



**Friends of
the Earth**

How to: put environmental justice into campaigns

The poorest people are most likely to live in bad housing, near the busiest roads and in the shadow of the most polluting factories – but green campaigners can do something about this. Environmental Justice Programme Manager Stuart Parkinson helps you find ways to include environmental justice in local campaigning

What is environmental justice?

Environmental justice exists when all people:

- live in a healthy environment; and
- have access to enough environmental resources (eg water, food, fuel, shelter) for a healthy life.

It is generally the poor and socially disadvantaged who miss out. But the solutions will come as no surprise to experienced Friends of the Earth campaigners.

Picking the right campaign

Campaigners working on transport, corporate and industrial pollution, climate change or food are best placed to factor environmental justice into their solution strategies.

1 Transport

Poorer communities, both in the UK and other countries, generally suffer the worst impacts from busy roads. As Friends of the Earth's research has shown at Bradford, and other areas, air pollution from traffic is higher in poorer communities. A child in social class 5 (the poorest) is five times more likely to be knocked down by a car than one in social class 1 (the richest). Poorer people - including children and pensioners - are the least likely to drive. In Britain more than half (65 per cent) of the poorest fifth do not have a car. Poorer communities rely most heavily on buses and walking for getting to work, shops, hospital or leisure facilities. Yet these transport modes are often the least well-funded. A recent assessment of the Government's Ten Year Transport Plan found that most spending would benefit the richest because it would go on roads and rail.



I live here: being able to live away from busy roads is a luxury that the poorest groups of people may not be able to afford.

Solution: major improvements are needed in public transport (especially buses); prices need to come down and the quality of service needs to improve. Serious funding also needs to be directed to cycling and walking facilities. Town planning needs to favour these modes over car driving.

How to...Pull-out section

2 Corporations and industrial pollution

Most polluting factories in the UK are sited in poor and socially deprived areas. Friends of the Earth's study of the biggest factories in England found that 82 per cent of cancer causing pollution occurs in the most socially-deprived fifth of communities.

Some big corporations have moved their operations to poorer developing countries as the environmental and social standards tend to be lower. Often these operations are geared to producing goods that are exported to richer countries: hence, the poorer people suffer health problems so that richer people can buy consumer items like the latest electronic must-have.

Solution: everyone in society has the right to live in a healthy environment (see box on Aarhus, page 14). Friends of the Earth is also calling for big business to comply with the same high environmental and social standards worldwide.

3 Climate change

Climate change is being caused by emissions of greenhouse gases, mainly from the burning of coal, oil and gas, together with deforestation. Most emissions are from the richer, industrialised countries. For example, over the past 150 years approximately 80 per cent of the emissions of the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, have come from richer countries. But it is the poorest countries that are suffering and will continue to suffer the worst effects. Almost all people killed in climate-related disasters over the past ten years have been from poorer, developing countries. These nations have also had to deal with increased droughts and flooding (in different areas and at different times), reduced crop yields, and a surge in tropical diseases.

Solution: to deal with climate change, richer countries need to adopt cleaner technologies such as renewable energy, and more sustainable lifestyles such as using public transport, cycling etc. At the same time, assistance needs to be provided to developing countries both in dealing with the extreme weather conditions and with installation of cleaner technologies. See feature on climate equity on page 19.

4 Food

One in seven of the world's population is malnourished. Yet, if equally distributed, enough food is produced every year to feed everyone comfortably. The problem is that food is not evenly distributed. Poverty, political persecution and war prevent many communities getting enough food, whilst richer groups consume a lot of the types of food which require large areas to produce (eg beef). A major cause of poverty in developing countries has been the way in which small farmers have been marginalised by the drive for export-led agriculture.

Solution: we need to move much further towards a food economy based around local production for local consumption, using environmentally sustainable methods as outlined in Friends of the Earth's publication *More from less* (order via publications catalogue on www.foe.co.uk or call 020 7490 1555, ref: T485).



Low tech farming: a booming local food economy provides high quality, fresh, safe food while securing local employment.

Ian Jackson/Friends of the Earth

Social deprivation

Facts and figures

A straightforward example of when environmental and social damage go hand-in-hand is in the siting of a proposed new road or factory. These will often be in a socially deprived area – richer people tend to have the political clout to make sure such projects are not considered in their area. Make it a rule to find out the level of social deprivation in the area in which the project is going to be located. The Government compiles the Index of Multiple Deprivation for England and Wales (but not yet for Northern Ireland) – a combination of indicators including income, employment and health (but not yet environmental quality – although this is about to change), compiled at ward level. Find this by looking at the Government's neighbourhood statistics website [see how to use this on page 14].

