

# What Matters Most?



**Exploring Poverty**  
with Upper Primary  
Students

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**Cover photo:** Conor Ashleigh, Australian Government aid program.

**About the photo:** A boy leaves for school in Korail slum in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. The school is run by Bangladesh - based BRAC, the largest non-government development organisation in the world. BRAC was established in Bangladesh by Fazle Hasan Abed in 1972, and works in poverty alleviation throughout Bangladesh as well as in many other countries such as Afghanistan, Uganda and the Philippines. BRAC employs over 100,000 people, with about 70% of those being women, and tackles poverty on a large number of fronts including through education and health services, financial projects, and grass-roots organising and advocacy.

More information about BRAC at [www.brac.net](http://www.brac.net)

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educating for a just & sustainable world

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## Introduction

### The challenges we face

*What Matters Most* is a classroom resource about one of the major challenges facing the global community. Well over a billion people still live on less than \$1.25 a day; nearly two billion people still live in slums; a child still dies of hunger-related causes every six seconds. Nevertheless, there is also cause for hope – over the last 20 years the number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen in every global region, and the number of children dying globally from poverty-related causes has reduced by more than a third.<sup>1</sup>

Still, enormous challenges remain and this resource aims to give teachers the tools to bring these alive in the primary classroom. It aims to explore the complex issues of poverty in a way that makes sense to upper primary students, and enables them to understand more about the interconnected world we live in. It also aims to help students develop good critical thinking skills, and to find their own ways of contributing toward a more just and sustainable world. Largely, these activities seek to answer some basic but challenging questions: What is poverty? What can be done? And what does poverty have to do with me?

### Difficult but rewarding

Poverty is a hard subject, but also a potentially rewarding one. It does involve sad stories, complicated issues and competing ideas about causes and solutions. Poverty means different things to different people, and handling this topic in primary classrooms requires sensitivity and thought, especially as it raises questions about local and personal circumstances as well as global ones. There is a risk in examining poverty in a classroom setting that students may see people and communities as only helpless victims, or only see the differences between themselves and others. This material aims to help teachers and students to move beyond such a diminished or simplistic picture, to recognise their common humanity and the lessons they themselves may learn from others.

This is indeed a richly rewarding topic, which gives schools the opportunity to delve into a continuing struggle of the human community, and to see how they themselves can respond.



Hygiene lessons at a pre-school in Ratanakiri, Cambodia.  
Image credit: Cathy Reid, Australian Government aid program.

### A wide range of source material

The material in this resource looks at a range of stories to help bring this topic to life – stories of individuals, as well as large projects. In putting it together we sought to draw on the experiences and ideas of people at the centre of this issue – people who experience poverty themselves. We are also inclined to be hopeful, and have aimed to help students discover the ways in which people and communities have responded. The resource also takes a wider view, exploring international strategies which seek to alleviate poverty, such as economic initiatives, government actions, and community development projects.

### The Australian Curriculum and an inquiry approach

All activities are written for content from the Australian Curriculum, in Geography, English, Maths and The Arts. Many learning activities also correspond to the aims of the cross-curriculum priorities and the general capabilities, particularly critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding



Image credit: One World Centre.

and intercultural understanding. All of these links are mapped out in the matrix on pages 4 and 5.

Consistent with the approach used in the Australian Curriculum, *What Matters Most* is structured around an inquiry approach, because asking informed and investigative questions is so important for such a crucial issue. Inquiry learning enables students to think critically and pursue their own lines of research, as well as to use skills and content from a number of disciplines and see connections between them. It also promotes student ownership, collaborative work and problem-solving skills. In this case the inquiry structure is built around five phases – ‘tuning in’, ‘finding out’, ‘going further’, ‘sorting out’ and ‘taking action’. Each of these phases includes a number of lesson ideas. The inquiry process is not necessarily linear, so teachers may choose to use ideas from various places in this resource as it suits their context.

Each lesson idea comes with a major focus question, as well as further questions for discussion. In order to foster meaningful discussion, it is important to aim to have students responding to each other and not just to teachers’ questions. It also may be useful to share the focus question with the class during each activity.

Bearing all of this in mind, *What Matters Most?* lends itself to teaching around the theme of poverty over a period of time in a number of learning areas. It is not

essential that every single lesson idea be used, but covering at least some of the material from each of the inquiry phases will help the learning experience be a more useful and fulfilling one for students.

## Global education and the five emphases

Global education enables children and young people to participate in shaping a better shared future for the world. The activities in *What Matters Most?* reflect the five emphases of global education and are coded to show which of these they relate to:



Interdependence and globalisation



Identity and cultural diversity



Social justice and human rights



Peace building and conflict resolution



Sustainable futures

To learn more about global education, visit the [Global Education website](#).

## Accessible online material

Throughout this publication there are many references to online material needed for activities. An electronic copy of this resource is available in the [Resources Gallery](#) of the Global Education website, in which all the online material is accessible directly from active hyperlinks. Alternatively, teachers can use the information given in the text to search for the information themselves. The online version also includes some extra material useful in carrying out some of the lessons, such as copies of ready-to-print cards for certain activities.

## Leading to action

An over-riding influence in the writing of this resource has been to ensure that the activities are interesting and relevant to the students they are written for. After all, our hope is that they are motivated to learn more and increase their understanding, to ask thoughtful and interesting questions about why things are the way they are, and that learning will lead to action that is informed and valuable.

## Australian Curriculum links

Activity	Learning Areas	GC
<b>The good life road</b>	English: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACELA1502</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1709</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Language: Language for interaction</i> – Understand how to move beyond making bare assertions and take account of differing perspectives and points of view.</li> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Interacting with others</i> – Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions.</li> </ul>	Ethical understanding
<b>The lolly game</b>	Geography: Year 6 ( <a href="#">ACHGK032</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Knowledge and Understanding</i> - Differences in the economic, demographic and social characteristics between countries across the world</li> </ul>	Numeracy
<b>Defining poverty</b>	Geography: Year 6 ( <a href="#">ACHGK032</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Knowledge and Understanding</i> - Differences in the economic, demographic and social characteristics between countries across the world.</li> </ul> English: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACELY1703</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1713</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Interpreting, Analysing, Evaluating</i> – Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts.</li> </ul>	Personal and social capability
<b>Looking for clues in art</b>	Visual Arts: Years 5 & 6* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Investigate values and meanings in their own and others' visual arts works</li> <li>▶ Identify and discuss a range of visual arts works and how they may be interpreted in different ways</li> </ul>	Personal and social capability
<b>The web of poverty</b>	Geography: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACHGK028</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACHGK032</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Knowledge and Understanding</i> – the influence of the environment on the human characteristics of a place.</li> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Knowledge and Understanding</i> – Differences in the economic, demographic and social characteristics between countries across the world.</li> </ul>	Critical and creative thinking
<b>The interconnections game</b>	Geography: Year 6 ( <a href="#">ACHGK035</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Knowledge and Understanding</i> – The various connections Australia has with other countries and how these connections change people and places.</li> </ul>	Critical and creative thinking
<b>Ernie's search for work</b>	Geography: Year 5 ( <a href="#">ACHGK029</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Knowledge and Understanding</i> – The influence people have on the human characteristics of places and the management of spaces within them.</li> </ul> Drama: Years 5 & 6* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Offer, accept and extend situations to shape dramatic action in improvisations and devised drama.</li> </ul>	Literacy
<b>Living on less than \$1.25 a day</b>	Mathematics: Year 5 ( <a href="#">ACMNA106</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Number and algebra</i> – money and financial mathematics – Create simple financial plans.</li> </ul>	Personal and social capability
<b>Investigating projects that make a difference</b>	English: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACELY1700</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1704</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1710</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1714</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Interacting with others</i> – Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations.</li> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Creating texts</i> – Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience.</li> </ul> Geography: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACHGS033</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACHGS034</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACHGS038</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Inquiry and Skills</i> – Observing, questioning and planning; collecting and recording; communicating.</li> </ul>	Critical and creative thinking
<b>The election</b>	Civics and Citizenship* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Yr 5 Knowledge and Understandings</i> – The roles and responsibilities of electors and representatives in Australia's liberal democracy.</li> </ul>	Ethical understanding

## Australian Curriculum links (cont.)

Activity	Learning Areas	GC
<b>Graphing the facts</b>	Mathematics: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACMSP119</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACMSP120</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACMSP147</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Statistics and Probability: Data representation and interpretation</i> – Constructing and interpreting a range of data displays.</li> </ul>	Numeracy
<b>Further research</b>	Geography : Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACHGS033</a> )( <a href="#">ACHGS034</a> )( <a href="#">ACHGS038</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Inquiry and Skills</i> – Observing, questioning and planning; collecting and recording; communicating.</li> </ul> English: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACELY1704</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1714</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Creating texts</i> – Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience.</li> </ul>	Critical and creative thinking
<b>Writing persuasive texts</b>	English: Year 6 ( <a href="#">ACELA1525</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1714</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Language: Expressing and developing ideas</i> – How language can express meaning and opinion.</li> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Creating texts</i> – Draft and publish informative and persuasive texts.</li> </ul>	Personal and social capability
<b>The pitch</b>	English: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACELY1707</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1717</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1709</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Creating texts</i> – Use a range of software including word processing programs with fluency to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements.</li> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Interacting with others</i> – Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions.</li> </ul> Media Arts: Years 5 & 6* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Plan media arts works for specific audiences and intentions</i> – Collaborating to design storyboards and scripts for a media arts sequence that addresses a social, environmental or community issue.</li> </ul>	ICT
<b>The anti-poverty declaration</b>	English: Year 5 ( <a href="#">ACELY1704</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1709</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Creating texts</i> – Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structures, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience.</li> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Interacting with others</i> – Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions.</li> </ul>	Ethical understanding
<b>Taking action</b>	Geography: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACHGS039</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Inquiry and Skills</i> – Reflecting and responding.</li> </ul>	Critical and creative thinking
<b>Living with less</b>	English: Year 6 ( <a href="#">ACELY1711</a> ) ( <a href="#">ACELY1801</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Interpreting, analysing and evaluating</i> – Analyse how text structures and language features work together to meet the purpose of a text.</li> <li>▶ <i>Literacy: Interpreting, analysing and evaluating</i> – Analyse strategies authors use to influence readers.</li> </ul>	Ethical understanding
<b>Fundraising and school partnerships</b>	Geography: Years 5 & 6 ( <a href="#">ACHGK035</a> )( <a href="#">ACHGS039</a> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Knowledge and Understanding</i> – The various connections Australia has with other countries and how these connections change people and places</li> <li>▶ <i>Geographical Inquiry and Skills</i> – Reflecting and responding.</li> </ul>	Ethical behaviour

The curriculum links listed here are the ones most closely related to each lesson, but the list is not exhaustive and there may be links to other learning areas, strands and year levels which are also fulfilled by these lesson ideas. To find out more about each of the content descriptions written in this table, enter the code in the search window at: [www.australiancurriculum.edu.au](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au)

- ▶ The Arts curriculum and the Civics and Citizenship curriculum were only available in draft form at the time of going to print.





