# WHY ADVOCATE ON WASTE AND A CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

**'When I pick up a plastic bottle from off the street I know that it means it's not clogging up the river and so not causing flooding.'**

FEMALE ACTIVIST FROM SELETA

tearfund

## Why advocate on waste and a circular economy?

Written by Julia Kendal

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Further resources on waste and the circular economy are available at: www.tearfund.org/circular

# WHY ADVOCATE ON WASTE AND A CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

## Contents

# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| **Circular economy** | An economy that keeps resources in use for as long as possible. Products are designed to last longer and, at the end of their life, to be repaired or safely taken apart so the resources can be reused. |
| **Climate change** | The climatic changes caused by the rise in the earth's global temperature due to human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels. |
| **Fossil fuels** | Fuels such as coal, oil and gas formed from the mineralised or otherwise preserved remains of dead plants and animals over many years. |
| **Greenhouse gases** | Gases, including carbon dioxide and methane, which cause climate change. |
| **Informal economy** | The part of the economy that is not taxed or monitored by any form of government. Activities in the informal economy are therefore not included in national statistics about countries. |
| **Lobbying** | Direct contact with decision-makers. It is about dialogue and ongoing conversation with the main aim of influencing decision-makers to bring about changes in laws, policies and practices. |
| **Methane gas** | A powerful greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. |
| **Pollution** | The introduction of something (a pollutant) that harms the environment e.g chemicals, noise, light. |
| **Remanufacturing** | Rebuilding a product to its original standard, using a combination of reused, repaired and new parts. |
| **Resource efficiency** | Using the earth's limited resources as well as possible by doing more with fewer resources, and reducing any associated damage to the environment. |
| **Social protection** | Policies and programmes designed to reduce to reduce poverty and vulnerability to risks such as unemployment or sickness. |
| **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** | The 17 goals agreed by 193 governments in 2015 with the aim of ending poverty and protecting the planet. |

# Introduction

Our current approach to resources is creating mountains of waste, which is killing people and the planet. Poor management of resources is harming some of the most vulnerable communities in both low-income and middle-income countries. Every year around nine million people die of diseases linked to badly managed waste and pollutants; that's 20 times more than die of malaria.

This waste could instead be re-used or eliminated; this would improve health, create jobs and be better for the environment. This guide is for organisations working with communities and in locations that are experiencing the impacts of this wasteful approach through damage to people's health or the local environment. Tearfund believes that a transition to a circular economy can play a major part in tackling poverty and reducing our impact on the planet. Advocacy, alongside other tactics, can be a crucial tool in improving health, jobs and the environment.

This short guide looks at:

- why we should advocate on waste and a circular economy, focusing in particular on the impacts on the poorest communities and the biblical mandate for this work (Section 1)
- ways to advocate on waste and a circular economy at a national or local level, through the church and local communities (Section 2)
- further resources and contacts to help you integrate this topic into your work (Section 3)

Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund

# SECTION 1 Why advocate on waste and a circular economy?

## 1.1 What is the problem?

**'We live in the dirt and the rubbish.'**

AHED AL KHALED (AGED 10), LEBANON

Mountains of waste are harming some of the most vulnerable communities in both low-income and middle-income countries. Informal settlements are often choked with waste, and frequently grow up around dump sites due to a lack of alternatives. People in these settlements are already living in poverty, and air, soil and water pollution resulting from the waste that surrounds them increases their risk of disease and sometimes death.

This problem is driven by the way that waste and resources are currently managed. At present many products (and their packaging) are made to be used for only a short time and then discarded. When they are thrown away they waste valuable resources and harm people's health, the planet and future generations.

David Cavan/Tearfund

### Harm to health

Around nine million people die every year of diseases linked to the mismanagement of waste and pollutants. That is six times as many as die from AIDS-related illnesses, and 20 times more than die from malaria each year.[1] One cause of illness is that people living or working around waste inhale the methane gas released by rotting waste, which can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and headaches. In severe cases, it can cause breathing and heart complications.

