



Global learning – lenses on the world

Section 3: Poverty and Wealth

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Section 3: Poverty and wealth

This thematic section shares teaching ideas for work on poverty and wealth.

“I think we miss the human rights aspect of poverty”

- project worker from The Gambia, during study visit to Kenya



Each Sustainable Development Goal has targets that spell out in more detail what needs to be achieved in order to make it a reality. For SDG1 'No Poverty', the first of these targets is *“By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty*

for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.”

Measuring poverty and what to do about it is notoriously difficult. When this target was set, many argued that the \$1.25 figure was too low, and that the figure was more like \$2. This would have meant many millions more people being counted in as living in 'extreme poverty.'

Money is not the only meaningful measure of poverty. Indeed, many people, including some of the poorest, live largely outside of the 'money economy'. If we factor in quality of life, for example, then it can look quite different.

During this project, this was brought home to us during a visit to Kibera slum in Nairobi. One of the Gambian visitors pointed out that, while most people in Kibera earned more cash each day than many people in rural Gambia, day-to-day life appeared much more difficult. There was no room in the slum for children to play outside, or for families to grow their own food, and at night-time it could be dangerous to go outside of your own home. All of these opportunities would be readily available for most Gambians, even those living on lower incomes.

Questions about poverty intersect with other issues, such as human rights, gender [including the 'pay gap'], environmental degradation, conservation, conflict or differences between urban and rural areas. Some young people coined the term 'punger' during the project to highlight the connections between poverty and poor nutrition. Indeed, as accounts of A Rocha's work on conservation agriculture will show us in Section 4: Food and hunger, it is often when those other issues are addressed that wealth creation becomes more sustainable.

“As a shorthand, we sometimes talk about 'rich' and 'poor' countries, but the differences within countries can be wider than those between them.”

Contrasting images of Europe and Africa

What questions do they raise for us?

Clockwise from top left:
Shopping Mall, Birmingham, UK;
Housing in 'The Jungle', Calais, France;
Shopping Mall, Nairobi, Kenya;
Housing in Kibera Slum, Nairobi, Kenya.



Calais photo: Reuters

In January 2016, the charity Oxfam announced that *“Runaway inequality has created a world where 62 people own as much as the poorest half of the world’s population.”*

Depending on what measure you use, the ‘ranking’ of a country might vary. For example, European countries often score less well on the Happy Planet Index [right] than Central American ones, although average income levels are higher. Meanwhile, some poorer countries, like Afghanistan, show comparatively low wealth inequality. That said, the basic patterns worldwide remain quite stark, including differences between the countries participating in this project.

Young people could research the strengths and limitations of different ways of measuring poverty and wealth. Here are a few key measures - interspersed with the occasional startling statistic.

Downloads and links

- Download: Teaching materials on the causes of poverty in Europe, generated by German and British teachers [PDF]
- Download: Larger-format copies of the contrasting images opposite from Europe and Africa [PDF]
- Video: Defining ‘Punger’ [Poverty and Hunger combined] - Moseley School, UK
- Why poverty? Long and short documentaries look at ideas about poverty, historically and present-day. Available in English, with some in German and Spanish www.whypoverty.net or <http://itvs.org/series/why-poverty>
- The Worldometers website offers ever-changing real-time statistics in 35 languages on human wealth, poverty and development: www.worldometers.info
- Happy Planet Index www.happyplanetindex.org

However, is putting figures on poverty and arguing over terms missing two crucial points?

1. What are the human stories behind the numbers?
2. How on earth do we bring about the sustained change that will eradicate poverty?

Poverty measures

- ◆ **Absolute poverty** [based on less than \$1.90/day] - in 2003, 45% of Gambians were in ‘absolute poverty’ according to this measure.
- ◆ **GDP per capita** - using Purchasing Power Parity [PPP]. The IMF calculated that in 2015 this was \$132,099 for Qatar, the top-ranked country: about three times that of the UK; four times that of Spain; thirty times Kenya and forty times The Gambia.
- ◆ **Human Development Index** - this measures health and education, as well as income, so in 2015 Qatar slips from 1st to 32nd ranking, with Norway at the top. However, positions for the UK, Spain, Kenya and The Gambia are much as for GDP per capita.
- ◆ **World Bank Gini** - measures wealth inequalities. Higher figures show greater levels of inequality - The Gambia and Kenya have fairly high levels of economic inequality [around 47%], and there are middle levels in Spain and the UK [40% and 33% respectively]. Countries like Ukraine and Norway are much more economically equal, with the most unequal being South Africa and Comoros.
- ◆ **Happy Planet Index** - Includes wellbeing, life expectancy and environment. In 2016, the UK and Spain slip slightly down the rankings and Kenya climbs up a little. Costa Rica, with high life expectancy and a small environmental footprint, comes top ... and Qatar is third from the bottom.

