Pathways for Teaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

(Material adapted from workshop given by the DICE team at ‘Teaching for a Better World: A Primary Education Conference’, Nov 24-25th 2006)

This resource contains:
A. Sequence of lesson ideas for teaching about the MDGs including several classroom activities
B. Background information for teachers on the goals (click here)
C. List of useful resources and websites referred to in resource and to allow further work on the MDGs (click here)

Note: the material has been developed for use at primary level but could be adapted for use in other settings such as teacher education or in-service training

A. Sequence of lesson ideas for teaching about the MDGs

The objectives of the lessons are:
- To introduce the MDGs as a means of exploring concepts of development and sustainability
- To help children understand the context for the MDGs and become familiar with the eight goals
- To look at one goal in more detail and make explicit the local-global connection

The suggested lesson ideas are divided into three broad steps:

Step 1 – Looking at the way the world is – setting the context for the goals (click here)
Step 2 – Familiarisation with the goals (click here)
Step 3 – Exploring one goal in detail (Goal 7 – focus on sustainable development) (click)

Symbols used throughout this resource:

AIMS

RESOURCES

ACTIVITIES
Step 1 – Looking at the way the world is

⇒ Classroom based activities/ stimulus for setting the context for the Goals.

Aim:
To make children aware of how the world really is - not everyone has their needs met – world is unequal/wealth not evenly distributed etc

Resources needed:
Activity 1: green and blue stickers; Activity 2a: atlases, 6 cards with names of continents written on them; Activity 2b: 10 cards with 10% written on each one

Step 1 Activity 1:

You will need: green and blue stickers
As the session is about to commence, place different coloured stickers on every 3rd (BLUE) and 5th child (GREEN). As the teacher calls out a colour invite those with the sticker to stand up. Ask the class to imagine that they represent the world’s population. Those who get the BLUE sticker represent the proportion of children in the world that experience regular hunger in their lives; those who get the GREEN sticker represent the number of people living in absolute poverty* or number of children not attending school. Invite the class to comment.

* going without basic needs such as safe water, food, health and sanitation; people in absolute poverty have less than $1 per day to cover all their needs

(This activity is adapted from Our World Our Future Activity 1 p100 + p23 (see Section C for details of resource))

Step 1 - Activity 2a

a) Population Distribution

You will need: atlases, 6 cards with names of continents written on them (see below)
This activity is based on a class of 30 who represent the world’s population. In this activity the children explore actively the division of the world’s population by continent. Before commencing give children time to study the atlas and become familiar with the continents and with landmasses etc.
Place the 6 cards (with named continents) around the room – the class decide amongst themselves how many of them should stand under each of the continents in order to represent the population of that continent (an alternative could be to sketch a large outline of the continents on flip chart and place it on the floor, then ask children to stand on a continent. To avoid confusion, the teacher might first place 2 children in each continent.
and ask each class member in turn to distribute themselves to whatever continent they think needs more population)

When children have grouped themselves under the continents allow time to look at the division and comment. Now call out the correct population as follows and allow children to make the correct adjustments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>&lt; ½ (person kneeling)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allow time for reflection and comments. Typical comments might be …’I thought that there were millions more people in Africa than in Europe.’ Point out that Europe is highly populated given its size. Does high population therefore necessarily mean poverty?

**Step 1 - Activity 2b**

**b) Distribution of wealth**

You will need: 10 cards with 10% written on each one. Explain that all the cards (i.e. 100%) represent the wealth of the world and that you are going to show how it is shared out.

Bring the group of 30 back together. Separate the group into 2 sub-groups of 24 and 6 (this represents 80% and 20% of the world’s population).

Give the large group two cards (each with 10%)
Give the small group 8 cards (each with 10%)

Allow them to draw their own conclusions about fair/unfair distribution of wealth; poor/rich countries etc.