## The Good Life Road

### What makes a good life?



Image credit: One World Centre.

The purpose of this activity is for students to raise questions and clarify their own thoughts about what things are most important to having a good life. They may also begin to see that although people living in poverty are lacking many material things, their lives may also include some aspects that the students value. This thinking will be important as students learn more about experiences of poverty.

### Activity

Tell students that they will be considering what makes a good life. First, watch or read a stimulus resource as a class (such as *Herbert and Harry* by Pamela Allen, *The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley* by Colin Thompson, or the TEAR video, *Working Together in an Indian Village* which is [available online](#)).

Divide students into groups of four or five and give each group a set of cards with the following phrases on them. (They are available to print at the [Global Education website](#).) It is helpful if each card can be printed in a different colour.

- ▶ Having lots of money
- ▶ Being healthy
- ▶ Having great toys

- ▶ Having fashionable clothes
- ▶ Being famous
- ▶ Having jobs for adults
- ▶ Having friends and family who love and help you
- ▶ Having clean water and toilets
- ▶ Being able to make choices about what happens in your life
- ▶ Having a safe place to live
- ▶ Having TVs, computers and other electronic stuff
- ▶ A government that helps if you need it
- ▶ Getting an education

In their groups, students read through the cards and make a decision about how necessary each item is for a person to have a good life. They should place each card along the Good Life Road, a line marked on the ground with ends marked 'Very important' and 'Not important at all'. The cards should be positioned according to how important students think the item on the card is to having a good life. For example, if the group thinks the item on the card is vital to having a good life they should place it at the 'Very important' end, or if they think it is not important they should place it at the 'Not important at all' end. They can also place cards at any point in between.



## The Good Life Road (cont.)

### Discussion

When the groups have finished, the whole class should look at the continuum. The different coloured cards will help them to notice any trends across the cards from different groups. Students can comment on why they agree or disagree with the placement of particular items.

- ▶ Is there general agreement within the class about particular items?
- ▶ Are there differences between the class's answers and what they think other people may say about a good life?
- ▶ Do students' lives actually reflect the things they say are important?
- ▶ Are there any connections between the thinking in this activity and the people/characters in the book or video they viewed previously?
- ▶ Do they think that people living in poverty are able to have a good life? Can students think of anything they have in common with people living in poverty?

### Understanding poverty journals



Tao Kim 7 years old sits at his desk in a school where the Australian Government aid program has funded training for teachers. Lao PDR. Image credit: Jim Holmes, Australian Government aid program.

To complement the activities in this resource, students could keep a journal where they gather information and ideas and express their growing understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty. A journal can also be useful in assessing student learning.

Some of the learning activities in this resource include specific topics for journal entries. At other times students may reflect on an activity or answer a discussion question from the activity. They can reflect on how their thinking has changed by comparing their current thoughts with previous entries. Students may also record questions for future research. Their entries may be written or in another form.

Students may record their thoughts in a paper journal or in an online space such as [Edublogs](#), [Kidblog](#), [penzu](#), [Wikispaces](#) or [Glogster](#).



## The Lolly Game

### How many people actually live in poverty?

This activity provides a way of visualising some global statistics about hunger, access to water and sanitation, and resource distribution. It then leads on to some discussion about the implications of those realities.

The following steps outline the procedure for 30 students, so numbers will need to be adjusted for other group sizes (see the table on the following page). It is important to stress that this is a global view of the world, not a country-by-country view. For example, there are the very rich and the very poor in many countries. On the whole, Australia is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but we still have many citizens who are homeless.

1. Ask the 30 participants to form a circle, standing behind their chairs. Tell them they represent the total world population (currently just over 7 billion people<sup>2</sup>), with each person representing 3.3% of the world's population. (230 million people – approximately the population of Indonesia)
2. Ask 11 of the circle to sit on their chairs. These people represent the 36% (2.5 billion people) of

the world without adequate sanitation<sup>3</sup>. Being without adequate sanitation means not having somewhere safe and clean to go to the toilet and wash afterwards, and lack of sanitation is a major cause of illness and death.

3. Ask 6 of those sitting to kneel on the ground, as they represent the 20% (1.4 billion people) of the world suffering extreme poverty<sup>4</sup>. Extreme poverty is defined by the World Bank as living on less than \$US1.25 per day. (A cause for hope is that 20 years ago this figure was 43%)
4. Ask 4 of this group to sit on the floor. They represent the 14% of world population who do not have access to adequate shelter<sup>5</sup>. (Not having access to adequate shelter means living in slums or being homeless)
5. Ask this group to put their hands on their stomachs as they also represent the 13% of world population who experience hunger every day<sup>6</sup>, and the 12% of the world that don't have access to clean water<sup>7</sup>.
6. Ask 1 of those sitting on the floor to lie flat on their backs, representing the 3.2% of world population that are child labourers<sup>8</sup>.



Children play, Koral Slum, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Image Credit: Conor Ashleigh, Australian Government aid program.

## The Lolly Game (cont.)

7. Of those still standing, ask 3 (preferably one female and two males) to put their hands above their heads as they represent the 10% of the population which holds most of the world's wealth<sup>9</sup>.
8. The remaining people who are still standing represent those in the world that have modest incomes, 'just enough' to feed, house, and clothe themselves.

### Distribution of lollies (resources)

Make sure there are enough lollies to have one for each person (in this group, 30 lollies). Announce that the lollies in your bag represent the world's wealth. There is enough for each person to have a lolly but you are going to share them as the wealth is currently shared in the world. Give 25 lollies (85%) to the richest 10% (give more to the males than the females); give the rest of the group the remaining (5 lollies – 15%) to share between them all.

### Some possible discussion questions

- ▶ Where do most Australians fit into this equation, e.g. standing/sitting? (Note for the teacher: Australia is second out of 190 countries on the UNHDI – which measures wealth, income, education and health services. We still have inequalities though; 100,000 homeless people for example.)
- ▶ How did those sitting feel when I gave them their 5 lollies?
- ▶ How did those standing feel?
- ▶ Did anyone think about how they were going to share them?
- ▶ Did anyone think about how they might get some of the larger pile of lollies? Why or why not?
- ▶ Would those standing have felt any different if they did not know that the others only got 5 to share?
- ▶ What things are happening currently in the world that may be related to this unequal distribution? What is the relationship?
- ▶ It has been argued that this level of inequality is at the core of much of the world's conflict. Do you agree/disagree?
- ▶ What might happen between countries or between people in countries that is related to this inequality?
- ▶ Is there anything we can do about it?

Below is a table with distribution for different class sizes. Numbers are approximate due to rounding.

Class size	10	15	20	25	30	35	50
Percentage of world population	10%	6.7%	5%	4%	3.3%	2.9%	2%
Lacking adequate sanitation 36%	4	6	7	9	11	13	18
Living in absolute poverty 20%	2	3	4	5	6	7	10
Slum dwelling 14% living in hunger 13%	1	2	3	4	4	5	7
Lacking clean water 12%	1	2	3	3	4	4	6
Child labourers 3%	0	0	1	1	1	1	2
Top 10%	1	1 or 2	2	2 or 3	3	3 or 4	5
Lollies given to top 10%	8	13	17	21	25	30	43
Lollies given to rest	2	2	3	4	5	5	7

This activity is adapted from: *A Better World for All* – Student Activities by Margaret Calder and Roger Smith, Commonwealth of Australia, 1993

Note: Lollies are used in this activity as they are usually seen as desirable by students and suit the purpose of demonstrating the uneven distribution of resources. Some schools may be reluctant to use lollies because of particular school policies or student allergies. If this is the case they may choose to use some other token or symbol for the resource consumption part of the simulation.





## Defining Poverty

### What is poverty?

#### About this lesson

This lesson gives students the opportunity to reflect on what they already know and think about poverty, and then asks them to think about other people's ideas about poverty. Some of these may affirm students' thinking and some may present additional ideas or challenge assumptions they may have made. This lesson encourages students to think broadly about poverty and to recognise the grim realities as well as the common experiences all humans share. It also introduces the idea that the reality of life with poverty is not fixed and that there is possibility for positive change.

#### Activity

Ask the students to imagine what their average day would be like if they were someone living in poverty. Give them a short period of time to write a journal entry about this. What are their needs and wants? What do they do and think about? Have them pair up and share their paragraph with another student.

As a class, watch some of the following videos where people talk about or show their experiences of living in poverty. Ask students to note anything that stands out to them.

- ▶ In World Vision's [Imagine My City video](#), children in the slum areas of Manila talk about their lives and dreams.
- ▶ The [Our Africa website](#) includes many videos made by children from African countries and a number of these are about the experience of poverty.
- ▶ In an [End the Cycle video](#), Mosua Islam talks about his experiences of poverty and disability.
- ▶ Milka tells the story of how her life has improved in this [Nuru International video](#).
- ▶ The 7 billion Others website includes a video called [MDG-Poverty Matters](#) where people from many countries speak briefly about their experiences of poverty.
- ▶ The [Children in Poverty](#) video from Channel 10 is about poverty in Australia.

#### Living texts

A good way to learn about poverty is to listen to someone who has had a close up view. Invite someone to the classroom for students to interview as a living text. This could be someone who has experienced poverty and is willing to talk about it, or someone who has worked or volunteered in a development organisation or social services organisation. Before the visit, students will need to prepare questions and should consider the personal nature of the topic and how they will act accordingly.

## Defining Poverty (cont.)

Discuss students' thoughts and impressions. What do they think the videos or interviews tell them about experiences of poverty? What surprised students? What has or could change to improve the lives of the people in the video? What do they have in common with the people in the videos?

Tell students that you would like them to answer the question, "What is poverty?" and that you have one more activity to help them think about this. Display (either as a handout or cards placed around the room) the statements on the following page and ask students to read through each of them.

Ask students to select one statement which stands out to them and share it with a partner.