Key questions for teachers

- ◆ We do not want to over-burden young people with emotion and create a sense of helplessness. Can we build awareness of how people in places everywhere contribute to positive change?
- ◆ When looking at questions about poverty, how do we ensure that the people we are talking about are treated with dignity?
- ◆ Wealth and poverty are closely connected. Can we talk about one without addressing the other?

Teaching about poverty and wealth

Beginning with statements that explore how we define poverty, this section goes on to tease out ideas about its symptoms, roots and its impacts on different groups. It finishes with questions about appropriate action. These materials are particularly appropriate for work on Geography, Citizenship and Social Studies, although they could also be adapted for looking at historical poverty.

Starter - Continuum Line

This and 'The Power Walk' are best done in a large space. The pupils form a straight line, one end signifying 'strongly agree' and the other 'strongly disagree.' The teacher reads out each of the statements below in turn. These come from a group of Spanish, Kenyan, Gambian and British teachers working together. Pupils place themselves on the continuum line depending on what they think about each statement. Why have they placed themselves where they are? What experiences have influenced their choice? Would it change depending on context [eg which country you had in mind]?



The soil is very useful

Addressing the gender gap is crucial to addressing poverty

Empowerment matters more than money

Education is an essential escape from poverty

Rural poverty really matters

Equality is for all

Absolute poverty matters most

Poverty is a curse

We cannot ignore relative poverty

To address poverty we must start with peoples' basic needs

It is harder to be poor when you are surrounded by wealth

Poverty is the most severe human rights issue

Main The Poverty Tree

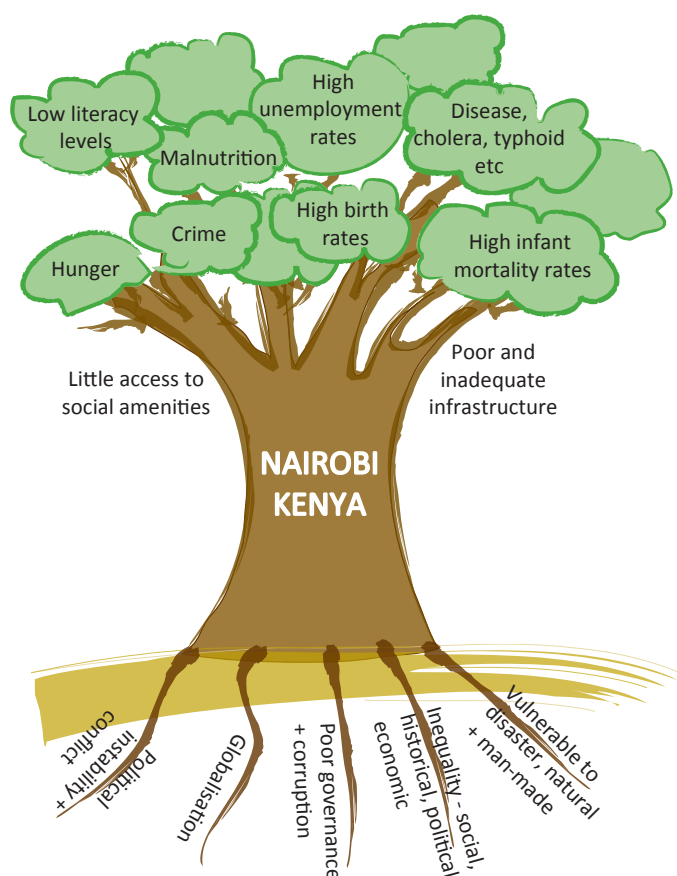
This activity, originally developed by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, helps pupils think about what poverty looks like in their own area. Working in groups, pupils draw a simple tree shape on a large sheet of paper. Thinking about their own area, they note some of the signs or symptoms of poverty on its leaves [eg poor diet]. On the branches, they then note some of the direct causes of these symptoms [eg low income]. Finally, they note some of the deeper and indirect causes [eg lack of employment prospects due to investment decisions by a corporation].



We share an example of a 'poverty tree' from Nairobi, Kenya, on this page. We also offer downloadable examples from other places, and a blank version for young people to complete for their own community. Comparing these trees, consider how far the symptoms and causes are similar or different for each place. Even when the leaves look different, are the roots comparable?



The poverty tree



The Power Walk

This activity helps young people explore their perceptions of poverty and power. Students stand in a straight line and are given role cards, which others do not see. They are asked to visualise the person on the card [if there is time, they may research the role card before completing the activity]. As each “I can ...” statement is read out by the teacher, they take a step forward if they think that this is true of the person on the role card. When every statement has been read out, they disclose who is on their role card. Discussion: who is furthest forward and furthest back, and what reasons can we offer for this? Do people have different perceptions about



who would be standing where? Could the people on the role cards be in more than one category? If we changed the country where this is happening [eg from Kenya to the UK], would it change where people are positioned?

