

# Update

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**Subscription is free – contact the office if you would like to be put on the mailing list.**

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**Maria Adebawale, Director of Capacity Global, introduces the latest issue of Capacity Update.**

**W**elcome to Capacity Update, the newsletter from Capacity Global. Through the newsletter we hope to build capacity and create dialogue, inform debate and raise evidence in policy and research on environmental and social justice.

Capacity Global is an independent think tank and NGO. Our values are based on justice, equality and environmental rights. This means encouraging participation, ensuring access to information and decision making, protecting human rights, eliminating poverty and ensuring everyone is able to live in a healthy environment. We do this through having strong networks within communities, government and NGOs, and by providing well-researched and clearly argued policy analysis, publications and events.

Since Capacity Global was established it has built a reputation for providing a voice to communities in developing evidence-based policy. All our work aims to ensure that there is a 'bottom up' approach. This means offering tools to individuals and groups from socially and economically excluded communities so they can influence policy agendas and projects that have the greatest impact on their lives.

Update is part of our objective to inform and create debate on social justice and environment issues in the UK and globally. I am particularly pleased that Elliot Morley MP, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, has chosen Update to provide an exclusive interview on environmental justice and equality in the UK. The Minister's interview offers a useful overview of how government understands environmental justice and equality. More importantly, it provides a steer on understanding how it aims to tackle environmental injustice in the UK.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Update. If you would like to receive future editions please get in touch with Capacity Global, and don't forget to check the website for all our latest work.

In the meantime... happy new year.

**Maria**

**We are learning more about the differences in the quality of places where people live, partly thanks to the UK Government's own research and policy in this area. Recently Oby Onyekpe interviewed the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Elliot Morley MP, and asked him about a range of topics concerning environmental justice.**

**How would you define environmental justice/equality?**

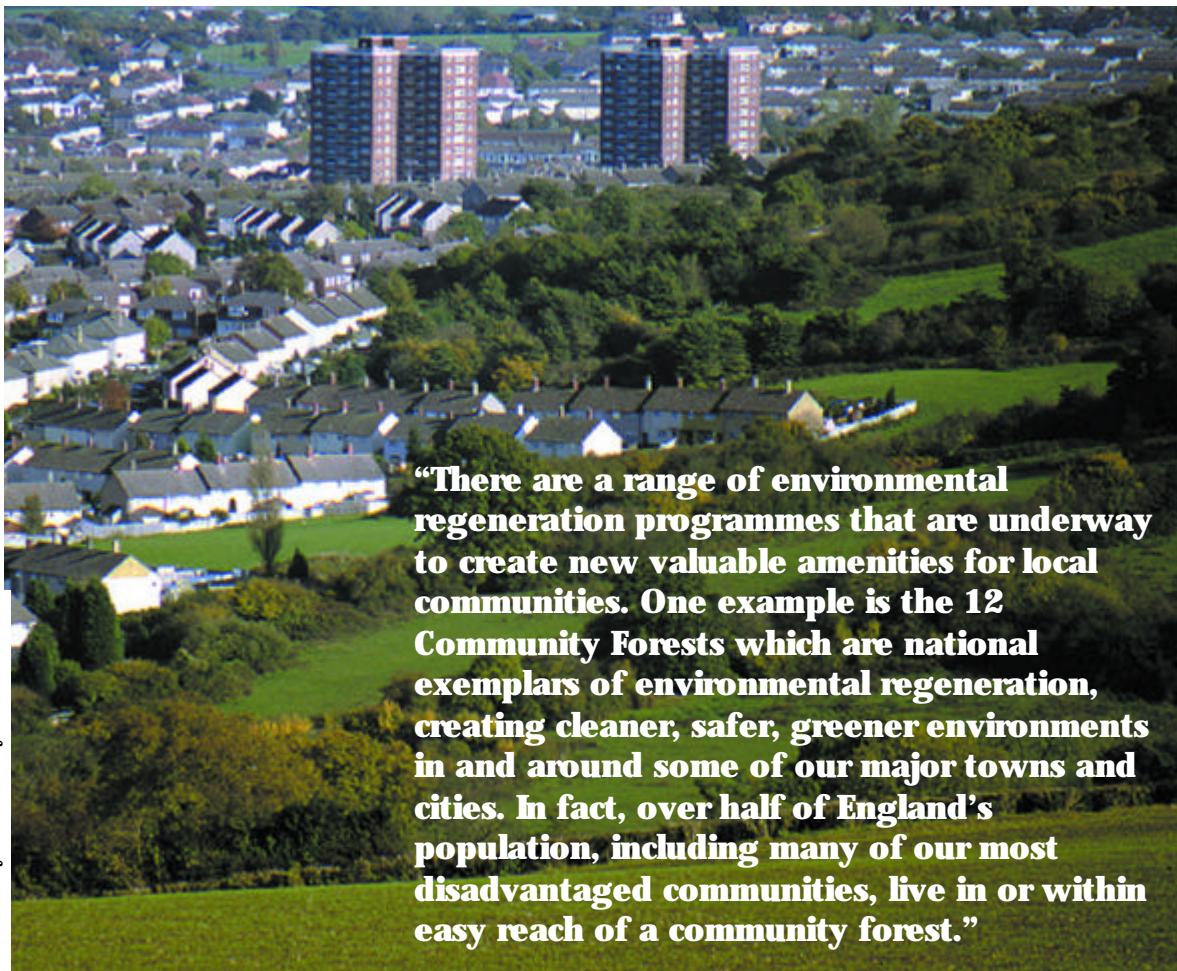
Environmental equity and environmental justice are concepts that can be difficult to define and this has sometimes led to confusion as to their precise nature. We just want healthy environments for all – and we make this an underpinning principle of action for all our programmes to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged by where they live. Then you have environmental equality and justice.

