

# Poverty, justice and the environment



**Friends of  
the Earth**



# Our unequal world

## Why a healthy planet is better for everyone

A flourishing planet can provide for all our needs. Its minerals, fabulous wildlife, forests and seas should mean at the very least clean air and water, safe food, energy and shelter for everybody.

But our natural world is under severe threat. For decades we've been over-exploiting the land and oceans, and we've pumped so much pollution into the air that we're actually changing the weather. The root cause of our environmental problems – a skewed approach to economics, and business that puts profits first – is also deepening inequalities. Across the world it's the people with least power and money who are worst hit when the environment is damaged – and they're not getting their fair share of the benefits.

That's environmental injustice – and it's found in many forms. In the UK, people in the poorest neighbourhoods are the most likely to be living with pollution from factories and traffic. Globally the richer countries are using up more than their fair share of natural goods like energy, water, timber and minerals. And future generations – who have no say in the matter – could inherit a world of health problems and depleted wildlife because we're not doing enough today to protect the environment.

**This booklet shows why a thriving natural world goes hand in hand with a decent quality of life and fair shares for all. It offers ideas about what you and your family can do to keep the environment safe today and for generations to come.**



Did you know

**In the last decade of the 20th century, 99 out of every 100 people killed in climate-related disasters lived in poorer countries. Three-quarters of the greenhouse gases causing climate change come from the rich industrialised world.**

**Indonesia's 40 million indigenous people are losing their lands as rainforest is destroyed by logging and oil palm plantations. The products of these industries are mostly consumed in the rich countries.**

**Over 1 billion people survive on less than US\$1 a day. The richest 20 per cent of the world's people consume 86 per cent of its resources. Some of the poorest have to survive on waste.**



Digital Vision

# A world out of balance

## Tipping the scales in favour of people and the planet

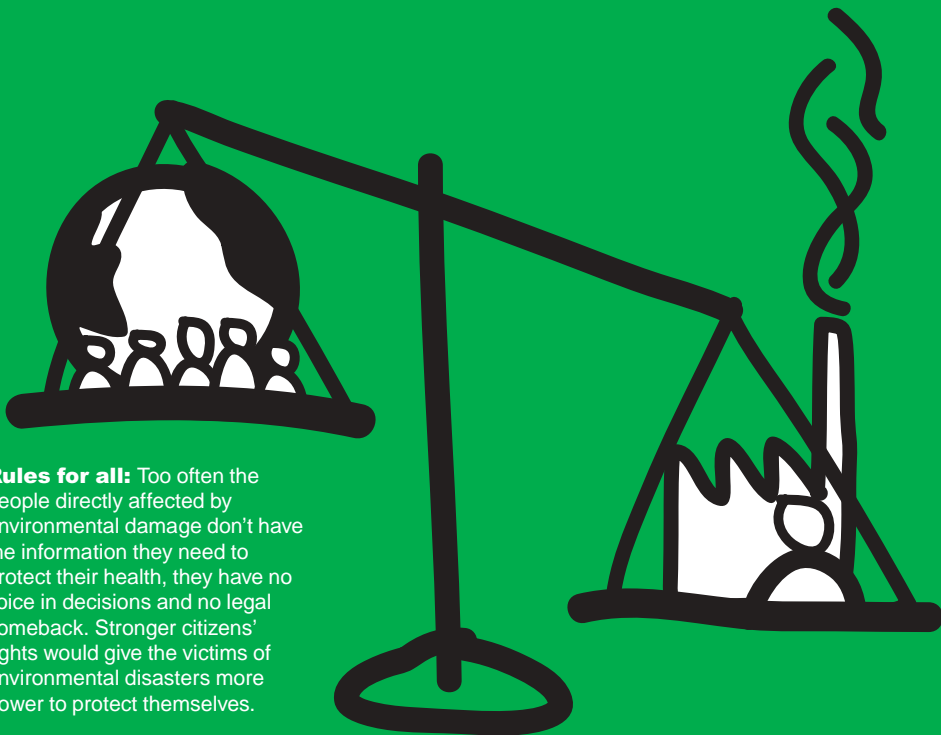
Each of us has a right to live in a safe and healthy environment without having a negative impact on other people in the UK or elsewhere – now or in future. That's environmental justice.