- ▶ How does it feel to read these statements?
- ▶ What does it tell you about the life of a person experiencing poverty?
- ▶ Would you make changes to what you wrote in your journal entry? Why?
- ▶ Thinking about the lesson so far, choose four key words or phrases that you think describe poverty.
- ▶ Join with another pair, compare lists and choose four key words or phrases that the group agrees on.

Ask students to write a short statement, beginning with "Poverty is..." in their journals. These could also be displayed in the classroom and added to during further activities.

## Quotes about Poverty<sup>10</sup>

(A larger printable version of these is available at the [Global Education website](#).)

<p>"A lack of good health, belonging and care, lack of money, food, shelter and clothing. And a lack of having love, self-esteem and trust in other people."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- Homeless man in Melbourne</b></p>	<p>"Poor people care about many of the same things all of us care about: happiness, family, children, livelihood, peace, security, safety, dignity and respect."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- World Bank Report: <i>Can anyone hear us?</i></b></p>
<p>"Poverty is like living in jail, living under bondage, waiting to be free."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- A young woman in Jamaica</b></p>	<p>"Poverty is ... fear of what the future will bring."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- World Bank Report: <i>Can anyone hear us?</i></b></p>
<p>"We poor people are invisible to others – just as blind people cannot see, they cannot see us."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- A person from Pakistan</b></p>	<p>"Being unable to change the future, or live in a permanent home. And being unable to stop worrying about life or plan ahead."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- Homeless man in Melbourne</b></p>
<p>"We're ashamed of our poverty. We have been forced to be ashamed. But the misery goes away in the evening when I watch my children sleeping. I can see only them, and I weep. This way they never see my tears."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- World Bank Report: <i>Can anyone hear us?</i></b></p>	<p>"Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not being able to go to a school, not knowing how to read, and not being able to speak properly. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- World Bank Report: <i>Can anyone hear us?</i></b></p>
<p>"We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- Mother Teresa of Calcutta</b></p>	<p>"For a poor person everything is terrible – illness, humiliation, shame. We are cripples; we are afraid of everything, we depend on everyone. No one needs us. We are like garbage that everyone wants to get rid of."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>- A woman in Moldova</b></p>



## Looking for clues in art

### How do I feel about poverty?

In this activity, students view and respond to artworks, question their assumptions and consider their feelings around issues of poverty and homelessness. This photograph was taken by [Kate McMillan](#), a Western Australian artist, in Tokyo, Japan in 2002/03. It is part of a series of 18 photographs of the shelters and belongings of people who are homeless<sup>11</sup> called Concepts on the Verge of Collapse. For a larger version of this image and a second image go to the [Global Education website](#).

### Activity

Show students the images without telling them anything about who took them or where. It is important that teachers listen to students' answers and draw attentions to stereotypes (e.g. poor and dirty). A good way to do this is through further questions.

Ask students to describe what they see. Discuss some of the following questions. At an appropriate point in discussions, give students more information about the images.

- ▶ What are the objects in the photograph? How can you tell? Could there be other answers?
- ▶ Where do you think the photograph was taken? Are there clues in the image that tell you this?
- ▶ What can you tell about the people who own the objects in the photograph? What leads you to this conclusion?
- ▶ What could be happening outside the frame of the image? How could you find out?
- ▶ What do you think the artist is trying to say through this photograph?
- ▶ This image is part of a series of 18 photographs. What might you learn from looking at all of the images?
- ▶ What perspective have the photographs been taken from? A high viewpoint? A low viewpoint? At eye-level? Close up? A panoramic view? Why do you think the artist chose to photograph the subjects from this perspective?
- ▶ Why do you think that there are no people in the images?
- ▶ Do you think the artist met the people who own the objects before she took the photographs?
- ▶ How would you feel about your home and possessions being photographed and turned into an artwork seen by many people?
- ▶ What do you think about when you look at the image? What do you feel?
- ▶ Do others respond in the same way that you do? Why or why not?



**Kate McMillan** From the series, Concepts on the verge of collapse 2003, 18 c-type print (series 1 of 2) 18 prints, each print 44.5 x 55cm State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia  
© 2013 Kate McMillan.

Students complete this activity by making an entry in their journals "How I feel about poverty." This can be used as a basis for creating their own artworks to communicate their emotional reactions to poverty.





## The web of poverty

### What causes poverty?

Why are people poor? Are they lazy, unlucky, or perhaps made bad decisions at the wrong time? Actually there are other factors at play. Poverty can be a complex web of causes and consequences – this activity introduces students to the many different circumstances involved.

### Brainstorm

Ask students to reflect on the stories they have heard so far about poverty, and ask them to think about what they think some of the main causes are. Have a class brainstorm and note all the suggestions.

### Learning about causes

The following cards give a brief explanation outlining a range of causes of poverty (they are available to print at the [Global Education website](#)). Divide the class into 12 groups and give each group a different card. You may also use a couple of extra blank cards and record an additional cause suggested by the students in the brainstorm. Students will also need three lengths of wool for each group (you will need at least 36 pieces of wool about six metres long) which they will use in the next part of the activity.



Drought affected area in Mazar, Afghanistan.

Image Credit: Steven Dupont, Australian Government aid program.

<p><b>Not being able to go to school</b></p> <p>If children aren't able to go to school they will miss out on learning new ideas and skills, being with other children, and will have trouble finding a job and earning an income in the future.</p>	<p><b>Sickness</b></p> <p>Being very sick can prevent someone from going to school, from working, and enjoying their life with their family and friends. Staying healthy requires good nutrition and access to medicines and doctors when people are sick.</p>	<p><b>Where you live</b></p> <p>Some people live in places where it is hard to find a job or go to school, or where they are in danger from natural disasters like floods, earthquakes and drought.</p>
<p><b>Discrimination</b></p> <p>In some places and communities, people are treated very unfairly because they are female or from a certain ethnic or religious group. This may mean they can't go to school, can only have certain types of jobs, or are not able to make their own choices about where they live.</p>	<p><b>Corruption</b></p> <p>When people in power act dishonestly by spending government money on themselves or taking bribes, it means that other people can be treated unfairly. This means that there could be less money to spend on services like hospitals and clean water.</p>	<p><b>War and other conflicts</b></p> <p>Armed conflicts can cause ongoing suffering for people who are already poor. Hospitals, schools and roads can be destroyed, family members killed, and money normally used to provide services is used for funding weapons and other equipment.</p>
<p><b>Land dispossession</b></p> <p>Sometime people aren't able to own land because it is already owned or is taken from them by more powerful people. Being landless makes it harder to earn money. People without land can't grow food, don't have somewhere secure to live and aren't able to pass on anything to their children.</p>	<p><b>Climate change</b></p> <p>Changes in climate can mean that farmers are unable to grow enough food to feed families or earn a proper income. Changes can also cause more frequent and severe weather events and natural disasters.</p>	<p><b>Unfair rules</b></p> <p>Rules about buying, selling and paying taxes can sometimes favour big companies. This means that governments of poorer countries have less tax money to build hospitals, schools and roads, and local farmers and business owners find it harder to make money because the big companies have an advantage.</p>
<p><b>Natural disasters</b></p> <p>Drought, floods, earthquakes, bushfires and other natural disasters can destroy homes, roads, hospitals, schools and other important community facilities that people need.</p>	<p><b>Being unemployed</b></p> <p>If someone doesn't have a job they are likely to have a lot less money to be able to buy food and medicines and to pay for somewhere to live.</p>	<p><b>Not having enough food</b></p> <p>Children who are undernourished experience ongoing sickness, may not be able to grow and develop properly, and may miss out on many opportunities, such as going to school.</p>

Stand in a large circle and ask each group to read their card together and then one person from each group explains what is on their card to the rest of the class, in their own words as much as possible.

## The web of poverty (cont.)

### The web of causes

Once everyone has explained their information to the others, tell students they will be trying to discover if any of these causes are related to one another. Is one cause created by another or does it make another worse? For example, if someone has to pay a bribe to get medical treatment (Corruption) they will have less money to buy food (Not having enough food). Display a list of the causes where all the students can see it. Give groups time to think and make a list of connections to their cause.



Lit Rav Ve is 17 years old. She is in grade 6 as she missed a lot of school because her brothers married and left home, leaving her responsible for the housework such as collecting water and firewood and looking after the livestock. Image credit: CARE Australia, Laura Hill.



Darul Aman Palace, Kabul, left in ruins after the 1990s civil war. Image credit: Cameron Tero

Make a large circle again and ask one group to choose another group whose cause is related to theirs. Then one group member holds one end of a piece of wool while another takes it over to the other group and gives it to them to hold. Go around the whole class asking each group to connect up with another with a piece of wool, giving each group three turns. Stop a few times during the activity to remind students of the range of causes written on the cards.

Take a photo of the web the students have created from as high up in the room as possible. Enlarge the photo as much as you can and display it in the classroom. Students could also include the photo in a journal entry. Then, as students undertake further activities about poverty, refer back to the web – to explain how a project tackles a particular problem, or how a story reflects the ideas presented in this lesson.

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### Discussion

As a class, discuss the following questions:

- ▶ How is the information on the cards similar or different to causes suggested by the class?
- ▶ Is there one cause that is more important than any other?
- ▶ Do any of the causes you have talked about play a part in the stories of poverty that you have read or heard?
- ▶ What does this activity tell students about how poverty needs to be addressed?

As this lesson highlights many of the problems the global community faces, it may be helpful to finish with some examples of how these are being addressed. See the [Global Education website](#) case studies, or check out the [‘A different story’ video](#) from an aid organisation called PLAN International.

## The interconnections game

### What does poverty have to do with me?

This activity helps students to make connections between their own lives and other people's experiences of poverty. It highlights the way in

which everyday actions and circumstances have connections and impacts beyond what we can immediately see.



Peanuts from a crop in Lombok, Indonesia. Image credit: Josh Estey, Australian Government aid program.

### Initial discussion

Ask students to think about the question: "What does poverty have to do with me?"

Give students a sticky note on which to write their ideas, and then collect them on a large poster or the board at the front of the classroom. If students seem to need some further clarification, you could ask them to think about how they may be connected to people or countries who they think are living in poverty, or whether they themselves are affected by poverty in any way.

### The card game

For the card game component of this activity you will need some open space where the whole class can move around freely – in the classroom or outside. Explain to students that each of them will be given a card that has something on it, such as a word, phrase, statistic, country or person. Explain that they are to move around the room and see what is on

other people's cards, and then try to form groups of four so that they will be able to tell a feasible story about how their four cards are connected.