**How serious a problem is environmental inequality?**

We know that, while overall environmental standards are improving, the quality of the environment varies between areas, and that people living in the most deprived areas often live in areas of poor environmental quality, and have less access to resources such as green space. A review commissioned by the Government found that problems of environmental injustice are a real and substantial problem in the UK.

**If that is the case how is the Government planning to address these inequalities in the UK?**

We are committed to improving local environmental quality and ensuring public spaces are cleaner, safer and greener by 2008. A specific objective of our action on neighbourhood renewal is to improve local environmental quality and this focuses on the most deprived areas as identified under the Index of Multiple Deprivation. We are also carrying out longer-term research to identify 'environmental priority



**“There are a range of environmental regeneration programmes that are underway to create new valuable amenities for local communities. One example is the 12 Community Forests which are national exemplars of environmental regeneration, creating cleaner, safer, greener environments in and around some of our major towns and cities. In fact, over half of England’s population, including many of our most disadvantaged communities, live in or within easy reach of a community forest.”**

Photo courtesy of Community Forests

## Five positive changes to look out for



**“We will give local people a bigger say in decisions that affect them and the opportunity to**

**address local priorities, without imposing a ‘one size fits all’ model. You should see more invitations to the public to take part in discussions on their community.**

**“There will be continued improvement in the quality of local authority services and the way they are delivered – including those affecting the local environment like street cleaning and removing abandoned vehicles. So we should see cleaner streets.**

**“There will be a continued improvement in green spaces, with a greater emphasis on improving and sustaining quality.**

**“We will encourage more people to discuss issues around sustainable development such as their local environment and – through initiatives like Environment Direct which we hope to launch next year – to choose to buy products or act in ways that will help us protect the environment for future generations.**

**“People will be able to see which aspects of their local environment are most at risk of degradation through maps of their local area. Communities will be encouraged both to take action themselves and to encourage action from their local service providers.”**

areas’ where there has been ongoing environmental degradation so that we can better target our work.

At the national level we also need to achieve better results from environmental enforcement, and we will continue to work with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders to examine how to deliver this. How communities might be further involved in the enforcement process will also form part of this work.

### **What is being done to improve the dialogue between the Government and the general public?**

We want to enable everyone to participate and have a say in how their neighbourhood is run. We are undertaking research to understand which environmental issues are important at a local level. We will also be holding a series of seminars, which will bring together researchers, policy makers and practitioners, to understand the most effective ways of addressing these issues.

A large aspect of environmental justice is being able to provide the public with information on their environment and provide new ways to discuss issues. The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 came into force on 1 January 2005, to coincide with the Freedom of Information Act. They clarify and extend previous rights to environmental information held by public authorities and some other organisations.

### **How does the Government aim to meet the needs of the most vulnerable communities that are often the main casualties in environmental injustice, for example Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) and economically excluded groups?**

Throughout the Government’s work on environmental inequality, our focus is always on the most deprived areas. We are also aware that in some cases there are particular communities with different needs.

We will be launching Community Action 2020, a range of tools and practical support for networks and individuals who want to tackle issues around sustainable development, including environmental inequality.

We also welcome the work of Capacity Global to address issues of environmental justice and to tackle social and environmental inequalities and promote a healthy environment. Capacity Global plays a strong role in helping us to raise public awareness of issues of social and environmental exclusion and to ensure strong public participation from all communities in designing and delivering solutions to tackle ugly and blighted local environments.

### **The UK is part of the global village – how are we ensuring that we move towards environmental equality for all citizens of the world, wherever they may live?**

We recognise that while we may have created a relatively good quality of life in this country for most of us, we now realise that this may have been at the expense of communities elsewhere in the world.

The Prime Minister put climate change and overseas aid to Africa among the UK’s top priorities for our G8 and EU presidencies in 2005. The high profile the UK has given to climate change,



together with the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol last year, has injected fresh momentum into the international debate.

