

ACTIVITY

There is much talk about the major environmental problems facing 'the whole planet', yet the planet could be viewed simply as all the 'local' places grouped together and called 'the world'. Global problems result from local problems. Were each locality, school or individual to find out how they contribute to global problems and then set out to reduce their environmental impact, many of the global problems would diminish.

This activity will give you ideas about how to carry out an environmental audit of your school, centre or home, using knowledge learned about the environment. They will be able to discuss their results with the aim of lessening their negative impact on the environment through thinking globally but acting locally.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

1. Get into a group, and divide yourselves into sub-groups or individuals who are assigned a certain topic to explore: those looking at water use will analyse the uses of water in the kitchen, the classroom, the gardens etc. and note if any is wastefully used. Those looking at waste would find out if the centre buys recycled paper, whether waste paper, tin, glass, plastics and food waste are recycled or reused, and whether less could be used in the first place! Those looking at energy could see which energy sources are used and in what ways, how much fuelwood or charcoal is used, how much electricity is used, whether any appliances (lights, radios) are left on when not in use, and whether any energy-saving technologies could be applied. Those looking at transport could look at how people get to and from school, whether it is by public or shared transport, walking, cycling or in individual vehicles?
2. Each member of the group should make a grid in their notepad. Across the top they should mark six columns - very good, good, neutral, bad, very bad, and don't know). Down the side they should write in the name of the subject being audited eg. water use, food waste, heating, lighting, paper, transport, depending on the topic they are auditing.

	Very good	Good	Neutral	Bad	Very bad	Don't know
Food waste						
Water use						
Heating						
Lighting						

SOURCE: Environmental Education Activities for Primary Schools, International Centre for Conservation Education, UNESCO-UNEP International Environmental Education Programme

✓ If there appears to be a lot of wastage or misuse, a tick should be made in the 'very bad' column
 ✓ If there is no wastage, or if conservation measures are already in place, then tick the 'very good' column.
 ✓ If there seems to be no obvious positive or negative aspect, then tick the neutral or don't know column.

By looking at the results the group can discuss how the school or community might lessen its negative aspects through more careful use of resources.

The results should be widely publicized with a request for suggestions and a plea for care to be taken when using resources. This may even lead to positive environmental (and economic) changes!

You could take each topic one by one, and find solutions to any wastage problems you have discovered.

Make sure everyone involved in solutions understands the global connection. For example, the links between using fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas) and global warming, or between deforestation and unsustainable use of paper or biomass fuel can be highlighted.

Finally, after solutions have been put into action, you can repeat the audit to see if there has been any improvement!