As students begin to move around the room there is likely to be a great deal of initial confusion as they try to make connections between different ideas. It is best to let students try to make connections for themselves, even if at first this seems unlikely. Any clues or ideas from the teacher should be very vague. There are many possible connections between the ideas written on the cards, so it is not necessarily better for students to form the groups indicated in the 'intended connections' listed on the following page, as there are many additional connections that can be made.

This activity is a way in to finding about the issues, and getting it 'right' isn't the initial intention of the exercise. Rather it is to demonstrate the



## The interconnections game (cont.)



K. Vasantha Kumary is a female deminer working for DASH, a demining organisation working in Northern Sri Lanka and funded by the Australian Government aid program. Image credit: Conor Ashleigh, the Australian Government aid program.

interconnectedness of the global family and find out some new stories and facts. It is also a great starting point for further investigation about many of the issues raised. Consequently, if students end up forming slightly smaller or larger groups (or a couple of children don't end up in a group), the activity can still work well.

Once students have had a chance to discuss and form groups (give them at least 10 minutes), ask each group to tell their story to the whole class. Explain that while there are intended connections, there are a multitude of possibilities and this activity

is about exploring what those possibilities are and being creative. After everyone has told their stories, shuffle people around into groups reflecting the intended connections (explained on the next page) and explain those interconnections.

The content for the cards on the following page is set out in groups of four, and the activity works best if there is a complete set for each interconnected story. Depending on the numbers of participants, take out a set of four if needed, and if the group is not a multiple of four, put some people into pairs.

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### Ending discussion

Finish the activity by revisiting the question: "What does poverty have to do with me?" Give students a second sticky note (of a different colour than the first), and again ask them to record their ideas, and stick them on the board along with their earlier responses. Use the discussion to highlight the ways in which the interconnections game has shown the multiple ways students' own lives are connected to circumstances and stories of poverty.

This is also a good opportunity to discuss the ways in which everyday actions can have a positive impact

on alleviating poverty – such as participating in the fair trade movement, being more aware about how tourism affects others, and addressing poverty and homelessness within Australia.

### The intended connections

Following is a description of the cards and the intended connections. Teachers can make their own cards or a printable version of the cards is available at the [Global Education website](#).

## The interconnections game (cont.)

bread	food prices	\$1000	waste
Buying more food than we need and throwing out food that is edible is a common practice in Australian homes and restaurants. This food wastage can increase demand for agricultural commodities like wheat and other staples, raising food prices globally and making it difficult for poorer people to buy enough to eat. Money spent by consumers on products that aren't then used is also wasted. It is estimated that the average Australian household spends over \$1000 a year on such wasted products <sup>12</sup> .			

footballs and netballs	child slavery	stitched by hand	a family desperate for money
Many footballs, netballs and soccer balls that are used in schools are imported from places where children are employed to hand stitch balls in very poor working conditions. Many children working in these conditions are doing so because of ongoing poverty in their families and communities, and to pay off debts owed by their families.			

homeless	105,000 people	Australia	2012
Research released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that there are currently at least 105,000 homeless people in Australia <sup>13</sup> . It's important to realise that poverty doesn't just happen "somewhere else", and that there are many instances and indications of poverty and inequality within Australia.			

pair of jeans	workers earning low wages	fashion	factory
A great deal of clothing, including jeans and a lot of sportswear, is made in factories where workers endure poor working conditions, long hours, low wages and other violations of their rights. Fairer working conditions would make a big difference in the lives of the people living and working in these situations.			

Bali	swimming pool	salinity	tourists
Bali is a favourite holiday destination for Australians. Overuse of fresh water for tourism interests, such as for swimming pools and golf courses, has a negative impact on fresh water supply for locals, including rising salinity which can harm food production and jeopardise the livelihoods of local farmers <sup>14</sup> .			

people who work in Australia	income tax	Australian aid works to help people living in poverty overseas	\$5.2 billion
Income tax is an important source of revenue for the Australian government, and is used to fund services and projects within and beyond Australia. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade manages the Australian government's overseas aid program, and the budget for Australian aid's work in 2012/13 was \$5.2 billion.			

"Convention on the rights of the child". For example, the right to shelter and medical care	Me	Isaac in Zambia (aged 10)	Auvita in Papua New Guinea (aged 12)
<p>The Convention on the Rights of the Child is an internationally recognised treaty that sets out the rights of children, and draws attention to the duties of governments, families, communities and individuals to respect those rights and support the special care and protection of people under the age of 18. A child-friendly version of the convention is available from the <a href="#">UNICEF website</a>.</p> <p>This interconnection emphasises the way in which these rights belong to all children everywhere - the students in Australian classrooms (the 'me' in this activity), and children such as those described on the other two cards.</p>			



## Ernie's search for work

### What do people need to get a job?

Earning an income can make a big difference to the life of a person or family living in poverty. There are actions that individuals can take to assist them to get a job (e.g. applying for lots of jobs or furthering their education) but there can also be factors beyond their control that influence whether they will be employed or not. This activity is based on real events and helps students consider the complexities involved in gaining employment, particularly in areas where many people live in poverty.

### Activity

In this activity, students will be acting as investigative journalists whose editor has assigned them to write about why so many people in the Philippines are moving from the country to the cities to find jobs. Students should begin by thinking about why people might not be able to find jobs where they live. They will then need to interview a series of people. The teacher or other helpers can act as each interviewee and should base their answers on the stories below. Students could ask questions in small groups or altogether as in a press conference. They should listen to their interviewees for suggestions about other people to talk to. They will need to take notes during their conversations.

At the end of the interviews, students will need to create and present a news report (newspaper, radio or television) based on Ernie's story, but attempting to draw some broader conclusions about barriers to employment for people living in poverty.



Organic La Top farm in Benguet, Baguio, Philippines  
Image credit: Rowena Harbridge, Australian Government aid program.

### The Roles

The students' first contact is Evelyn Reyes whose husband, Ernie, has just moved to Davao to look for work. Before they meet her they will need to come up with some questions that will help them to find out some useful information.

### Evelyn's story

I live with my family in the country outside Davao on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. I'm 27 and married to Ernie and we have three small kids. We have a small amount of land that we farm on, but we can't even grow enough to feed all of us all the time so we really need to have other ways to earn some more money. I work on the farm and look after our kids so it has always been Ernie who has been looking for extra work, but it has been really hard for him lately and it means that we have really been struggling.

It's not that Ernie isn't a good employee. He is clever, he can read and went to school for nine years which is as much as anyone from around here. And he's a really hard worker. Everyone he's worked for has said so. His last job was working for Juan on his mango farm but a few months ago Juan told him that he couldn't afford to pay him anymore. I don't know why he couldn't pay Ernie any more, but maybe you could ask him. After that Ernie looked for another job but he couldn't find one and so he has gone to look for a job in the city. Hopefully he will get one soon and then he will be able to send some money back to us and things will get easier.



## Ernie's search for work (cont.)

### Juan's story

I have a mango farm and sell the mangos to people who sell them in the markets in nearby towns. Ernie used to work as a labourer on my mango farm and he was a great help. Some of his jobs were pruning the mango trees, weeding, managing pests and picking the fruit for sale. Then people would buy the fruit from our farm and transport them to markets which are about 9km away. Our business was going well and we were starting to think about starting a factory to make dried mangoes and mango juice – I had been talking to some business people from Davao about investing some money to get things started and then we would have been able to sell our products at other places, beyond the local towns.

Unfortunately, six months ago there was a big cyclone and it left a fair bit of damage around here. Luckily most of my mango trees recovered but the road into town had been flooded and became a real mess. There were so many rocks and potholes that it was really slow, bumpy and dangerous to travel on. Some traders, who used to buy my mangos, stopped coming on the road and others said they would pay me much less because the fruit got so bumped around on the way into town that they couldn't sell them for much. The business people decided they wouldn't invest in a factory that was so hard to get to and I was barely making any money at all. That's why I couldn't afford to pay Ernie anymore. That road has caused me and lots of other people so much trouble. I don't know why they haven't fixed it yet. You could talk to Alvin de Asis – I think he used to work for a company that sometimes fixes the roads.

### Alvin's story

I work for a road construction company when there is work available, doing some of the digging and compacting. We did start working on the road between here and town, at the end near town but we'd only been working a few days and then when I arrived at work one morning all the equipment was gone and I haven't been able to get in contact with my boss. We had only fixed a few hundreds of metres of the roads. Maybe the people at the Department of Highways could tell you what happened. They were the ones who employed my boss's company, Davao Road Maintenance.

### Maricel's story

My name is Maricel Cruz and I work at the Department of Highways. We did employ Davao Road Maintenance to fix that road but there has been a bit of a holdup. You see, there are a lot of forms that need filling out when you're going to fix roads and as we fix many many roads there are a lot of paper forms in our offices. Just when work had begun we realised that we couldn't find the forms for this road and so work had to stop until we had the correct forms either found or completed again. This is the way that things run when you work for the government.

After a couple of months we did get new copies of the forms, with all the correct signatures but then there was a new problem. The Department of Highways had run out of money. It turns out that we had planned to do more than we had the money to pay for. The construction company refused to do any more work until we were able to pay them, which will probably be sometime next year.

In 2010, the Australian Government's Philippines Strategy program worked with the Philippines Department of Public Works and Highways to implement an automated government accounting system, one of many projects in the Philippines. This is an example of the way that Australian aid works to improve government processes which then have a flow-on effect on people's abilities to have jobs, and alleviate poverty.

Note: The above scenario is based on an Australian Government program but is fictional.



## Living on less than \$1.25

### What would it be like to live on a very small income?

This activity is designed to help students learn more about what it would be like to live on an extremely small income. During this activity they will work in groups to design a budget for a family living on \$1.25 per day, per person, for a week. They will be given some information to help them get started, and then have to investigate more, and make decisions together as they go along.

### Background

Poverty is measured around the world in a number of different ways, and sometimes governments or other organisations will talk about people 'living below the poverty line'. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$1.25 per day, and estimates there are 1.4 billion people in the world living on less than this amount (about 20% of the world's population).

Some people may think this is not as bad as it sounds, as they may have travelled overseas and found that buying food or other goods in that country seems to be very cheap to them. However, these calculations use a technique called purchasing power parity (PPP), which means they take into account the difference in prices between countries. When we say that 1.4 billion people in the world are



Image Credit: ccarlstead.

living on less than \$1.25 a day, we mean that they are living on the equivalent of what \$1.25 would buy you in the USA (or Australia, as our currency and living costs are similar), not what it would buy you in Indonesia, or Zimbabwe, or any other country. One important point that will emerge from this activity is that this is an incredibly small amount of income on which to survive.

