



# **The Problem with Plastics:**

## **Global Schools Workshop Plan & Materials**

This resource is a product of the Waterford One World Centre's Global Schools Programme which is funded by Irish Aid's WorldWide Global Schools. Each year we work with a group of Transition Year Students on a global topic. After intensive training from Centre Staff, TYs design their own workshop which they then deliver to primary schools across Waterford. This year we focussed on 'The Problem with Plastics'.

For more information about WorldWide Global Schools, check out their Global Passport Award which recognises the efforts of post-primary schools to integrate global citizenship education. If you are interested in having Transition Year Students from your school participate in this programme, please contact us using the information below.

This resource includes a workshop plan and support materials for a 60-minute workshop designed for 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year CSPE classes. The workshop looks at the Sustainable Development Goals with a specific focus on Goal 13 which calls for urgent action to be taken to combat climate change. The workshop then delves deeper into the 'The Problem with Plastics' and looks at actions that young people can take on their own or as part of the school community to decrease the negative impacts that plastic is having on our lives. If you have comments, questions or feedback, please contact us at:

Waterford One World Centre  
Dunhill Ecopark  
Ballyphilip  
Dunhill  
Co. Waterford  
[info@waterfordoneworldcentre.com](mailto:info@waterfordoneworldcentre.com)



*Students from the 2017-2018 Global Schools Programme representing Presentation Secondary School, De La Salle College, Abbey Community College and St. Angela's Ursuline. Photographs by Thomas Grace Photography.*



# INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: Sustainable Development Goals Cards

This activity is designed to introduce the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to students.



There are 17 Goals with 169 targets and were passed by the United Nations to cover the period from 2016-2030 replacing the Millennium Development Goals. If your students are familiar with the concept of sustainability, you can move on to the SDG Activity. If not, it may be helpful to start this with a brainstorm/mindmap of the word 'sustainable'.

The definition most widely used comes from a 1972 UN Report: Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### Steps:

- Have students work in small groups and provide each group with a full set of the SDG cards (available on next page for photocopy, we also recommend laminating the cards, despite the plastic, in order to keep using them). Ask students to prioritise the SDGs, based on which one they think is the most relevant to their own lives, in a diamond shape. The top of the diamond should represent the most relevant and the bottom represent the least relevant.
- Once they have chosen which SDG is most meaningful or important to their group, have them describe what they think the world would look like if that Goal was achieved. Also, have students explain why they chose that goal as the most important.
- Transition to Goal 13: If any group has chosen, Goal 13 as their top goal, leave that group until last to allow for an easy transition to discussions relating to Climate Change. Otherwise point to the wording of Goal 13: 'Take Urgent Action on Climate Change'. It is the only Goal that uses words like 'urgent' and this indicates that the UN places a certain priority on Goal 13. However, it is important to recognise that the UN has been very specific in stating that no Goal stands alone, that success depends on understanding the interconnectedness of the Goals.



NO  
POVERTY



2  
NO  
HUNGER



3  
GOOD  
HEALTH



4  
QUALITY  
EDUCATION



5  
GENDER  
EQUALITY



6  
CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION



7  
CLEAN  
ENERGY



8  
GOOD JOBS AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



9  
INNOVATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE



10  
REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



11  
SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



12  
RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION



13  
PROTECT THE  
PLANET



14  
LIFE BELOW  
WATER



15  
LIFE  
ON LAND



16  
PEACE AND  
JUSTICE



17  
PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



THE GLOBAL GOALS



## GOAL 13 TAKE URGENT ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Some Important Things to Know About Goal 13:

- Plastic takes approximately 450 years to decompose which means that every single piece of plastic ever produced still exists on the planet in one form or another
- In Ireland, we only recycle about 30% of all plastic that we use which is one of the lowest rates in Europe. Worldwide the average is about 9%.
- There are seven different types of plastic. In Ireland, we only recycle numbers 1 and 2.



