

IB Community Theme: *sharing our humanity*

The ethics of global poverty – a Theory of Knowledge lesson for all.

Aims

1. To develop an appreciation that poverty is a universal theme, which should be studied universally.
2. To develop students' understanding of the ethics of poverty.
3. To encourage students to take action in response to poverty.

Notes for teachers

This is an outline for a lesson on global poverty. It is intended that this lesson can stand alone, to be taught on or around the International Day for the Eradication of World Poverty on 17 October. It is expected that teachers will adapt the lesson as they wish, and may wish to integrate it in their overall theory of knowledge teaching scheme.

Prior requirements for students:

None, except for interest and enthusiasm.

Preparation by students:

No specific preparation is required.

However, teachers may wish to encourage students to review relevant parts of theory of knowledge already covered (e.g. how different ethical systems are derived), and any work on poverty or related topics already covered elsewhere, for example:

- when studying economics.
- in MYP humanities.

Guiding questions

The overall guiding question for the lesson is:

Does our knowledge about poverty bring with it an ethical obligation to do something about it personally? If so, what can we do?

Some or all of the guiding questions below may also be explored during the lesson.

- How do we decide what is poverty?
- What moral issues arise from poverty?
- What do various moral systems – e.g. deontological, utilitarian, tell us about moral responsibility?
- Does education help to prevent poverty?
- Do scientists have a responsibility towards the poor? What about experts in other areas of knowledge such as the arts or mathematics? (One assumes that the human sciences and ethics must be concerned with the poor.)

- What should our response be to poverty? Indifference? Acceptance? Wishing to help? Solidarity?
- Does our knowledge about poverty bring with it an ethical obligation to do something about it personally? If so, what can we do?
- Does proximity make a difference – family, locality, country?
- What are the implications of this for our lives as individuals?
- What forms of poverty are there, other than material poverty?
- What can people who are richer learn from those who are poorer?

Setting the scene

You may wish to display factual information about poverty in the teaching room, or to provide students with sheets with some key facts about poverty. See poverty factsheets in Web resources below.

[Worldmapper](#) is a collection of world maps, where territories are re-sized on each map according to the subject of interest. Includes a number related to poverty. Maps are also available as PDF posters.

Outline Lesson Plans

Two plans are suggested below

Plan A:

- Opening: How do we decide what is poverty? Start by discussing how poverty might be defined. Is it a relative term, or an absolute one?
- Follow with class discussion on the overall guiding question, or using some or all of the other guiding questions above.

To finish:

- Review the lesson.
- Ask the students to reflect individually on what they have learned; have their views towards poverty and the poor changed; what might they do next? (See “What can we do about poverty?” below).

Plan B:

Students can do some research in advance, for example:

- Compare poverty in your country with poverty in another. Students can undertake research, and could then perhaps exchange information by contact with another IB World School. You can use the forums on the community theme website for this.
- Supply some striking facts e.g. over a certain level, money does not lead to as much happiness as it does below it. (And see Poverty factsheets in Web resources below)
- Look at the information on global poverty in "High Noon" by J.F Rischard, 2002.
- Research from the list of websites supplied.

In the lesson:

- Start by discussing how poverty might be defined. Is it a relative term, or an absolute one?
- Follow with class discussion using the knowledge generated by the research and the

general guiding question; or some or all of the guiding questions above.

To finish:

- Review the lesson.
- Have the students changed their views towards poverty and the poor?
- Ask the students to reflect individually on what they have learned; have their views towards poverty and the poor changed; what might they do next? (See “What can we do about poverty?” below).

Ideas for further work and action

- Further research (See websites below).
- See “What can we do about poverty?” below.

Links to other subjects

These might be drawn on either before the lesson or after it for further work. Poverty might be studied in:

- Tutor groups / Personal, social, health education / Class time – considering concepts, factual background, action that can be taken.
- Language A1 – e.g. World Literature, Les Misérables (Victor Hugo), The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (Robert Tressell); for a list of literature on poverty on the World Bank’s poverty site click [here](#) .
- Language B – A topic
- Language A2 – Global Issues
- Individuals and Societies – economics in particular, history, psychology, etc.
In economics colleagues may like to consider the following guiding questions:
Should 'equality' be a core objective of Economic policy?
If it is, what are the implications for economic policy?
- Sciences – Diseases of malnutrition in biology; effects of poverty in biology or chemistry, energy poverty in physics
- Maths – measuring wealth distribution, concept of relative poverty, statistical measures of poverty etc. An excellent website displaying UNDP development statistics in a dynamic form is [Gapminder](#).
- Arts – poverty and creativity; representing “poverty” (in a broad sense) in artistic expression.

Some web resources specifically for this lesson

Most of these resources are in English only. See “Supplementary general resources on poverty” below for more resources in French and Spanish (reproduced from the MYP lesson plan).

An excellent overview, with good references.