Another point to keep in mind is that the activity described below is not aimed at understanding more about poverty within Australia, as 'living below the poverty line' within a country such as Australia is defined quite differently. Some activities which explore this theme are available in the teaching activities section of the [Global Education website](#).

### The activity

- ▶ Divide the class into small groups, who will represent small families of four, five or six members, depending on class numbers.
- ▶ Explain that in their family groups they are to construct a budget for their family for a week, with the spending limit of \$1.25 per person per day. They can combine their income, which means for a group of five they will have \$43.75 available for seven days ( $\$1.25 \times 5 \times 7 = \$43.75$ ).
- ▶ They should begin by drawing up a list of what a family of five may need for a week, considering meals for everyone, water for drinking and other purposes, energy, transport, medical bills, and other needs students may think of.
- ▶ Then, as a group they need to figure out a way to try and meet those needs with their budget of \$1.25 per person per day. Give them time to discuss the various options and check their calculations.
- ▶ Once students have figured out a budget for their families, ask them to share their budget with the rest of the class, showing which items they have chosen and how they have kept below the allowed limit.
- ▶ Use the discussion questions on the following page after students have completed and presented their budgets.

The tables on the following page set out some estimated costs for food and other items and services, within Australia. This is just an indicative list, and prices may change in different places and circumstances. Teachers may decide to use this list or set students the task of researching costs themselves.

## Living on less than \$1.25 (cont.)

### Food and other grocery costs

Loaf of bread	\$2.30	Bananas (1kg)	\$1.99	Baked Beans (large tin)	\$2.90
Milk (2 litres)	\$2.20	Lentils (1kg)	\$4.50	Tuna (large tin)	\$5.60
Weet-bix (large packet)	\$5.49	Carrots (1kg)	\$0.99	Tea bags (24 bags)	\$2.05
Oats (1kg)	\$2.50	Potatoes (1kg)	\$2.49	Milo (medium tin)	\$7.50
Vegemite (small jar)	\$4.20	Onions (1kg)	\$2.00	Sugar (500g)	\$1.90
Honey (small jar)	\$4.40	Apples (1kg)	\$3.50	Muesli bars (6)	\$4.10
Pasta (500g packet)	\$1.99	Tin of tomatoes	\$0.85	Coca Cola (2 litres)	\$3.30
Rice (5kg bag)	\$10.00	Beef mince (500g)	\$8.49	Packet of sweet biscuits	\$2.75
Eggs (dozen)	\$4.49	Orange juice (1 litre)	\$2.40	Toothpaste	\$2.30
Flour (2kg)	\$3.30	Salt (500g)	\$2.15	Toilet paper (1 roll)	\$0.90
Cooking oil (small bottle)	\$3.79	Cheese (1kg)	\$8.99	Soap	\$1.75

### Food and other grocery costs

Water and sanitation (the average weekly cost of water and sewerage supply to a household)	\$11.00
Energy (electricity cost for a day)	\$3.00
Transport (five short journey concession fares on public transport)	\$5.50

### Other Costs

The tables above don't give a costing for rent or accommodation. For the purposes of this activity, you should consider that your family may have to stay with relatives, squat illegally, or have no shelter. Also, the list doesn't include costs for medical help, education, games or entertainment. You may not have access to these unless they are free.

Some questions for discussion, in the family groups and as a whole class:

- ▶ What was on your initial list of needs?
- ▶ What couldn't you afford?
- ▶ What kinds of food and other items did you consider essential?
- ▶ What do you think your life would be like if you had to live on \$1.25 per day?
- ▶ There were some costs that were not even included in your weekly budget, like medical help, education and entertainment. What would your life be like if you had little or no money to spend on these things?
- ▶ Did you come up with any original ideas to help improve your quality of life?
- ▶ What would make a difference to your situation if you lived on a small amount of money?





## Investigating projects that make a difference

### How are people tackling poverty?

This lesson introduces students to some projects that make a response to poverty, and suggests ideas to help students creatively explore them. A number of case studies are suggested in the following pages, and there are also suggestions about where to find further projects to investigate.

### Exploring the case studies

Divide the class into investigative teams, who will each explore a case study and have a task to complete which they will present to the rest of the class. Following are some ideas about tasks for the investigative teams to complete. All of these ideas give students the chance to learn more about the projects, see what difference they make in the lives of people, explore questions and doubts they have about the projects, and present their findings to a broader audience. The investigative teams could choose one of the tasks in the box below.

#### Investigative journalists

You are a team of journalists with the job of creating a wraparound newspaper spread about one of the projects. It needs to be colourful, have an interview or two, some info-graphics about how the project works, and a news story which explains the project. (Note: An info-graphic is a visual representation designed to present complex information quickly and clearly. Looking at major newspapers or online news sites will give you some examples.)

#### United Nations

Foreign Ministers from three different countries are gathering at the United Nations to see if they are interested in supporting or expanding a project. You need to script a discussion/debate between two representatives of the project and the three foreign ministers, who will be meeting together at the United Nations. The discussion needs to include some summaries of the project and a question and answer session with the ministers. Decide which countries they are from, what questions they have, and how the discussion will work out. Be prepared for the foreign ministers to ask some tough questions.

#### Promotional brochure

Create a promotional brochure for your project. This means you will need to research thoroughly to find out enough information to convey a broad understanding of the project to your audience. Your brochure should include an overall explanation about the project as well as some more detailed explanations of some particular parts of the project. Some photos or other graphics should be used to make your brochure appealing, and try and find some other ways to make your brochure original and informative.

#### Prezi design team

Using the tools available at [prezi.com](https://prezi.com) create a presentation that explains all about the project to the rest of the class. You will need to include an overview of the project, graphics, video and lots of different details to show that you know the project well. When showing their presentation, the design team then needs to be available to answer questions about the project, and the design of their presentation.

In researching the project for their tasks, students may find the following questions helpful:

- ▶ Who are some of the main people involved in the project?
- ▶ What are some of the main features of the community where the project takes place?
- ▶ What are some of the good things that have happened because of the project? How has this project helped people living in poverty? Has it helped in more than one way?
- ▶ In trying to do good, will the project do any harm? Will positive changes be ongoing?
- ▶ Do you think the project is worthwhile? Why?
- ▶ If you were running the project, are there any changes or suggestions you would make?

## Investigating projects that make a difference (cont.)

To make the most of this activity, teachers could broaden the audience for the presentations. You could invite some other school classes to the presentations, or have an afternoon or evening event which parents, family members, and other people from the local community could come along to.

### Case study 1: Skateistan

Skateistan is a skateboarding school for children and young people in Kabul in Afghanistan which works with boys and girls, aged 5 to 18. As well as learning skateboarding, the project works to give children opportunities which they may not have had before, including learning about human rights and peace-building.

For more information about the project see [skateistan.org](http://skateistan.org) or the [skateistan movie trailer](#)

Also, look for some background information about Afghanistan from a range of sources. [The Global Education website country profile page](#) is a good place to start.



A student at the Skateistan skateboarding school in Kabul, Afghanistan.  
Image credit: Canada in Afghanistan.

### Case study 2: M-Maji



Collecting water in Kibera. Image credit: St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School Journalism Club.

M-Maji is a Swahili word which means ‘mobile water’. It describes a project which aims to provide clean water to people at a fair price, in a place called Kibera in Kenya. Kibera is one of the world’s largest slums, and water is scarce, costly, and often contaminated. Collecting and purchasing the water needed for survival is a daily task that can take hours, especially if accurate information is not available.

Using a simple mobile phone data system, people who need to collect water can find out vital information about where water is available, its price and the quality, which is precious information for people in their situation.

Learn more about the project on the [M-Maji website](#), and look for some more information about Kenya, and Kibera.

### Case study 3: ‘Rights on the radio’ in Thailand

Millions of people leave their homes every year to look for work in other countries, hoping to escape poverty and insecurity, and to earn enough money to send back home to help their families. Many people are then preyed upon by employers or companies who exploit their vulnerability – paying very low wages, forcing people to do very dangerous work, and providing no protection for human rights. The International Labor Office estimates there are nearly 12 million people who are victims of forced labour in the Asia-Pacific region.

“Voices without borders” is a radio program broadcast by a community radio station in Thailand, which provides advice and help for people in these types of circumstances. Enabling vulnerable people to improve their access to work rights is an important part of alleviating poverty, and using the medium of radio broadcasts makes the information and support available to many of the people who need it the most.

Find out more from this blogpost about working on the [Voices without borders](#) radio program.



## Investigating projects that make a difference (cont.)

### Case study 4: Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands is a nation made up of nearly 1000 islands, approximately 1800 km north-east of Townsville in Queensland. Many people in Solomon Islands face challenges to do with health, education and getting jobs.

Mesach Eretea is a youth worker from Solomon Islands who used cameras and training sessions to help young people record their ideas about what was needed in their village. The project then led to the buying of a much needed water tank which had to be hauled by hand up a mountain for 25km to their village. There is more about Mesach's story in [the project news section of the TEAR Australia website](#).

You can find out more about Solomon Islands in the [Global education website's country profile](#).



Children in Solomon Islands. Image credit: Rob McColl, Australian Government aid program.

### Case study 5: Trading goods



The container port in Surabaya, Indonesia. Image credit: BBC World Service.

Trade is the action of buying and selling goods between people, organisations and countries. Healthy international trade can provide people with jobs and money that they didn't have before, or new skills and ideas. Therefore it is worth knowing about the many ways countries can work together through trade to improve the lives of their most vulnerable citizens.

The Australian government helps many countries to trade goods with other countries. This includes doing things like improving quarantine services which keep pests from ruining farm produce, or providing training for managers who will be in charge of negotiating with companies and other countries.

Another example is the Better Work Vietnam program, which helps improve working conditions and quality in the clothing factories which are part of the project. This leads to better international trade opportunities for those businesses, as well as improving the lives of the workers.

Find out more about this project in [Australian Aid's Focus magazine](#), and for more detailed information about trade, see this [DFAT publication about trade and poverty reduction](#).



## Investigating projects that make a difference (cont.)

### Case study 6: Surfing, storms and being prepared



Students take shelter under a desk as part of a disaster simulation at Wadoi Primary School in Nabire District of Papua, Indonesia. Image credit: Dian Lestariningsih, Australian Government aid program.

People and communities experiencing poverty are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters – they may be forced to live in areas that are easily flooded, be homeless, living in unsafe housing, have no way of escaping an area in the path of disasters, nor have the money to fund recovery efforts.

