

Advocacy case studies

Preventing an environmental disaster in Brazil

Country:

Brazil

Themes:

Environmental sustainability

Advocacy approaches:

Mobilising people and campaigning; government officials: lobbying; social contracts and social accountability

In the major city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is an important green haven called the Camboatá forest. It is home to over 200,000 trees and hundreds of species of fauna. When Rio de Janeiro's city government announced their plans to destroy this forest to build a race course, Tearfund's partner, We in Creation Rio de Janeiro, joined the SOS Camboatá Forest Movement to prevent this environmental disaster. The SOS Camboatá Forest Movement is an organized civil society initiative, integrating residents from the surroundings of the Camboatá Forest, social and community leaders, and professionals in the areas of urbanism, education, economics and the environment.

This movement gathered 30,000 signatures in their petition online against the forest's destruction. This petition clearly showed policymakers that the community wanted to save this forest. When the race course's construction workers tried to begin demolition ahead of the project's approval by the city's government, the movement also organised a protest with dozens of people at the entrance of the forest to promote respect for the community's voice and uphold the government's decision making process.

Finally, the movement took hold of an opportunity to influence key policymakers to prevent environmental damage to the forest, when local elections happened in the midst of the campaign. The movement lobbied all of the candidates to address this issue in their election campaigns. When the city's new mayor was elected, leaders of the movement met with him. At first, he was reluctant to keep his election campaign's promise of protecting the forest. However, when the movement leaders suggested a different location for the race course, the mayor agreed to prevent the destruction of the forest.

The Camboata forest is now safe and is being preserved as a conservation unit. While this campaign was successful, We in Creation National are continuing to monitor environmental concerns in the rest of Brazil.

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