



Sudan

Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment

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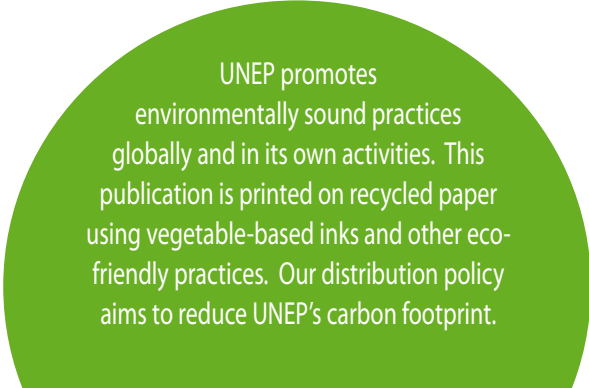
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Table of contents

Foreword	5
Executive Summary	6
Chapter 1: Introduction	18
1.1 Background.....	20
1.2 Objectives	20
1.3 Assessment scope.....	21
1.4 Methodology.....	21
1.5 Assessment team and consultations	25
1.6 Report structure	26
Chapter 2: Country Context	30
2.1 Introduction.....	32
2.2 Society	32
2.3 Governance and economy	36
2.4 Climate	38
2.5 Geography and vegetation zones.....	42
Chapter 3: Natural Disasters and Desertification	56
3.1 Introduction and assessment activities	58
3.2 Water shortages	59
3.3 Desertification.....	62
3.4 Water damage.....	66
3.5 Disaster risk reduction and mitigation of desertification.....	67
3.6 Conclusions and recommendations.....	68
Chapter 4: Conflict and the Environment	70
4.1 Introduction and assessment activities	72
4.2 Overview of conflicts in Sudan.....	73
4.3 Analysis of the role of natural resources as a contributing cause of conflict in Sudan.....	77
4.4 Environmental linkages to local conflicts over rangeland and rain-fed agriculture.....	80
4.5 Assessment of the environmental impacts of conflict	88
4.6 Conclusions and recommendations.....	95
Chapter 5: Population Displacement and the Environment	98
5.1 Introduction and assessment activities	100
5.2 Overview of population displacement in Sudan.....	101
5.3 Overview of displacement-related environmental issues.....	104
5.4 Environment as one of three major causes of displacement in Sudan.....	104
5.5 Environmental impacts of camps and settlements.....	105
5.6 Other environmental impacts of displacement	112
5.7 Environmental implications of the return process.....	112
5.8 International aspects of environment and displacement in Sudan	115
5.9 Conclusions and recommendations.....	115
Chapter 6: Urban Environment and Environmental Health	118
6.1 Introduction and assessment activities	120
6.2 Overview of demographics and major urban centres.....	121
6.3 Overview of urban environment and environmental health issues	122
6.4 Urbanization and urban planning.....	122
6.5 Drinking water, sanitation and waterborne diseases	127

6.6	Solid waste management	130
6.7	Air pollution and urban transport	133
6.8	Urban energy.....	133
6.9	Sustainable construction opportunities.....	134
6.10	Urban and health sector environmental governance.....	134
6.11	Conclusions and recommendations	136
Chapter 7: Industry and the Environment		138
7.1	Introduction and assessment activities	140
7.2	Overview of the industrial sector in Sudan	141
7.3	Overview of industry-related environmental issues	144
7.4	General industry-related environmental issues.....	144
7.5	Environmental issues specific to the upstream oil industry	148
7.6	Industrial sector environmental governance.....	153
7.7	Conclusions and recommendations	155
Chapter 8: Agriculture and the Environment		158
8.1	Introduction and assessment activities	160
8.2	Overview of agriculture in Sudan	161
8.3	Cross-cutting environmental issues and impacts	163
8.4	Mechanized rain-fed agriculture sector impacts and issues	166
8.5	Traditional rain-fed agriculture sector impacts and issues.....	169
8.6	Mechanized irrigation sector environmental impacts and issues.....	172
8.7	Traditional irrigation sector impacts and issues.....	178
8.8	Livestock husbandry impacts and issues	179
8.9	Agricultural sector environmental governance	189
8.10	Conclusions and recommendations	190
Chapter 9: Forest Resources		192
9.1	Introduction and assessment activities	194
9.2	Overview of forest resources	196
9.3	Forest utilization	200
9.4	Forestry sector environmental impacts and issues	203
9.5	Deforestation rates and causes	203
9.6	Potential conflict ‘flashpoint’ over the charcoal industry in Southern Sudan	213
9.7	Development opportunities for the timber industry in Southern Sudan	213
9.8	Forestry sector governance.....	214
9.9	Conclusions and recommendations	216
Chapter 10: Freshwater Resources		218
10.1	Introduction and assessment activities	220
10.2	Overview of the freshwater resources of Sudan	221
10.3	Environmental impacts and issues of the water sector.....	224
10.4	Large dams and water management schemes	224
10.5	Sustainable use and conservation of wetlands	234
10.6	Invasive plant species.....	236
10.7	Water pollution	237
10.8	Groundwater exploitation	241
10.9	Transboundary and regional issues.....	244
10.10	Freshwater fisheries.....	245
10.11	Water sector environmental governance.....	245
10.12	Conclusions and recommendations	248

