

Advocacy toolkit case studies

RESEARCHING THE ENVIRONMENT IN SUDAN

THEME: Environment

ADVOCACY APPROACH: Research and analysis

A Tearfund report, based on experience of working in Darfur, researched and analysed the environmental context there. Through systematically asking questions and identifying where there were common findings, they were able to work out the things that would most practically help the relief effort and reduce the chances of further environmental degradation there in the future.

The analysis recommended systematic environmental assessments, promotion of alternative energy and construction technologies, and improved resilience in the face of drought, in order to mitigate damage to the environment for future generations. As a result, the report's message was clear: more sustainable use of natural resources would help deal with poverty and also reduce the chances of further conflict in regions such as Darfur. The report received widespread coverage and had a substantial impact on the international community's response in Darfur, such that all agencies, whether UN or INGO, began competing to be seen as the most environmentally sustainable in their work.

Later, the UN work plan for Darfur went on to feature the environment as a key theme. The UN Under-Secretary-General – as a result of the in-country research – endorsed the call from humanitarian agencies for the Sudanese government and civil leaders to take action concerning the significant effect the conflict was having on the environment, particularly forest cover and water resources, through impacts such as massive displacement. Tearfund, as the author, was credited for promoting an integrated holistic approach, far broader than a traditional disaster response, as it addressed a range of complex issues including livelihoods, conflict, political instability and environmental sustainability.