Tip: if the site is socially deprived, then you can make this argument in your campaign. It is also worth trying to build links with community groups in that area, which may be sympathetic.

Working with communities

Working on environmental justice issues may involve working with people for whom the environment is remote or for whom problems such as health or unemployment are far more pressing concerns. Be sensitive and follow the steps below:

Step 1

Find out which community groups are active in the local area. Find these by looking up all the community centres in a particular area in the phone book, and then phoning them (or better still visiting) to find out which groups are based there and which might be interested in working in partnership with your campaign.

Step 2

Phone the groups you've selected, and find out how they feel about the issue. Avoid using jargon that they might not be familiar with (eg environmental justice) Be sure to incorporate their views/ ideas into your campaign: this is a partnership.

Sticky questions

The most common conflicts that arise between environmental and social priorities tend to be the trade-off between jobs and tax

- **Cutting pollution will cost jobs.** It is true that some jobs in certain heavy industries will be lost by cutting pollution – so in areas of social deprivation, it is very important to be sensitive to this argument. However, there is much employment potential in cleaner industries and practices. For example, renewable energy generally employs more people per unit of energy produced than fossil fuel or nuclear, whilst energy efficiency measures (eg insulating buildings) can also create a lot of jobs.
- **Taxing pollution or energy will hit the poor hardest.** A common policy option for tackling pollution is to tax the emissions of the pollution or the energy use that leads to that pollution. This can hurt low income people if it is not done thoughtfully. For example, taxing domestic fuel in order to tackle climate change can increase fuel poverty (ie the number of people who can't afford to heat their homes in winter). But providing grants so people can properly insulate their houses can meet both objectives.



Jennifer Bates/Friends of the Earth

Girl on a swing or girl by a pylon?: think before you speak.

Tip: be sensitive about how you describe an area and its community. People do not like to be told that their area is poverty-stricken/ dirty/ a slum. So use less emotive terms such as low income or air quality problem or socially disadvantaged.

Step 3

Hold a meeting with interested groups to discuss the campaign, and together agree common aims, strategy and tactics.

Aarhus: making environmental justice a right

The UK (and European Union) has recently become a signatory to the Aarhus Convention which defines a set of environmental rights. Currently legislation is going through Parliament which will define three basic rights:

- The right to information on environmental quality
- The right to participate in decision-making on environmental issues
- The right to access justice on environmental issues via the courts

Once legislation is in place (probably 2003) individuals and communities will be able to take legal action to ensure their local environment is kept healthy.

More on the Aarhus Convention at www.unece.org/env/pp/.

Find out more

Finding out the level of social deprivation for a local area

The Government's Neighbourhood Statistics Service website is the place to find out about social deprivation (and other statistics) for a particular area in England and Wales go to www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/.

Tip: for England, the data is straightforward to locate – using the home page map of the UK

click on the region you want, then the local area. This will give you a list of all the wards in that area. Select the ward you want and click on “key stats”. You’ll get a table – look at the “Indices of Deprivation” figure – anything less than about 2000 is socially deprived. Information is more complex for Wales, contact Stuart Parkinson or Simon Bullock for help if you need it on 020 7490 1555.

Useful books

Environmental Justice: rights and means to a healthy environment for all (2002) download from www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/environmental_justice.pdf

Environmental Justice: mapping transport and social exclusion in Bradford (2001)

FOE report, using a case study in Bradford, that illustrates how the negative impacts of traffic and the problems of limited access to public transport are mainly felt by the poor. Download from www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/env_justice_bradford.pdf

Redressing the balance: working towards environmental justice in Scotland (2002)

A series of handbooks which include useful information on local campaigning for environmental justice. Order from Friends of the Earth Scotland: <http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/pubs/>

Websites to bookmark

Factory Watch at www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/industry_and_pollution/factorywatch/

Friends of the Earth's website enables you to look up what pollutants are being emitted from local factories, which shows how the most polluting factories tend to be sited in the poorest areas.

UK Environmental Justice Network: co-ordinated by Capacity Global, see www.capacity.org.uk/ Monitoring poverty and social exclusion is at www.poverty.org.uk/ New Policy Institute and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's useful background facts and figures on poverty.

If you don't have web access call 020 7490 1555 for printed copies.