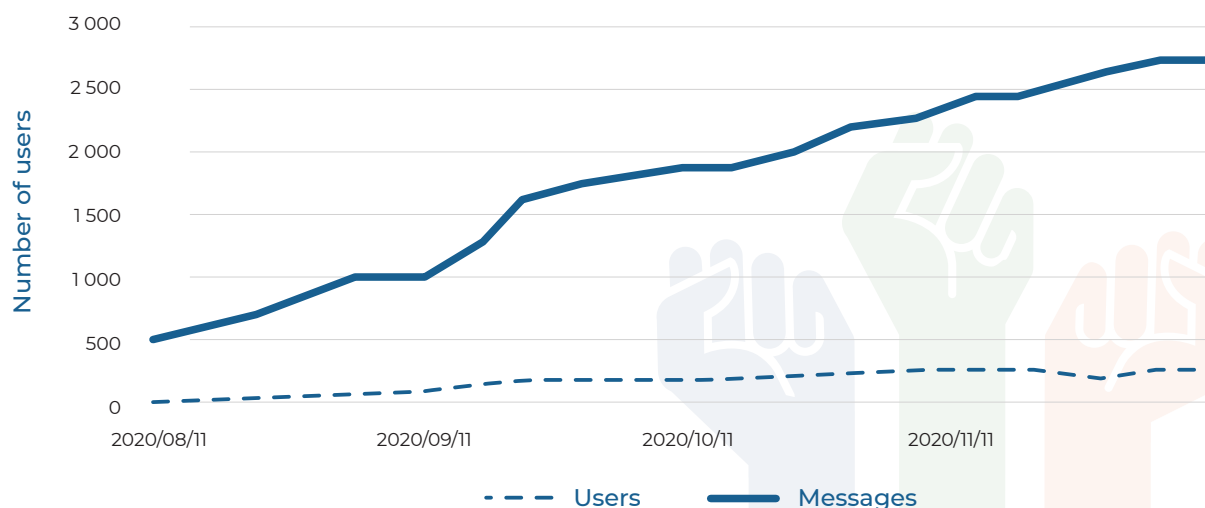
The content on COVID-19 prevention was particularly popular, especially the animated content. For instance, 'Meet Sam: The importance of physical distancing', was downloaded 1 600 times. Other findings included:

- Resources that are uniquely positioned to the needs of church leaders saw the highest number of downloads on the website.
- The funeral guides had been downloaded 1 297 times.
- Church in Action received an African Christian media award for the website.

Newsletter

A large database of church leaders was developed through the SACC and Heartlines networks, and a newsletter was distributed to this database. The newsletter contained links to the resources available on the website, as well as videos and quizzes. It proved a successful and popular way to disseminate information. The development of a dedicated database for the Church in Action project is currently underway, with a series of advertisements being run on social media to collect sign-ups. SACC switched from weekly to bi-weekly newsletters to reduce potential audience fatigue.

WhatsApp



The most popular content on the WhatsApp platform was the church services and funeral content, which showed that the focus on church leaders and pastoral care had been well received.

While there were challenges in sending out updates, four updates were posted in October to promote the latest content on the various platforms. This was well received, and to date, there have been 90 sign-ups on the platform.

LEANs

- The LEANs galvanised the communities in which they were formed, prompting local people to find local solutions in their unity. This activated a spirit of community that cannot be measured.
- The SACC shared information with these LEANs in a way that informed them, equipped them and gave them confidence in how the church responded to COVID-19 as the information situation demanded.
- The LEANs initiated crisis-relief interventions that included food security, health access, education-crisis intervention and resources to mitigate GBV. They also facilitated the national food voucher programme. The SACC, with the Solidarity Fund, gave food vouchers to close to 30 000 households nationally.
- Some of the LEANs – depending on whether advocacy demanded a district, provincial or national support – would engage the relevant structures within the SACC to assist with advocacy.
- The LEANs, especially in the Eastern Cape, became essential in efforts to promote behavioural change, particularly regarding funerals. This had become urgent in the context of the second wave.

Summary of the impact of the campaign and reach

In South Africa, the institution of the church represents the largest community-based structure. The church interacts with millions of South Africans on a regular basis, in communities across the country. Central to its faith mandate is providing care and support for the poor and vulnerable. This extends beyond the Christian faith.

Many church leaders and their congregations have been instrumental in responding to these challenges, but needed information specific to their contexts, including how to conduct funerals, weddings and church services amid lockdown regulations, as well as general prevention and care information. This is the role that the Church in Action initiative has filled – and intends to continue to fill.



CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS

The key challenge faced during content development was the changing nature of the pandemic. When the lockdown levels and regulations changed, the content had to be revised. In some cases, scheduled content also had to be changed or moved. While this posed a challenge initially, the campaign subsequently shifted to a more flexible content calendar that could respond to arising needs, rather than rigidly sticking to an initial content plan.

An example was the move to lockdown Level 1, when subsequent changes in regulations meant that the funeral and church services content had to be revised, re-designed and translated. As updating the content became a priority, the release of the mental health posters had to be postponed from September to October. However, this delay proved advantageous, as it meant that the delayed content could align with World Mental Health Month in October. This was a highly effective way to market the material.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp had been a challenging platform for the campaign. The SACC used a programme developed by Praekelt called turn.io. This platform was also used by the National Department of Health when it set up its official WhatsApp help service.

The main barrier had been the functionality of the platform itself. When the decision was made to use the platform, the core intention was to be able to send updates directly to users. WhatsApp's functionality doesn't allow for messages to be sent to users without them actively opting in. This is to prevent people using WhatsApp to send bulk advertising messages. The platform we used to run the WhatsApp campaign initially resolved this by having users opt in, which resulted in over 300 sign-ups. However, in October, the functionality changed, which necessitated again asking users to opt in to receive updates by responding to a message. This meant that the 300 sign-ups were not able to be registered on the platform, and the subscriber list had to be established anew.

We have struggled to obtain approval for our updates, which meant that many of the update messages were rejected due to the strict requirements of the platform. The functionality of using key words to prompt content was another barrier, as many users were (and are still) unfamiliar with this way of receiving information on WhatsApp. Therefore our drop-off rate was high.

Digital marketing

Church in Action has a unique demographic, and we struggled to find a digital marketing company that was able to cover Christian leaders, congregants and the public. We initially used external service providers, but it became clear that the strategy needed to be more integrated. This was also partly because we produced all the content ourselves and would then hand over the completed content to someone else to market. This isn't usually how marketing agencies work. They are used to, or prefer, being involved from the concept stage, as it is easier to market content that they helped to develop from the beginning.



This led us to review our digital marketing strategy at the end of September. We decided that content development and digital marketing cannot be separated into two separate strategies. We therefore decided that rather than employing a separate service provider, we would bring a digital marketing specialist into our own team. By integrating content development with our digital marketing strategy, we were able to find greater synergy between the two and align our messaging effectively across all platforms. This was reflected in the analytics, which improved following this decision.

Further to that, we went beyond digital marketing and added traditional media to the marketing strategy. This included radio programming in October and November, and television in December with our last animation for the project. This resulted in us exceeding our deliverables and expectations for the grant period.

Facebook and Instagram

Being able to promote Instagram posts is key to their success. In some cases, Instagram did not allow promotion. The first reason for this was that the content violated its promotional rules. This outcome was appealed, and promotion was allowed. In another instance, video was deemed to be of insufficient quality. We learnt that going forward, we needed to allow time for posts to be approved in our calendar, and we also provided guidelines when asking people to record their own content.

We encountered similar issues with boosting content on Facebook. We had to learn which words violated Facebook's rules (this meant excluding words such as 'you' and 'yours', for example) to allow for the promotion of the posts.

Website

As part of the Church In Action funding from the Solidarity Fund, the SACC corporate website underwent a much-needed revamp, with a new aesthetic, updated content and a more modern and engaging user experience.

The focus of the revamp was to clearly communicate who the SACC is, what we do, and to detail our activities and initiatives. Improving and updating the SACC corporate website was a three-month process, and required a lot of detailed work by the communications team and the service provider who developed the new website.

We are proud that the digital face of the SACC, the foundation of all our initiatives, is now what it should be. The website will be a public platform where people can access the latest information about the SACC and keep up with SACC initiatives, the events calendar and news. The website now also clearly includes, promotes and links to the Church In Action website. It also includes the Solidarity Fund logo and acknowledgement in the footer of the website. The website officially launched on 15 December 2020.



LEANs

The church had not yet fully developed the habit of working together beyond the framework of a fellowship that was limited to fraternal relations. These were not fit for purpose, and setting up the LEANs proved a challenge. This included a limited conceptualisation of working together at the local level.

Organising people around these structures was already challenging. This was compounded by the reliance on a developing technology, and having to on-board people onto the technology. Limitations related to structural functioning within local communities posed a risk of delaying the work, as we needed full and legitimate support at the local level to ensure an optimal response among the relevant local church structures, which in turn faced their own limitations.

Another hurdle was having to overcome resistance to data collection; for instance, the contact details of members. This created a challenge in providing people with direct access to information.

Over time, fatigue led to a decrease in energy and enthusiasm, and keeping people interested and engaged proved difficult.

There is a need to build and develop local capacity for people to take into their hands the development of their local community, which in turn will help to spur development at the national level.