Chapter 11: Wildlife and Protected Area Management	250
11.1 Introduction and assessment activities	252
11.2 Overview of the wildlife and habitats of Sudan.....	253
11.3 Overview of protected areas.....	259
11.4 Wildlife and protected area management issues	264
11.5 Wildlife and protected area sector governance	272
11.6 Conclusions and recommendations	273
Chapter 12: Marine Environments and Resources	274
12.1 Introduction and assessment activities	276
12.2 Overview of marine and coastal environments and resources.....	277
12.3 Environmental impacts and issues	278
12.4 Marine and coastal environmental governance.....	287
12.5 Conclusions and recommendations	288
Chapter 13: Environmental Governance and Awareness	290
13.1 Introduction and assessment activities	292
13.2 Overview of environmental governance structures.....	292
13.3 Overview of environmental and natural resource legislation	296
13.4 Environmental education and civil society.....	299
13.5 Overview of environmental governance and awareness issues.....	301
13.6 Social, development and investment issues	301
13.7 Structure and legislative issues	303
13.8 Environmental governance and peacebuilding.....	305
13.9 Conclusions and recommendations	306
Chapter 14: International Aid and the Environment	308
14.1 Introduction and assessment activities	310
14.2 Overview of international aid in Sudan	312
14.3 Overview of environmental aid programmes in Sudan	313
14.4 Overview of impacts and issues for aid and the environment.....	319
14.5 Conclusions and recommendations	324
Chapter 15: Conclusions	326
15.1 Introduction.....	328
15.2 Key findings	328
15.3 Key recommendations and investment requirements.....	330
15.4 The way forward.....	332
15.5 Concluding remarks	333
Appendices	
Appendix I: List of acronyms and abbreviations.....	336
Appendix II: List of references.....	338
Appendix III: List of contributors.....	351

Foreword

The peace deal signed in Nairobi by the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on 9 January 2005 put an end to more than two decades of civil war in the country. The United Nations family in Nairobi is proud to have played a lead role in the conclusion of the peace process by hosting an exceptional meeting of the United Nations Security Council in November 2004, which facilitated negotiations that led to a Comprehensive Peace Agreement being reached in early 2005.

For most of Sudan, it is now time to focus on recovery, reconstruction and development. In this context, the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan requested UNEP to conduct an environmental assessment of the country in order to evaluate the state of Sudan's environment and identify the key environmental challenges ahead. This report presents the findings of the fieldwork, analysis and extensive consultations that were carried out between December 2005 and March 2007, and contains:

- an overview of the environment of Sudan and the assessment process;
- analysis and recommendations for the major cross-cutting issues of climate change, desertification, conflict, and population displacement; and
- analysis and recommendations for key environmental issues in nine different sectors (urban/health, industry, agriculture, forestry, water, wildlife, marine environment, law and foreign aid).

Sudan will not benefit fully from the tangible dividends of peace as long as conflict rages on in Darfur. Despite the signing of a peace agreement in May 2006, violence and insecurity continue to prevail in the region. The United Nations, through its Secretary-General, has designated the resolution of the crisis in Darfur as a main priority, and it is hoped that the findings and recommendations presented in this UNEP report will contribute to this goal.

Indeed, UNEP's investigation has shown clearly that peace and people's livelihoods in Darfur as well as in the rest of Sudan are inextricably linked to the environmental challenge. Just as environmental degradation can contribute to the triggering and



perpetuation of conflict, the sustainable management of natural resources can provide the basis for long-term stability, sustainable livelihoods, and development. It is now critical that both national and local leadership prioritize environmental awareness and opportunities for the sustainable management of natural resources in Sudan.