(Activities adapted from 1&2 p 22-23 *Our World Our Future* (see Section C for details))

Further information on the inequalities in the world can be found on the website www.developmenteducation.ie – show clips from *Imagine the World were a Village of 100 people* animation.
Alternatively, show examples from the book *If the World were a Village* (see Section C for details)
Step 2 - Familiarization with the goals

The aim of this section is to allow children become familiar with each individual goal as well as reach some understanding of the role of governments, the EU and the UN in tackling poverty and inequality.

Resources needed:
- A set of photographs and Millennium Goals poster from Our World Our Future; or use other posters displaying the goals such as in Irish Aid Children’s Media Awards pack or from Trócaire or Oxfam
- Teacher’s background information - Millennium Development Goals information page provided with this resource (click here);

Lesson Plan:

Before proceeding to the photo-activity display on walls some of the available posters and distribute the simplified Millennium Goals Summary (click here).

Photo-activity: Cover the written explanation on the back of each photo (from Our World Our Future) and distribute them to pairs of participants, ask children to decide with reference to posters and information provided, which of the 8 goals it seems most applicable to, then discuss which other goals might also apply. Now reveal the information on the back of each photo and ask children to re-assess their decision. Ask them to prepare to present their photo and reasons for choice to whole class.

Draw out in discussion that MDGs are all interconnected (in same way that poverty issues are etc), e. g. because of lack of access to water, girls might have to spend 4 -5 hours a day fetching water and cannot go to school, so education and literacy, access to water and health are all linked (Millennium Goal 2,3 and 7)

Follow up discussion e.g. can one goal be achieved without the other? Likely reasons why goals cannot be met by different countries include some governments spending so much money paying back debts that there is little money for health and education spending or in many countries where there is war and conflict, a large part of the government budget goes to military spending etc.

To consolidate children’s learning show all or parts of the PowerPoint presentation on MDGs on: http://www.developmenteducation.ie
Step 3 - Exploring one MDG: Goal 7 - Ensure environmental sustainability

Aim of Step 3:
To help children reflect on the ‘environment’ and make connections between our lifestyle in the North and the lives of vulnerable people in South and to understand that ensuring environmental sustainability is something to that needs to concern us all.

Note for teachers
Targets set for Goal 7 refers to specifically to improving access to clean water and the lives of slum dwellers, as well as the more general promotion of sustainable development principles. In these materials the focus is on general introduction to environmental sustainability but other entry points to Goal 7 could equally be through the theme of ‘water’ or ‘exploring lives of people living in slums/poor conditions in urban situations’.

Resources needed: Display of Goal 7, peel-off sticky dots, Copy of Activity 10 from National Youth Council of Ireland’s One World Week pack 2005 Making a Difference (see below), mystery clues sheet (see below)

Lesson Plan:

- Display Goal 7 (child-friendly versions can be found in Irish Aid Media Awards pack or from Trócaire – see Section C)

- Brainstorm/construct an issues map or mind map on ‘environment’ in small groups or as whole class; write word ‘environment’ in centre of board or flipchart or get children to do so; pose Q ‘when you hear the word ‘environment’ what do you think of?’ or ‘What are all the different aspects /’bits’/components of the environment that come to mind?

- Give following prompts if necessary: try going through typical day and think of all things you take/get from environment (air, water, food, fuel etc), also don’t forget the built environment (e.g. what building materials do we get from environment?) as well as natural, even suggest the social environment (e.g. places to play etc) and our inner environment (e.g. feelings nature gives us) – the purpose is to get children to see that the environment has many different and important aspects to it some of which we might take for granted.