1 UNEP (2015) *Pollution is the largest cause of death in the world*, UNEP SDG fact sheet, available at www.gahp.net/new/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/UNEP_SDG_FactSheet_March13_2015.pdf; Malaria mortality figures from World Health Organisation *Number of malaria deaths* www.who.int/gho/malaria/epidemic/deaths/en

Another cause of illness is waste electronic equipment (e-waste). This is one of the fastest-growing types of waste seen. Most e-waste recycling takes place in low-income and middle-income countries, in particular in informal waste sites and slums. E-waste contains harmful substances such as lead and mercury which can, for example, affect fertility and child development, and increase the risk of cancer. In India, almost all e-waste is dealt with by informal waste pickers who do not have equipment or training to protect them from the health risks.[2]

## Harm to the planet

When the environment is damaged and the climate is changed, people living in poverty usually suffer first and the most. Climate change makes rainfall unpredictable and floods and droughts more likely. This makes food supplies more unreliable, increases the spread of diseases such as malaria and dengue fever, and creates conflict over scarce resources such as water. People already living in poverty are most at risk of change and damage to the environment.

Bill Crooks/Mosaic Creative

Every time we throw a product away, we are also throwing away all the materials and resources used to create it. Depending on the product, the resource use can be huge; for example, it takes 2,900 gallons of water to make one pair of jeans. Manufacturing often releases many pollutants; when a product is thrown away, a replacement is made which releases even more pollutants.

Throwing items away also contributes to climate change in two ways:

- Waste in landfill and dump sites releases greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.
- New products are made from new materials; this uses more energy. If that energy is from fossil fuels, then more greenhouse gases are produced.

## Harm to future generations

Our current rate of resource use cannot continue forever. Ideally, we would use resources no faster than they are replenished. However, we are using resources faster than the earth can replenish them. It is future generations who will bear this cost because the resources we use now will not be available to them in the future.

For example, mobile phones contain up to 60 metal elements (such as copper) which are critical to make them work. We are using so much of some of these metal elements that they are becoming harder and more expensive to mine. For many of the elements, there is no good alternative available that can fulfil the same role. Disposing of products such as mobile phones instead of recovering their parts deprives future generations of important resources.

Mobile phones also contain a metal called coltan; control of coltan supplies has been directly linked with conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Reducing stress on resources could also reduce the risk of conflict in the future.

**'The challenges associated with preventing, managing and resolving natural resource-induced conflicts may well come to define global peace and security in the 21st century.'**

THE EU-UN PARTNERSHIP ON LAND, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

2 Annamalai J (2015) 'Occupational health hazards related to informal recycling of E-waste in India: an overview', *Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* Jan-Apr; 19(1) pp 61-65

## 1.2 A wasted opportunity – what is the alternative?

**'Grow now, clean up later really doesn't work.'**

MUTHUKUMARA MANI, SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMIST AT THE WORLD BANK

The disposable approach to products is linear and particularly harmful to people living in poverty. A circular economy, however, can be a solution to these problems and an opportunity for people to lift themselves out of poverty.

A circular economy keeps resources in use for as long as possible, creating jobs because it needs more labour. Products are designed with this in mind – they are made to last longer and, at the end of their life, to be repaired or safely taken apart so the resources can be reused. This is how nature itself works. Nothing is wasted; when an organism reaches the end of its life, it provides food for another part of the system.

CASE STUDY

### Rural farmers use animal waste to improve incomes

In Brazil, the NGO Diaconia helped small-scale farmers to access the technology needed to convert animal waste into cooking gas and nutrient-rich fertiliser. This improves their incomes because they spend less on cooking gas, and the fertiliser improves the output from their farms. Ordinarily the animal waste would break down and emit methane (a powerful greenhouse gas contributing to climate change) so this is also better for the environment.

Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund

### A different development pathway

Informal circular economies often exist in both low-income and middle-income countries. Resources, including waste, are comparatively valuable. This means that people can earn an income from, for example, repairing or recycling waste items.

However, as countries develop there can be less of an incentive to make the most of every resource. The economy becomes more linear and more wasteful; this is particularly bad for people in poverty.

It doesn't have to be this way. Many big businesses have begun to embrace the circular economy because it saves money to use less resources and energy. The opportunities for development and to empower people in poverty are even greater:

**MORE AND BETTER JOBS:** a quarter of people currently living in extreme poverty are either unemployed or working in low-quality, dangerous employment.[3] The poorest are often already involved in informal waste collection and recycling. Formalising this informal circular economy can improve their incomes and fix their often hazardous working conditions. The circular economy also creates more jobs because it needs more labour, often in highly skilled jobs such as remanufacturing, repair and high-tech recycling.