SurfAid International is a non-government organisation established by a group of surfers who visited some remote Indonesian islands, and met people with limited access to healthcare and facing many other challenges. The islands are situated alongside the boundary of four tectonic plates, and earthquakes in the region are common. In 2006, SurfAid started its Emergency Preparedness Program, which is working in partnership with 54 communities in the islands of Nias and Mentawai to improve basic community knowledge of natural disasters.

Hundreds of community volunteers, including school children and elders were trained to react quickly and decisively in the face of earthquakes, potential tsunamis and floods. They have learnt how to treat the wounded, evacuate people with injuries, employ basic search procedures, and practised for high ground evacuation.

For more information see the [disaster preparedness case study on the global education website](#).

Below are some websites where students can find more stories and projects to explore:

- ▶ Global education: [www.globaleducation.edu.au/global-issues/case-studies.html](http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/global-issues/case-studies.html)
- ▶ TEAR Australia: [www.tear.org.au/projects](http://www.tear.org.au/projects)
- ▶ Australian Aid's Focus magazine online [aid.dfat.gov.au/focusonline](http://aid.dfat.gov.au/focusonline)
- ▶ ONE – Living Proof: [www.one.org/livingproof/en/stories/all/](http://www.one.org/livingproof/en/stories/all/)
- ▶ Oxfam Australia: [www.oxfam.org.au/explore/](http://www.oxfam.org.au/explore/)

## Economic growth and poverty reduction – Background information for The Election activity

Economic growth is something we hear about a lot in the news in Australia. Therefore, it is important to understand a little about economic growth, and the role it can play in reducing poverty across the globe.

Economic growth is an increase in the amount of goods and services produced by a place, such as a country or a region, and can be a powerful tool for reducing poverty. The percentage of the world's population living in extreme poverty has been dramatically reduced since 1990, and strong and sustained economic growth has been a major contributor to this improvement. Economic growth can create jobs which in turn raise household incomes, enabling people to afford what they need to survive. Growth can also increase the amount of tax collected by government which can be put towards building and maintaining important services like roads, schools and hospitals.

However, there are some other important considerations if we are to discuss the role of economic growth in poverty reduction:

- ▶ Economic growth on its own does not guarantee that people will be lifted out of poverty, especially the most disadvantaged. In some situations, economic benefits can be unevenly distributed, often dramatically so, which means that only some people benefit from the improved economic circumstances.<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ Sometimes poverty is the result of a lack of rights or of historical injustice. These causes may not necessarily be addressed by economic growth and they may even be exaggerated by it.<sup>17</sup>
- ▶ Many aspects of economic growth rely on and result in an increased use of natural resources, or degradation of the environment such as mineral extraction, clearing of forests or increased waste from disposal of unwanted goods.<sup>18</sup>
- ▶ Economic growth has an impact on the way people live, and the changes are not always positive. It can lead to people working longer hours, changes in the way families and communities function, and can contribute to health problems such as obesity and chronic diseases. Also, people aren't necessarily happier with more wealth, beyond the point where their basic needs are met.<sup>19</sup>

Individuals, organisations and governments are attempting to help people move out of poverty and avoid some of the above problems in a variety of ways:

- ▶ [The Australian Government, along with the governments of Germany and Vietnam worked to rehabilitate coastal areas of Kien Giang province in Vietnam](#) that had been lost as a result of deforestation, sea level rise and erosion. The project also included helping local people to use different farming techniques that increased their incomes and education about caring for the environment.
- ▶ The [Working for Wetlands](#) program employs people living in poverty, especially women, young people and people with disabilities, to restore wetlands across South Africa in order to conserve biodiversity and increase access to clean water. Workers also receive training about health issues and business.
- ▶ Instruments such as the [Human Development Index](#) and the [Happy Planet Index](#) have been developed to consider the health of people and environment in measuring progress.
- ▶ Bhutan has a policy of [Gross National Happiness](#) which includes thinking about health, education, mental wellbeing, community, culture, time use, and the environment in plans the government makes for the country.<sup>20</sup>

## The Election

### Is life always better if people are able to buy and use a lot of things?

The stories in this activity are a reminder of the competing ideas involved when communities change. Working to reduce poverty involves making choices about the best way to go about this.

#### Activity

Tell students that today they will pretend to be residents of the fictional town of Silver Bay. There is an election coming up to decide who will be the mayor of the town and the big issue the candidates are talking about is whether or not to build a big

new shopping centre. In groups, students should read what each has to say about the shopping centre proposal and then list points that they think are positive and negative about each candidate's view. (A printable version of the candidates' views is available at the [Global Education website](#).)

Individually, students should use the lists to decide which candidate's ideas they think would be best for the town. Students should vote in a secret ballot for the candidate they think has the best plan to help the people of Silver Bay.

## The Candidates

### Janice

Janice is keen to see people get jobs but is concerned about the damage a shopping centre would do to the environment. She says that the shopping centre will use a lot of power and contribute to climate change. She also says that the products sold in the shopping centre (and their packaging) will create lots of waste and disposing of all of this extra waste will be expensive and take up too much land in the town. Janice only wants the shopping centre to go ahead if the council sets rules to say that the products sold at the shops have very little packaging and the whole centre uses renewable power.

### Sam

Sam does not want the shopping centre. He thinks that it will sell a lot of things that nobody needs, and that having a lot of junky stuff makes people unhappy. He says that people will want to work more and spend less time with their families so that they can buy more things from the shopping centre. He is also worried about the damage the shopping centre could do to the environment. Sam thinks that instead of the shopping centre, people should get the things they need by swapping with other people in town, buying from small local shops and helping each other.

### Camilla

Camilla wants to build the shopping centre; she says that it will be fantastic for Silver Bay and will employ many people who haven't been able to get a job in the past. They will be earning money and able to look after themselves and their families much better. People will be able to buy more food, clothes and toys and will have more to choose from when they do. Also, people who own the shops will be able to make money too.

### Floyd

Floyd is worried that building a shopping centre will only help some people. In fact, he thinks it will lead to greater inequality in Silver Bay because some of the people who are unemployed didn't finish school and so are less likely to get one of the new jobs. Also, prices of products will rise as shopkeepers will put prices up because they know there will be more people in town with money to spend because of their new jobs. This will make it difficult for people who live in poverty to buy things. Floyd wants the shopping centre to go ahead but says that the shopping centre owners should provide special training and employment programs so that people with less education can get jobs there. They should also pay taxes to the town council to help pay for services that will benefit the whole town.



## The Election (cont.)

### Discussion

Tally the results of the election and discuss the results as a class.

- ▶ Will the new mayor allow the shopping centre to be built?
- ▶ What do students think will be the consequences for people in Silver Bay?
- ▶ Will there be any consequences for people in other places outside Silver Bay?
- ▶ How did it feel to decide on a candidate knowing that there could be problems with each candidate's view?
- ▶ Is the shopping centre scenario like anything in real life? (Discuss some of the information on the previous page)
- ▶ Is life always better if people are able to buy and use a lot of things?



A woman voting in Indonesian elections. Image credit: Josh Estey, Australian Government aid program.

## Graphing the facts

### How can I best present information about poverty?

This page and the next present two sets of data about poverty in Australia and our region. Set students a challenge to construct info-graphics to represent the data in a way that is accurate and interesting. Give examples of info-graphics that have been used to present different information. A useful book for demonstration would be *Information is Beautiful* by David McCandless (published by Collins, 2009). Also, students could look for examples of info-graphics in newspapers, as well as online.

### Homelessness in Australia 2001-2011

The table below shows statistics about homelessness taken from the last three censuses, including information about the number of people living in the different types of circumstances that are considered homelessness. It also shows the Australian population in each of those three years. This information could be presented in a side-by-side column graph, showing change in the various categories of the three years the data was collected. There are also many other ways in which this data could be presented (e.g. three contrasting pie charts).



Sometimes people have to sleep on the street or other public places.  
Image credit: stilltheone1.

**Table 1: People classified as homeless in Australia 2001-2011**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>21</sup>

Categories of homelessness	2001	2006	2011
Sleeping out, living in tents or improvised dwelling	8,946	7,247	6,831
Supported accommodation for the homeless	13,420	17,329	21,258
Staying temporarily with other households	17,880	17,663	17,369
In boarding houses for the homeless	21,300	15,460	17,721
Other temporary lodging	338	500	686
In severely overcrowded dwellings	33,430	13,531	41,390
<b>Total</b>	<b>95,341</b>	<b>89,729</b>	<b>105,237</b>
Australian population	19,533,972	20,848,760	21,507,717

#### Additional notes:

The definition of homelessness used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics includes people who have no physical shelter, but also includes those who are staying temporarily with others, in boarding houses for the homeless, and in accommodation specifically provided for homeless people. The emphasis is on 'not having a home' – a place which is safe, stable and secure. It can also be worth thinking about how homelessness and poverty may be related. Homelessness can be an indicator of poverty, but not always. In the same way, some people who experience poverty do not experience homelessness.

## Graphing the facts (cont.)

### Wellbeing in our region

Below are some statistics about Australia and 10 of our closest neighbouring countries. Students might use column graphs to represent this data, or some kind of combination of maps and other representations to show country locations as well as the data from the table.

**Table 2: Indicators of wellbeing in Australia and other neighbouring countries**

Sources: World Bank<sup>22</sup> and the United Nations Human Development Program<sup>23</sup>

Countries	Population (2012)	Life expectancy (years)	Under 5 mortality rate (per 1000 births)	Income per person (\$)	Women in parliament (% of seats)	Ecological footprint (hectares)	People living on less than \$1.25/day (% of pop.)
Australia	22,620,600	82	5	34,431	28	6.8	0
Cambodia	14,305,183	63	43	1,848	19	1.0	28
Fiji	868,406	69	16	4,145	NA	NA	6
Indonesia	242,325,638	69	32	3,716	18	1.2	19
New Zealand	4,405,200	81	6	23,737	34	4.9	0
Papua New Guinea	7,013,829	63	58	2,271	1	2.1	36
Philippines	94,852,030	69	25	3,478	22	1.3	23
Solomon Islands	552,267	68	22	1,782	0	NA	NA
Timor-Leste	1,175,880	62	54	3,005	29	0.4	37
Vanuatu	245,619	71	13	3,950	4	NA	NA
Vietnam	87,840,000	75	22	2,805	26	1.4	13

#### Additional notes:

- ▶ Life expectancy refers to the average number of years someone would be expected to live in a country if all conditions in a country stay the same as they are now.
- ▶ Under 5 mortality rate is the number of babies per thousand in a country likely to die before their 5th birthday.
- ▶ Income per person tells us about the average income of people in a country. It is based on the total income of a country, divided by its population and converted to a figure which takes into account the difference in living costs between countries, using a technique called purchasing power parity (PPP). This concept is explained further on page 19 in the activity about living on less than 1.25/day.
- ▶ Women in parliament shows the percentage of women holding seats in the national parliament, and can be one way of measuring the opportunities available to women in that country. Women are often amongst the poorest people, so gender equality is an important factor to consider.
- ▶ Ecological footprint refers to the amount of land and sea area required per person to sustain the lifestyle of the current population, including resources consumed and waste generated.
- ▶ People living on \$1.25/day shows the percentage of people living on that amount of money, and is the measure used by the World Bank to describe extreme poverty.

