

PART -1

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC EQUITY

The activities that follow raise awareness and encourage action regarding economic equity issues. The following specific Earth Charter principles address the economy and can be read as a beginning to each activity in Part 1 and following the reading of the Preamble.

Principles:

3b. Promote social and economic justice, enabling all to achieve a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible.

10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.

10a. Promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations.

10b. Enhance the intellectual, financial, technical, and social resources of developing nations, and relieve them of onerous international debt.

10c. Ensure that all trade supports sustainable resource use environmental protection, and progressive labor standards.

10d. Require multinational corporations to act transparently in the public good, and hold them accountable for the consequences of their activities.

11b. Promote the active participation of women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life as full and equal partners, decision makers, leaders and beneficiaries.

ECONOMIC EQUITY ACTIVITY 1

SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL ECONOMY AND UNDERSTANDING WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

PURPOSE: a- *To build awareness on the reasons why it is essential to support the local economy.*

b- *To understand the principles that guide a local economy mind set.*

c- *To promote behaviors that enrich the local economy.*

SAMPLE MINI-LECTURE: *In the last few decades local governments have tried to attract multinational corporations to bring their business into the local community. The absentee shareholder owners of these businesses have little knowledge or concern for the consequences of their corporate decisions on the local level. Furthermore, studies have shown that often more jobs are lost rather than gained with the opening of a super-retail store such as Walmart or Home Depot. Also, the jobs that are created usually pay less and offer fewer benefits than the jobs they replace.*

What exactly is meant by “local”? What is determined as “local” is decided upon by the people in the community. Rural communities may define themselves by county or multiple counties. City communities may define themselves in terms of the greater metropolitan area and the business district neighborhood.

Determining which businesses are independently owned is not always easy. Is a locally owned Burger King franchise or an insurance agency with a national company and a local office considered independently owned? A locally owned business is one where the owner has full autonomy and local decision-making authority with respect to their business practices. You may want to ask yourself the following questions:

a. *Is the business privately held (not publicly traded)?*

b. *Do the business owners live in the local area?*

c. *Is the business registered in your state, with no corporate or national headquarters?*

d. *Can the owners make independent business decisions regarding name, looks, and*

business practices?

e. Does the business pay its own rent in full, marketing expenses, and other business expenses without assistance from corporate headquarters?

DISCUSSION: *(The guide passes out Handouts A-1 and B1)*

Participants are invited to read the handouts out loud and the guide may ask participants to share in the reading of the handouts. After the handouts are read dialogue can be encouraged with the questions that follow. Participants are also encouraged to explore how this activity relates to the principles read.

Do you already make a conscious effort to use locally owned business? Would you share? Was there a sacrifice involved and is it worth it?

Do you own a local business and if you do, do you have experience of how you feel supported (or not) by your community? As a business owner do you exchange services with other local business owners? Could you do this more?

Are you willing to be inconvenienced a little and go to your local hardware store or building supply store rather than Home Depot and Lowes?

Do you go to locally owned restaurants rather than chain restaurants?

Do you listen to the local media outlets and support them with your donations?

How has this discussion raised your awareness of the significance of a local living economy?

What are some local businesses that you all know about that might be worth supporting?

What are you willing to do differently to support your local economy?

CLOSING: *(The guide invites participants to close their eyes for five minutes, take a few deep breaths, and be in silence. In this silence participants are invited to make a commitment to themselves and to their local community to support locally owned businesses by engaging in some particular new behavior of their choice. After five minutes the guide closes the meeting with a few words of encouragement such as, “Let us support and build the vibrancy of our own community so we can be proud.”)*

HANDOUT A-1

THE BENEFITS OF SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES

- 1. MONEY SPENT LOCAL, STAYS LOCAL-** *A higher percentage of consumer dollars spent in local business (versus in a chain business) have a positive economic impact on the local community. The owners and the employees spend more of their revenues within the local area. This builds a vital economic base the community.*
- 2. LOCAL OWNERS ARE LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS-** *Small local businesses make indispensable contributions to communities and neighborhoods as in the form of in-kind contributions to local charities.*
- 3. LOCAL BUSINESSES OFFER STABLE EMPLOYMENT-** *Local businesses account for the largest share of net new jobs generated each year. The number of jobs provided by global corporations relative to the worlds work force is small. Most job growth comes from local independent businesses. The 200 largest corporations in the world employ less than 1% of the global workforce although they account for 30% of global economic activity (Korten).*
- 4. LOWER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT-** *Generally, local businesses are located in central business districts which have less impact on the local ecosystems compared to larger retailers that require large development projects. These land projects include more roads which results in greater reliance on cars which leads to increased auto emissions. Polluted run-off from parking lots places a greater burden on waterways.*
- 5. TAX REVENUES GO FURTHER-** *Local business require comparatively little infrastructure investment and make more efficient use of public services. The taxes paid by large retailers often do not cover the increase in required public services.*
- 6. MAINTAIN UNIQUENESS-** *Local businesses help to create and enrich a community's distinctive character. Studies show that creative workers and tourists are drawn to one-of-a-kind communities that have dared to be different from cookie-cutter housing developments and cluttered commercial strips.*
- 7. INDIVIDUAL TALENTS AND CREATIVITY IS REINFORCED-** *Supporting local businesses is supporting the cultivation of competent business practices, of imaginative and viable ideas that arise from within the local citizen. This promotes a more vital, creative population that has a higher likelihood of experiencing a strong sense of contentment with life.*

8. A STRONGER SENSE OF COMMUNITY- *When consumers and business owners network among each other in a collaborative manner to support each other's growth a strong sense of community is developed. This diminishes feelings of alienation and fosters feelings of well-being.*

HANDOUT B-1

LOCAL ECONOMY PRINCIPLES

A strong local economy ensures that economic power resides in the neighborhood thus supporting a vibrant community life while developing long-term financial viability.