**BETTER HEALTH:** better management of waste will improve the health of the millions of people living and working around it. Recycling, repairing and deconstructing products will no longer be hazardous, and less waste will be left to contaminate the soil and groundwater.

**BETTER ENVIRONMENT:** a circular economy eliminates waste from the system. Biological resources break down and return to the environment; non-biological resources remain in use. This means fewer resources and less energy are used overall. For example, one tonne of ore from a gold mine produces around five grams of gold. One tonne of discarded mobile phones can give up to 150 grams of gold. Keeping valuable resources in the system means that we can do more with what we have.

**LESS RISK OF CONFLICT:** when resources are better managed they are less scarce; this reduces the risk of conflict over freshwater, land and other resources.

The circular economy offers a different development pathway for low-income and middle-income countries from the traditional linear one. Managing waste better could start a positive cycle of more jobs and less pollution, which also means better health and a better environment for people living in poverty.

## Communities putting the circular economy into practice

### Better sanitation in urban slums

Sanergy installs good quality, low-cost toilets in schools, residential compounds and public locations in urban slums in Nairobi, Kenya. The toilets are managed by local franchise owners, who make sure that the waste is removed regularly, safely and professionally. The waste is turned into high quality fertiliser and renewable energy. Sanergy has created more than 800 jobs in the community, with the over 700 toilets now serving more than 30,000 users every day and creating a cleaner and safer environment.


Sanergy

### Organising into cooperatives

Waste pickers play an important part in sorting waste, but are often working in hazardous conditions, poorly paid and in some cases marginalised by society or persecuted by governments. Organising themselves into recycling cooperatives means that their work is formalised and they gain access to social protection, better working conditions and better pay. In 2012, a group of waste pickers in Brazil began the Recyclers Association Jaraguaense Valley Itapocu. The association now helps 100 people from 20 families to earn a decent wage whilst reducing the amount of waste going to landfill by sorting waste from the local municipality and other smaller local groups to sell to companies that process recyclables.

3 The remaining three quarters are either not of working age, economically inactive (for example, looking after children) or in formal employment. International Labour Organisation (2016) *World Employment Social Outlook 2016*, Geneva

## 1.3 What does the Bible say?

Joe Perini/Tearfund

Wise management of God's earth and care for his creation have a strong biblical foundation:

**DIGNITY AND RESPECT:** all people are made in the image of God (Genesis 1-2). Through creating better jobs and recognising the important role of waste pickers and other low-skilled labourers, the circular economy provides opportunities to affirm the dignity of people as they are made in the image of God. Better working and living conditions enable human flourishing.

**STEWARDSHIP:** creation is a gift from God. God commanded Adam and Eve to care for creation. Being given 'dominion' over creation by God means that we have a job to do – to serve creation and to keep it well. (Genesis 1-2) Being made in God's image means that we should rule as he would – protecting and preserving it faithfully.

**JUBILEE AND POVERTY:** 'there need be no poor people among you' (Deuteronomy 15:4) when jubilee principles are applied. These principles emphasise:

- **fair allocation of wealth:** human welfare should not be less important than the economy. Wealth should be allocated fairly. God told Moses, 'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers'. (Leviticus 25:23-24) Similarly, in the early church there were no needs left unmet in the community. (Acts 4) This also goes beyond the church community or God's people, as explained below.
- **environmental restoration:** each jubilee year was also a sabbath year – a time of 'solemn rest for the land'. (Leviticus 25:4 ESV) The land, and by extension the rest of natural creation, belongs to all of us and ultimately to God. (Leviticus 25:23; Psalm 24:1) Wasting resources works the land too hard; the circular economy recognises and respects its limits.

**JUSTICE:** God loves justice. The 'cry of the oppressed' reached his ears, and he liberated his people from Egypt. (Exodus 3:7-8) Jesus identified with the poor in his mission statement (Luke 4:16-21) and illustrated this in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37)

**THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH:** God's people are called to be 'salt and light'. (Matthew 5:13-16) This involves demonstrating a society built on God's kingdom values and calling prophetically for change. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5; Luke 6) make clear that this involves speaking out

against injustice and offering hope for the future through alternative solutions, in line with the Old Testament prophets.