<i>Role</i>
A doctor
A teacher
A disabled woman
A taxi driver
A government minister
A politician
A businesswoman
A farmer
A school student
A woman farmer
A petty trader
A slum dweller
A local councillor
A lawyer
A nurse
A widow
A local youthworker

<i>Statement</i>
I can attend all functions in my community
I can afford my children's school fees
I can have a bank loan
I can own a house or land
I can vote in elections
I can afford food for my family
I can pay university fees for myself and my children
I can get my MP to listen to my concerns
I can say my mind in my community and be consulted on any development
I can have access to facilities around town

Plenary

Pupils return to the continuum line from the start of the lesson. The teacher reads out a few of the statements again, and pupils discuss whether their positions have changed and why. Might their position be different if they were in different ‘power walk’ roles or different countries? You could add ‘fruits’ to the trees as ideas for short- or long-term solutions.



Links and downloads

- Download: Power Walk role cards and statements [PDF]
- Downloads: Poverty Trees: blank for your own community; trees from Kenya, The Gambia, Spain and the UK that can be used for comparison [PDF]



Poverty and Wealth: activities

"Solutions in Europe are about how to equalise or manage what is there. In Africa, they are about how to overcome barriers and challenges"

- Kenyan teacher at Nairobi workshop.



This page offers a brief overview of some additional teaching activities from our project that could be used to explore issues around poverty and wealth. We hope that these will serve as a starting point for your own professional creativity. We offer further action-orientated activities alongside the Young People's Communiqué in Section 5.

Using literary texts

[English/Literature]



Literature provides a way to get inside the facts and figures, to consider the relative evils of urban and rural poverty, differing manifestations of poverty across different cultures and historical periods, and to gain insight into the experience of poverty. We offer a download of some suggested titles.



The relationship between gender, poverty and power is a theme that came up frequently in all the participating countries. Pupils at

Kings Norton Girls' School, UK, ran a workshop for their [male and female] peers on how gender impacts on wealth and opportunity. Pupils looked at graphs showing statistics on: pay differentials between men and women in different countries; the different kinds of work undertaken by men and women; and what change - if any - could be perceived over time. They noticed, for example, that there had been a gradual reduction in the size of the gender gap in most 'developed' OECD countries, but that it had not narrowed as much elsewhere.



Working in small groups, they were then asked to look at different scenarios [unwanted marriage, unable to vote, access to education etc]. They discussed: *How does this make you feel? Do you think this actually happens? Can you think of any examples? What would you do in this situation?*

The gender gap

[Citizenship/Geography/RE/Social Studies]

You are forbidden an education

Think about ...

- *How does this make you feel?*
- *Do you think this actually happens?*
- *Can you think of any examples?*
- *What would you do in this situation?*

Pupils devised slogans to promote gender equality, and - having seen videos of women talking positive action in different countries - discussed what they too might be able to do. The scenario cards and supporting information are downloadable, including in Word format so that your pupils can modify them or create their own.

An example of a gender gap scenario card

"We can be the first generation in human history to end hunger and ensure that every person achieves a basic standard of wellbeing"

- UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons

A few other ideas

Section 5: From understanding into action, includes several ideas about positive action. This includes looking at the history of successful social movements. However, there have also been many unsuccessful attempts in the struggle to end extreme poverty. The SDGs are only the latest in a long series of initiatives, such as the Millennium Development Goals, which have seen some successes, but have not achieved everything they intended to. Can looking at the obstacles to why such attempts have failed in the past help us see how future obstacles can be overcome?

We offer some ideas for teaching about cities, poverty and wealth in Section 1 as 'a cities approach'.



It is sometimes more difficult to see the commonalities rather than the differences between places. Using the Development Compass Rose, groups of young people could look at an image such as one of the downloadable photos of Africa and Europe at the beginning of this section. They then ask questions about it for each domain [Natural, Social, Economic and Who Decides?]. They then substitute it with an image from a contrasting place [eg a Kenyan for a British shopping centre, or Kenyan for French informal housing]. Which questions still apply? Are there any that do not? What global processes are at work that affect them all?

Downloads and links

- Download: Teaching materials on the causes of poverty in Europe [PDF]
- Download: Proforma on the causes of poverty that can be adapted for your own classroom needs [PDF, Word]
- Download: The Development Compass Rose
- Downloads: Scenario cards and supporting information slides on The Gender Gap [PDF, PowerPoint]
- For a journal article from Spain on using literary texts [in English and Spanish], see <http://educacionglobalresearch.net/wp-content/uploads/EGR09-02-Prado-English.pdf>

