

Teacher's notes: What is poverty?

Objective

Students develop their understanding of poverty through exploring the impacts on people living in poverty. They consider some of the consequences of poverty on people and their wellbeing. Students learn about some of the indicators of global poverty and compare indicators for Australia and Uganda.

This activity would suit upper primary school students.

Resources

- 1 x copy Student Handout – Comparing Australia and Uganda per student.

Activity

As a class, brainstorm about what constitutes poverty. What are some of the impacts for people who live in poverty? Write up ideas on the board.

Recommend start with poverty in the center of the board and draw consequences links out from the centre. Examples of some of the consequences of poverty your class may wish to explore are included in the notes section. It may be helpful to complete one consequences link as an example.

Advise students that when the majority of people in a country are poor that country is considered to be 'less developed' or 'developing'. Uganda, where Lucy lives, is a developing country. When most of the people in a country are able to meet their basic needs and more, that country is considered to have a high level of development. Australia is an example of a country with a high level of development. It is important to point out that not everyone in Uganda is poor, and not everyone in Australia is wealthy.

Give students the handout "Comparing Australia and Uganda." This handout outlines some of the indicators used by the UN to determine a country's level of development. Read through the handout with students. Point out that when a country is poor, like Uganda, it can be hard for the government to provide services, like healthcare, for its people. Other countries can help out by providing money and assistance, or 'foreign aid'.

Students can use the second page of the handout to fill in some of the main impacts of poverty on people's lives. They could then add the consequence links onto the diagram in the handout.

Notes

What is poverty and its impacts notes:

- The main focus is likely to be around a lack of money; however the impact of living in poverty comes from not being able to afford basic necessities.
- A person may lack funds relative to the other people in their society, but still be able to afford to meet their basic needs.
- Absolute poverty is when a person cannot meet their basic needs. It impacts every aspect of their lives and stops them from fulfilling their potential.

The United Nations Bibliographic Information System Thesaurus defines basic needs as: “food nutritive enough to avoid malnutrition, shelter, clothing, public services for education, clean water, and health care.”

Source: <http://unhq-appspub-01.un.org/LIB/DHLUNBISThesaurus.nsf/MultiEng/2172B200B763C03A85256AA0005FD446?OpenDocument> [accessed 16 Dec 2010]

As a result of living in poverty, people may not be able to, for example:

- > Afford enough food to eat each day, and the food may not have much variety. As a result their health begins to suffer, so they may not be able to go to school or work, impacting on their income.
- > Access enough clean water. As a result they are vulnerable to illness and their health begins to suffer, so they may not be able to go to school or work, impacting on their income. Also girls and women, in particular, may have to spend time collecting water, and also miss out on school or income-generating options.
- > Afford a doctor, medicine, or other medical services. As a result they are more likely to die from otherwise preventable illnesses or from injuries.
- > Afford to send their children to school, or for children to attend both primary and secondary school. Without education people are limited in the types of work they can do, which can impact how much money they are able to make.
- > Afford a house that is safe, protects people from the environment/weather, and has enough room inside for the people living there to be comfortable.