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An online resource developed by DICE
For more information visit our website: http://www.diceproject.org or email us at dice@cice.ie
• **Carry out dot voting** using peel-off sticky dots distributed to groups or individuals (minimum two dots per group or pupil needed but can use more; simple alternative is to get children to use markers to make dots/symbols or use coloured chalk if using blackboard)

• To help children see that everyone is connected to/dependent on the environment no matter where they live and that some people in poorer countries are even more directly dependent on the environment use (a) and (b)
  (a) ask pupils to ‘vote’ by placing a dot on any aspect of the environment with which they have a connection e.g. they drink water, they breath air etc
  (b) ask them to imagine that they live in a rural part of one named African country and to place a dot on any aspect of the environment on which they depend (they may need to add more points to the ‘maps’ e.g. firewood, soil to grow crops, plants to feed animals etc but will also see that people everywhere depend on the environment for water, air etc)

• **Introduce concept** of ‘sustainable development’ or environmental sustainability either by displaying the definition below or elicit through discussion of the verb ‘to sustain’ and the term ‘development’
  You may use the Bruntland definition of Sustainable Development:
  “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without limiting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

  ➔ See also on DICE website a video clip featuring Rachel Kavanagh (click here: [http://www.diceproject.org/upload/uploadedFile/SustainableDevelopmentFeb06.doc](http://www.diceproject.org/upload/uploadedFile/SustainableDevelopmentFeb06.doc)) explaining the concept of sustainable development as well as some additional activities and information on this topic.

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<tr>
<th>Note for teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While it is necessary to think and act locally about the environment and sustainability (e.g. current emphasis on renewable energy) and it is worthwhile with children to introduce the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle i.e. developing notion of personal responsibility) but from a development education perspective it would be desirable to go that bit further with children and to explicitly make the global connection. Helping children / people make the connections between how we live our lives and how this affects other more vulnerable/poor people in Southern /developing countries presents a challenge. The suggested activities in Step 3 aim to help educators meet this challenge in an engaging way.</td>
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*Pathways for Teaching the Millennium Development Goals*
An online resource developed by DICE
For more information visit our website: [http://www.diceproject.org](http://www.diceproject.org) or email us at dice@cice.ie
Activities:

• Carry out the following activities involving groups of children in solving puzzles and mysteries in order to make local-global connections, particularly in relation to global warming and climate change:

Chain Reactions

Purpose: To help children make local-global connections, particularly in relation to global warming and climate change

Materials required: Copy of Activity 10 from National Youth Council of Ireland’s One World Week pack 2005 Making a Difference (for downloadable PDF file click here)

Advance preparation: enlarge and cut up ‘links’ in chain (they can be stuck onto Post-its or use Blue tac to hold ‘links’ in their final place)

Method: Distribute one chain activity to each group of 4-5 people and ask them to place links of chain in order and write one sentence about what they think the chain is all about; discuss in whole class the different ‘chains’ and draw some conclusions

Solve the mystery Why has Mrs Camara’s stall closed down?

Purpose: To help children make local-global connections, particularly in relation to global warming and climate change through solving a puzzle with many clues

Materials required: MYSTERY CLUES SHEET (click here)

Advance preparation: enlarge and cut up components or clues of ‘mystery’

Method: Distribute set of ‘clues’ to each group; ask them to first sort the clues into those which seem connected in some way; they should then try to solve the mystery; discuss outcomes with whole class comparing variations on the solution and what they learnt from the activity about climate change and the interconnections between the lives of people in different parts of the planet.

Note for teachers:
Alternatively with younger children use only Chair Reactions and use Solve the Mystery for differentiation i.e. give out the mystery to those groups who solve the chain puzzles easily and quickly
B. Background information on MDGs

a) Millennium Development Goals information

*The UN's Millennium Development Goals*

In 1992, the largest-ever gathering of world leaders took place at a summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: 117 heads of state attended and a total of 178 countries were represented. The summit aimed to address the twin issues of promoting worldwide economic development and protecting the environment – including tropical rain forests, biodiversity and reducing global warming.

While many good intentions were expressed, there was a lack of firm commitments, and the event was criticised by poorer countries (Less Economically Developed Countries, or LEDCs) for placing the responsibility for environmental protection on them, without the necessary support from the More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs).