**Further information**

For further information, see Tearfund's resources on the church and advocacy:

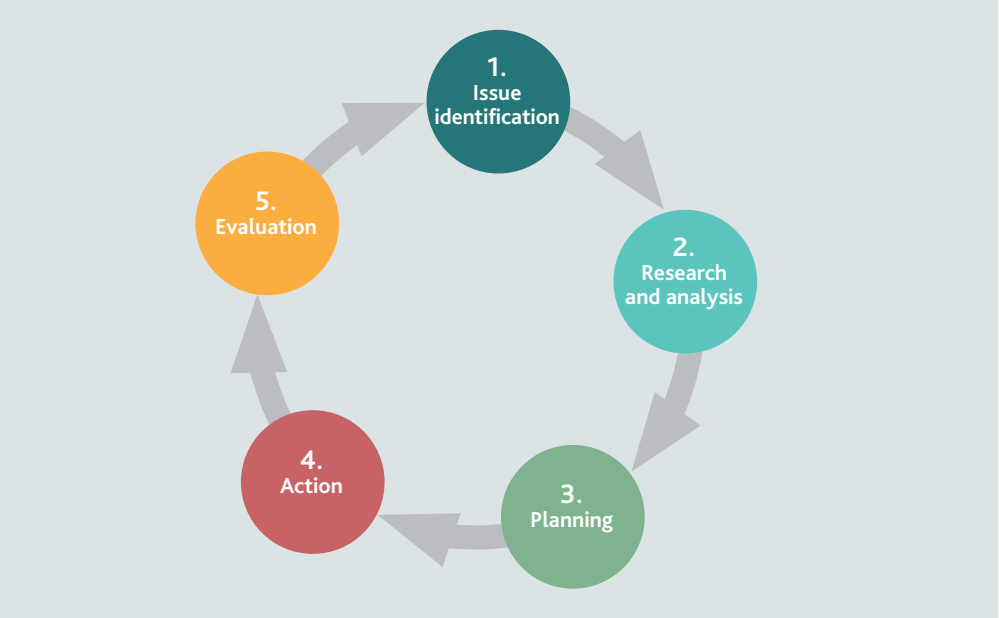
- www.tearfund.org/churchadvocacy

## 1.4 What is advocacy?

There is no single definition of advocacy, but Tearfund describes it as: 'influencing the decisions, policies and practices of the powerful, in order to address the underlying causes of poverty, bring justice and support good development.'

Advocacy is rooted in God's commitment to justice. The story of salvation, which is at the heart of the Bible, is about 'putting things right' and restoring them to how God wants them to be. Advocacy is part of this 'putting things right'.

**The advocacy cycle**




Advocacy is about having ongoing conversations to bring about change. It can be for, with and by people, and take place at all levels of decision-making. It can often be collaborative; decision-makers can be aware of a problem and welcome the chance to work with others to resolve it. Advocacy is therefore not necessarily confrontational. It can complement other development approaches and achieve long-term change because it:

- identifies and tackles the root causes of poverty and injustice, as well as the consequences and impacts
- empowers people to become their own agents of change in their communities
- can influence the powerful. It holds them to account and can change power structures and unjust practices and systems.
- can generate more resources for other areas of work

The kind of advocacy work undertaken will always be informed by the cultural context. Advocacy can involve:

**DIRECT CONTACT WITH DECISION-MAKERS (sometimes called lobbying):** engaging in dialogue with decision-makers, through for example sending a position paper or arranging a visit or public meeting. Depending on the context, these could be national or local government officials, business leaders, Members of Parliament, or village elders/chiefs. (See section G1 of the Advocacy Toolkit for information.)

**MOBILISING THE PUBLIC (sometimes called campaigning):** this goes beyond awareness-raising to mobilising large numbers of individuals in mass actions to influence or increase pressure on decision-makers to bring about the desired change. Examples include: letter-writing, petitions and internet campaigns, street marches and demonstrations. (See section G2 of the Advocacy Toolkit for information.)