A LOCAL ECONOMY IS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

-Local communities produce and exchange goods within the region as determined by the needs of the citizens while reaching out to other communities to trade in those products that cannot reasonably be produced at home. These communities value their unique character and encourage cultural exchange and cooperation.

-Local economy public policies support decentralized ownership of businesses and farms, fair wages, taxes and budget allocations, trade policies that benefit the neighborhood and fosters stewardship of the natural environment.

-Local economy consumers appreciate the benefits of buying from close by businesses and are willing to pay a premium price to secure those personal and community benefits.

-Local economy investors value businesses that are community stewards and as such accept a "living return" on their financial investments rather than a maximum return, recognizing the value derived from enjoying a healthy and vibrant community and sustainable global economy.

-Locally sponsored media outlets provide sources of news that are independent of corporate control. Citizens are better able to make informed decisions that is in the best interest of their communities and natural environment.

-Local businesses are independently owned and their owners often value the needs and interest of the community they do business with while building long-term profitability.

Many local businesses strive to:

-Source products from businesses with similar values, with a preference for local procurement.

-Provide employees a healthy workplace with meaningful living-wage jobs.

-Offer customers personal service and useful, safe quality products.

-Work with suppliers to establish a fair exchange.

-Cooperate with other businesses in ways that balance their self-interest with their obligation to the community and future generations.

-Use their business practices to support an inclusive and healthy community, and to protect the natural environment.

-Yield a “living return” to owners and investors.

(Borrowed and adapted from BALLE, Business Alliance For Local Living Economies)

ECONOMIC EQUITY ACTIVITY 2

ENGAGING IN RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

PURPOSE a- To increase awareness of how we unknowingly promote destructive business practices by blind consumption.

b- To educate participants about a value-based spending.

c- To increase awareness of how consumer behavior is a powerful tool that makes a difference.

d- To provide participants with resources to promote responsible consumption.

SAMPLE MINI-LECTURE: *Our consumer behaviors have a great impact on our society and our environment. What we choose to buy and not buy expresses our values regarding clean air and water, good jobs, and a better future for our children. Buying “virgin” paper, for example, sends the message to paper companies that we don’t mind if they cut the last of our old growth forests. If we buy recycled paper (paper made from paper) we send a very different message, one more aligned with sustainable values, that we will not tolerate practices that destroy our forests.*

Our consumer choices have tremendous power over corporations who will do what it

takes to take our money in exchange for the product they make. All we need to do is show them what we want. Every dollar that we spend on a particular product is a vote for that product and the company that makes it. Our money is social capital, a way to make our voices and values heard.

When we spend blindly and mindlessly we could unknowingly perpetuate business practices that pollute the environment or violate human rights in a poorer country. When we spend responsibly we begin to ask important questions about the origin of the product we are purchasing and we begin to align our actions with values that promote fairness and individual/planetary health. How we choose to consume in our personal lives therefore is a powerful and effective way of making a difference in the world.

Responsible consumption refers to the socially conscious mind-set we have before we purchase a product. This mind-set refers to a pro-active frame of mind that sets the stage for wise discernment that considers the good of the whole. Responsible consumers adopt clear values regarding the protection of the environment, the sustainment of human rights, and the promotion of a philosophy of interconnection. They purchase products with these values in the foreground and before making a purchase, ask questions such as, how was this made and what am I supporting by buying this item? The responsible consumer truly put his money where his/her mouth is and transforms values into action.

DISCUSSION: *(The guide passes out Handout A-2 and encourages discussion on some specific ways in which blind consumption impacts the world and some ways to counteract this. After this discussion the guide passes out Handout B-2 and C-2 which can be used to stimulate discussion about how to increase value-based spending.)*

The following questions can be used to promote discussion:

Would you buy products without thinking of their origin and the business practices used to get this product in your hands?

How does it feel to ponder on the idea of where a product came from, to research its company, and inquire about its practices? What reactions do you have when you think of the idea of searching out for “green” companies? All this takes time. Is it worth it?

Would you consider spending a little more money on products that you know are produced with sustainable practices?

Do you think that engaging in a little responsible consumption is better than no

engagement at all? Discuss how every small action is an important first step. Discuss the importance of patience and gradual progress as we become more responsible consumers.

CLOSING- *The guide asks participants to share one responsible consumption behavior they are willing to initiate as a result of today's discussion.*

HANDOUT A-2

THE IMPACT OF OUR BLIND CONSUMPTION

There are several ways in which our blind consumption impacts the world:

A- Consuming fossil fuels by purchasing gas guzzling vehicles, excessive driving, and the use of electricity (when produced from coal) is releasing too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere causing global warming. It is believed that the warming temperatures can cause the alteration of ecosystems, the retreat of glaciers, the melting of ice caps, a rise in the sea level, more destructive storms, and lower crop yields.

Buying hybrid and fuel efficient vehicles, purchasing products that are not transported from other regions, and using energy efficient appliances are consumer behaviors that reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

B- Logging, mining, agriculture, marine fishing, and suburban sprawl of homes and super centers cause great habitat destruction- a great threat to wild life.

