

Addressing issues of Global Citizenship

Water

Important topic information

Classroom

Water

the world's most essential commodity

Only 3% of all the water on earth is freshwater and 77% of this is locked up in ice caps and glaciers. It is a renewable but limited resource.

Clean water is therefore one of the most precious resources on earth. It is life's most important basic necessity. Dirty water on the other hand is one of the deadliest killers.

In the UK we usually have lots of water and have direct access to it via taps which very rarely stop running. What's more, the water coming out of taps in the UK is guaranteed clean and safe.

For many in the world however turning on a tap and watching it pour clear clean water is simply a pipe dream. Millions of people are often many miles away from a source

A world thirsty for water justice

The world's water supply is unfairly divided. In the UK we bathe, water our gardens, use water-guzzling washing machines and dishwashers while millions go without.

Clean water - the key to health

It is inconceivable to us living in the UK that the water we drink and in which we wash would be anything but clean and safe. Yet an estimated 10 people die every minute from contaminated water. The World Health Organisation estimates that 80% of all sickness and disease in developing countries is due to unsafe water. In many countries surface water and water found in streams and lakes, is deadly. It is home to all sorts of parasites and illnesses which kill millions of children world wide and cause lives of misery to many more. In the UK and other western countries we are fortunate that we have had the money to build sewers and water treatment plants to ensure safe water and high levels of hygiene.

Water access - millions go without

Two decades ago less than half the people of the developing world had access to safe, clean water. Now more than two-thirds have access to it. Whilst this is substantial progress, it means that nearly 2 billion people are still denied this most fundamental resource. Many millions of people, usually women and children, spend many hours every day fetching and carrying water, because there is no water supply where they live.

Water in short supply - who gets it?

It is estimated that a third of all the world's countries will soon be permanently short of water. Yet in many of the countries with a shortage of water the rich have their swimming pools filled and their golf courses watered while the poor struggle to get any water at all. And to make it worse in many cities the rich get their water cheaply while the poor have to pay a much higher price for their miserably small allowance. Also big industrial or agricultural businesses often ruin people's water supply in the pursuit of profit by using water which could otherwise be used for local people's needs or by polluting their water supply.

EXERCISING RIGHTS, AND TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: THE WORLD OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Global citizenship education identifies key areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes which foster concern for social justice and the environment.

It helps develop critical thinking skills and enables these to be applied to complex and controversial issues.

A Global Citizen is someone who:

- has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally*
- understands the links between their own lives and those of people throughout the world*
- is outraged by social injustice*
- participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from the local to the global*
- is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place*
(based on Oxfam Curriculum for Global Citizenship)