**WORKING WITH THE MEDIA:** media can be powerful and effective at raising awareness and informing and shaping public opinion and policy decisions. The media includes broadcast (television and radio), print (newspaper, magazines) and digital (blogs, social media) platforms. (See section G3 of the Advocacy Toolkit for information.)

**WORKING WITH OTHER GROUPS:** advocating in coalitions, networks or alliances can share resources, reduce potential risks, and increase your influence with decision-makers by demonstrating the high level of concern about the issue.

**PRAYER:** this is a part of what differentiates Christian advocacy. Prayer should be part of the foundation of all our work and activity. As Christians we also think hard about the kind of society that God is calling us to be part of creating, and the way he calls us to do this. This also sets us apart.

**LIFESTYLE:** we can change our own unjust or wasteful practices through, for example, reducing the amount of stuff we buy, sharing what we have with others (to reduce waste or duplication) and learning to repair items (or taking them to someone who can) rather than buying new ones.

## Further information

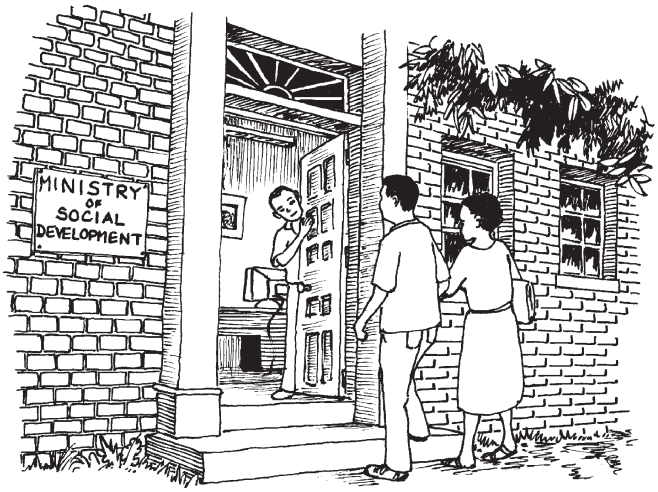
For further information, see:

- Tearfund (2015) *ROOTS 1 and 2: Advocacy toolkit* (Second edition) www.tearfund.org/advocacytoolkit

Rod Mills/Tearfund

# SECTION 2 How to advocate on waste and a circular economy

Waste and the circular economy is a relatively new area of work, especially in a development context. You might therefore need to begin your advocacy work by helping people to understand what the circular economy is and how it benefits people living in poverty. Advocacy should not stop at awareness-raising though; it should always seek to change decisions, policies and practices.




Rod Mills/Tearfund

## 2.1 Global action

International commitments can be useful focus points for advocacy. Two key ones for the circular economy are:

### Sustainable Development Goals

**UN's Sustainable Development Goals**

www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment

In September 2015, the 193 Member States[4] of the United Nations agreed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aim to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. World leaders have committed to achieve these goals; we can play a role in keeping them to account.

The circular economy contributes to the overall aims because it enables prosperity without harming the planet. The circular economy can help with particular goals including the following:

| GOAL | The circular economy can... |
|---|---|
| **3: Good health and wellbeing** | help reduce deaths and illness from pollution and contamination (supports target 3.9) |
| **8: Decent work and economic growth** | create job opportunities because it saves resources but uses more labour (supports target 8.2). It is particularly good for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (supports target 8.3). |
| **12: Responsible consumption and production** | play a central role in this goal through better design of products and use of waste |

## Paris Agreement on Climate Change

In December 2015, world leaders from 195 countries[5] agreed to limit the warming of our planet to well below 2°C (35.6°F), and to aim for 1.5°C (34.7°F). This agreement is known as the Paris Agreement. The circular economy can play a big part in reducing greenhouse gases because it reduces emissions from landfill, and it saves energy needed for new products. For example, recycling aluminium needs 95 per cent less energy than producing the metal from scratch. Making clothes last an extra year reduces their greenhouse gas emissions by a quarter.

CASE STUDY

### Kenya's waste management plan

Currently nearly two thirds of Nairobi's waste is in informal dumpsites or is burned. Less than ten per cent of it is recycled. Kenya's waste management plan aims to increase recycling rates to 25 per cent; this equates to up to 600 tonnes of waste. Doing this will save 800,000 tonnes in greenhouse gas emissions over 15 years and create 1,600 jobs. Framing Kenya's work on the circular economy around the Paris Agreement gives access to funding and links it clearly to a policy framework.