### **Changing climate:**

Dangerous climate change is hitting people least able to cope. The world's richest countries could start to create a safer environment for everyone by drastically reducing their emissions of greenhouse gases.

**Better company:** People living near factories and chemical refineries around the world see more than their fair share of illness. If companies were legally obliged to take greater care of their neighbours, the environment would be cleaner too.

**Way to go:** Children from poorer communities are five times more likely to be killed in road accidents than those from richer areas. Improving public transport makes for a better environment, and can help make roads safer too.



**Rules for all:** Too often the people directly affected by environmental damage don't have the information they need to protect their health, they have no voice in decisions and no legal comeback. Stronger citizens' rights would give the victims of environmental disasters more power to protect themselves.

**Wasting less:** Our rubbish mountains are storing up hazards for local communities and future generations. Producing less waste and cutting consumption of raw materials will reduce the damage being done to the planet and people.

**Healthy eating:** Much of our food travels thousands of miles at huge cost to the environment, while farmers get a tiny part of the profit. More locally produced and organic food would mean a fair deal for producers, a healthier planet and more nutritious food all round.

**Trading up:** Small-scale farmers and local communities around the world are squeezed by economics that put profits first. Global trade rules should ensure the needs of people and their environment come first.

# Environmental justice – who needs it?

People with least money and power tend to take the brunt of environmental problems. The UK Government recently acknowledged for the first time the links between poverty and the environment. Its Index of Deprivation 2004 used air quality, road accidents and access to essential services as measures of poverty.

Friends of the Earth's own research on transport influenced this shift in thinking. We found that there was more traffic and pollution in poorer, inner city neighbourhoods, causing more road deaths and breathing problems than in wealthier areas. And inadequate public transport in areas like this often makes it difficult for people to get to work, to the shops, schools and hospital.

It's not just in our inner cities that environmental damage takes its toll. Around the world people's livelihoods, health and homes are blighted by widespread industrial pollution, intensive farming and deforestation. When Hurricane Mitch struck Central America in 1998 mudslides destroyed thousands of rural homes because logging had stripped hillsides of forest cover, weakening the structure of the soil. As a result of climate change, by 2050 the equivalent of Britain's population could lose their land or homes in India and China, and rising sea levels could displace 15 million people in Bangladesh alone.

And future generations have no say in what we are doing to the environment today. Our bodies are now contaminated with more than 300 man-made chemicals – an unpredictable legacy for our children and grandchildren. Toxins in pesticides could have a long-term impact, increasing rates of cancers, hormonal imbalances and early puberty.

**We should all have a healthy environment. Healthy homes, streets, neighbourhoods, villages, cities and wild places. But not at someone else's expense.**

Did you know



**In Bhopal, India, it was people living near the Union Carbide chemical plant who were hardest hit by a chemical leak in 1984. The accident killed some 8,000 people within three days and claimed 20,000 more lives in the years that followed.**

**Dean Axford lives near the Wilton chemical complex in Teesside, north east England. "In Dormanstown you'd come out of the house and this filth would be on the car, everywhere. There's lots of asthma around, my brother is 32 and can't walk with it. We cannot be poisoned without any comeback. Our environment is as important as anyone else's and it's worth fighting for."**

Mandica Zagrović/Friends of the Earth



**People in some of the world's poorest countries, like Mozambique (pictured), are already being hit by flooding and other severe weather events that are predicted to increase with climate change.**



# Tricky business – rules rigged against the poor

There is a yawning gap between the world's rich minority and the increasing numbers of poor people. Yet global trade rules and the growing power of big business over governments are doing little to make life better for the world's majority. Corporate-led globalisation is draining wealth and resources from the poorest countries and concentrating it in the hands of a few in the richest.