The UK Government works with a wide range of multilateral organisations, and we also fund specific programmes and initiatives that address environmental equality and related issues. For example, the UK is a founding partner of the Partnership for Principle 10 [see page eight].

“Capacity Global plays a strong role in helping us to raise public awareness of issues of social and environmental exclusion.”

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has a new programme as part of its Global Opportunities Fund called the Sustainable Development Programme. This will be complemented by additional Defra funding under the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Implementation Fund. This will help to deliver commitments from the WSSD and be used to establish sustainable development dialogues with rapidly emerging markets such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa.

All of this work will help the world meet Millennium Development Goal 7 to ensure environmental sustainability.

**This is an abridged version of Capacity’s interview with the minister. The full text is available on the website, [www.capacity.org.uk](http://www.capacity.org.uk).**

# Sowing seeds for environmental justice

**Government commitment to environmental justice is critical. But action everywhere is what will force change to improve poor environments and create more inclusive processes. Capacity Global is targeting a number of different areas – research, policy, audience development, training and advocacy. This article provides a taster of the kinds of projects Capacity is currently working on.**

## Research

There are currently few opportunities for scientists, engineers and social scientists to work with local communities to address their environmental and sustainability needs. People from these different groups often talk about problems in very different ways and bring very different sets of experiences and expectations to the table.

In collaboration with the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) and the Centre for Sustainable Development at the University of Westminster, Capacity has set up the Citizen Science for Sustainability (Suscit) project. The three year programme, funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences and Research Council (EPSRC), seeks to provide local communities with a greater say in how priorities for environmental and sustainability research are defined. It is designed to develop closer links between researchers, sustainability practitioners and local citizens, in particular from black, minority and ethnic (BME) communities as well as socially and economically excluded groups.



Photo courtesy of CSD, University of Westminster

Photo courtesy of IWWC



### **Audience development**

Recently the London Wetland Centre, a popular tourist attraction in Barnes, south west London, commissioned Capacity to assess the barriers and opportunities for public access to the centre. Capacity organised a visitor survey to analyse the current visitor profile. We compared the results to the available data for the Greater London area and identified those groups currently under-represented among visitors. We then specifically targeted these groups to find out what they thought about the centre and why they hadn't visited. The findings provide an insight into what motivates people to use environmental attractions, and how inclusive marketing campaigns are.

### **Policy**

Capacity has played a key role in developing robust policy in social and environmental justice. Our work for, among others, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Green Party, the London Sustainability Exchange and Defra (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) has created an evidence base for environmental justice and equality policy. We have written policy papers to assess the public need for an environmental court in England and Wales and to define the role of environmental justice in the UK. Capacity also continues to provide a forum for marginalised communities to influence policies that impact on their lives, their environments and their neighbourhoods.



### **Advocacy**

The environment sector is increasingly being questioned about how it operates in a multicultural and diverse society. Capacity has been a strong advocate for developing environmental policy and practice that tackles social justice issues. With the support of Defra, Capacity recently established the Diversity and Environmental Equality Network (DEEN). This network follows on from consultations which identified that there is a need for a body which promotes diversity in the environment sector and social equality. DEEN provides a forum for organisations and individuals involved in environmental justice to examine research, policy and good practice, and to share and discuss ideas.



### **Training**

Capacity holds regular international training seminars with the British Council on environmental democracy and governance. Participants work in government, NGOs and the private sector. The seminars offer valuable forums for delegates to exchange experiences, best practice and new ideas for tackling environmental problems nationally and globally. During the week of the seminar, participants have extended periods where they are able to discuss their 'real life' situations with other delegates. Capacity will also be training environmental justice 'community leaders' with Friends of the Earth Scotland under a three year programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

# Black and green: towards new strategic partnerships?

**The environment sector has been criticised for not embracing issues that concern black and ethnic minority (BME) communities. Charanjeet Sall reports on a House of Lords seminar that aimed to change all that.**

On Tuesday 22 November 2005 the House of Lords was the venue for a packed seminar organised to promote and discuss Capacity Global's report **BME communities: tackling social and environmental justice** (download a copy at [www.capacity.org.uk](http://www.capacity.org.uk)). The audience was a mix of representatives from well recognised environmental and black and ethnic minority (BME) organisations.

The seminar, called **Black and green: integrating race into the environment agenda**, was hosted by Lord Adebawale and highlighted Capacity's advocacy work on promoting diversity and the environment. Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), and Wilfred Emmanuel Jones, CEO of The Black Farmer, were the guest speakers and had their own take on why BME communities feel 'excluded' within the environment sector.

## **Environment: it's not just about the countryside**

Of course, 'the environment' is a notoriously vague concept. One participant argued that "the environment is not just about biodiversity, but what you see when you open the door". This point was supported and reinforced by Trevor Phillips who felt there was a danger that we were now in a situation where nothing is allowed to "change the environment and those who are close to it". He felt that the current definition is too narrow. People automatically associate the environment with an unchanging society.

