

# what do YOU buy in a day?

COFFEE groceries RENT clothes  
LUNCH hair cut bus fare  
new shoes medicine SODA

## \$2/DAY challenge

### Poverty and the Environment

Global environmental justice is movement that addresses a statistical fact: almost half the world's population survives on a mere \$2 per day<sup>i</sup> and that the impoverished live in the world's most polluted environments<sup>ii</sup>. Also, the poor are most vulnerable to natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes and droughts. In response to their chaotic surroundings, the poorest are forced to migrate and resort to survival techniques that exacerbate the problems .

#### Poverty and Environment

Poverty and the environment have a two-way relationship. The environment may provide a source of income for low-income people; at the same time, it may affect their health and access to other opportunities.

Developing countries rely heavily on natural resources. When growth is based on depleting these resources, it is difficult to sustain long term poverty reduction. In rural areas, poor people may be concerned with access and control of natural resources that provide them with adequate food and shelter. In urban areas, the environmental concerns may focus on access to clean spaces.

Environmental damage almost always affects the poor more than the wealthy. The wealthy have adequate resources and safety nets to protect them from the worst ravages of environmental damages. For low-income people living nearest to environmentally polluted or deforested areas, their experience of environmental loss is immediate and direct.

For example:

- Nearly 3 million people die annually from air pollution, more than 2 million from indoor pollution. More than 80 percent of these deaths are those of women and girls.
- Nearly 15 million children in Latin America are affected by lead poisoning.
- As many as 25 million workers—11 million in Africa—may be poisoned each year from fertilizers.
- Desertification costs the world more than \$42 billion a year in lost income.
- About 650 million poor people live on marginal and ecologically fragile lands—affecting their economic livelihoods as well as the state and care of the lands.

It is vital to preserve soil quality, as agricultural land constitutes a large share of natural wealth (51 percent in South Asia, and 62 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa). Failure to invest and protect our natural resources and environment represents a failure of imagination and a failure for the next generation.

However, young people around the world have demonstrated their concern for protecting the planet. In recent surveys, young people have shown that they are more willing than older people to give up income in order to prevent environmental pollution.

And young people have been at the forefront of efforts to reduce carbon emissions, halt climate change, and promote local and national policies to protect the environment.

## Solutions

- Promote U.S. investment in green jobs and green technology domestically and internationally. The U.S. can promote green technology through international development, labor, and environmental programs.
- Cut carbon emissions by 80 percent in the U.S.
- Invest in clean energy.

## Take Action

1. Raise awareness about this issue by participating in AID's \$2 a day challenge.
2. Get your Member of Congress to take part in the \$2 a Day Challenge.
3. Raise awareness of global warming, natural resource, and environmental justice issues and how U.S. youth can promote responsible U.S. leadership on these issues. Go to [www.aidemocracy.org](http://www.aidemocracy.org) for information on how AID could provide your campus with a mini-grant to run a campus campaign on climate change, greening your campus or host a conference or film screening.

For more information about AID and our work on the environment, contact Richard Graves at [richard@aidemocracy.org](mailto:richard@aidemocracy.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Jehan, Selim and Alvaro Umana "The Environment-Poverty Nexus" UNDP; 2002

<sup>ii</sup> Development and the Next Generation; World Development Report 2007; World Bank; Washington, DC; 2007.