Buying organic produce from your local health food store (organic farming prevents soil erosion, saves energy, protects farm workers, promotes bio-diversity, and helps small farms survive) and purchasing most products from locally owned stores contribute toward the protection of ecosystems.

C- Purchasing products from chain businesses supports the exportation of economic revenues outside your local area.

Buying products from your locally-owned businesses means that you are contributing to the vitality of your community's economy because a higher percentage of the dollar you spend stays within the local area.

D- Often companies use cheap labor in other parts of the world to make their products.

These companies often violate the human rights of this labor force by not providing living wages and by offering poor working conditions.

By purchasing “Fair Trade” goods, you are supporting and empowering the people who produce them (The Fair Trade system helps more than 800.000 farmers in 48 countries).

E- The production of cotton is one of the most pesticide-intensive processes in the world. Many useful items take up unnecessary space in landfills. Much of the world’s new clothing is manufactured in sweatshops in poor countries.

Buy second hand when it is possible and purchase organic cotton clothing and sheets.

F- Most household cleaners and pesticides cause the air inside a typical home to be two to five times more contaminated than the air outside.

Buy products that are safe and simple ingredients that can be used in most cleaning situations. Soap, water, baking soda, vinegar, lemon juice, borax, and a coarse scrubbing sponge can take care of most household cleaning needs.

G- Paper products account for about 40% of the municipal solid waste burden in many industrial countries. A big portion of these paper products is packaging.

Refrain from buying paper plates, cups, towels, and napkins and use items that are washable instead. If buying paper products is a necessity buy recycled paper. Always think about how the same item can be purchased with less packaging.

HANDOUT B-2

MORE TIPS ON RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

- 1. Consider the following Earth friendly considerations when buying a product: Is the product made from recycled materials? Can it be recycled? Is it locally made? Is it nontoxic? Is it biodegradable? Is it energy efficient?*
- 2. When possible purchase products that have an EnergyStar rating which means they have met strict government criteria for energy efficiency. (Check the EnergyStar website, www.energystar.gov)*

3. *As often as possible purchase products that are minimally packaged.*
4. *Call the companies that make the products you regularly buy and ask them to consider more Earth-friendly ways of making or packaging the product so that you are more motivated to continue purchasing it. Companies often pay attention to their customers since they want to keep you as a customer.*
5. *Be aware of the times you purchase something to merely feel good. Instead ask yourself if there are other ways of feeling good that do not involve consuming such as offering a service, donating the money you were going to use on your purchase to a charitable organization, or do something kind for someone you care about without buying anything.*
6. *Do an inventory of all the toxic products you have in your home, use them up or dispose of them safely, then purchase Earth-friendly products that achieve the same results.*
7. *Reduce or stop using products that come in aerosol cans. Although harmful chemicals like CFC's have been banned from aerosols, most of them still contribute to pollution.*
8. *Paints, solvents, and cleaning products contribute to indoor pollution. Purchase low solvent paints and less toxic cleaning products.*
9. *Building materials and home furnishings often contain toxic substances. When buying home furnishings steer in favor of untreated fabrics, natural fibers and materials. For renovations used natural, unaltered building materials, non-petroleum-based latex paints.*
10. *Buy recycled paper. When possible buy paper that is labeled "post-consumer waste" which is the stuff people actually recycled not just the trimmings from the paper mill floor. Ask you local office supply stores to carry recycled paper products.*
11. *Buy and eat organic. Organic means the produce has been grown without toxic pesticides and has no dyes or wax coating to preserve it. This is healthier for you and easier on the Earth.*
12. *Broaden your diet and become less dependent on meat. Livestock are usually inefficient ant converting grains and other resources into usable food. Beef requires 16*

pounds of grain to produce just one pound of meat. If you do eat meat consider choosing “free range” or “organic” varieties .

13. Consider purchasing clothing and other items at consignment centers while offering them the clothing you no longer want.

14. Consider gathering a group of neighbors, friends, and colleagues to start a lending and borrowing system whereby items that rarely are used are borrowed among each other.

15. Plant a garden even if it only includes a few number of vegetables. Use compost to build healthy soil instead of chemical fertilizers.

*16. Ask yourself what are some simple non-material pleasures that you would like to have more of in your life. Consider reading the book, **Your Money or Your Life** by Robin and Dominguez which helps the reader re-prioritize activities that come from simple, enriching ventures and time making and spending money.*

HANDOUT C-2

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION SELLING POINTS

Sometimes it is difficult to decide which product is best. To make things easier take this list with you when you go shopping and look to see if the products you are considering follow these criteria.

- contains recycled materials*
- can be recycled*
- doesn't have excess packaging*
- is non-toxic or biodegradable*
- is of good quality and lasts a long time*
- reduces consumption of other materials*
- reduces consumption of water and/or electricity*
- keeps money and jobs in the community*
- is made from fairly-compensated workers*
- uses organic meats, produce, and other ingredients*
- has an energy star rating*
- is Green Seal certified*
- is Forest Stewardship Council certified*

RESOURCES

www.newdream.org

www.metafore.org

paper products

www.coopamerica.org

www.eatwellguide.org

poultry, dairy

www.eatwild.com

dairy

www.esopassociation.org

www.fairtradefederation.org

and safety

www.greenhotels.com

www.localharvest.org

cooperatives

www.oikos.org

www.theorganicpages.org

www.nosweatapparel.com

apparel

www.plasticresource.com

www.socialfunds.com

investing

www.supermarketcoop.com

www.thevegetarianchannel.com

products

*Eco-friendly products
Sustainable woods and*

*Eco-friendly products
Sustainably raised meat,*

Local grass fed meat and

*Employee-owned companies
Companies with fair wages*

*Earth friendly lodging
Farmer's markets and food*

*Green building products
Organic products
Union-made, sweatshop-free*

*Recycled plastic products
Socially responsible*

*Family farm products
Vegetarian and vegan*

ECONOMIC EQUITY ACTIVITY 3

HUMAN CONNECTION AND POVERTY

PURPOSE: a- Understand the importance of connecting with the world on a personal level.

b- Creating ideas on how to combat poverty from a fundamental level.