Winning a healthy environment and decent quality of life for everyone means persuading governments and big business of the long-term benefits of environmental justice.

Big businesses have little incentive to respect the rights of the communities where they operate. Energy giant BP is laying a pipeline across Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey to carry crude oil from the Caspian to the Mediterranean. As it flows to fuel western economies the oil threatens to leave a trail of political instability, damaged ecosystems and displaced communities. Yet BP has won agreements exempting it from environmental and labour laws that might reduce its profits.

Global bodies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) finance major projects like dams, oil pipelines and mines that threaten local water supplies, land, homes and people's livelihoods. Since 1992 the World Bank has poured more than US\$10 billion into oil and gas extraction. A Christian Aid report in 2003 said: "the presence of oil in a developing country makes life worse, not better, for the people who live there – particularly the poorest people".

**Governments – under pressure from big business – are deepening inequalities and failing to protect people and the planet. It's time for a change.**

Did you know



**Under World Trade Organisation rules, governments can be penalised if, in trying to protect local businesses or the local environment, they get in the way of so-called free trade.**

**Just 500 big companies now control two-thirds of world trade. It's their agenda that prevails not that of people and the environment.**

**"The Earth was not given to us for anyone to monopolise and dominate and destroy. It was given for life, food, clothing and shelter. Without the air, water and land we all suffer." – Margie Richard, campaigner for justice for US communities affected by industrial pollution.**

Nick Cobbing/Friends of the Earth



**While foreign companies have made huge profits from Nigerian oil, local people have seen little benefit but plenty of problems – from spills to burning of waste gas (pictured) and violent conflict.**



# Fair shares

The good news is that there are clear ways to tip the scales in favour of people and the environment.

To start with, governments should regard the environment and people's needs as goals that can be met at the same time. For example communities should be consulted about their transport needs, money should be put into better public transport, which would help reduce traffic, improve road safety, cut pollution and create jobs too.

Economic policies that focused on managing the world's resources more wisely would be better for people and the environment. Friends of the Earth is campaigning for governments to agree global rules that protect the planet and give local communities priority over so-called free trade. Strong and binding laws could make corporations responsible for their impact on communities and the environment worldwide.

Perhaps most important, people affected by environmental damage need to know their rights and be able to exercise them.

In Teesside in the north east of England, one of the UK's most deprived areas, the Wilton chemical complex pumps out more than 700 tonnes of cancer-causing chemicals every year. With Friends of the Earth's support a community centre has been set up and local people now have access to training, research and resources to help them make sure industry hears their voices.

**Environmental justice is fundamental to the work of Friends of the Earth. If taken to heart by big business, governments and citizens' groups at home and overseas, it could change the way the world works.**



Did you know

**Companies working on the proposed Yusufeli Dam in Turkey – which would have affected up to 30,000 people – withdrew from the project after campaigners protested at the likely impact on villagers and wildlife.**

**The Fuel Poverty Act which Friends of the Earth campaigned for means everyone in the UK should have a warm home – through greater energy efficiency, not using more fuel.**

**With Friends of the Earth's support the Longsight Transport Group in a deprived area of Manchester won a new bus service after children complained that their usual bus often failed to get them to school on time.**



www.johnbirdsall.co.uk





**Hartlepool, north east England, has had more than its fair share of industrial pollution. In 2003 local people mounted a successful legal challenge to the scrapping of old US ships in the area – they were worried about the impact on wildlife and health.**

# What you can do

Each of us can reduce our impact on the planet, other people and generations to come by thinking about how we use resources, by polluting less, and by exercising our rights to press for change.