We wish to sincerely thank the Governments of Sweden and the United Kingdom for their generous financial support, which enabled UNEP to carry out this assessment, organize two environmental workshops for national delegates in Sudan in 2006, and publish this report.

In addition, this assessment would not have been possible without the support of our colleagues in the UN Sudan Country Team, including those in sister agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, UNHCR, WFP and OCHA. The Ministries of Environment of the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan were also active partners in the assessment process, providing both information and support. We hope that UNEP can remain a long-term partner of the Sudanese authorities and people as they address the environmental challenges ahead.

Achim Steiner
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Executive Director
of the United Nations Environment Programme

Executive summary

Introduction

In January 2005, the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, putting an end to twenty-two years of continuous civil war. With peace and a fast-growing economy fueled by its emerging oil industry, most of the country can now focus on recovery and development.

Sudan, however, faces a number of challenges. Among these are critical environmental issues, including land degradation, deforestation and the impacts of climate change, that threaten the Sudanese people's prospects for long-term peace, food security and sustainable development. In addition, complex but clear linkages exist between environmental problems and the ongoing conflict in Darfur, as well as other historical and current conflicts in Sudan.

Post-conflict environmental assessment

With a view to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the current state of the environment in

Sudan and catalysing action to address the country's key environmental problems, the Government of National Unity (GONU) and Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) requested the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to conduct a post-conflict environmental assessment of Sudan. The goal of the UNEP assessment was accordingly to develop a solid technical basis for medium-term corrective action in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development.

Assessment process

The post-conflict environmental assessment process for Sudan began in late 2005. Following an initial appraisal and scoping study, fieldwork was carried out between January and August 2006. Different teams of experts spent a total of approximately 150 days in the field, on ten separate field missions, each lasting one to four weeks. Consultation with local and international stakeholders formed a large and continuous part of UNEP's assessment work, with the total number of interviewees estimated to be over two thousand. Parties consulted include representatives of federal, state and local governments, NGOs, academic and research institutions, international agencies, community leaders, farmers, pastoralists, foresters and businesspeople.



The UNEP team on mission in Northern state. Different teams of experts spent 150 days in the field, on ten separate field missions, each lasting one to four weeks

Figure E.1 General map of Sudan





The UNEP team interviews a group of local men in Umm al Jawasir, in Northern state. Community hearings and consultations were a critical component of UNEP's assessment work

The assessment team was comprised of a core UNEP team and a large number of national and international partners who collaborated in a range of roles. These partnerships were crucial to the project's success, as they enabled the fieldwork, ensured that the study matched local issues and needs, and contributed to national endorsement of the assessment's outcomes. UNEP also worked closely with the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan, and specific efforts were made to align UNEP activities with a government initiative known as the National Plan for Environmental Management.

Summary of the findings

The assessment identified a number of critical environmental issues that are closely linked to the country's social and political challenges.

Strong linkages between environment and conflict: a key issue in the Darfur crisis

The linkages between conflict and environment in Sudan are twofold. On one hand, the country's long history of conflict has had significant impacts on its environment. Indirect impacts such as population displacement, lack of governance, conflict-related resource exploitation and under-

investment in sustainable development have been the most severe consequences to date.

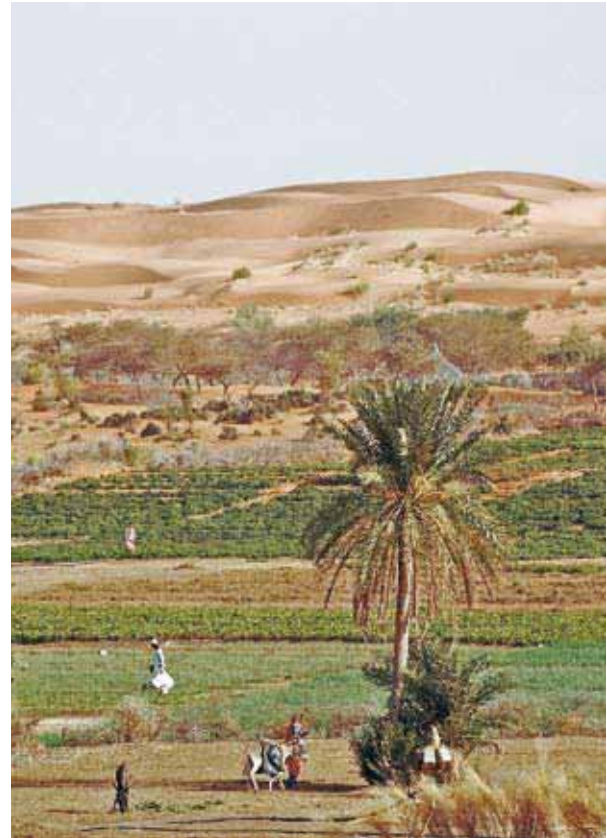
On the other hand, environmental issues have been and continue to be contributing causes of conflict. Competition over oil and gas reserves, Nile waters and timber, as well as land use issues related to agricultural land, are important causative factors in the instigation and perpetuation of conflict in Sudan. Confrontations over rangeland and rain-fed agricultural land in the drier parts of the country are a particularly striking manifestation of the connection between natural resource scarcity and violent conflict. In all cases, however, environmental factors are intertwined with a range of other social, political and economic issues.