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty>

Factsheets on poverty

1. From the Australian website [Global Education](#).
The website also includes other resources on poverty:
 - teaching activities (mainly secondary)
 - case studies
 - teacher's resources

- links

2. From the New Zealand Global Education Centre click [here](#)
3. A webpage giving a clear and very concise overview of concepts of poverty, and views on its measurement and causes. It is written by Professor Paul Spicker of Robert Gordon University, Scotland. <http://www2.rgu.ac.uk/publicpolicy/introduction/needf.htm>
4. For a useful source of facts and figures about poverty collated by Anup Shah, click [here](#)

Actions on poverty by IB students

Malmö Borgarskola, has already responded to the community theme and reported on its action on poverty. About 60 students work, parallel to their studies, fighting poverty. More details are on:

- <http://communitytheme.ibo.org/node/346>

Bahrain School students studied poverty in development economics, did something about it in the local community, by improving living conditions for poor local expatriate workers, and brought back their experience and knowledge to the economics classroom in considering economic theory. See <http://communitytheme.ibo.org/eng/post/community-and-curriculum>

Explore the community theme website for other examples of schools responding to poverty.

Community theme website

The community theme website contains links to many relevant websites. Search “global poverty”.

From Poverty to Power, by Duncan Green

This is an excellent book on poverty which has just been published by Oxfam. The book can be downloaded in full, or in summary (with sections in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) or purchased, by visiting the [From Poverty to Power](#) website.

Pages from New Internationalist, UK-based journal which campaigns on various global issues.

1. ‘Poor and Rich - The Facts. DEFINING POVERTY... MEASURING POVERTY...’
 - <http://www.newint.org/features/1999/03/01/poor-rich-the-facts/>
2. ‘Being poor is about not having enough money. Or is it? Nikki van der Gaag investigates.’
 - <http://www.newint.org/features/1999/03/01/keynote/>
3. ‘The way we define the poor is a reflection of the kind of society we live in, argues Zygmunt Baumann.’
 - <http://www.newint.org/features/1999/03/01/consumerism/>

A range of sources – in English, French and Spanish.

- <http://www.rrojasdatabank.org/dev2000.htm>

A case study, based on the UK.

- <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/ukpoverty/index.html>

Thinkquest

A US site on poverty and finding solutions to it.

- http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00282/edu_poverty.htm

<p>An interview with Peter Singer, Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics in the University Center for Human Values, Princeton University. ‘Does a hungry child in a far away land have any less of a demand on your good will and aid than a hungry child from your own family or neighborhood? Does each individual have the duty to give to the worldwide alleviation of poverty up to the point at which further giving would cause his or her own family more harm than it would do good for others? Or is responsibility for others a mostly local affair: take care of your family, look out for those in your community, and the rest of the world will take care of itself?’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ http://www.philosophytalk.org/pastShows/GlobalPovertyandInternationalAid.htm
<p>United Nations Development Programme –the UN agency specifically concerned with poverty reduction http://www.undp.org/poverty/propoor.htm</p>
<p>The International Fund for Agricultural development (IFAD) is dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries. It is a specialized agency of the United Nations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ http://www.ifad.org/
<p>An Islamic attitude to poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ http://www.al-islami.com/islam/islam_solves_poverty.php
<p>The beauty of poverty – a Buddhist angle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/artofzen/ed_zen_history.html
<p>Excerpts from Voices of Poor. ‘Listen to the poor as they speak about their lives, and what it means to be poor.’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/0,,contentMDK:20612465~isCURL:Y~menuPK:336998~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992,00.html ▪ This is part of the World Bank’s excellent PovertyNet site http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/0,,contentMDK:20153855~menuPK:373757~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992,00.html
<p>Ending world poverty – material from the Brooks World Poverty Institute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ http://povertyblog.wordpress.com/

With thanks to Nick Lee for developing this lesson.

Supplementary general resources on poverty

(from the MYP lesson plan by Simon Scoones)

The theme of poverty is difficult to tackle sufficiently in a single lesson. Here are some suggested (free) online resources to supplement those in the lesson plan:

Oxfam Education (UK) have produced a poster and associated learning activities for each of the eight **Millennium Development Goals**. All are downloadable in PDF format at http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/change_the_world_in_eight_steps/ (in English)

The World Bank's **online atlas of the Millennium Development Goals** has a series of interactive maps with supporting information to explore the MDGs in greater depth. <http://devdata.worldbank.org/atlas-mdg/> (in English, French and Spanish)

The **Make Poverty History** site provides learning resources on poverty plus links to other NGO sites for schools that focus on poverty - <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/schools/index.shtml> (in English)

The **UN's Cyberschoolbus** curriculum focusing on poverty:

<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/poverty2000/index.asp>

(This particular resource is available in English only. The website is in English, French, Spanish, Chinese and other languages)

"People and Possessions" postcard book by Peter Menzel (New Internationalist Publications Ltd 2002) is an excellent visual resource to use with a class to compare material possessions of families from all over the world.

