



capacity global

living in a clean and healthy environment is everyone's right

One Planet Culture

This month, One Planet Culture features the science-fiction classic, *The Drowned World*, by JG Ballard. The story takes place in a post-apocalyptic environment, where rising waters and increased temperatures have drastically changed the world into a prehistoric swamp.

Whilst we don't face the risk of our planet transforming into the one Ballard described, climate change is real. This factsheet is just an introduction to the problem; to find out more, visit the Capacity Global website and the links included below.

Introduction to climate change

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today. Rising global temperatures have brought about changes in weather patterns, mostly negative.

The rise in temperature is due mainly to the increase of several gases in our atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. The gases trap heat around the earth's surface, similar to how glass traps heat inside a greenhouse; hence the name 'greenhouse gases'.

Whilst levels of these gases fluctuate naturally, it is the emissions from the last 50 years of human activity, such as deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels, that have created an urgent problem. The accumulation of these gases strengthens the greenhouse effect; the more we emit, the warmer it gets.

Why climate change is a big deal

Everyone loves the idea of a hot summer, but we must consider the other consequences. Hotter summers mean more heat-related illnesses and deaths, like in 2003 when the heat wave during 4-13 August caused over 2000 excess deaths in the UK.

We'll see higher winter rainfall and more frequent heavy rainfall. The floods like we saw in August and recent years were caused by increased rainfall. The floods in June and July of 2007 alone caused £3 billion in damages, according to the Association of British Insurers. More rain means higher likelihoods of flooding.

We'll also see rising sea levels and storm surge heights. Flooding and coastal erosion will affect people living in low-lying areas like East England, the East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber. Higher sea levels mean thousands of people at risk of losing their homes.

And this is just in England. Low-lying countries such as Bangladesh and the Netherlands face catastrophe if sea levels rise as predicted. Higher temperatures expose millions more people to

diseases like malaria as infected mosquitoes shift to different areas. Crop yields are expected to drop significantly around the world and droughts are likely to be more frequent.

In short, we need to act now

As an individual and as part of your community, you can change your behaviour and make choices for a more sustainable lifestyle. You can take action at home and at work to save energy and resources, shop ethically, travel wisely and care for your local area.

This is how Capacity Global and the Every Actions Counts (EAC) programme can help. We provide advice and support to voluntary and community organisations which are looking to reduce their impact on the environment and tackle climate change.

There are many things you can do to become more sustainable, but here are a few ideas:

- **Turn off the lights when you leave the room, and switch off electrical appliances at the wall.** Around 25% of our carbon dioxide emissions come from heating and lighting our homes and the energy used for household appliances.
- **Insulate your roof and cavity walls.** You can cut your heating costs and the associated emissions by up to one-third!
- **Remember the 3 R's: reduce, reuse, recycle.** Reducing your consumption, reusing old-but-still-good items, and recycling anything that is recyclable will reduce the need to produce things from scratch, which will save on emissions.
- **Buy seasonal, locally-produced food, or better yet, grow your own!** The fresh seasonal food available at local farmers' markets is not only more flavourful and healthy, but is often better for the environment than what is available at the supermarket.
- **Walk or cycle as much as possible.** Not only will you reduce your emissions, but the regular exercise will help keep you fit!
- **Consider alternatives to flying.** A return flight for one person from London to New York produces the same amount of emissions as a year of driving for an average car in the UK!
- **Tell your family and friends to become more sustainable too!** As individuals, we may not think we can do much good by ourselves, but collectively, we have the power to change the world. Become an Every Action Counts Community Champion and spread the word!

For more information

If you're interested in learning more, visit the Capacity Global and Every Action Counts websites:

www.capacity.org.uk

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk

To find an EAC Community Champion in your area, or to learn more about becoming one, contact Claire Lyon at BTCV on 01302 388 841 or email c.lyon@btcv.org.uk.