UNEP's analysis indicates that there is a very strong link between land degradation, desertification and conflict in Darfur. Northern Darfur – where exponential population growth and related environmental stress have created the conditions for conflicts to be triggered and sustained by political, tribal or ethnic differences – can be considered a tragic example of the social breakdown that can result from ecological collapse. Long-term peace in the region will not be possible unless these underlying and closely linked environmental and livelihood issues are resolved.

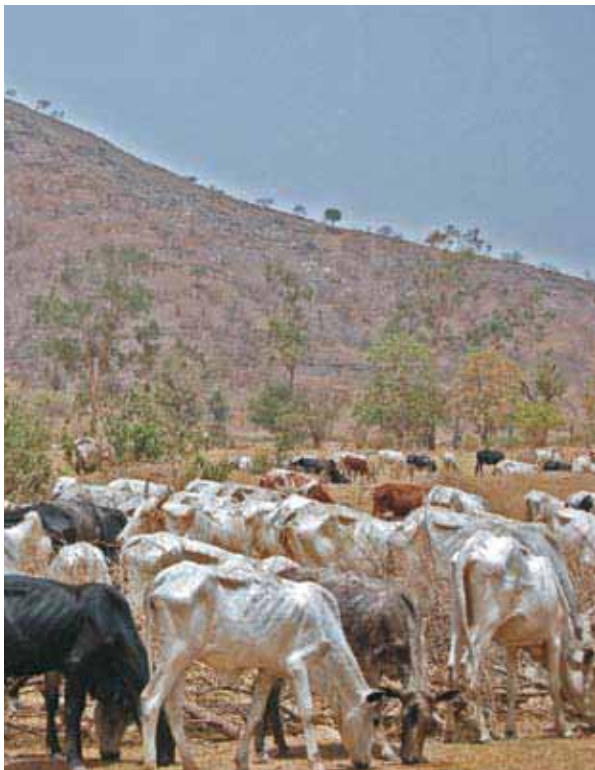
Population displacement: significant environmental impacts

With over five million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and international refugees, Sudan has the largest population of displaced persons in the world today. In Darfur, internal displacement has occurred at an unprecedented rate since 2003, with some 2.4 million people affected. This massive population displacement has been accompanied by significant human suffering and environmental damage. Areas around the larger camps – particularly in Darfur – are severely degraded, and the lack of controls and solutions has led to human rights abuses, conflicts over resources and food insecurity. Although this is not a new phenomenon, the scale of displacement and the particular vulnerability of the dry northern Sudanese environment may make this the most significant case of its type worldwide.

In addition, the large-scale return of southern Sudanese to their homeland following the cessation of the civil war is likely to result in a further wave of environmental degradation in some of the more fragile return areas.



Desertification and the associated loss of agricultural land are not an inevitable and unstoppable process. Good management practices can sustain agriculture even in seemingly arid and hostile environments, as in this dune belt in Northern Kordofan



Cattle in poor condition on overgrazed land near El Geneina, Western Darfur. Intense competition over declining natural resources is a contributing cause of the ongoing conflict in the region

Desertification and regional climate change: contributing to poverty and conflict

An estimated 50 to 200 km southward shift of the boundary between semi-desert and desert has occurred since rainfall and vegetation records were first held in the 1930s. This boundary is expected to continue to move southwards due to declining precipitation. The remaining semi-desert and low rainfall savannah on sand, which represent some 25 percent of Sudan’s agricultural land, are at considerable risk of further desertification. This is forecast to lead to a significant drop (approximately 20 percent) in food production. In addition, there is mounting evidence that the decline in precipitation due to regional climate change has been a significant stress factor on pastoralist societies – particularly in Darfur and Kordofan – and has thereby contributed to conflict.