### Discussion

After students have completed their info-graphics, ask them to present them to the class and give reasons for the methods they chose to represent the data. Take the opportunity to discuss the positives and negatives of the methods used, as well as what they learned from the data they were examining.



## Further research

### What else would I like to find out?



A theatre group perform a play about the daily prejudices faced by people living with a disability at the Wan Smolbag Theatre and Youth Centre in Vanuatu.  
Image credit: Graham Crumb, Australian Government aid program.

As mentioned in the introduction, this publication is structured around an inquiry approach to learning. An important part of this is to enable students to pursue their own lines of inquiry, investigating topics related to poverty that are of interest to and chosen by them. Questions that students have entered into their journals will be a good starting point.

Students will need to pose good questions and use their planning, decision-making and research skills. They will also need to choose a meaningful way to communicate their

findings to others. This work will entail students working individually or in small groups. The level of guidance required from the teacher will depend on how proficient students are at self-directed learning.

### Possible starting points

- ▶ The Millennium Development Goals
- ▶ Poverty in Australia
- ▶ Disability and poverty
- ▶ Organisations that work to reduce poverty
- ▶ Natural disasters and poverty
- ▶ Conflict and poverty
- ▶ Government efforts to reduce poverty
- ▶ Women and poverty
- ▶ Homelessness
- ▶ Microcredit
- ▶ Child labour
- ▶ Poverty and the environment



Blowing sand in some parts of China not only decreases visibility in towns and cities but also clogs rivers and water catchments. Image credit: Se Hasibagen, Australian Government aid program.



Women in Kibera, Kenya, with their urban gardening project. Image credit: Christy Gillmore, the Advocacy Project.



Children working in a brick field in southern Bangladesh. Image credit: jasimsarker.



## Writing persuasive texts

### How can I write effectively for change?

Letter writing is a tangible and realistic way that students can take action about important issues, and is very relevant to the content of the Australian Curriculum: English, including students being able to draft and write persuasive and informative texts. Letter writing can also be a way of finding out more about a particular issue or idea.

Below are some suggestions for letter writing activities for students which relate to taking action about poverty, including suggestions for topics to write about, who to write to, and how to go about it.



A student at Xayyathong school in Laos. Image credit: Bart Verweij, Australian Government aid program.

#### Advice about writing to community leaders:

- ▶ Use formal language, but you are expressing an opinion so it's OK to include phrases like 'I feel' and 'I want to see'.
- ▶ Use your own words.
- ▶ Show that you know something about the issue you're writing about.
- ▶ Be polite; being rude or offensive will harm your cause.
- ▶ Be concise; write briefly and clearly.
- ▶ Offer practical solutions.
- ▶ Ask the recipient to take some action.
- ▶ Ask for a response to your letter.

#### What to write about:

- ▶ Drawing attention to the needs of children who don't have access to safe water, adequate food or sanitation (see page 6).
- ▶ Advocating for the rights of workers who are treated unfairly (see page 14 or 23).
- ▶ Asking questions about how Australia is assisting communities overseas (see pages 23 and 24).
- ▶ Poverty in Australia (see page 29).
- ▶ Finding out more from an organisation about a project they run (see page 25).

#### Extra tips for teachers:

- ▶ If you have a number of letters being sent to one place or person, attach a short introductory letter explaining that students have been studying this particular issue and have written letters as one practical way of taking action.
- ▶ Tell them that your students would really appreciate some type of response.
- ▶ A follow-up phone call may also encourage a response.

#### Who to write to:

- ▶ Think through the various issues raised by the material students have covered in their learning about poverty, such as causes of poverty, projects that make a difference, workers' rights, economic development and many others. Brainstorm about a range of relevant people or groups which students could write to – this may include local or state newspapers, company directors, politicians or other community leaders, and many others.

## The Pitch

### How can I convince people to act to end poverty?

This activity aims to help students think through what they have learned about poverty in earlier activities and asks them to produce a television commercial to convince people that they should act to end poverty.

### The Activity

Have a whole class discussion about the activities students have been undertaking to explore poverty. Ask what students think and feel about whether they (and other people) should take action to try to end poverty. Students could also make an entry in their journals on this topic.

Ask students to start thinking about how they might convince other people to take action on poverty. One way they can do this is through advertising. Tell students that, in small groups, their job will be to create a 30-second commercial that will convince people that they should act to end poverty. (If there are students that strongly believe that people shouldn't act on poverty then they should make a commercial promoting that point of view.) Students will need to write, plan, film and edit their commercial, but first the class should decide on a target audience. They may wish to show their commercials to the rest of the class or to invite in another class or parents or to show them at an assembly. They may even wish to show their commercials online.



Children in Vietnam taking part in the ChildFund Connect program used hand-held pocket cameras to document their lives, and share with Australian children. The Australian aid supported program encourages dialogue between children in Australia and developing countries using multimedia technologies.

Image Credit: Raul Caceres, ChildFund Australia.

### Useful resources for stimulus and planning

Depending on previous class work, the following may be appropriate:

- ▶ [Perspectives on Poverty](#) is about stereotypes and representations of people living in poverty
- ▶ Advertisements by [International Children's Fund](#), [Plan International USA](#) and [The Girl Effect](#)
- ▶ Information about [common advertising techniques](#)
- ▶ [Smartcopying](#) contains information about copyright (if students use film, photos or music that isn't their own)

### Planning and Production (in small groups)

**Brainstorming** – Students should give suggestions for an appropriate message for their advertisement. How will it convince their target audience to act? How could it be memorable? Could they use humour, statistics or emotions? After listing as many ideas as possible, students select their best idea.

**Planning** – Students should write a script for their advertisement around the message they have chosen. How will they create the look and feel of their message? Then, they should use the script to create a storyboard which can be hand-drawn or made in Word or PowerPoint. There are many resources online about [how to make a storyboard](#). It should contain illustrations that will show what will appear on the screen during the commercial, and also information about sound, music and camera movement.

**Filming and Editing** – Students use their storyboard to film or create their commercial and then edit it. [Information about free editing software](#) is available online or your school may already have its own software.

**Sharing and reflecting** – The students should show their commercials to their target audience and reflect on their group and other groups' products. They could ask for feedback from the people who watched the commercials and write about this in their journals.





## The anti-poverty declaration

### What will our class do about poverty?

A declaration is a document, usually put together by a group of people, which sets out some principles or actions on which they agree. The aim of this activity is for students to jointly construct an anti-poverty declaration for the class – drawing on the stories and ideas they have been learning about.

One way to build a class anti-poverty declaration is to write a number of statements that express ideas about beliefs or values to do with poverty, as well as a number of statements about intended actions.

### For example:

- ▶ We believe that it isn't fair for people to live in poverty
- ▶ We believe that all children should be able to go to school, or get help when they are sick
- ▶ We will try to tell others about the problems that people face because of poverty
- ▶ We will share some of our money with others

For some more ideas about declarations you could also look at the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) or the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

### Writing the declaration as a jointly constructed text

- ▶ Discuss the idea as a whole class and have students give some ideas about statements that could be in the declaration. Ask students to think through all the stories and ideas they have learned about which have helped them understand more about poverty, and to think of how they can use what they have learnt to write statements for the declaration.
- ▶ On their own, students write up to three statements that they think should be in the declaration.
- ▶ Students then join together in groups of four or five and compile all the statements they have into a list. Any statements that are reasonably similar can be combined.
- ▶ Combine the statements of the whole class and institute some kind of voting procedure. For example, display all the statements along a wall, give each student five coloured dot stickers, and ask them to place their five dots on the statements which they believe are most important to be in the declaration. You will also need to decide on how many statements you will have.
- ▶ Present the results of the voting to the class and give students the opportunity to argue the case for any that they believe should be included even though they may not have received as many votes as others.
- ▶ Also, decide on some kind of grand opening sentence to your class declaration:
  1. We the people of room 13 at Silver Bay Primary School, do declare that ...
  2. The students and staff of room 8 do declare that ...
- ▶ Once the text of the declaration has been written, decide how it will be presented – students could write out the declaration individually and decorate it to look like an ageing scroll, or it could be painted on one large banner for display somewhere. You may want to have a reading of the declaration at a school assembly, to another class, or for some visitors.



An elementary pupil presents the risk plan developed by her disaster risk reduction school group in Guinobatan Albay, Philippines.  
Image credit: Nancy Obias, Save the Children.

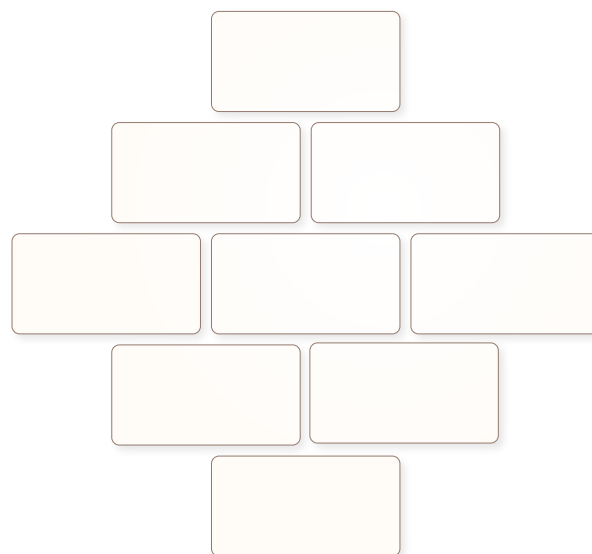
## Taking action

### What actions will help people the most?

This activity helps students explore ways of responding to poverty by using a 'diamond ranking' to promote discussion.

#### Initial instructions

Divide students into small groups, and give each group a set of 10 cards. *What will help the most?* is written on one card, and a possible response to poverty is written on each of the other nine. Negotiating within their group, they are to rank the nine cards in answer to the question: What will help the most? Cards should be ranked in a diamond shape, with the card at the top representing the action they think will help most, the second line with the next two best actions, etc.