The **Miniature Earth** web movie, available in five languages, would make a hard-hitting start or end to a lesson on poverty, looking at the world as if the population was a hundred people. Many of the issues covered in the video raise awareness of inequalities of wealth, resources, education, technology and access to health care - <http://www.miniature-earth.com/> (in English, Spanish, French, German and Portuguese)

For a more data-focused approach to investigating differences in global poverty the **UN's Human Development Report** site now has an excellent interactive micro-site where students can select and use any UN statistics on all indicators used in the Human Development Report - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/data/> (in English, French, Spanish)

Worldometer – world statistics updated in real time, covering many types of resource consumption, population changes, etc. <http://www.worldometers.info/> (in many languages)

The **World Mapper** site provides (currently) 366 world maps which digitally re-sizes countries to represent a development indicator. Many of these are relevant to learning about poverty, and the site presents a lot of potential for students to enable visual comparisons and analysis of global disparities - <http://www.worldmapper.org/> (in English)

On **YouTube** there are many versions of "Shift Happens" - from the US, UK and Australia, and with different soundtracks. Just type 'shift happens' into the search engine. If it is new to you, "Shift Happens" is a short photostory of mindblowing data, comparing different parts of the world and the changes in development. A great lesson/discussion starter.

IB global lessons

What can we do about poverty?

Here are some suggestions to consider. Organizations mentioned are for illustration.

- 1. Become better informed about the issues**
 - Below are some websites specifically for young people
 - Follow up references and resources in the global lesson.
 - Tag or search “global poverty” on the [community theme website](#)
- 2. Inform yourself, and discuss the issues and your views with others.**
- 3. Volunteer your time for organizations eradicating poverty**
- 4. Support campaigns** to put pressure on world leaders to implement the Millennium Development Goals, which include eradication of poverty. For example:

The [United Nations Millennium Campaign](#) supports and inspires people from around the world to take action in support of the Millennium Development Goals. It is coordinating worldwide efforts to hold governments to account for their promises to help end poverty.

[Avaaz](#) – world in action – “ is a new global web movement with a simple democratic mission: to close the gap between the world we have, and the world most people everywhere want.”

The [Global Campaign for Education](#) promotes education as a basic human right.

- 5. Write a letter to someone in power about your concerns about poverty.**
- 6. Connect with other people who care.**
- 7. Shop ethically – check the source and background of goods and services you buy**
- 8. Buy Fair Trade goods**

For a description of Fair Trade and details of Fair Trade organizations see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_trade. Web search for local organizations.
- 9. Lend money through microfinance organisations**

Microfinance makes tiny loans to small business people and entrepreneurs trying to earn their way out of poverty. Click [here](#) for factsheet. Search “microfinance” on the [community theme website](#). Microfinance organisations include: [Grameen Foundation](#) , [KIVA](#)
- 10. Donate money to / raise funds for organizations working to eradicate poverty** e.g. [Action Aid](#) , [Islamic Relief](#), [Oxfam International](#), [UNICEF](#), [World Vision](#)

Some websites for students to explore poverty (and related global issues) and to



Cool Planet Find out about life for children in different countries, about your food, and about the work of international charity Oxfam to help poor communities make improvements to their lives. Also suggestions for action. From Oxfam GB (in English). For PYP / MYP students.

Cyberschool

Oxfam Hong Kong's interactive website where you can explore a number of important global issues, including poverty. In English and Chinese.

Generation Why "Do what you love doing - just change the world while you're doing it."

Issues, Do something, Have your say – on this site for high school students from Oxfam UK (in English).

Global Rich List

How rich are you compared with the world's population as a whole? Check out where your income – pocket money or from a part-time job – places you personally on the global rich list.

Millennium Development Goals

Find out about the eight Millennium Development Goals that all countries in the world have agreed to improve things for the poorest people on the planet. See what **you** can do to help.

Have your say about the goals, and read what other young people are saying.

There are also updates on how the world is doing in trying to meet its goals.

Website is part of the UN CyberSchool Bus, and is in Spanish, French, Arabic, Chinese and English.

Net Aid

Join the fight against poverty. Know the issues, Be inspired, Act now – on this US website from Netaid - an initiative of Mercy Corps (in English).

Stir your world!

Be informed (YouTube videos), Communicate (with others in "the Blender", act.

Youth initiative (for high school students) from World Vision Australia (in English).

Voices of Youth

Explore, Speak out, Take action – the three sections of this website from the United Nations organisation for children, UNICEF (in English, French, Spanish, Arabic).

Youth Voice

UNICEF UK's website for young people to find out more and take action (in English).

La Juventud Opina

Explora, Opina, Actúa – UNICEF (in Spanish)

La Voix des Jeunes

Explore, Exprime-Toi, Il faut agir – UNICEF (in French)

First 8

Excellent interactive website from the Netherlands on the Millennium Development Goals (in English and Dutch).