Natural disasters: increasing vulnerability and impacts

Sudan has suffered a number of long and devastating droughts in the past decades, which have undermined food security and are strongly linked to human displacement and related conflicts. The vulnerability to drought is exacerbated by the tendency to maximize livestock herd sizes rather than quality, and by the lack of secure water sources such as deep boreholes that can be relied on during short dry spells.

Despite serious water shortages, floods are also common in Sudan. The most devastating occur on the Blue Nile, as a result of deforestation and overgrazing in the river's upper catchment. One of the main impacts of watershed degradation and associated flooding is severe riverbank erosion in the narrow but fertile Nile riverine strip.

Agriculture: severe land degradation due to demographic pressure and poorly managed development

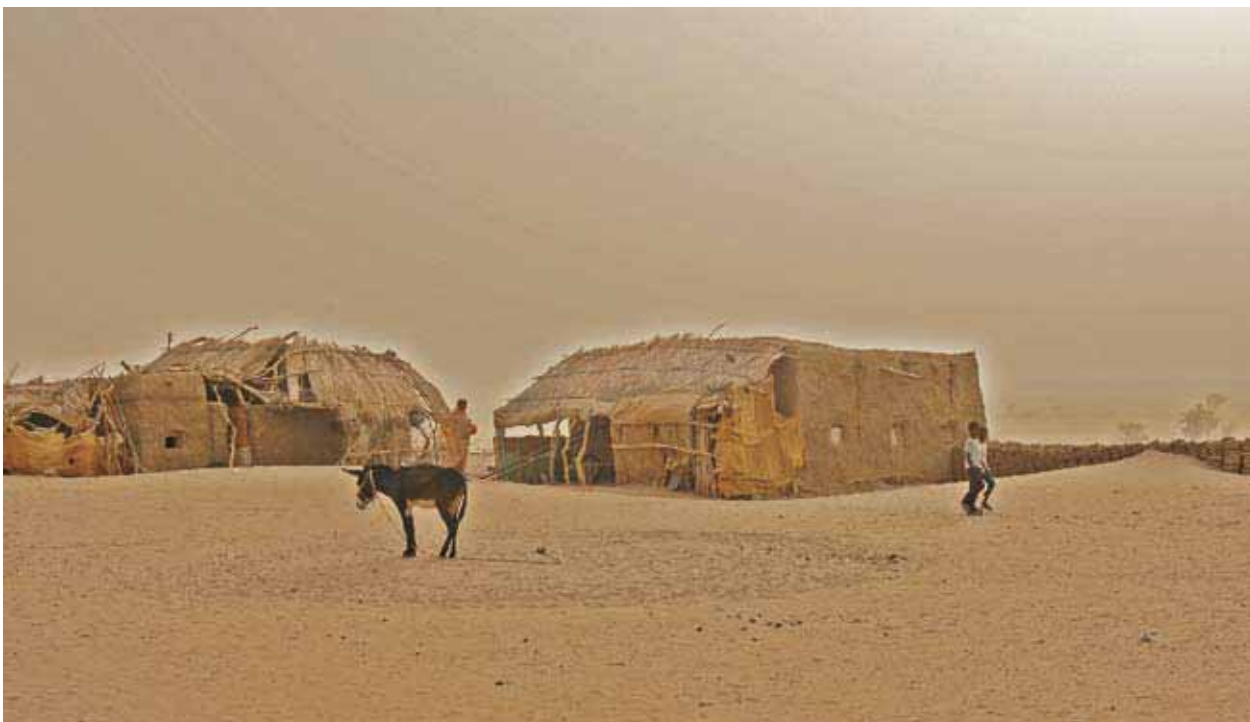
Agriculture, which is the largest economic sector in Sudan, is at the heart of some of the country's most serious and chronic environmental problems, including land degradation in its various forms, riverbank

erosion, invasive species, pesticide mismanagement in the large irrigation schemes, and water pollution. Disorganized and poorly managed mechanized rain-fed agriculture, which covers an estimated area of 6.5 million hectares, has been particularly destructive, leading to large-scale forest clearance, loss of wildlife and severe land degradation.

