

Element 6 Social action

There's no Planet B – what can we do to help make our lives more sustainable?



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The world is a constantly changing place. Geography is the study of the physical nature of the Earth's surface and the human societies that inhabit it. More and more people are realising that we need to make a real effort to live our lives in a sustainable way. We must find ways to continue to develop and grow our communities and use our resources but without spoiling them for people in the future.

Working together to end poverty and promote peace

Almost 8 billion people live in the world in 195 countries and speak thousands of languages. They don't always get along. The world is full of conflict. After the last major global war, World War 2, ended in 1945, countries decided to get together to try to develop good relationships between nations, so that they could help one another and maintain peace. They formed the United Nations which has its headquarters in New York. Its General Assembly has representatives from the governments of 193 countries who meet every year from September to December.

[*Explaining the United Nations to Kids*](#) is an article from the *Washington Post*. The Security Council is the most powerful part of the United Nations. Five countries are permanent

members including the US and China and 10 others are picked from different regions of the world every two years. The Security Council can vote to take military action or to punish countries for unfair actions (these are called sanctions).

But the United Nations does more than talk. There are many smaller organisations that are part of the UN who work around the world, helping people with issues such as reducing poverty, fighting disease and combating natural disasters. For example, UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, helped provide food, water and medical supplies for children after the devastating Pakistan floods of 2010. All this work helps to make our world more sustainable.

Wherever we live, whatever language we speak, the Earth is our home and we *have* to take care of it. And we should look after everyone else who lives here. We know about the many ways in which we are damaging our world. We know about the amount of pollution we produce from industry and our modern lifestyles; the animals and plants that are becoming extinct because we are destroying natural habitats like the oceans and the rainforest; the resources we are mining from the Earth, which are likely to run out.

We know that people live in very different circumstances. There is great poverty in some areas of the world and some people do not have access to good health or a clean water supply. Many children do not have access to an education or the prospect of a decent job. We know more about the world and its people than we have ever done in the past and we know that we have a responsibility to conserve our world for people in the future. We have to ensure that development in the future is sustainable.

In 2015 the member states of the United Nations decided to put together a series of goals which every country would try to achieve to help make development more sustainable. The aims of these seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are:

- to end poverty,
- to protect the planet and
- to ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

You can see these goals below and on the SDG website here:

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

The Goals call for action by all countries, underdeveloped, emerging and developed to promote well-being and economic growth while protecting the planet. Everyone has a part to play in ending poverty and helping people live better lives while tackling climate change and environmental protection.



The Sustainable Development Goals shared by all the countries of the United Nations

Activity

Look at the three aims of the Sustainable Development Goals.

- to end poverty
- to protect the planet
- to ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Copy the table below:

Ending poverty	Protecting the planet	Promoting peace and prosperity

Choose the aim that you think each Goal belongs to and write it into your table in the correct column. Are there any goals that might appear in more than one column?

What can we do?

At first glance, it might seem that there is nothing that we can do as individuals to help achieve these goals, but as the examples below show, there is a lot each one of us can do to help reach a sustainable world.

This App for your mobile phone – <https://sdgsinaction.com/> – lets you see all the projects that are happening to promote the Sustainable Development Goals around the world. You can browse to see what’s going on; you can read about specific projects or you can even volunteer to join one of them if they are near to you.

Look at these examples of how young people have made a difference in their own country:

- **Oxfam's climate Change Fighters**

<https://asia.oxfam.org/latest/stories/hakim-mai-inspiring-climate-change-fighter>



Hakim's village is suffering from more floods and prolonged rains because of climate change. With the support of Oxfam, Hakim has learnt how to grow a kitchen garden to produce food all year round. This means that in times of flood, she is still able to harvest enough food to feed her family.

In Ethiopia Hermela Solomon brought together a group of young people committed to changing gender perceptions through the arts. She is part of the Active Citizens programme run by the British Council. They have a range of activities linked to global citizenship.

- **British Council's Active Citizens**

<https://active-citizens.britishcouncil.org/about>

Pearson produced some useful work packs as part of their **World Changer Awards**.

There are packs for secondary students: <https://bit.ly/3t0oVpD>

There are packs for primary pupils: <https://bit.ly/2RkDTbZ>

- **British Council and COP26**

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/programmes/cop-26>

With useful resources on climate change:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/climate-change>

- **Sing about it!**

Learn the climate change song

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3yL_1L85Mk

Or write your own rap.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yu8WQfWVG3U>

- **The Eden Project** has a range of activities for their 'Make the Change' Project

<https://www.edenproject.com/make-the-change>