Five years later, in 1997, world leaders again met in Kyoto, Japan. This meeting aimed to build on the Rio agreements, placing more specific targets for countries to achieve. Its most important, yet contentious, aim was the worldwide reduction of greenhouse gases (to 5.2 per cent below their 1990 levels) in order to slow down the rate of global warming.

Some LEDCs thought that restricting the fossil fuels they burnt would also restrict their development and they were unhappy that they had to suffer for the overuse of fossil fuels by the MEDCs. But some MEDCs were also unhappy about reducing their fossil fuel use because they believed it would have a bad effect on their economies.

It took a long time and a lot of renegotiation, but 178 countries eventually agreed to a final, watered-down version of the treaty in 2001, though importantly not the USA, the world's biggest polluter.

While the final version of the Kyoto Treaty was being negotiated, another important agreement was being developed. This time, the development needs of the LEDCs were to be at the heart of the discussions. At this summit, held in New York, September 2000, known as the Millennium Summit, every country in the UN agreed to continue working towards global development and the elimination of poverty.

The following year, guidelines were drawn up to help governments to continue their development work: these are known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

These eight goals help to focus the world's community on improving the lives of millions of people by, for example, aiming to halve the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015 and reduce by two-thirds the proportion of children dying before the age of five. Ultimately, the MDGs will help to concentrate the international community's efforts on issues that matter most to the world's poorest children - like whether they eat nutritious food or whether they go to bed at night hungry; whether they
stay healthy or whether they even live to see their next birthday.

When the next World Summit took place in 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa, the agenda continued to focus on LEDCs achieving sustainable development, though its targets are less ambitious than the MDGs. The MDGs remain the most comprehensive list of aims ever agreed.

The first seven MDGs reinforce each other and aim to reduce all forms of poverty, while goal eight - a global partnership for development describes how the world's richer countries can contribute to achieve these goals.

The MDGs are important as they:

- **endorse a multi-dimensional view of development.**
  Progress is measured not only by economic growth, but also by factors that make a direct difference to people's lives - the realisation of their human rights, eg, their rights to nutritious food, a decent standard of health, education, and to have a say in decisions that affect them.

- **have been adopted by many countries and international development agencies as a basis for their work.**
  This means that development programmes supported by international agencies will endeavour to tackle some of the most important problems facing poor people.

- **recognise that different development problems 'cross-cut'.**
  For example, in some countries children usually girls - spend up to four hours a day carrying water. As a result, lack of access to clean water may mean that girls do not go to school.

The MDGs matter to children because:

- They cover most of the **fundamental rights** enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), for example, the right to life, education, health.

- They include many of the development indicators relevant to children. There are 32 indicators linked to the first seven goals, and ten of these are direct measurements of child welfare (such as under-five mortality and school enrolment).

- Most of the other indicators cover areas that have a direct or indirect impact on children, such as maternal mortality.

Progress towards achieving the MDG targets will be measured at regular intervals, and over a period of 15 years the results will show countries whether or not they are likely to achieve them. To date some countries are on track, but many are not, and only a few will meet some of the targets, such as the three-quarters reduction in maternal mortality.
Action is needed at both national and international levels for all countries to achieve their targets for each MDG.

The less developed countries are working towards their goals, by allocating a larger percentage of their economic budget to meet their population's basic rights, such as better nutrition, healthcare provision, education, clean water, sanitation; a more modern infrastructure, including housing and roads; and better employment opportunities.

But politics often stand in the way of achieving these needs. For example, in Africa government spending per university pupil is several hundred times that spent on each primary school pupil. Similarly, large-scale infrastructure programmes, such as dams, often give governments more visibility than longer-term investments, such as healthcare provision. The more developed, donor countries are also working towards goals related to the MDGs (see section on Aid on page 7).

As in many countries (developed and developing alike), military expenditure or an overblown, inefficient civil service, may consume essential resources. Moreover, despite recent efforts at debt reduction, many poor countries continue to pay large amounts of debt service each year to developed countries. More developed countries will need to provide support to ensure that all countries reach the MDG targets.