## How to get involved

Some specific questions you might ask and actions you could take:

- Has your country fully signed up to the agreements? Check the links in the footnotes to see if they're on the list.
- Each government submits and reports on its own targets for the SDGs and for the Paris Agreement. Could you participate in the process by, for example, writing your own parallel report at the same time? If not, could you call for an annual report to the government on progress?
- Call for domestic legislation in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

4 See the full list at: www.un.org/en/member-states

5 See the full list at: www.unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9444.php

- Promote the SDGs or the Paris Agreement to your local community, church or organisation. This will enable citizens to hold leaders to account on their implementation at a local level.

**Further information**

For further information, see:

- United Nations SDGs: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals
- Paris Agreement: www.unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php
- The charity Waste Aid has mapped how each of the SDGs relates to reducing waste: www.wasteaid.org.uk/vision

## 2.2 Role of governments

Governments have a responsibility to uphold their citizens' rights, including their right to be 'safe from harm' (see Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Government policy (national or local) sets out how goals will be achieved. Policy can affect the work and activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and communities – for better or for worse.

### How to get involved

Advocacy aims to influence the shape of policies and monitor their implementation through programmes or projects, and government budget allocations to support them. Influencing governments can seem intimidating or too big a task for relatively small organisations, but many of Tearfund's partners have become trusted advisors to their governments.

There are many different ways to influence government; the best place to start can be where you already have experience – at a local, regional or national level, on a specific issue or with a particular demographic of people. Local-level advocacy can also be a first step towards using these skills at a national or international level.

To advocate effectively, these are some questions you may want to ask to help get you started:

- Who is responsible for local waste management collection? This could happen at a local, regional/state, or central government level. Are they delivering what they promise?
- Are there any local, regional or national government targets driving progress on waste reduction, recycling and resource efficiency? Are any of the SDG targets relevant?
- Are there government policies that create barriers to circular economy practices? For example, offering free landfill collection (particularly to businesses) encourages people to throw away items instead of recycling them. Section E1 of the Advocacy Toolkit provides guidance on how to find out about government policies.
- Are there policy opportunities to encourage circular economy practices? Examples of this are: setting design standards that encourage producers to make their products more durable and easier to repair; making manufacturers responsible for collecting and dismantling their products at the end of the product's life.
- What good practice is already happening? Could it be supported, replicated or scaled up? If not, what is stopping this?
- Who are the relevant stakeholders?
  - Who is impacted by the issue of waste (e.g. people living around dump sites)?

  - Who is involved in sorting waste? This could be formal waste collection or waste pickers collecting waste to make an income.
  - Who is involved in advocacy or programmes around the issue (e.g. NGOs, churches)?

Types of actions you might consider taking:

- holding governments to account for existing commitments
- looking at how policies are formed and implemented around the circular economy
- advocating for public waste management policies to involve those already working in the waste picking and informal recycling sector. This will support them in formalising and therefore gaining access to social protection, improving their incomes and their working conditions. It will also increase recycling rates and reduce costs for government.
- advocating for governments to work with representatives of micro and small/medium-sized enterprises in the remanufacturing and repair sectors to ensure that they have the necessary access to electricity and connectivity to create jobs and reduce waste

CASE STUDY

### Government policy encourages circular practices

China's national circular economy pilot programme aims to make the best use of materials and energy. The Suzhou New District (SND) was one of the first schemes in the programme in 2005. It is an eco-industrial park where companies share water, energy and their waste and recycling processes. There are now over 16,000 enterprises, including around 4,000 manufacturing firms based in the industrial park. By giving incentives to collaborate, governments can help organisations to link up their supply chains, and therefore save money and reduce waste. For example, in SND the waste copper from one company is used to make electronic circuits by another. This means they do not have to use newly mined copper. Overall, 96 per cent of the solid waste produced on the park is used elsewhere.

## 2.3 Businesses have a role

Businesses have a vital role to play in the way products are designed and what happens at the end of their life. Businesses can be leaders in embracing the circular economy (as many in high-income countries are beginning to be, recognising it makes good economic sense) or they can be part of the problem – designing things to be thrown away, or making products difficult or even hazardous to repair or deconstruct into reusable parts.

