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# Empowering learners through sustainable development goals

## Webinar handout

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### What are the sustainable development goals?

In 2015 all United Nations Member States adopted The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which they identified 17 areas on which to focus. Practically, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call for action in a global effort to manage global issues. Although they overlap in some areas, these goals cover health, education, energy, education, economy, and the climate crisis. You can find more explanations and the detailed list of SDGs on the United Nations website <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

### Why should teachers include SDGs in their classes?

One of SDGs is quality education, but actually education is embedded in *all* the goals. None of them can be achieved without educating children and young people and engaging them in this common effort to overcome specific global issues. Prior to this webinar, we asked teachers why they think they should address global issues in their classes. We received over 170 responses and the vast majority focused on the need to raise awareness on these topics among the students. Other reasons mentioned by the teachers were equally inspiring:

- becoming responsible global citizens
- developing critical thinking
- teaching life skills
- staying up-to-date with what is happening in the world
- creating a better world together

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## From awareness to action

Teachers agree that these global issues need to be tackled in the classroom but they feel overwhelmed by the variety of resources they find online. We recommend two reliable websites which contain teaching ideas and materials.

The first website is the UNESCO page (<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/sdgs/material>) dedicated to teachers looking for resources on SDGs. Visit the website and click on the icon of each SDG to discover how education can support the respective goal and teaching materials organised on age groups (early, primary and secondary education).

The second one is the British Council Classroom Resources (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom>). Make sure that you browse through all the pages with topics and you will find a wide range of materials covering the SDGs with practical activities that can be easily implemented in the classroom. Our favourite materials are listed below:

- Quality education for all the children <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/quality-education>
- Climate change and girls' education <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/climate-change-and-girls-education>
- Zero waste <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/zero-waste>
- Zero hunger <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/zero-hunger>
- Sustainable cities and communities <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/clean-air>
- Life below water <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/life-below-water>
- Life on land <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/life-on-land>
- The story of water <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/story-water-education-pack>

While it is important to raise awareness of these sustainable development goals among our learners, we consider that it is vital to involve them in noticing these issues in their communities and in finding and implementing solutions. It is time we started acting, not just discussing these issues. What we suggest is to always add an element of action to your classroom activities by creating opportunities for the learners to get involved actively. For example, we developed a lesson around the British Council materials on The Buy Nothing Movement (<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/b2-reading/buy-nothing-movement>). We designed this task and a possible action plan to encourage learners to implement what they learnt in their own lives and maybe in the lives of their community.

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## A classroom task that involves action

According to the organisers of *Buy Nothing Day*, shopping itself isn't harmful but what we buy can be. They claim that in the rich western countries 20% of the world population consume 80% of the earth's natural resources. They want consumers to think more about what they buy and to ask themselves some questions before buying anything new.

### Stage 1: Instructions for students - planning

Work together to make some questions (a minimum of 3) that people should ask themselves before buying something. Write them on a separate piece of paper and when you are ready, display it for the whole class.

### Stage 2: Instructions for students - action planning

In your groups, discuss how you can encourage people to use your questions before they buy something. How can you make them known in your family/school/community?

Another example is the one we presented in the webinar. After a lesson on inequality in society, we can ask our learners the questions below and based on the answers we get, develop a project that might get out of the classroom, out into the school or the community.

- Are there any cases of inequality in your class / school / community?
- What actions are being taken to reduce inequality?
- What actions should be taken to reduce inequality?
- How can we help?

## Action for change

Introducing global issues and the SDGs in our classes with a pro-active approach will have a better impact on the learners and on the teachers. First of all, we will not only help learners become aware of the issues of the world we live in, we will help develop new behaviours, change attitudes and inspire positive habits. Then, getting involved and feeling that we act upon our convictions will prevent a feeling of anxiety and of hopelessness. Doing these activities regularly will allow learners to identify an area of interest and of action which could become their future job or a long-term project in activism. Education is meant not only to inspire thinking, but action too.

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A recording of Cristiana and Teo's webinar can be found here:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/policies-and-practices-elt-classroom-mini-event>