(Young Lives, Global Goals. Children, poverty and the UN Millennium Development Goals, A resource pack for environment studies and citizenship for 11- to 14-year olds, London: Save the Children 2004, pg. 3 and pg. 5)

(back to step 2)
b) Millennium Goals Summary

MILLENIUM GOAL SUMMARY

Millennium Goal 1
_Poverty and Hunger_
Cut in half the number of people who live on less than one US dollar a day and who suffer from hunger

Millennium Goal 2
_Education_
Make sure that all children start and finish primary school

Millennium Goal 3
_Girls_
Be sure that as many girls as boys go to school

Millennium Goal 4
_Infants_
Cut back by two-thirds the number of children who die before they reach the age of five

Millennium Goal 5
_Mothers_
Cut back by three-quarters the number of women who die when they are having babies

Millennium Goal 6
_Disease_
Stop terrible diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, from spreading and make them less common

Millennium Goal 7
_Environment_
Cut in half the number of people who lack clean water, improve the lives of people who live in slums, and promote policies that respect the goods of creation

Millennium Goal 8
_Global Partnership_
Promote greater cooperation among all nations with special concern for fairer deals for poor countries in trade, aid, debt, new technologies, etc

(forms to step 2)
c) Mystery Clues Sheet

Solve the mystery clues

‘Why has Mrs Camara’s stall closed down?’

Eamonn is driven to school every day in his parent’s car

Banjul, capital city of The Gambia, is an island ½ metre above sea level

Cars produce carbon dioxide from the burning of petrol

Last year’s peanut harvest was spoiled by heavy rain

Banjul is linked to the Gambian mainland by a single highway

Eamonn’s parents say the traffic in Dublin makes it too dangerous to walk or cycle to school

Global warming is believed to cause extreme weather

Tourists come to the Gambia for winter sun and sandy beaches

The Gambia is in West Africa
It is one of the countries most at risk from sea levels rising

The High Court is situated on a busy roundabout by the Banjul Highway

Bad storms and waves have been damaging the main Banjul Highway

Eamonn lives 2 km from his school in Ranelagh, Dublin.
Last week Mrs Camara’s stall was flooded for the second time

Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas which adds to global warming

The morning bus to Eamonn’s school is often held up in heavy traffic

Dublin’s traffic is mostly made up of cars

Recent stormy weather has made it harder for cars and trucks come into Banjul

Sea levels have risen as a result of global warming

Mrs Camara sells nuts and oranges to office workers and tourists, outside the High Court in Banjul

Mrs Camara’s stall has had to close down

(Adapted from Catty Holden’s ‘Global Citizenship’ workshop, Global Teacher conference, Manchester, 2004)
C. LIST OF SOME USEFUL RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

*Our World Our Future*, A teaching resource on development for Senior Primary Geography, for 5th and 6th classes, Irish Aid, 2006

*Young Lives, Global Lives* – Children, poverty and the UN Millennium Development Goals, Save the Children, 2004


*In the Global Classroom*, Pippin Publishing, 2003 (Book 1 Chp 3 Environment and Sustainability)

*If the World were a Village*, David A Smith, A & C Black, London, 2002

*Pachamama – Our Earth – Our Future*, UNEP/Evans 2001

Our World Children’s Media Awards 2006 pack – available from [ourworld@real-event.ie](mailto:ourworld@real-event.ie) 021-4550434 website: [www.ourworldawards.ie](http://www.ourworldawards.ie)

*Sustainable Human Development, A Young Person’s Introduction*, Peace Child International 2002

**Websites:**

[www.developmenteducation.ie](http://www.developmenteducation.ie)

[www.worldwatch.org](http://www.worldwatch.org)

[www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet)

[www.globaleyeye.org.uk](http://www.globaleyeye.org.uk)


[www.millenniumcampaign.org](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org)

[www.unicef.org/mdg/](http://www.unicef.org/mdg/)

[www.un.org/cyberschoolbus](http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus)

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