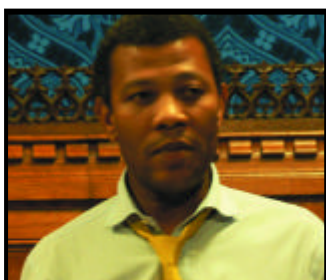
Research has shown that members of disadvantaged communities are four times more likely to be from black and ethnic minorities. There are

"We need to integrate race into environment policy"



**Participants at Black and Green, the Capacity Global seminar**

“The environment is not just about biodiversity, but what you see when you open the door”



Wilfred Emmanuel Jones, Chair, The Commission for Racial Equality (above) and Trevor Phillips, Chair, Commission for Racial Equality (above) spoke at the recent Capacity Global House of Lords seminar

negative health effects of living in these poor environments, such as lack of access to clean air and decent housing. These health issues cannot be disconnected from the environmental ones. Greater understanding of this will prompt organisations to look at the ‘wider picture’.

#### **Integrating race into the environment agenda**

Trevor Phillips argued that individuals should not have to undertake “heroic” acts to socially integrate. Instead it must be made possible for people, whatever their background, to live in rural as well as urban areas.

Wilfred Emmanuel Jones, who is popularly referred to as ‘the black farmer’, is aiming to help this process. He has established a scholarship scheme for young people from BME and excluded communities so that they can experience rural and farm life. The objective behind this has been to educate and train young minds by allowing them to have the choice to learn about rural communities as well as urban life. He focuses on offering them the opportunity of integrating and adapting to a different way of life.

So far, this scheme has been a success. Wilfred has received positive feedback from young black people as they feel able to voice their opinions about the quality of the area they live in. The name ‘black farmer’ has become a food brand in its own right (the sausages are particularly sought after). His success demonstrates that black people can become part of the mainstream. The scholarship scheme has, in lots of ways, restored the identity and confidence of the individuals taking part. We will all be able to see the benefits when Channel 4 screens a documentary on the scholarships later this year.

#### **Barriers to change**

The speakers agreed that social inclusion and wide diversity in environmental policy decision making are the ultimate goals. However, there are currently major barriers to achieving these.

Insufficient funding in the environmental sector acts as a barrier to BME communities becoming more involved in decision-making processes. In addition there is a lack of understanding between the two sectors about what the other does, and how mutually related their work actually is. There is also a lack of a diverse work force (staff and volunteers) in environmental NGOs and organisations.

#### **A new black and green strategic partnership?**

For Trevor Phillips, overcoming these barriers will require organisations to be bold and precise about what actions need to be taken, and to then actually carry them through.

But they can’t operate in isolation. The environmental sector needs to work with BME communities so that it better represents the needs of all of civil society. With constant regulation and monitoring, this could lead to a more ‘sophisticated’ environmental sector for the UK.

In a nutshell, we need to integrate race into environmental policy. The next step will be to begin a dialogue which can lead to effective strategic action plans being founded and developed between the environment sector and BME communities.

# Turning principle into action

**What happens to the promises of big international gatherings like the Earth Summit of 1992? Christoph Schwartz traces the evolution of one commitment in Rio from principle to, 15 years later, global partnerships and action.**

In 1992 at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit 178 governments committed to an idea. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration states that 'environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level'.

A decade later, in 2002, 100 governments reaffirmed this principle during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. In order to translate it into action they founded two partnerships: the Partnership for Principle 10 and The Access Initiative.

The **Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10)** provides a forum for the implementation of practical solutions. PP10 partners include governments, international institutions and non-governmental organisations. Upon joining, all PP10 partners make specific commitments and agree to a set of shared commitments to improve access and participation in their country.

**The Access Initiative (TAI)** is a global coalition of civil society organisations. TAI has developed a set of indicators that civil society groups can use to assess how well their governments are performing at providing access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters. PP10 will use the findings from TAI assessments to improve the national and local application of Principle 10.

Capacity Global is the national NGO coordinator for both partnerships and organised research, training and community consultations for the implementation of Principle 10 in the UK. It recently hosted the PP10 Committee of the Whole meeting in London at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, attended by more than 80 delegates from all over the world, and prepared the TAI Regional Meeting for Europe in Warsaw, Poland.



**A recent PP10 meeting in London**

After three years both initiatives are moving from the start-up phase into the next stage of their development. The UK government has been instrumental in establishing the initiatives and funding TAI country assessments abroad. However to date there has not been a national assessment in any 'old' European democracy or the USA. Capacity is therefore trying to raise money for a national assessment in the UK. Within TAI and PP10 Capacity has also been campaigning for the stronger involvement of business in the initiatives.

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