Explain to students that there are not necessarily any right or wrong answers for where cards should be placed. The main idea of the activity is to promote discussion about the merits of each of the possible responses.

It may be helpful to review some of the other stories and ideas you have covered in previous lessons about poverty. Discuss the various projects and stories that students have investigated, and different types of responses to poverty they have seen and heard about.

#### Discussing the diamond ranking

After students have had time for group discussion and decide on their ranking, ask a student from each group to report some of their negotiations to the rest of the class. Some suggestions for useful points of discussion:

- ▶ Which of the actions did you consider to be more important than others? Why?
- ▶ Which actions did you consider to be less important? Why?
- ▶ Which actions did your group have disagreements about?
- ▶ Is it necessary to do something big in order to help others?
- ▶ Is it better to carry out actions as individuals or by working with others?

The content of the cards is listed below. A larger printable version is available at the [Global Education website](#).

WHAT WILL HELP THE MOST?	Giving your own money away to organisations that help people living in poverty
Travelling overseas to do some volunteer work	Letting people work their problems out for themselves
Starting up a school group to raise awareness about poverty	Giving money to a micro-loan project that helps people start their own business
Living in a way that preserves the environment because environmental disasters hit poor people the hardest	Learn more about poverty so I will know how to help better
Find out about what our own government is doing to reduce poverty	Helping homeless people in Australia



## Living with less

### Can I change the way I live to respond to poverty?

This lesson raises some ideas about over-consumption and how we might respond to poverty by using less resources and embracing simpler lifestyle choices.

### Why simplicity?

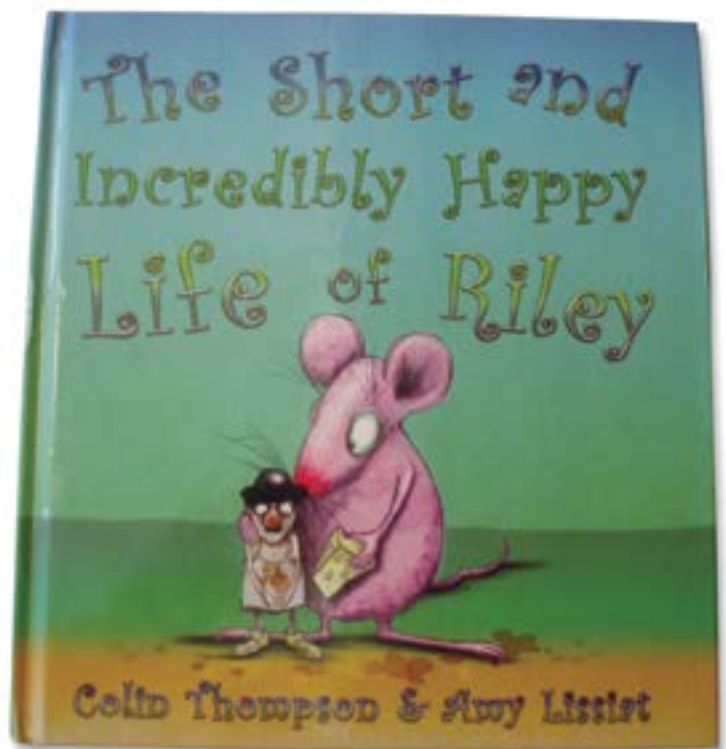
Many people see the idea of consciously consuming fewer resources as a practical way of responding to the problems of poverty. Living more simply provides the potential for fairer distribution of resources, as those who have access to more material wealth may choose to live with less and give money and time to projects that help alleviate poverty. It also provides a practical way of reducing unnecessary waste and environmental damage – and as climate change has impacts beyond our own circumstances and poor communities are often the most vulnerable, taking personal action about climate change can have global implications. Simple living can have other spin-offs too – some people experience an amount of personal satisfaction from seeking to live with less, and depending on the lifestyle decisions people make, simple living practices can help people build more meaningful relationships with those around them.

### A book to read and discuss

*The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley* by Colin Thompson is a satirical picture book which compares the lives of humans and rats, raising many points for discussion about materialism, overconsumption and wellbeing. Read the story in class as a group and discuss.

### Some suggested questions

- ▶ What stands out to you in this story?
- ▶ How did the story make you feel?
- ▶ Which parts of the story did you find amusing?
- ▶ Are there any parts of the story you found worrying? Confusing?
- ▶ Why does the author compare the lives of humans to rats?
- ▶ Does the story encourage you to take any particular action? If so, what?



*The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley* by Colin Thompson, Lothian Children's Books, an imprint of Hachette Australia, 2005.  
Image used with permission.

## Taking action

Together as a class, brainstorm some actions you could take, as a class or individually, to lower consumption. Below are a few ideas to get you started.

### Seven classroom ideas for promoting simplicity

1. Organise an excursion to an op-shop – see if the shop staff are able to give a talk about how the shop works, visit the various areas in the shop to see what's available, buy something useful that you can use in class, ask students to suggest all the benefits that op-shops provide (such as low-cost items for people with less income, reducing landfill, a place to find unusual clothes and gifts, spending less so you can give money away, and raising funds for the social projects run by the organisations who own the op-shops).
2. Develop a class list of “what to do instead of shopping” suggestions and make posters about them that will be displayed in class. (Some initial suggestions: walk the dog; go for a bike ride; visit the beach or the pool; borrow a book/game/movie/CD from the library; visit your cousins, build a cubby in the backyard; cook a cake; plant vegetables, etc.)
3. Model sustainable practices with classroom resources: Aim to buy and use less resources, recycle paper and other materials, turn the lights off whenever you leave the room, consider buying secondhand classroom resources, promote the use of recycled clothes.
4. Have your students do the '[Green Grin-o-metre](#)' online survey.
5. Watch the online animation '[The Story of Stuff](#)' with your students – a great springboard for discussion and activities about over-consumption and environmental damage.
6. Develop a “Buy less and do more at Christmas” suggestion list and do one as a class activity. (Some suggestions: make a favour voucher for your parents to wash the car or mow the lawn; buy a charitable gift card from an aid agency like Oxfam or TEAR Australia; make some homemade food as presents; have a family outing as a gift to each other, establish a veggie patch for the coming year. There are lots more suggestions in the [buy nothing Christmas catalogue](#).)
7. Read some books about children in other places and times. Discuss how people have used resources in different ways, and how this may contrast with students' own lives. *Come and play with us*, an Oxfam publication for young readers, *Around the World: Bicycles* by Kate Petty, or *When I was little like you* by Mary Malbunka are a few examples. Take the opportunity to think about and discuss the role material goods play in our lives and the consequences of having more.

## Fairtrade

Another practical action involving what we buy (or don't buy) is participating in Fairtrade.

The Fairtrade movement exists to help farmers and producers in developing countries. It makes sure that each are paid a fair price so they can earn an income, and that they sign long-term contracts with traders to help with planning for the future. They are also given extra payments to improve the lives of people in their communities.

To be part of the Fairtrade system, farmers and producers need to meet certain standards that help them look after the environment and people. For example, they are not allowed to use child labour in the production of their goods.

Goods which are sold as part of the Fairtrade system are marked with a Fairtrade logo. For more information see the [Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand website](#).





## Guidance for teachers

### What should we consider in fundraising and partnerships with other schools?

Giving money is an important way in which children and adults can respond to poverty, and many schools and classes raise funds for humanitarian projects and organisations within and beyond Australia. Fundraising can also help raise awareness about issues related to poverty, and help students and teachers have fun and be creative in designing fundraising projects.

Fundraising can also take a lot of time and energy, and teachers and students will want to ensure that the money they raise really does make a positive difference in the lives of the people who need it. Doing some research will increase the chances that your money benefits people, and also helps to avoid the possibility of it causing harm. Doing some research together as a class, or giving students the responsibility to undertake some of the research themselves, is also an excellent learning opportunity.

### Some points to consider when researching organisations:

What are their **values**?

Do they **promote environmental sustainability** and **human rights**?

Do they **think** about what they do?

Do they **evaluate regularly** and make information **available**?

If giving in response to a natural disaster or other emergency, have they been **previously active in the affected region**?

If so, they are likely to be more effective, and more able to be involved in long-term recovery.

Are lots of **local people** involved in the work and decisions of the organisation?

Are they **accountable**? Do they make annual reports and financial reports **easily available** (such as on their website)?

Is the organisation a signatory to the **Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)** code of conduct? You can check for current signatories on the [members page of the ACFID website](#).

### Some further resources

The [‘Giving one percent’ website](#) is one place where you can find out some information about various Australian-based charities. Also, you could do a brief online test on the [test your knowledge page of the ‘Good intentions are not enough’ website](#) with your class. It gives some clear information about giving responsibly, and raises some good points for discussion.

### Giving things rather than money

Sometimes people want to give material things rather than money, especially when there is a high profile natural disaster. Even though giving of material items (such as donating tents, clothing, etc) to overseas aid projects is popular, it is not necessarily the most helpful or effective response in many cases. Giving material things can result in huge wastage, more work for overstretched aid agencies, and generally creates more problems than it solves.

If you’re looking for more information on this topic, the donations hall of shame at the [‘Inside disaster’ website](#) is one place to start.

In some particular circumstances within your own country, giving material items can be helpful, but not often in overseas development. Donating to op-shops is one way of using an existing system that works well.

## School partnerships

Linking up with schools in other countries can be an exciting and valuable educational experience for students and teachers. However, it can also be a demanding and complicated process which doesn't necessarily lead to good global citizenship education.

Partnerships between schools can foster self-awareness as well as an appreciation of diversity, introduce students to new understandings about the lives of others, and inspire a desire for change both locally and globally. On the other hand, partnerships can potentially reinforce negative stereotypes, cultivate paternalistic attitudes, and focus on differences instead of what children have in common.

[Building Successful School Partnerships](#), published online by Oxfam UK, is a very useful guide which covers some of the key questions you need to consider before embarking on a school link. It provides some case studies and ideas which will help you think about the wonderful benefits, and the potential pitfalls, of undertaking overseas partnerships.



Students at a primary school in Manikganj, Bangladesh. Image credit: Conor Ashleigh, Australian Government aid program.

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# What Matters Most?



# What Matters Most?

## Exploring poverty with upper primary students

*What Matters Most?* is a resource book packed with lesson ideas and resources designed to help upper primary teachers approach the topic of global poverty in a meaningful way.

*What Matters Most?* helps students become aware of the serious challenges the human community faces, as well as looking at possibilities for hope and change. This book gives teachers the tools to bring rich global learning experiences to the classroom – increasing knowledge, fostering new skills, questioning values, and encouraging realistic action for positive global citizenship.