- There is a plastic garbage patch in the middle of the Pacific Ocean bigger than the State of Texas (which is big).
- It is estimated that over ONE HUNDRED MILLION sea animals are die from eating plastic each year (*Photograph from Green-peace*)
- Plastic contributes to global warming both from its production and from its disposal



Be Like Bhutan!

Protect our Carbon Sinks!

Oceans and Rain Forests clean dangerous pollutants from our air.

## THINK PAIR SHARE

### IMAGINE YOUR LIFE WITHOUT PLASTIC

The Think Pair Share is a simple activity that gives learners enough time to think about what they would like to say and share. Ask students the following question: Imagine an average day from start to finish focussing on all of the ways that plastic shows up in your life. Now try to imagine your day without plastic. What would have to change? Can you think of things that you can substitute in for plastic? Are there things that you would not be able to do without plastic?

Have students THINK for two minutes, then discuss in a PAIR, and finally SHARE with the larger group.

Photographer Peter Menzel travelled the world photographing people with all of their possessions and published the collection called *Material World*. Use these photographs to demonstrate that there are societies that do not rely on plastic as much as we do in Ireland (there are also photos of countries that are more reliant on plastic). There are a number of photographs from this series available on-line. Alternatively, if you have time, *The Story of Stuff*, has a great series of short videos that show the dangers of our dependency on consumption including one on plastic water bottles.



*Peter Menzel, Material World. Iceland*



## CLIMATE FOOTPRINT QUIZ

The following series of questions are designed to identify actions that all of us can take to decrease our impact on the environment. It is important to stress the following to students:

- Everyone has some impact on the environment. But we can all take steps to decrease the negative impacts that we do have.
- Each of the questions relates directly to an action that is within a young person's power to carry out.
- These questions are for personal use only, there is no need to share the scores with others in the room

Do you normally take a bath or a shower?      Bath +20      Shower +10

How do you get to school?      Walk/Bike +0      Carpool/Public Transportation +10  
Individual Car +20

Do you compost at home?      Yes +0      No +20

Do you always turn off tv when you leave the room?      No TV +0      Yes +10      No +20

Do you recycle at home?      Yes +0      No +20

Do you let the water run when you brush your teeth?      Yes +20      No +0

Do you give away or donate your unwanted clothes?      Yes +0      No +20

How do you get rid of leftovers?      Eat them +0      Dogs/Chickens +5      Bin +20

How do you dry your clothes?      Line/Rack +0  
Combination Line/Rack and Tumble dryer +10      Only tumble dryer +30

Do you use a dishwasher or hand wash for dishes?      Dishwasher +20      Handwash +10

Do you buy Fair Trade products when you have the option?      Yes +0      No +20

Do you use a reusable water bottle rather than single-use bottles?      Yes +0      No +20

Most amount of points      250  
Least amount of points      20

## A MOVING DEBATE

### TAKING A STAND

This activity is designed to enable students to think critically about the issues that have been addressed by this resource and to encourage them to become active citizens through taking positions on controversial topics.

*Time:* 15 minutes

*Steps:* This activity can be done with learners standing up and moving around the room if you have enough space. If you do not, provide students with Agree/Disagree signs and they can state their position from their seats (alternatively you can decide on a system such as left hand up if you agree, right hand up if you disagree, hands in lap if you are undecided).

If students are moving around, identify an Agree side of the room and a Disagree side of the room. If they are seated instruct them on how to signal their opinion.

Explain to students that you are going to read a series of statements. If they agree they should indicate by moving to Agree side of room or putting up their Agree sign, etc. If they are unsure they should stand in the middle of the space.

After you have read the first statement and people take their positions, ask some students why they took the position that they did. Explain that if there is anything that anyone says that makes them change their mind, then they can change which side of the room that they are on or which sign they are holding up.

Sample statements:

- Everyone should be able to have what they want.
- It is more important to protect the environment by decreasing our food miles (how far our food has to travel to get to our plates) than it is to buy Fair Trade products.
- We should be more worried about taking care of people who are suffering in Ireland than about those living in other countries.
- It is not possible for any one individual to have any real impact on global issues.
- It is not possible for us to live without single-use plastic, we are too dependent on them.