SAMPLE MINI LECTURE:

In our fast paced world, it is sometimes easy to forget about others. The daily grind often leaves us short sighted. It is becoming increasingly hard to see outside of our own personal problems and situations which serve as daily distractions from the needs of others. As innovators and ushers of the earth, we must be willing to become less self-absorbed and to form meaningful connections with others. The following meditation will be inviting you to step outside of your familiar environment and to put yourself in a place you may have never been. I will be asking you to place yourself in the minds of one of the millions of people in this world living in poverty. It does not matter how much or how little you know about poverty. Statistics, while often handy, often don't reveal the fundamental needs of individuals. Concentrate on the fundamental needs of human life in this mediation. Please be aware that these needs can and should go beyond the need for food and shelter, although these are certainly of great importance. Remember that emotional support and security needs are also essential for human beings.

After the meditation, we will work with Handout A-3. As a group we will be focusing on how, as ushers of the earth, we can best help the world's poverty stricken.

MEDITATION:

This mediation is self-guided and will take about ten minutes. The guide asks the participants to close their eyes, take a few deep breaths and quiet down as much as they can. Then participants are asked to identify and think about all their essential needs. The guide tells the participants to imagine themselves going through a full day thinking about all the basic resources (emotional and physical) which support them and enable them to do what they need and want to do. After ten minutes of silence the guide asks participants to come back and share their initial thoughts after the exercise. The guide encourages them to answer the question, "What is fundamental to life?" As they answer this question the guide writes the answers on a board (Reference answers later).

After they have expressed what they believe to be fundamental, the guide distributes Handout A-3 on global poverty and the handout is read out loud. This handout helps expand knowledge on poverty.

After the reading the guide asks the following questions for discussion:

- 1. What did you learn about how fundamental needs are thwarted in a poor area?*
- 2. Of the needs you identified (written on the board) which ones are met and not met among the poor?*
- 3. What judgments do you make about people living in poverty? Are you aware that research on attitudes towards poor people done in the European Union and in the United States shows that Americans tend to “blame the victim” and perceive poverty to be the fault of the person while European are significantly more likely to see it as the fault of the system?*
- 4. “Throughout history, there have been societies in which people voluntarily gave what they had to a common and collective storehouse. When people believe that they can trust one another to use their collective wealth in ways that would benefit everyone, they are happy to share what they have.” (Politics of Meaning; M. Lerner; 1996) This can apply to personal donations as well as supporting raising taxes to help the greater good. What are your feelings or opinions about that?*
- 5. As we become more conscious of the surrounding poverty in our neighborhoods and globally what can we do, what action can we take? (After participants share their answers the guide can offer the following ideas: join an organization without borders such as Doctors Without Borders, volunteer to teach someone to read, donate money to an organization that fights poverty, offer one’s expertise in an impoverished area).*
- 6. How is it good for each of us to be more aware of poverty when we could easily ignore it exists?*

CLOSING: *The guide reads out loud the list of actions participants came up with offering positive reinforcement for the creative brainstorm of today’s session.*

HANDOUT A-3

The Statistics of Poverty: Quick Facts

Of the world's 6 billion people, 2.8 billion are living on 2 dollars a day. In addition, 44 percent of these individuals live in South Asia. In the next 25 years there is an expected population increase of 2 billion people, with 97 percent of the increase coming from poverty stricken countries.

20% of the population in industrialized nations consume 86% of the world's goods.

The developing world now spends \$13 on debt repayment for every \$1 it receives in grants.

Global Poverty: Major Causes

Painting a global picture of poverty is challenging and there are no simple answers. Below is a listing of the major causes of poverty. This information is presented as a guide to help you develop ideas for creative initiatives that focus on the fundamental needs of the poverty stricken.

- *Land Allotment and Usage - Issues with land allotment and usage are varied. Most land usage issues involve improper use of land for agriculture. Also, often times due to a weak government structure there are no simple ways to procure land in a legal manner.*
- *Food Dumping- Food dumping is the excessive supplying of food to impoverished countries from external sources. Food Dumping is a major cause of poverty because it perpetuates dependence on other organizations or countries. Also, it lowers the demand for foods that are produced within the community therefore weakening the local economy.*
- *Lack of Government Leadership- In numerous impoverished countries, communities are very loosely tied to the national government. Often times communities are often left to support there own infrastructure, which can be daunting and cause strain on community resources.*

- *Lack of Competition in the Global Market- Impoverished countries have a hard time competing in the global market because their local market is not stable. When trading on the global market, buyers want a reliable flow of export and because impoverished countries don't have the stability of a multi-tiered government and economy they are often left out of the global market.*
- *Dependence on Development Grants- Unfortunately, like food dumping, something that was meant to help is now starting to hinder progress. There is a growing problem within impoverished countries competing for development grants. While competing for grant funding, countries often accept lower standards in order to compete with other impoverished countries. This causes a continued dependence on foreign grants and ongoing lower standards within impoverished countries.*
- *Education- Education is essential to all humankind and sadly individuals in impoverished countries have less access to schools and educational programs that are badly needed.*

Income Shocks- Another significant problem in the fight against poverty is income shock. Income shock can be caused by various different situations. Most often by natural disasters. Income shock occurs when individuals can not readily recover from damages done to infrastructure or the economy in times of emergency.