**Climate change:** There are lots of ways to help tackle climate change – and they're all about cutting the amount of carbon dioxide being pumped into the air. You can make your own home more energy efficient by insulating it properly, using low-energy light bulbs and switching to a green energy supplier – one that uses renewable sources like wind, solar and hydro power. Visit [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press\\_for\\_change/choose\\_green\\_energy](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press_for_change/choose_green_energy) for our green-energy league table. If you want to do more you could take Friends of the Earth's Climate Challenge. Phone 020 7490 1555 for details.

Did you know



**The UK Government wants a 60 per cent cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 to avoid dangerous climate change. Achieving this will make life better for everyone today and for future generations.**

**A UK citizen creates more than 100 times as much carbon dioxide as the average citizen of Malawi – yet it is people in countries like Malawi that face the greatest risk from climate change.**



Friends of the Earth has successfully campaigned for doorstep recycling schemes throughout England and Wales. Recycling makes for a cleaner, healthier environment for everyone – particularly people living near waste tips, who tend to be the poorest.

**Transport:** Thinking carefully about how we travel – on holiday, for business or the school run – can help tackle pollution and climate change. Using the car less, going by train rather than short-haul flights, walking, cycling and car-sharing can be easy and fun. You can get advice on the most energy-efficient cars from the Environmental Transport Association ([www.eta.co.uk](http://www.eta.co.uk)). And you can support Friends of the Earth’s campaign for a transport system that puts people and the environment first at [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/transport/press\\_for\\_change/](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/transport/press_for_change/).

**Losing waste:** Many of the things we use every day – like office paper and aluminium cans – are produced at high cost to wildlife, habitats and communities. By buying carefully and reducing the amount of rubbish we produce and throw away, we can help improve the environment for people living near landfill sites and for future generations, and help reduce the amount of natural resources being extracted from the Earth. Visit [www.wastewatch.org.uk](http://www.wastewatch.org.uk), or get a copy of *Don't throw it all away*, Friends of the Earth’s popular guide to reducing waste: phone 020 7490 1555.

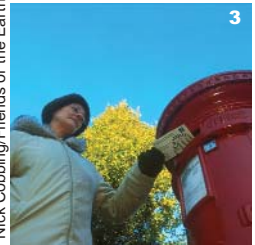
**Toxics:** Some of the thousands of chemicals and household products being produced today are storing up real problems. Try to recycle your batteries (or use rechargeable ones), mobile phones and fridges. Fifteen high street retailers, covering 8,000 individual stores, have signed up to Friends of the Earth’s safer chemicals pledge, committing to phase out risky chemicals from their own brand products. You can support the campaign to get more retailers to sign up at [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safer\\_chemicals/press\\_for\\_change/league\\_table/pledge.html/](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safer_chemicals/press_for_change/league_table/pledge.html/)



Digital Vision



Science Photo Library



Nick Cobbing/Friends of the Earth

- 1** Cycling instead of driving means cleaner air – and it’s good exercise for your heart.
- 2** Better insulated homes would save energy and lives.
- 3** Make your voice heard – join Friends of the Earth and campaign for a cleaner, safer environment.

**Trade justice:** Buying fairly traded products such as coffee, tea, chocolate, cocoa, honey and bananas puts money back into local communities. Farmers get a fair price for their products, enabling them to feed and educate their families. But there's more to making trade fair than buying Fair Trade – you can also join Friends of the Earth's campaign for changes to trade rules at [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global\\_trade/press\\_for\\_change/](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global_trade/press_for_change/).

**Invest ethically:** Through our investments, pensions and mortgages, which provide businesses with the bulk of their money, we can help challenge the more destructive behaviours of big business. Banks like Triodos and the Co-operative Bank offer more ethical pensions, life insurance, ISAs and savings plans. Check with the Ethical Investment Research Information Service at [www.eiris.org](http://www.eiris.org); or phone 020 7840 5700.

Fairly traded products guarantee better income and working conditions for smallholders in developing countries. Look for the Fairtrade Mark.

