



London Sustainability Exchange

Environmental Justice in London: Linking the Equalities and Environment Policy Agendas

Background Briefing on Environmental Justice for London Policy Makers and Influencers

Prepared by Maria Adebawale, Capacity Global for London Sustainability Exchange

The London Sustainability Exchange (LSx) project "Environmental Justice in London: Linking the Equalities and Environment Policy Agendas" (July-November 2004) has aimed to bring together London's equalities and environmental policy agendas and consider how the concept of "environmental justice" fits within London policy and practice.

The project's recommendations may be found in the report "Environmental Justice in London" at www.lsx.org.uk/programmes/envjustfront_page1721.aspx.

This briefing provides an additional information source for policy makers and influencers on the concept of environmental justice and its importance for addressing equality in London. With links to the key documents available on the internet, it offers an "e-resource" for those needing an introduction to environmental justice.

The briefing is in three parts:

- **Part One:** provides a basic background to what environmental justice is and provides a global perspective
- **Part Two:** offers an insight to environmental justice in Europe and the UK as it relates to relevant policy areas
- **Part Three:** offers a background on the links to the equality agenda in London

Part One

What is Environmental Justice - a Basic Background

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg discussed the global issues of poverty and the environment www.johannesburgsummit.org. It reaffirmed the need to ensure quality of life for the most vulnerable in society. The 1987 Brundtland Report www.aren.admin.ch/aren/en/nachhaltig/international_uno/unterseite02330/ noted that Sustainable Development was the framework for an equitable share of the world's natural resources. Following this and the 1992 Rio "Earth Summit", a number of international laws and United Nations programmes were implemented to address environmental protection and equity. See www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=287 and, more generally, www.undp.org.

Environmental justice is in general about ensuring three things (1) the right to a healthy environment is protected (2) there is no disproportionate negative impact of environmental policies, acts or omissions on minority or indigenous communities and (3) there is access to

environmental information, participation, decision making and justice. See, for example, www.iied.org/docs/wssd/bp_envrights_ftxt.pdf.

Global networks and international projects for environmental justice have been established.

Many environmental justice networks have closely linked environmental justice to disproportionate impacts that are directly and indirectly racist, eg. see www.ejrc.cau.edu/PovpolEj.html.

NGOs at the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban submitted a declaration recognising environmental racism as a violation against human rights and stipulating a programme of international action www.ejrc.cau.edu/NGOEJ.htm. It called for governments "to establish, comply with and enforce international conventions, treaties, laws and polices that ensure the fundamental rights of all people to clean air, land, water, food and safe housing".

Other international projects and networks include:

Pesticide Action Network: www.pan-international.org

International environmental justice exchanges, eg. between South Africa and the United States: <http://saepej.igc.org>

The Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10): www.pp10.org

Earthjustice International Program:

www.earthjustice.org/regional/international/index.html?show=Right%20To%20A%20Healthy%20Environment

United States

In the United States, there is a strong environmental justice movement. It was closely linked to the civil rights movement and predominantly led by grass root Black and Hispanic community groups. The galvanisation of Black and 'people of color' communities is illustrated in an interview with Professor Bob Bullard, one of the US's foremost environmental justice activists www.ejrc.cau.edu/nov99interv.htm. Further examples are given at www.ejrc.cau.edu.

The American EJ movement has been effective in developing grass root community action across the US and creating federal and interstate networks such as the Community Coalition for Environmental Justice www.ccej.org/about.php4.

As a result of the movement's campaign success, "Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" was established. It states "each Federal Agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low income populations".

The campaign and the executive order have helped to influence and develop a number of national and federal programmes with government agencies and community groups. For example

- Transport: the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ej2.htm
- Environmental Protection: the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/nejac/index.html

The US Environment Protection Agency has implemented a number of environmental justice policies and action plans www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/. The EPA plans are made public and are monitored through progress reports for each federal EPA office www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/reports/accomplishments/ej/index.html.

Environmental justice has on the whole been accepted into mainstream policy development and is still an active community action campaign. Awards, training programmes, academic courses, research and funding have all been implemented to develop both government and community responses to environmental justice. For example:

- The Transportation Equity Act: www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/index.htm
- Training programmes and internships: www.eco.org and www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/interns/index.html
- Grassroots awards: Goldman Environmental Prize: www.goldmanprize.org/media/embargoed/
- Youth activism: www.ejrc.cau.edu/ejcc_press_rel.html
- Environmental Justice Centers: www.tsu.edu/academics/law/programs/environmental.asp, www.chej.org
- Funding: There is a specific environmental justice fund (Note – this link is not working at present) www.ejfund.org/welcome.html

Part Two

Environmental Justice in Europe and in the UK – Policy, Projects and Initiatives

Europe

Environmental justice is a growing policy area in Europe. There are a number of European laws and directives that specifically relate to developing access to environmental information, participation and decision making. The 'Aarhus Convention', the UNECE European Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, was agreed at the 1998 Environment for Europe conference www.unece.org/env/pp. The Convention is helping to advance environmental justice issues in many parts of the UNECE region, specifically Europe and the UK.

There are a number of studies that have sought to gain a clearer understanding on how environmental justice relates to the social, legal and cultural frameworks in Europe. Examples include how environmental justice relates to children in Europe www.lshrm.ac.uk/pehru/staff/cstephens.html and perspectives on environment and environmental impacts in multi cultural societies www.ncl.ac.uk/geps/research/soc/current/cultural.htm.