In addition, an explosive growth in livestock numbers – from 28.6 million in 1961 to 134.6 million in 2004 – has resulted in widespread degradation of the rangelands. Inadequate rural land tenure, finally, is an underlying cause of many environmental problems and a major obstacle to sustainable land use, as farmers have little incentive to invest in and protect natural resources.

Forestry: a deforestation crisis in the drier regions, risks and opportunities in the south

Deforestation in Sudan is estimated to be occurring at a rate of over 0.84 percent per annum at the national level, and 1.87 percent per annum in UNEP case study areas. It is driven principally by energy needs and agricultural clearance. Between 1990 and 2005, the country lost 11.6 percent of its forest cover, or approximately 8,835,000



The most serious and common natural disaster facing the population of Sudan is drought. Rural communities such as this village in Khartoum state have faced waves of drought since the 1970s, which have exacerbated rural poverty and precipitated large-scale displacement to the northern cities



Abandoned degraded agricultural land in a former irrigation scheme near Tandelti in Northern Kordofan

hectares. At the regional level, two-thirds of the forests in north, central and eastern Sudan disappeared between 1972 and 2001. In Darfur, a third of the forest cover was lost between 1973 and 2006. Southern Sudan is estimated to have lost 40 percent of its forests since independence and deforestation is ongoing, particularly around major towns. Extrapolation of deforestation rates indicate that forest cover could reduce by over 10 percent per decade. In areas under extreme pressure, UNEP estimates that total loss could occur within the next 10 years.

These negative trends demonstrate that this valuable resource upon which the rural population and a large part of the urban population depend completely for energy is seriously threatened. The growing use of fuelwood for brick-making in all parts of Sudan is an additional cause for concern. In Darfur, for instance, brick-making provides a livelihood for many IDP camp residents, but also contributes to severe localized deforestation. If it were properly managed, however, the forestry sector could represent a significant opportunity for economic development and sustainable north-south trade.



A mango orchard in Juba, Central Equatoria. The combination of higher rainfall and lower population and development pressure results in Sudan's remaining forest cover being concentrated in the southern half of the country



The rusting wreckage of the Jonglei canal excavator lies in the unfinished main channel. This failed venture illustrates the risks associated with developing large-scale projects in socially and environmentally sensitive areas without local support

Dams and water projects: major impacts and conflict linkages

UNEP considers the principal and most important environmental issue in the water resource sector in Sudan to be the ongoing or planned construction of over twenty large dams. While its electrical output is expected to bring major benefits to the country, the Merowe dam epitomizes environmental and social concerns over the country's ambitious dam-building programme. Although it is the first dam project in Sudan to have included an environmental impact assessment, the process did not meet international standards, and would have benefited from more transparency and public consultation. Major environmental problems associated with the Merowe dam include silt loss for flood recession agriculture, dam sedimentation and severe riverbank erosion due to intensive flow release within short time periods.

In addition, the active storage capacity of all of Sudan's existing dam reservoirs (with the exception of Jebel Aulia) is seriously affected by sediment deposition. Dams have also caused major degradation of downstream habitats,

particularly of the maya wetlands on the Blue Nile and of the riparian *dom* palm forests in the lower Atbara river.

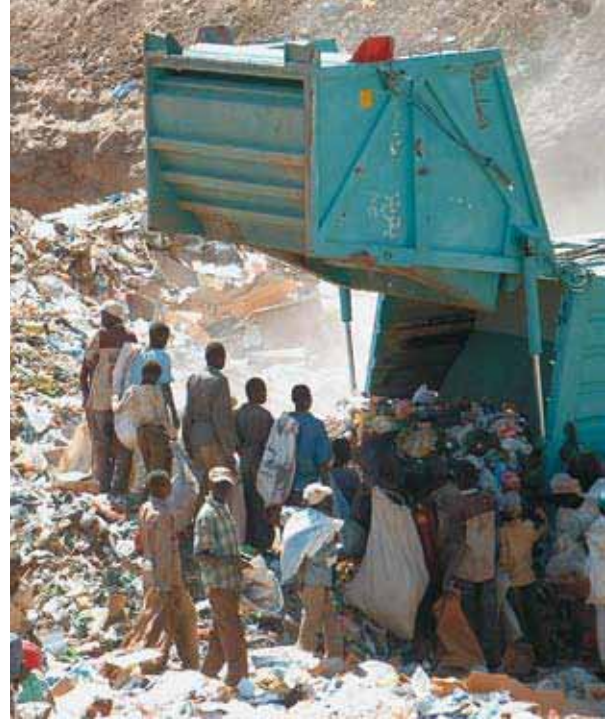
The infamous Jonglei canal engineering mega-project, which started in the 1970s, was closely linked to the start of the north-south civil war. As it was not completed, its anticipated major impacts on the Sudd wetlands never came to pass. The unfinished canal bed, which does not connect to any major water bodies or watercourses, now acts only as a giant ditch and embankment hindering wildlife migrations. Nevertheless, lessons learnt from this project should be carefully studied and applied to existing efforts in peacebuilding between north and south, especially as economic motivations for the project still exist, including from international partners.