ECONOMIC EQUITY ACTIVITY 4

LOCAL CURRENCY- AN INNOVATIVE AND COMPLIMENTARY ALTERNATIVE TO THE NATIONAL CURRENCY

PURPOSE: a- *To raise awareness of the reality of local currency.*
 b- *To understand the benefits of complimentary currency.*
 b- *To explore how participants could now participate in a local currency system.*

SAMPLE MINI-LECTURE: *The design of money is actually at the root of what happens or doesn't happen in a society. If money is designed to gain interest (as national currencies are set out to do), then the accumulation of wealth becomes the primary purpose of most of our actions which in turn drives societal values. Furthermore, the management of scarce resources, the basis of modern economics, promotes a mind set that is dominated by fear and greed. Individuals become motivated to accumulate money and material possessions (greed and hoarding) to protect themselves against scarcity.*

*What we don't always recognize is that the money economy we have created is just one part of the way we organize our affairs. There is another, invisible economy that we take part in every day of our lives. It is the economy of home, family, neighborhood and community. We don't think of it as an economic system—but it is. It is so important that it deserves the name that economist Neva Goodwin gave it when she called it the "Core" economy. In the Core Economy, exchanges are built on a sense of obligation and reciprocity, not price or supply and demand. Acts of pitching in, sharing, loyalty, and love—not price—are the driving forces behind a healthy Core Economy. In this type of sustainable economy "we could redesign money to encourage abundance and generosity instead of greed and scarcity", says economist Bernard Lietaer (***The Future of Money: Beyond Greed and Scarcity***, 2001).*

Many local currencies projects, based on Core Economics are sprouting through out the world. Local currency, otherwise known as complimentary currency or open moneys, work at regional and local levels and are seen as tools that foster an attitude of abundance, close knit communities, meaningful employment, and environmental stability. It is considered a new type of currency better suited for building sustainable life styles and cooperation. When using local currencies it becomes clearer what is local and what is not and a bias towards regional sustainability is promoted. Also, using local currencies partially insulates communities from the ups and downs of the global economy.

Let us review some examples of local currency projects currently under way. In France, there are 300 local exchange networks called "Grain de Sel" (Grain of Salt), which facilitate exchanges from rent to organic produce. People come together not only to trade cheeses, wines, cakes but also hours of plumbing, haircuts, and sailing or English lessons. A significant outgrowth of these exchange gatherings is a party every fortnight, a festive communal celebration that may not have otherwise occurred!

The Ithaca Dollars project, created by Paul Glover, a community economist in Ithaca, New York, enables local currency participants to spend this dollar on rent, plumbing,

carpentry, car repair, chiropractic, food, childcare, and numerous other goods and services. In this project there is also the Ithaca Dollar which is equivalent to \$10, the approximate average hourly wage in the community. Community members become part of Ithaca Dollars by listing their own skills to share with others. There is an Ithaca Dollars Credit Union that issues loans using Ithaca transactions.

The kinds of services people share within a local currency project depends entirely on what their group or community needs. Edgar Kahn's Time Dollars Institute offers information on setting up a local currency project. Although neighborhoods can certainly create their own bartering systems that can effectively create informal and alternative transaction methods, when local currency projects are carried out, they can greatly contribute to a flourishing local economy and a connected community.

DISCUSSION: *The Guide invites participants to share their understanding of the local currency process and to respond to the questions:*

- 1- How does this topic challenge you to think differently about money?*
- 2- What reactions come up for you as you consider the idea your own community currency?*
- 3- How does a local currency project unleash untapped community capacity?*

CREATING A MOCK EXCHANGE NETWORK: *Following the discussion the guide invites the group to create an informal exchange network among themselves. The guide states that this is just for fun and for the purpose of seeing where it goes. Participants are encouraged to brainstorm any and all ideas they have about how each one of them would contribute to a local currency project. They are encouraged to think expansively about their talents, ideas, special interests, education, training and hobbies. The guide gives participants a few minutes to think about this. The guide then encourages participants to discuss how the identified talents, services, etc. can be exchanged. The question, what benefits each member of the group would derive if such an exchange existed, is explored. The guide can also invite participants to brainstorm what faces would appear on their dollar bill, their five dollar bill, etc. and why? If there is interest, invite the participants to research more information about starting a local currency project such as Edgar Kahn's Time Dollars to share at the next meeting.*

CLOSING: *The guide invites participants to close their eyes for five minutes, take a few deep breaths and be in silence while they reflect on insights gained from the discussion and examine what possibilities might exist in their lives or community to strengthen the Core Economy. The guide invites the participants to share, if they wish, their experience.*

ECONOMIC EQUITY ACTIVITY 5

CORPORATE PARTICIPATION IN THE CREATION OF A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

PURPOSE: a- To raise awareness about corporate social responsibility
b- To explore ways in which individuals can become proactive.