Banana Stock

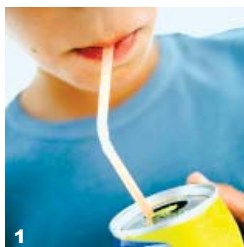


Did you know

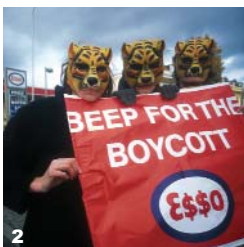
**DIY giant B&Q has pioneered environmental policies in its stores, for example on working conditions in developing countries, without seeing cuts in profits.**

**For the UK to use only its fair share of the world's forest resources by 2050, we need to cut our timber use by 75 per cent.**

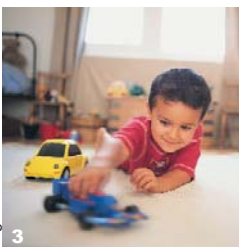
**Environmental protection is not anti-commerce. Draft European Union chemicals regulations would cost less to implement than they would save in health care costs and losses to business.**



Jennifer Bates/Friends of the Earth



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If you want to stop companies destroying the environment and communities in pursuit of profit, you can support Friends of the Earth's Corporate Accountability campaign, by visiting [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/corporates/press\\_for\\_change/join\\_list/](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/corporates/press_for_change/join_list/).

**Real food:** You can help protect the environment, your health and that of farmers by buying locally produced, pesticide-free, organic food where possible. Farmers' markets in your area are good places to find fresh local produce at a reasonable price. You can support the rights of farmers and consumers internationally to say no to GM: sign-up to the Bite Back petition to stop the United States forcing the Europe to accept GM food. Visit [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global\\_trade/press\\_for\\_change/bite\\_back/](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global_trade/press_for_change/bite_back/)

**1** Recycling aluminium cans could help the UK use 90 per cent less aluminum by 2050 – which would be our fair share of this precious resource. And it would avoid the impact on communities where raw materials are mined.

**2** Friends of the Earth has calculated that oil giant ExxonMobil (Esso) has caused between 3.4 and 3.7 per cent of total attributable climate change since 1882. The findings could prove vital to claims against companies by victims of climate change.

**3** Consumer pressure on retailers is persuading more and more of them to phase out risky chemicals from toys, foods and cosmetics – so protecting vulnerable people and future generations.

# Friends of the Earth's work for environmental justice

**Protecting everyone's future by tackling the roots of environmental abuse and its impact on vulnerable people**

The Friends of the Earth network has put the case for environmental justice at the heart of its campaigns. Here's how:



## **The Fuel Poverty Act**

In 2000 the Government admitted there was an average of more than 30,000 needless winter deaths a year because of cold. Since then we and others have won the Fuel Poverty Act, meaning "fuel poverty" among elderly people has fallen sharply and less energy is wasted.

## **Factory pollution and poverty**

In 2001 Friends of the Earth revealed that of the 11,400 tonnes of cancer-causing chemicals spewed into the air by large factories in England, 82 per cent were from factories in the most deprived wards. Since then these emissions have fallen and the Environment Agency is doing its own environmental justice analysis.

## **Friends of the Earth is:**

- working with vulnerable communities to challenge harmful local government and industry decisions.
- working to ensure communities have rights to information and decision making.
- encouraging politicians to place environmental justice at the centre of policy on climate and transport, and to link it to employment, health and overseas development.
- working with Friends of the Earth International to tackle barriers to a safe and healthy environment, including trade rules and weak regulation of dangerous industries.

**Contact Friends of the Earth for more information about our campaign for environmental justice and how to join us.**

Full campaign information, briefings and reports are on our website.