Urban issues and environmental health: rapid and chaotic urbanization and chronic waste and sanitation issues

Uncontrolled sprawl, chronic solid waste management problems and the lack of wastewater treatment are the leading environmental problems

facing Sudan's urban centres. The explosive growth of the capital Khartoum continues relentlessly, with 64 percent of the country's urban population residing in the area. The larger towns of Southern Sudan are also experiencing very rapid growth fueled by the return of formerly displaced persons, estimated at 300,000 by end of 2006. In Darfur, the majority of the two million displaced are found on the fringes of urban centres, whose size in some cases has increased by over 200 percent in the last three years.

Sewage treatment is grossly inadequate in all of Sudan's cities, and solid waste management practices throughout the country are uniformly poor. In the majority of cases, garbage of all types accumulates close to its point of origin and is periodically burnt. These shortcomings in environmental sanitation are directly reflected in the elevated incidence of waterborne diseases, which make up 80 percent of reported diseases in the country.



Waste pickers at the main Khartoum landfill site. Waste management is problematic throughout Sudan.



The release of industrial effluent from older factories lacking wastewater treatment facilities is an issue of particular concern

Industrial pollution: a growing problem and a key issue for the emerging oil industry

Environmental governance of industry was virtually non-existent until 2000, and the effects of this are clearly visible today. While the situation has improved over the last few years, UNEP has found that major challenges remain in the areas of project development and impact assessment, improving the operation of older and government-managed facilities, and influencing the policies and management approach at the higher levels of government.

Due to the relatively limited industrial development in Sudan to date, environmental damage has so far been moderate, but the situation could worsen rapidly as the country embarks on an oil-financed development boom. The release of effluent from factories and the disposal of produced water associated with crude oil extraction are issues of particular concern, as industrial wastewater treatment facilities are lacking even in Khartoum. Industrial effluent is typically released into the domestic sewage system, where there is one.



The all-women State Environment Council Secretariat in Gedaref state. The CPA and Interim Constitution devolve extensive responsibility to state governments in the area of environmental governance. State-level structures, however, remain under-funded and in need of substantial investment

Other issues include air emissions, and hazardous and solid waste disposal. While UNEP observed generally substandard environmental performance at most industrial sites, there were exceptional cases of responsible environmental stewardship at selected oil, sugar and cement facilities visited.

Wildlife and protected areas: depleted biodiversity with some internationally significant areas and wildlife populations remaining

The past few decades have witnessed a major assault on wildlife and their habitats. In northern and central Sudan, the greatest damage has been inflicted by habitat destruction and fragmentation from farming and deforestation. Larger wildlife have essentially disappeared and are now mostly confined to core protected areas and remote desert regions. In the south, uncontrolled and unsustainable hunting has decimated wildlife populations and caused the local eradication of many of the larger species, such as elephant, rhino, buffalo, giraffe, eland and zebra. Nonetheless, Sudan's remaining wildlife populations, including very large herds of white-eared kob and tiang antelope, are internationally significant.

Approximately fifty sites throughout Sudan – covering 10 and 15 percent of the areas of the north and south respectively – are listed as

having some form of legal protection. In practice, however, the level of protection afforded to these areas has ranged from slight to negligible, and several exist only on paper today. Many of these important areas are located in regions affected by conflict and have hence suffered from a long-term absence of the rule of law. With three exceptions (Dinder, Sanganeb and Dongonab Bay National Parks), the data on wildlife and protected areas is currently insufficient to allow for the development of adequate management plans.

Marine environment: a largely intact ecosystem under threat

UNEP found the Sudanese marine and coastal environment to be in relatively good condition overall. Its coral reefs are the best preserved ecosystems in the country. However, the economic and shipping boom focused on Port Sudan and the oil export facilities may rapidly change the environmental situation for the worse. Steady degradation is ongoing in the developed strip from Port Sudan to Suakin, and the symptoms of overgrazing and land degradation are as omnipresent on the coast as elsewhere in dryland Sudan. Mangrove stands, for example, are currently under severe pressure along the entire coastline. Pollution from land-based sources and the risk of oil spills are further issues of concern.

