

# World in our hands

**Theme:** climate change and sustainability

**Country focus:** global

**Aims:** to explore what sustainability means; to understand how we can help protect the environment.

**Materials/preparation:**

- the *World in Our Hands* PowerPoint presentation (available at [caid.org.uk/schools](http://caid.org.uk/schools))
- you could prepare to sing the hymn 'All things bright and beautiful' or 'He's got the whole world in his hands' at the end of the assembly (see the Reflection section).

## Assembly presentation

**Show slide 1** as pupils enter.

**Show slide 2.** Say: *Today we're going to start by talking about good manners. Have you ever sat down in the school canteen and found that the person before you didn't clear away their tray? It's not very nice when you're about to begin your meal to find the leftovers from someone else's dinner sitting in front of you. That's why we have a simple rule that you clear up after yourself. It makes it nicer for everyone. You leave things as you would like to find them.*

**Show slide 3.** *Today we're going to think about why this is so very important – not just for our school, but for the whole world!*

*Now what on 'earth' do good table manners have to do with the rest of the world?*

*Well, the same principle of 'leaving things as you would like to find them' applies to the way we treat our planet. Many people have treated the planet like a dustbin – they just took what they needed and chucked the rest away.*

*But we humans are starting to understand that we can't go on living like this. Ask pupils if they know why.*

*One of the reasons is that if we keep on using up all the planet's natural resources, then they will eventually run out. That's why we've got so much better at recycling. You could explain that*

*when you were at school, no one thought much about recycling things; they just chucked everything in the rubbish to be dumped in a landfill site, so things have definitely improved.*

*Another reason is that pollution is causing climate change. Climate change is disrupting weather patterns and making life harder for many people around the world. So people are busy thinking up ways to cause less pollution – by using clean energy and more efficient engines – and so limit climate change.*

*This idea of preserving our resources and protecting our planet is called 'sustainability', and it basically means leaving the world for future generations the same way that we would like to find it. It means clearing up after ourselves and not greedily consuming all the resources or causing pollution that harms the climate. This is the principle of good manners applied to everything we do. It's about living in harmony with our wonderful world and protecting it for the people of the future.*

*The first UN Earth Summit took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Countries recognised the need to work together to protect the environment since environmental damage in one country might affect neighbouring countries or even the whole world. This first Earth Summit was attended by leaders from 152 different countries. Since then, the concept of*

sustainability has taken off, and all around the world, people are busy putting the principles of sustainability and caring for the planet into action.

**Show slide 4.** A good example of this is the work of Christian Aid's partner OCDIH in Honduras, Central America. It works with schools in an area located near the source of two of Honduras' major rivers.

**Show slide 5.** With the support of OCDIH, students like Milo have planted more than 14,000 trees around springs and other water sources. OCDIH taught them that trees help to ensure that more water is absorbed into the ground and so will help to increase the amount of water that flows from a spring.

**Show slide 6.** Another of Christian Aid's partners in Honduras, Coprodedpiy, has taught people, like Augustina Perez Rodriguez, how to build smoke-free stoves. In the past, people would have cooked food on an open fire, but this way of cooking requires a lot of fire wood and also creates a lot of smoke, which caused pollution and breathing difficulties. The new smoke-free stoves are more efficient and so people don't need to cut down so many trees for firewood. Also they have chimneys so that people aren't having to breathe in the smoke.

**Show slide 7.** In Tamil Nadu, India, school children are taught about how to live in a way that causes the least damage to the earth and the environment.

**Show slide 8.** Priyaswami is part of an eco club at his school where young people tackle environmental issues through planting trees,

and sharing information about conservation and living in a way that protects the earth for the future with their peers, family and community. He sees his role of educating others as crucial for bringing about change.

*'If the situation continues here and no action is taken immediately, by the time I grow old... there will not be any drinking water. There will not be any food to eat,' he says.*

*But he has great hope for the power of the community to build a better world.*

*'If everyone joins together to take action on climate change, by the time I grow old it will look green everywhere and there'll be food and there'll be water for everyone. This will look like a place that's really fit to live in, and we will even be able to supply food to places where there is no food... the air will be good. It will be a place to live healthily without medicines.'*

**Show slide 9.** People all over the world, including those in richer countries, which have caused the most pollution, are working to reduce the damage that they do to the planet.

*In 2016, nearly every country in the world signed the Paris Agreement, which is an agreement that countries will work together to reduce pollution and limit climate change.*

*Let us think carefully about how we treat this wonderful world we live in – and in what state we will leave it for future generations.*

*After all, it's the only planet we've got.*

## Reflection

Most of the major world religions teach that we should respect our natural environment. For example, many Christians believe they have a responsibility to look after the wonderful world that God has given them. But you don't have to believe in God, or follow a particular faith, to appreciate natural beauty and to understand the role we all must play in caring for our planet. To finish, church schools might like to sing the hymn 'All things bright and beautiful'. Or you could sing 'He's got the whole world in his hands', but change the words to 'We've got the whole world in our hands' etc.

## Action

What actions are you taking at your school to look after our planet? Ask the school council to do an audit of all your environmental measures and invite suggestions for new ideas.