**Information Service:**

Freephone 0808 800 1111

Email: [info@foe.co.uk](mailto:info@foe.co.uk)

**Website:**

[www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/corporates](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/corporates)

[www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global\\_trade](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global_trade)

# Environmental justice directory

## **Black Environment Network**

1st Floor, 60 High Street,  
Llanberis, Wales, LL55 4EU  
Tel: 01286 87071  
[www.ben-network.org.uk](http://www.ben-network.org.uk)

## **Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE)**

Pressing for binding rules to stop companies putting the environment and human rights at risk.  
[www.corporate-responsibility.org](http://www.corporate-responsibility.org)

## **Corporate Watch**

Research and publishing group supporting grassroots and direct activism against large corporations.  
Tel: 01865 791391  
[www.corporatewatch.org.uk](http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk)

## **DEFRA**

Government department covering agriculture and the environment.  
Ergon House, 17 Smith Square,  
London SW1P 3JR  
Helpline: 08459 335577  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
[www.doingyourbit.org.uk](http://www.doingyourbit.org.uk)  
email: [helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## **DTI**

Department for Trade and Industry.  
[www.dti.gov.uk/energy](http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy)  
[www.dti.gov.uk/ccpo](http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccpo)  
[www.dti.gov.uk/renewable](http://www.dti.gov.uk/renewable)

## **Environmental Justice Foundation**

Works to protect the natural world and the people and wildlife that depend on it by linking environmental security, human rights and social need.  
5 St Peter's Street,  
London N1 8JD  
Tel: 020 7359 0440  
[www.ejfoundation.org](http://www.ejfoundation.org)

## **Ethical Investment Research Service (EIRIS)**

Provides research into corporate behaviour for ethical investors.  
Tel: 020 7840 5700  
[www.eiris.org](http://www.eiris.org)

## **Fairtrade Foundation**

Working directly with producers to promote fair trade practices.  
[www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 7405 5942

## **New Economics Foundation**

A think tank promoting innovative solutions on economic, social and environmental issues.  
3 Jonathan Street  
London SE11 5NH  
Tel: 020 7820 6300  
[www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)

## **Our World is Not For Sale**

Network challenging the current model of globalisation embodied in the global trading system.  
[www.ourworldisnotforsale.org](http://www.ourworldisnotforsale.org)

## **Pesticides Action Network**

Campaigns on the toxic effects of pesticides and the alternatives.  
Tel: 020 7274 8895  
[www.pan-uk.org](http://www.pan-uk.org)

## **Trade Justice Movement**

Coalition campaigning for trade rules that benefit poor people and the environment.  
Tel: 020 7404 0530  
[www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk](http://www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk)

## **Sustain**

Alliance for better food and farming.  
94 White Lion Street  
London N1 9PF  
Tel: 020 7837 1228  
[www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)

## **Sustrans**

Practical projects encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport.  
35 King St, Bristol, BS1 4DZ  
Tel: 0117 926 8893  
[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

## **Transport 2000**

National environmental transport campaign.  
[www.transport2000.org.uk](http://www.transport2000.org.uk)

## **Triodos Bank**

Ethical banking  
Brunel House,  
11 The Promenade,  
Bristol BS8 3NN  
Tel: 0117 973 9339  
[www.triodos.co.uk](http://www.triodos.co.uk)

## **Waste Watch**

Promotes waste reduction, re-use and recycling.  
Tel: 0870 243 0136  
[www.wastewatch.org.uk](http://www.wastewatch.org.uk)

## **World Development Movement**

Campaigns to tackle the root causes of poverty.  
25 Beehive Place,  
London SW9 7QR UK  
Tel: 020 7737 6215  
[wdm@wdm.org.uk](mailto:wdm@wdm.org.uk)

# Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people

## Friends of the Earth is:

- **the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation**
- **the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide**
- **a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- **dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

Front cover: Hugh Warwick. Small scale farmers in poorer countries have traditionally used a variety of seeds from one harvest to the next – a system under threat from big-business and genetically modified varieties. Written by Angela Burton and Adam Bradbury. Picture research: Calliste Lelliott. Design and illustration: bwa

## Friends of the Earth

26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ

Tel: 020 7490 1555 Fax: 020 7490 0881 Email: [info@foe.co.uk](mailto:info@foe.co.uk) Website: [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

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