SAMPLE MINI-LECTURE: Thomas Berry, in his visionary book, *The Great Work-Our Way Into the Future*, states, "Among the most significant concerns of this transition period into the twenty-first century must be the modern industrial, commercial, and financial corporation. We need to understand the larger significance of these corporations in American society, in the human community, and in the functioning of the planet Earth".

Clearly this is so. Many of us have at least some inkling of the power that corporations wield in the world. Because of their size, their powerful lobbying efforts, and their billion dollar bank accounts corporations have an enormous effect over the well-being of individuals, the community, and the environment.

Unfortunately, too many corporations are motivated primarily by profit. As a result of the dominant and motivating role profit has played, corporations have largely neglected to develop ethical labor and environmental practices, until recently. Thomas Berry makes clear the imbalance between the power corporations have and their responsibility to those they affect and influence. He states, "Corporations now own or control the natural resources of the entire planet directly or indirectly. They provides the jobs and pay the salaries of many people of the world. They make and sell products. They set the prices. They extract the various ores from Earth, fashion and sell the products. Yet they have no proportionate responsibility for the public welfare."

As a result of a growing public concern in the last few years for the widespread damaging effects of many corporate decisions, the notion of Corporate Social Responsibility has been brought to the foreground. CSR refers to the taking of responsibility by corporations for the impact their decisions have on customers, employees, community, and environment. This corporate duty extends beyond the statutory obligations to comply with legislation and moves towards the voluntary preservation or improvement of the quality of life. Furthermore, an even newer concept has emerged in the business world, that of creating a "corporate citizenship". This innovative notion has begun to resonate strongly in some business headquarters.

Paul Maidment, Executive Editor of Forbes, in a January 2008 article states, “Traditional corporate social responsibility is starting to be replaced with a new notion of corporate citizenship, which for larger companies, means global corporate citizenship. The social and corporate agenda is being integrated, and often involves partnership with other companies, government, and nongovernmental organizations, which is a challenge to those who hold to the traditional, narrow, economic definition of a company as an entity that is meant to maximize profits for shareholders”. United Nations Global Compact and the Global Reporting Initiative are part of the international effort to have corporate economic, social and environmental aspects of performance made as normal and important as financial reporting. (Handout A4)

This emerging reality where the “social and corporate agenda is being integrated” is aligned with the Earth Charter’s essential premise in the Preamble stating that we “declare our responsibility to one another”; and in its principles stating that we “ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner; and adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard the Earth’s regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being”.

DISCUSSION: *The guide asks participants to read Handout A4 and then asks for their thoughts and reactions to the ideas expressed in the mini-lecture by asking the following questions:*

- 1. What have you been aware of regarding corporate social responsibility?*
- 2. Do you know, through direct experience, of actions certain corporations have taken that display disregard for human, environmental and community welfare? Do you know of corporation that reflects sustainable values? Are any of these companies local companies? Tell us about this.*
- 3. How is it helpful to become more aware of the manner in which companies engage in responsible or irresponsible behaviors? As consumers and pro-active citizens, what can we do?*
- 4. How can we stay informed about these matters?*
- 5. How can we stay informed about corporate economic, social and environmental actions without feeling overwhelmed or helpless?*

6. Read Handout A4 and think about the businesses and corporations that you are familiar with. If they were to do corporate reporting based principles of people, planet and profit that are embodied in the Global Reporting Initiative, how would they rate?

HANDOUT A4

Corporate Reporting That Includes People, Planet & Profit

1) *United Nations Global Compact: A framework for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption.*

The Global Compact's ten principles in the areas of human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption enjoy universal consensus and are derived from:

- *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
- *The International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*
- *The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*
- *The United Nations Convention Against Corruption.*

Global Compact's Key elements include:

- *10 principles derived from key intergovernmental instruments*
- *Participation is free and open to companies of all sizes*
- *Participation requires a CEO and Board level commitment*
- *It has several thousand participants and a global network of local organizations*
- *Users are required to make an annual 'Communication on Progress' (COP)*
- *It has been recognized by the 2005 World Summit, the UN General Assembly and the Group of Eight (G8).*

2) *Global Reporting Initiative*

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the Coalition for Environmentally-Responsible Economies (CERES) launched the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), now the de-facto international standard used by over 1200 companies for corporate reporting on environmental, social and economic performance. The GRI's mission is to make reporting on economic, social and environmental aspects of performance as normal and important as financial reporting. The GRI was officially launched in 2002 at a ceremony at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Key elements include:

- *A set of agreed principles and ‘sustainability’ indicators*
- *Developed through a global and balanced multi-stakeholder process*
- *Governed by a distinguished group of business and civil society leaders*
- *Recognized by the 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and used by over a thousand organizations worldwide*
- *Available for use by all organizations*

The GRI helps respond to questions such as ‘what does sustainable development mean for my organization?’ and ‘what are the economic, social and environmental impacts of my organization?’ The GRI’s sustainability indicators are freely available for use by all organizations. By complementing financial reporting, reporting on these aspects of performance is intended to benefit managers, shareholders and stakeholders alike.

GRI Indicators include measurements like: ratios of standard entry level wage compared to local minimum wage or living wage; policy, practices, and proportion of spending on locally-based suppliers; community investments; environmental policies and practices; labor practices including turnover rates, benefits, diversity and employee training/education opportunities.

HANDOUT A 5

The guide distributes Handout A-5 which offers two examples of corporate environmental actions. One reflects corporate responsibility and one reflects corporate irresponsibility. After reading the handout out-loud the guide encourages discussion with the following questions?