Kumasi: Suame Magazine's Artisans Unveil Ghana-Made Car at Manhyia Palace, OMGGhana.com

Through advocacy, we can show how a circular economy can benefit businesses directly. Civil society can work with national or local government to influence good business behaviour, for example ensuring that laws (existing or new) are applied properly and responsibly by businesses. An example of this would be changing the laws around how products are designed to encourage businesses to design their products to be safely deconstructed.

Advocacy can also take place with businesses, to influence local or national policies. An example of this might be giving the right incentives to businesses to collect products for reuse, reconstruction or recycling when consumers are finished with them. This would reduce the harm the waste problem causes to people in poverty. Businesses can have greater influence when they work together in associations or cooperatives.

CASE STUDY

### Vehicle repair and remanufacturing in Ghana

Over more than 30 years, the Suame/Kumasi cluster of micro and small-to-medium-sized enterprises has grown. It now employs 200,000 workers – an increase from 40,000 in the early 1980s. The cluster consists of more than 12,000 businesses working on repair and remanufacture at the edge of the international automotive industry. The growth of the cluster to such a large scale has been helped by the businesses being able to organise into formal and informal associations. The cluster is bigger than anything found in Europe.

## 2.4 The role of the church

The local church forms part of many communities across the globe; church leaders and members are often on the frontline of experiencing and tackling poverty and injustice, acting on the Biblical mandate.

Tearfund believes that Christian organisations (such as networks, NGOs, church denominations and their development departments) can help the local church to maximise their relationships with and knowledge of their communities. For decades, Tearfund has been building and supporting a global network of local churches engaged in relief, development and advocacy work. This is part of what makes our contribution to civil society distinctive.

Through working together, churches and Christian organisations can empower communities to speak, or they can advocate with or on behalf of those negatively impacted by wasteful economic practices. Churches can:

- shape the goals of a campaign or the shape of society in ways that reflect the Kingdom of God
- have a deep knowledge and understanding of local issues
- build long-term relationships and trust within the community
- be a constant within a community, particularly during seasons of change or uncertainty
- use the credibility, respect and authority gained from their coordinating body to influence policy processes (locally, regionally, nationally or internationally)

Rod Mills/Tearfund

CASE STUDY

### Church advocacy impacts government programmes

Diaconia is an NGO made up of 11 churches, working with over 4,000 family farmers in rural Brazil to help small-scale agricultural production that is good for the environment. The NGO is pioneering bio-digester technology to turn animal waste into cooking gas and compost for soil. As a result of Diaconia's advocacy work, the Brazilian Government's National Rural Housing Programme is expanding this technology across Brazil. In total, 355 bio-digesters will be set up in 23 municipalities across six states.

Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund

## 2.5 Communities can be heard

**'There is a pressing need to build participatory relationships between state, civil society, grassroots institutions and citizens, which result in greater state accountability and transparency and which also lead to broad-based alliances and coalitions within the broader context of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.'**

MARCUS OXLEY, CHAIR OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS FOR DISASTER REDUCTION

The genuine needs of communities should inform and be addressed by decision-makers when forming policies and practice. Churches, community-based organisations (CBOs), NGOs – all key parts of civil society – can inform the policy-making process with their experience of what works, and by empowering the individuals and communities affected to speak, or by speaking with or on behalf of them.

Civil society can be part of holding governments to account on delivering what they've promised, and celebrating when they do so. Advocating on waste and related issues can help communities to know what governments have committed to, and hold them to account on it.

Civil society has a wealth of experience in addressing the needs of communities and tackling issues that harm them. Civil society can support communities in identifying opportunities to improve waste and resource management in their local area.

The voice of individuals can be more powerful when joining with others; working together can help communities to be heard.

CASE STUDY

## Clean River, Healthy City

In Recife, Brazil, an informal settlement has no sanitation or waste collection system. All waste (including human) is disposed of in the river. The river tends to flood after heavy rain, and the waste only makes this worse. The flood waters enter and destroy homes, bring disease and, in the worst cases, wash people away. A local pastor brought together 15 local churches whose members had been impacted by flooding to develop the two-year campaign 'Clean River, Healthy City'. The group engaged with students from the local university who volunteered to create publicity materials on the environment and waste to be used in local schools and churches. The group also organised a public hearing on the river conditions. The hearing brought together members of the city council, public authorities, as well as representatives of local associations, schools, churches and the general public to ensure municipal involvement in the community's problem.

Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund

## Further information

For further information, see:

- Tearfund (2016) *Bridging the gap: The role of local churches in fostering local-level social accountability and governance:* www.tearfund.org/bridgingthegap

# SECTION 3 Next steps

We hope that this booklet has inspired you about why and how you can advocate on the circular economy. Advocacy work should be integrated within your ongoing development work through your planning processes, contributing to common goals. It should also have an allocated budget.


Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund

Some questions that might be useful to ask:

- Do you understand the theology underpinning advocacy on waste? Could you do some Bible studies to find out? See the *Reveal* toolkit for some ideas (see below).
- Who benefits from better waste and resource management?
- Who does not benefit? Why not – are there cultural, governmental, environmental, or financial reasons? What additional burdens are placed on those who do not benefit? You could ask other organisations, research institutions or universities, or government departments questions about this.
- Are there any other organisations working on the same issues as you? It is good to try to work in partnership; could you work together to influence decisions?
- Who is responsible for waste management? Is it local government, national government or other providers?
- What is the government's policy or strategy for waste management? How is it being delivered? What monitoring systems are in place to hold the government to account?
  - Do waste collections happen?
  - Are there options to recycle?
- Is your government reporting on the SDGs or the Paris Agreement? Is this an opportunity to engage with it on waste management?
- How are decisions made about waste and resource policy and practice? Who makes them?
- How much would it cost to implement circular economy practices? Who should pay?

- Are there opportunities to generate income from waste? Is there a market for products made from waste?
- Are there informal waste pickers? What are their thoughts on how their working conditions could be improved? Could they work together e.g. through a cooperative?
- What practical ways can waste be reduced? What can individuals do? Are there opportunities for community members to talk with local decision-makers? If not, can we make them?
- How could local authorities or leaders help people to manage their waste better?
  - Is there a policy regarding electronic waste and waste received from other countries? If not, can we encourage the government to implement one?
  - Are there any local environmental advocacy organisations that we could join?
- How could advocacy complement your programmatic work in this area? If there is a clear link, this might be the best place to start.
- Are you modelling good waste and buying practices yourself – doing what you are asking others to do?

Before deciding whether to develop an advocacy strategy, find out more about what advocacy involves and tools for doing it in Tearfund's *Advocacy Toolkit (ROOTS 1 & 2)*.

**Further information**

For further information, see:

- Tearfund *Reveal* toolkit: www.tearfund.org/reveal

# Useful information and resources

## Useful Tearfund resources

Tearfund general resources on advocacy are available at: tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/Advocacy

Of particular use, might be:

- ***ROOTS 1 and 2: Advocacy toolkit*** (second edition) (2015)
- ***The mission of the church and the role of advocacy*** (2002)
- ***Church and advocacy*** which is a web page found at tilz.tearfund.org/churchadvocacy

Tearfund's resources on waste and a circular economy:

- ***Virtuous circle: how the circular economy can create jobs and save lives in low and middle-income countries*** (2016)
- ***Closing the loop: the benefits of the circular economy for developing countries and emerging economies*** (available in English and Portuguese) (2016)
- ***The restorative economy: completing our unfinished Millennium Jubilee*** (2015)

All available on the **Tearfund International Learning Zone** website: tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/policy_and_research/sustainable_economics

## Useful organisations, networks and resources

- **African Circular Economy Network:** www.linkedin.com/company/measuring-shared-value
- **Ellen MacArthur Foundation:** www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org
- **Paris Agreement on Climate Change:** www.unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php
- **UNEP10YFP** (United Nations Environment Programme Ten-Year Framework of Programmes) on Sustainable Consumption and Production: www.unep.org/10yfp
- **UNEP International Resource Panel:** www.unep.org/resourcepanel
- **UNEP Resource Efficiency:** www.unep.org/resourceefficiency
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals:** www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals
- **Waste Aid International:** www.wasteaid.org

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