

TAKE ACTION GUIDE

Downloading this page is your first step to taking action.

The best thing you can do to make changes in your world is to inform yourself and other people about the issues you think are important...

www.justfocus.org.nz

Did you know?

Did you know that if everyone on the planet lived like the average North American we would need FIVE planets to live on! Check out www.oneplanetliving.org for ten principles to look after the one planet we have.

Every ton of recycled paper saves almost 1500 litres of oil, 2.7 cubic metres of landfill and 17 trees.

In 2000, nearly 200 leaders from around the world adopted the Millennium Declaration and committed themselves to achieving a set of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which tackle key global issues and outline our responsibility to future generations. See Poverty Take Action guide for more information.

SUSTAINABILITY

What is it?

Sustainability, or living sustainably, means people choosing to live in a way that harms the Earth as little as possible, and makes sure that our children (and all future generations) will have a decent place to live in the future. When many of us hear the word 'sustainability' we think immediately of the natural environment, we think of fresh air, clean oceans, trees, diverse animal and plant species, and a stable climate. These are all fabulous things and they *are* part of it, but sustainability is not just about protecting Mother Earth. A truly sustainable world requires us to look after the people too! The Just Focus crew likes to use the Four Pillars of Sustainability, which are;

- ★ **Environmental responsibility**
- ★ **Economic health**
- ★ **Social equity**
- ★ **Cultural vitality**

If we can achieve these four things then we will have a world worth handing down to the next generation.

Economic health

Some may see money as the root of all evil, but the fact is that the global economy is part of modern life, and a healthy global economy can benefit everyone. However to create an economy that is both healthy and sustainable, we need to do things a little differently than we are now. Economic growth and business development must be held in balance with caring for the environment and workers. International trade rules need to be fairer (and help narrow the gap between the rich and poor), we need to invest more in education, create more employment opportunities, find effective transport solutions and use resources more effectively (that is, do more with less!).

Environmental responsibility

Humans have always adapted to the environment they live in. Many cultures lived in harmony with nature for centuries, protecting and managing its limited resources by only taking only what they needed. However, since the Industrial Revolution we have been taking more and more and **more**. Agriculture has been radically transformed into a huge feeding machine, factories now mass produce everything from computers to clothing, and goods are transported all around the world – consuming loads of resources and energy, and creating pollution and waste. We need to act more responsibly and relearn how to live in harmony with nature and only take what we **need**.

Social equity

The responsibilities associated with looking after the planet and maintaining a healthy economy should be shared by individuals, countries, regions and different social groups. But this is more likely to be achieved if we also share the same opportunities in life. This is not the case today. Poverty and hunger need to be eradicated, human rights must be upheld in all parts of the world and every human being should be able to access healthcare, education, employment, and opportunities to participate in discussion, planning and decision making.

Cultural vitality

Culture makes a huge contribution to building vibrant cities and communities where people want to live, work, and visit. Culture is art, language, history, technologies, practices and customs; it helps make each of us who we are. Culture plays a vital role in supporting social and economic health, through creativity, engagement, exchange and well-being. Cultural diversity is the jewel of humanity and we must protect and CELEBRATE it!

Take Action!

- **Be active.** There are so many things that you can do in your everyday life to promote sustainability. The '3 Rs' are a good start – Reduce, Re-Use and Recycle. Check out Greenpeace's [Only Planet Guide](#) for some practical tips and [25 easy steps towards Sustainability](#), produced by the Ministry for the Environment, has action guides presented by topic, including saving energy and water, on travel and reducing rubbish etc.
- **Learn about the issues.** Talk to people in the community who are actively working towards sustainability. The Sustainability Trust www.sustaintrust.org.nz has a great site on environmental and community sustainability, and their projects in action. The Ministry for the Environment www.mfe.govt.nz and The Sustainable Business Network www.sustainable.org.nz have lots of info on how sustainability relates to the economy.
- **Join an environmental or social justice group.** Organisations like [Oxfam](#), [Trade Aid](#), [WWF](#) are just a few of the many that incorporate sustainability and social justice concepts into their work. There are lots working at the local level in your own community... Find out who they are and check them out!
- **Educate yourself and others.** Talk with your friends, family and community about sustainability issues.
- **Work out your carbon footprint.** www.carbonfootprint.com And then reduce it! Buy local produce, or grow your own, take the bus, turn off appliances etc.
- **Make a movie for The Outlook for Someday competition.** Make a short film about how you see the future unfolding; look at your world through a lens of sustainability. www.theoutlookforsomeday.net
- **Find out if you live in a Transition Town.** Transition towns are whole communities which are pledging to become more sustainable and working together to tackle climate change and peak oil. www.transitiontowns.org.nz
- **There are lots of things you can do to embrace local culture** - Buy local art, go to local gigs and events, learn new things, volunteer, join up and take part in arts organisation, local theatre, choirs, community gardens.

Where can I learn more?

Websites

- Ideas for taking action at home www.sustainablehouseholds.org.nz
- Links, quizzes and local council info on sustainability www.sustainableliving.org.nz
- A social experiment—to live in the heart of New York City while causing no net environmental impact. <http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog>

Just Focus Articles

- [Life after oil – by Hannah Robson](#)
- [Christmas: Treasure or Trash? By Elisabeth Perham](#)

Other Media

- *The Outlook for Someday* is sustainability film challenge for young New Zealanders. Watch the winning entries here and check out the resources The Big Idea and A Maori Perspective on Sustainability. www.theoutlookforsomeday.net
- *The Story of Stuff* is a 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-filled short doco exploring the underside of our production and consumption patterns. www.storyofstuff.com
- *Global Issues: Greening up or green washing?* Available from www.globaled.org.nz/gec_media/files/GI_Iss27.pdf
- *Global Issues: In a world of debt* www.globaled.org.nz/globalissues/view.php?id=145
- *Wa\$tsed* – Ten episodes of the TV series on DVD. Available from the Global Education Centre Library.