- 1. What was your reaction as you heard about each example?*
- 2. Does reading about Patagonia’s efforts inspire you?*
- 3. Does reading about Occidental Petroleum’s actions in Peru motivate you to take action?*
- 4. Does reading about these two examples remind you of other stories you know, both positive and negative?*
- 5. How can you use this information in a positive and constructive manner?*

HANDOUT B-5

CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND IRRESPONSIBILITY TWO POLARIZED EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1

Patagonia, the outdoor apparel manufacturer, uses only organically grown cotton in its clothing line. It also recycles its synthetic fiber to create virgin, re-usable fiber. Patagonia has made a serious effort to track and expose the social and environmental impact of specific garments through a website that reveals to consumers the good and the bad in manufacturing outdoor clothing, *The Footprint Chronicles*. Patagonia is determined to be transparent about its impact on the environment and created this website to encourage dialog with its concerned consumers. The website states, "Our reason for being is to make the best product and cause no unnecessary harm. Yet we are keenly aware that everything we do as a business- or have done in our name- leaves its mark on the environment. As yet there is no such thing as a sustainable business but every day we take steps to lighten our footprint and do less harm."

EXAMPLE 2

Occidental Petroleum is being sued (March 2008) through a human rights class action lawsuit brought forth by Earth Right International and Amazon Watch for contaminating the Corrientes River Basin in northeastern Peru, the home of the indigenous Achuar people. Massive amounts of cadmium and lead poisoning has been discovered on the land and in the water. These two environmental groups allege that Occidental Petroleum dumped 850,000 barrels of toxic wastewater per day for three decades since the 1970's. This company, they state, also flared huge quantities of gas into the air without any warning to the local Achuar community causing acid rain. This environmental contamination is now believed to have caused the death, widespread poisoning, and destruction of the Achuar way of life.

RESOURCES: www.csr.com, www.patagonia.com, www.corp-ethics.com, www.commondreams.org

ECONOMIC EQUITY ACTIVITY 5

BALANCING CORPORATE POWER

PURPOSE: a) *To raise awareness regarding the balance of power between corporations, its employees, and their communities.*

b) *To explore actions that can be taken to foster socially responsible behaviors in businesses and corporations*

SAMPLE MINI-LECTURE: *(The guide can read Earth Charter principle #10 before the lecture) Even as far back as 1937 corporate power was a public and political concern. President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated in a message to congress, “The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than the democratic state itself. That in its essence is fascism: ownership of government by an individual, by a group or any controlling private power.” This speech gave rise to the Temporary National Economic Committee whose function was to study and report to congress the concentration of economic powers among corporations.*

David Korten states in his book , The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community, that as many as fifty major corporations (excluding financial institutions) exert such immense financial influence they are considered some of the world’s largest economies. He notes a report from the Economist stating that five firms alone control more than 50 percent of the global market in “consumer durables, automotive, airlines, aerospace, electronic components, electricity, electronics and steel. Five firms control over 40 percent of the global market in oil, personal computers, and—especially alarming in its consequences for public debate on these very issues- media.”

Remedies to address the growing corporate oligarchy include trade agreements that take care of workers and the environment, corporate charter reform, and grassroots efforts to change the way corporations do business. These efforts are on the upswing in the U.S.

Richard Grossman, co-director of the Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy , points out that corporations were chartered by state legislatures for 10-20 years. They had to demonstrate that they served the public interest and were prohibited from owning any interest in another corporation or land. Shareholders were liable for corporate harms and debts. Corporations were not allowed to lobby or give to political campaigns. They were subject to the revocation of their charter if they acted outside the public interests.

Grossman suggests that people read the history of corporate charters, start talking about it, and bring the debate into churches, academic institutions, professional societies and town meetings. He would like people to feel as empowered to take action as Paul Hawken, author of Ecology of Commerce, did. To raise public awareness, Hawken put a referendum item on the ballot in California that called for the enforcement of the re-chartering of corporations every 25 years based partly on their social responsibility record.

Faith communities are also joining the effort to pressure corporations to become better citizens. The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) is a thirty-five year old international coalition of 275 faith-based institutional investors including various denominations, religious communities, pension funds, healthcare corporations, foundations, asset management companies, colleges, and dioceses dedicated to “peace, economic justice, and stewardship of the Earth”. They sponsor shareholder resolutions, meet with management, screen their investments, conduct public hearings, publish special reports, and sponsor letter-writing campaigns

Alternative models for corporations are also being developed. Mondragon is a Spanish industrial cooperative whose model has been reproduced by several communities in the U.S. Mondragon is fully owned by its employees. They elect their CEO every four years, make up the board of directors, and share the profits. Ten percent of the profits go to the community, twenty percent to the business, and seventy percent to the workers. Mondragon has spawned 135 new businesses and has established a social service system for employees. This social service system provides a variety of benefits including child allowances, medical care, and retirement. The employees have formed a cooperative bank that operates in the same way and which is becoming the fastest growing bank in Spain.

Corporations themselves are also creating change from within. They are using social audits to evaluate their bottom line for caring about humanity and the environment. Companies like Costco, Interface Global and Tom’s of Maine, through their efforts to become socially responsible, are becoming corporate role models as they increasingly show that doing good goes hand in hand with increased profits.

However, there is still much to do to refashion corporate influence and create a more balanced distribution of power within the corporate industrial complex and its role in the society at large. Individuals and corporations must continue to play a pro-active role to, as the Earth Charter principle #10 states, “ensure that economic activities and

institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner”.