Environmental governance: historically weak, now at a crossroads

By granting the Government of Southern Sudan and the states extensive and explicit responsibility in the area of environment and natural resources management, the CPA and new Interim Constitutions have significantly changed the framework for environmental governance in Sudan and helped create the conditions for reform.

At the national level, the country faces many challenges to meet its international obligations, as set out in the treaties and conventions it has signed over the last thirty years. Although the technical skill and level of knowledge in the environmental sector are high and some legislation is already in place, regulatory authorities have critical structural problems, and are under-resourced.

In Southern Sudan, environmental governance is in its infancy, but the early signs are positive. High-level political and cross-sector support is visible, and UNEP considers the new structures to be relatively suited to the task.

Environment and international aid: reduced environmental impact of relief operations and improved UN response to environmental issues necessary

The environmental assessment of the international aid programme in Sudan raised a number of issues that need to be resolved to avoid inadvertently doing harm through the provision of aid, and to improve the effectiveness of aid expenditure in the environmental sector. UNEP's analysis indicates that while most aid projects in Sudan do not cause significant harm to the environment, a few clearly do and the overall diffused impact of the programme is very significant.

One major and highly complex issue is the environmental impact of the provision of food and other emergency aid to some 15 percent of the population, and the projected impact of the various options for shifting back from aid dependence to autonomous and sustainable livelihoods. Indeed, the country is presently caught in a vicious circle of food aid dependence, agricultural underdevelopment and environmental degradation. Under current



The coral reefs of the Red Sea coast are the best preserved ecosystems of Sudan

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circumstances, if aid were reduced to encourage a return to agriculture, the result in some areas would be food insecurity and an intensification of land degradation, leading to the high likelihood of failure and secondary displacement.

The integration of environmental considerations into the current UN programme in Sudan needs to be significantly improved. In addition, the environment-related expenditure that does occur – while acknowledged and welcome – suffers from a range of management problems that reduce its effectiveness. Priorities for the UN and its partners in this field are improved coordination and environmental mainstreaming to ensure that international assistance ‘does no harm’ to Sudan’s environment, and ‘builds back better’

Recommendations

1. **Invest in environmental management to support lasting peace in Darfur, and to avoid local conflict over natural resources elsewhere in Sudan.** Because environmental degradation and resource scarcity are among the root causes of the current conflict in Darfur, practical measures to alleviate such problems should be considered vital tools for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Climate change adaptation measures and ecologically sustainable rural development are needed in Darfur and elsewhere to cope with changing environmental conditions and to avoid clashes over declining natural resources.



A group of southern Sudanese travels down the White Nile aboard a ferry, returning to the homeland after years of displacement due to the civil war. A massive return process is currently underway for the four million people displaced during the conflict



A food aid delivery awaits distribution at Port Sudan. Fifteen percent of Sudan's population depends on international food aid for survival

2. **Build capacity at all levels of government and improve legislation to ensure that reconstruction and economic development do not intensify environmental pressures and threaten the livelihoods of present and future generations.** The new governance context provides a rare opportunity to truly embed the principles of sustainable development and best practices in environmental management into the governance architecture in Sudan.
3. **National and regional government should assume increasing responsibility for investment in the environment and sustainable development.** The injection of oil revenue has greatly improved the financial resources of both the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan, enabling them to translate reform into action.
4. **All UN relief and development projects in Sudan should integrate environmental considerations in order to improve the effectiveness of the UN country programme.** Better coordination and environmental

mainstreaming are necessary to ensure that international assistance 'does no harm' to Sudan's environment.

The way forward and the UNEP Sudan country programme

This report's 85 detailed recommendations include individual cost and time estimates, and nominate responsible parties for implementation. While they envisage a central and coordinating role for the environment ministries of GONU and GOSS, the wholehearted support and participation of many other government ministries and authorities, as well as several UN agencies, are also needed. The total cost of the recommendations is USD 120 million with expenditure spread over five years. UNEP considers that the majority should be financed by GONU and GOSS, with the balance provided by the international community.

For its part, UNEP plans to establish a Sudan country programme for the period of at least 2007-2009, and stands ready to assist the Government of Sudan and international partners in the implementation of these recommendations.