

# Friends of the Earth

Organization: Friends of the Earth

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Description Friends of the Earth, which was founded in 1969 by the former Executive Director of the US Sierra Club, David Brower, is the world's largest grassroots environmental network. According to Brower, from its inception it was considered essential that the organization be international in scope. By 1971 Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) was established, with member groups in France, Great Britain, Sweden, and the United States. FoEI remained predominantly northern in membership until groups from Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa joined in the 1980s. In 2002, the combined number of members and supporters of Friends of the Earth groups was more than one million, and the FoE International umbrella united more than 5,000 local activist groups in 68 countries (almost half of which are from the Global South). The FoEI website describes the groups' mandate as follows:

- to protect the earth against further deterioration and repair damage inflicted upon the environment by human activities and negligence
- preserve the earth's ecological, cultural, and ethnic diversity
- increase public participation and democratic decision-making
- achieve social, economic, and political justice and equal access to resources and opportunities for men and women on the local, national, regional, and international levels
- promote environmentally sustainable development on the local, national, regional, and global levels

Over the more than thirty years of their existence, Friends of the Earth organizations have mounted prominent and influential campaigns against nuclear power, commercial whaling, rainforest degradation, and pesticide use. Along with continued attention to "safeguarding the earth," recent campaigns have sought to critique and propose alternatives to corporate-led globalization, public sector privatization, investment deregulation, and trade liberalization. In its campaigns and organizational structure, which combine a commitment to strong grassroots activism with national and international campaigning and coordination, FoEI represents a significant contribution to the constitution of a global civil society.

Suggested Reading: **Friends of the Earth website.** [www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org) (accessed 21 December 2004).