DISCUSSION: *The guide encourages participants to share their reactions to the lecture. Handout A-5 is then distributed and the questions are explored. These questions are designed to expand awareness on issues regarding corporate social responsibility. After this discussion the guide distributed Handout B-5. This handout is designed to help participants explore ways they, as individuals, can make a difference.*

HANDOUT A-5

ASSESSING A COMPANY'S EFFORT AT BECOMING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

The guide states that a good resource to use for further clarification of guidelines regarding socially responsible behaviors among corporations is The Bench Marks Foundation of Southern Africa whose website is www.bench-marks.org. The guide states that this organization developed a document that offers one of the most comprehensive set of social and environmental criteria and business performance indicators available. It offers, the guide can continue, 100 principles, 129 criteria, and 118 benchmarks to assist companies that are genuinely interested in developing socially responsible behaviors.

The guide states that the following questions can guide individuals as they explore whether a particular company engages in socially responsible behaviors:

- 1. Does this company adopt and implement comprehensive human rights policies, policies that respect the rights of employees and of individuals and groups in the society?*
- 2. What might some of these policies be?*
- 3. Is this company taking responsibility for the creation of sustainable social and environmental conditions every step along the way as their products and services are produced? Does this company, for example, employ practices to make sure that vendors, suppliers, and factory management pay fair wages and offer a healthy workplace?*

- 4. Does a company adopt methods of compliance that include an independent monitoring component?*
- 5. Does the company issue regular compliance reports to shareholders and to the public?*
- 6. Does the company provide access to health care and an environment that supports health and well-ness?*
- 7. Is the company's government structure based on ethical values including inclusivity, integrity, honesty, justice, transparency, and responsiveness to shareholders and stakeholders?*
- 8. Does the company ensure that economic benefits are financially and socially equitable for all those who are associated with the company?*
- 9. Does the company promote "family values" while placing undue demands on employees that interfere with family needs?*
- 10. Does the company reward its employees for ethical decisions even if these decisions did not increase the profit margin?*
- 11. Does the company describe the products it produces in a misleading manner?*
- 12. Does the company promote conversations on ethical principles and does it have an ethics committee?*

(Resources: The Interfaith Center in Corporate Responsibility and Integrity Management by Thorne LeClare, Ferrel, and Fraedrich.)

HANDOUT B-5

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 1. Be aware of the power of each dollar spent. A dollar spent or not spent on a particular item is a vote for or against the company producing the product.*

- 2. If you choose not to spend your money on a particular product due to information you have about the company's socially irresponsible behaviors write a short letter to that company telling them the reason you are banning their product.*
- 3. Fill out a feedback form at your grocery store requesting organically grown products or products made by companies striving towards sustainable practices. Make the manager of the grocery store aware of your values.*
- 4. When you discover a company's efforts or lack of effort to engage in sustainable practices write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper informing the community of what you know.*
- 5. Spread the word among your friends and colleagues regarding products or services to ban or support depending on whether the company engages in ethical behaviors or not.*
- 6. Write a letter to your congress person asking for tougher laws and regulations regarding corporate social responsible behaviors.*
- 7. If you directly perceive the company you work for, or a company or small business in the community engaged in unethical practices contact the owner or the manager and respectfully give them feedback regarding their practice as you explain the values you hold. Let them know what alternative practice would be more ethical. As an employee, a recipient of its services, a user of its products, or a concerned citizen you have the right to offer this feedback.*
- 8. If you own a business get a copy of the Principles for Global Corporate Responsibility from www.bench-mark.org and follow their guidelines. Or, when relevant, use the following Professional Code of Ethics developed by the Earth Charter International:*

PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS
(by Alan Atkinsson)

*a) **Walk your talk.** We cannot promote change in others if we are not striving to exemplify that change in our own personal and professional lives.*

b) Keep up to date. As professionals, we have a responsibility to keep learning and constantly informing ourselves about the emerging science and practice of sustainability- both what is happening to our world, and what can be done about it.

c) Tell the truth about the trends as you see it. In a world of great media noise and confusion, where sustainability issues and global concerns must compete for attention, we have a responsibility to our clients to keep them informed. Be clear to your clients about what you believe to be the most important trends affecting our world and their future, and why.

d) Share information, and credit, with other professionals. While client confidentiality must always be respected, it slows down progress in the field and change for sustainability if we hoard information regarding new ideas, the development of new methods, and relevant activity in the market. It also damages overall progress when we use the work of other people without appropriate permission or citation.

e) Prioritize cooperation over competition, and impact over income. In the community of sustainability practice, seek for opportunities to work together with others and build on complementary strengths, rather than to compete for primacy; and weigh the chance to make change as more important than making money.

f) Make referrals to other professionals when appropriate. If someone else, or a different methodology, would be significantly more effective at meeting a specific client's needs than what you can offer, make the client aware of that option.

g) Tithe to the volunteers. Donate some fraction of your revenues to non-profit initiatives that are advancing the practice of sustainability.

h) Explain your ethical choices. Be transparent about the criteria you use for structuring your practice and for choosing your professional engagements.

i) Consider the systemic impacts of your advice and action. Sustainability professionals have a special obligation to think systemically, and to take into account the potential impact of what they recommend or do, including impacts beyond the boundaries of the system they are operating in.

j) Seek to do not harm. In working with clients and promoting change, seek to avoid actions and interventions that may cause lasting damage to people, nature, community, and organizational health.