Scotland

Scotland has often been seen as leading on the development of environmental justice policy in the UK. It is closely linked to Scotland's social justice agenda www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/emsjm-08.asp#n30. Campaigning on environmental justice by Friends of the Earth, Scotland www.foe-scotland.org.uk and political support by Scotland's first minister Jack O'Connell have helped to highlight that environmental injustices occur in the UK and need to be tackled. The First Minister made his public commitment to EJ in Scotland in Feb 2002 www.scotland.gov.uk/News/News-Extras/57.

There have been initiatives to train environmental justice activists, campaign for equity in the planning process www.everyonecan.org and investigate good neighbour agreements between industry and local communities.

England and Wales

In England and Wales, the environmental justice agenda is being linked to policy agendas and campaigns relating to sustainable development, social inclusion, liveability, quality of life, access to justice and ecological debt.

DEFRA

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) www.defra.gov.uk/environment/sustainable/ has commissioned a number of research projects looking at environmental justice in England and Wales www.defra.gov.uk/environment/justice/index.htm, specifically in relation to the UK's commitments as a signatory to the Aarhus Convention www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/what_is_sd/transparency.htm.

In the UK Government's 1999 Sustainable Development Strategy 'A Better Quality of Life' www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/uk_strategy/index.htm, the approach to environmental justice was to focus on transparency of environmental decision making and access to information, participation and justice www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/uk_strategy/factsheets/summary.htm.

In 2004, the UK government consulted on the next UK Sustainable Development Strategy www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/taking-it-on/index.htm. Environmental justice was one of the themes within this consultation. A number of organisations were commissioned to consult the wider public on issues relating to environmental equality and justice www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/taking-it-on/outputs.htm. The outputs of the consultation provided responses by Capacity Global in relation to BME communities tackling environmental and social justice www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/taking-it-on/bme.htm and by CIEF on environmental and social justice in the built environment www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/taking-it-on/ice/index.htm. The revised UK Sustainable Development Strategy is due to be published in Spring 2005.

ODPM Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) makes the connection between social inclusion and regeneration and environmental justice in 'A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: A National Strategy Action Plan' www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publicationsdetail.asp?id=89.

The NRU has commissioned research on environmental equality and its links to social inclusion, crime and safety and regeneration. The report commissioned from Brook Lyndhurst on "environmental exclusion" provides an overview on how environmental inequality affects the most vulnerable communities

www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publicationsdetail.asp?id=722&freetext=Environmental%20Justice. It surmises that environmental inequality impacts on many equality policy agendas such as access to open space, crime and safety, improving the built environment and health.

The NRU has also published a practitioner guide 'Achieving Environmental Equity through Neighbourhood Renewal' www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/formatteddoc.asp?id=474.

UK Sustainable Development Research Network

Environmental justice has been addressed by a number of research bodies including the UK's Sustainable Development Research Network www.sd-research.org.uk/sdrguide/category.php?catid=2.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency and Capacity Global mapped UK policy and initiatives to environmental justice in the UK. Their 'Mapping Common Ground' report was published in 2001:

www.capacity.org.uk/default.asp?page=4

The Environment Agency's more recent research conducted by Staffordshire University suggests that deprived communities experience disproportionate levels of environmental threat and may sometimes be more susceptible to the detrimental effects of flooding.

www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/sciences/geography/links/ESR/environmentaljusticeresearchprojects.htm

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/ has published a number of seminal research papers that explore policy links to environmental justice as it relates to environmental and social inclusion. The report 'Rainforests are a long way from here' by Burningham and Thrush (2001) www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/pdf/911.pdf noted that social, economic and environmental issues are inextricably linked for people living in run down neighbourhoods. The report 'Green taxes and charges: Reducing their impact on low-income households' addresses the design of non-regressive green taxes www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/074.asp.

Other UK resources

- General:
www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/sciences/geography/links/ESR/environmentaljusticebibliography.htm
www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/sustainable_development/publications/envjustice/
- Sustainable Development Policy:
www.wmin.ac.uk/cfsd/research.htm
- Pollution:
www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/income_pollution.html
www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/pollution_and_poverty.pdf
- Health:
www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/environmental_justice.pdf
- Transport:
www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/721.asp
www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/env_justice_bradford.pdf
- Regeneration (local environmental clean ups and successful regeneration):
www.jrf.org.uk/pressroom/releases/210102.asp.
- Environmental Courts:
www.ucl.ac.uk/laws/environment/tribunals
www.wwf.org.uk/News/n_0000001166.asp
www.capacity.org.uk/default.asp?page=4

Part Three

Links to the London Equalities Agenda

A range of information resources are given in the "Environmental Justice in London" project report at www.lsx.org.uk/programmes/envjustfront_page1721.aspx.

A sample of the additional resources available about environmental inequalities in London are:

- The GLA's 'Leading the Field' 2004 equalities report asks for the promotion of equality to be mainstreamed into all the London strategies. It notes that this has occurred to date in London's Noise Strategy and open spaces in the London Plan:
www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/equalities.jsp
- The Health in London' 2004 report highlights air pollution (NO2 and PM10) as a high level indicator of health in London:
www.londonhealth.gov.uk/pdf/HINL2004/hilfulreport2004.pdf
- The ALG's 'Liveable London' report highlights work by the London Boroughs to improve local environmental quality:
www.alg.gov.uk/upload/public/attachments/311/ALG%20Liveable%20London_FINAL_.pdf
- The GLA has started to develop a model to enable assessment of the environmental and health implications of London's future economic and demographic development:
www.london.gov.uk/mayor/economic_unit/docs/Enviroseemodelfinalreport.pdf