Lesson One: What is Sustainable Development?

About this lesson
Students will review background information and key definitions about sustainable development such as poverty and the Rio Earth Summit. This lesson will introduce the aims of the original Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the global issues it tried to tackle.

Learning Objectives
- Explain key terms sustainable development and poverty
- Understand what the Rio Earth Summit was, its aims and what it achieved
- Explore the global issues addressed at the Rio Earth Summit

Lesson plan

5 minutes
Start this lesson by gauging how much students already know. Write the words ‘sustainable development’ on the board and ask students to discuss in pairs what words and images come to mind. Then ask them to feed back to the group and note down key words on the board. Explain the learning objectives for this lesson.

20 minutes
This activity serves to familiarize students with the key concepts in the lesson – sustainable development and poverty. Divide the class into pairs and give half the pairs an expert sheet on ‘sustainable development’ and half of the pairs an expert sheet on ‘poverty’. Ask each pair to spend 10 minutes becoming experts on their topic and note down key information. Then ask each ‘poverty pair’ to join a ‘sustainable development pair’ and have the pairs take turns to share with each other what they have learnt. Then ask all the groups to feedback to the entire class.

30 minutes
Show your students the headlines from global newspapers from 1992. What kind of issues was the world facing then? Do the issues sound familiar or do they feel outdated? Now show students the statement on what the Rio Earth Summit aimed to achieve – make sure students understand all the terms. Now hand out one copy of the ‘Rio +20’ timeline per pair and ask students to work together to fill in the key events/documents that have taken place since the Rio Earth Summit. If possible/necessary, students can use the internet. Alternatively you can write the key events on the board and they have to fill them in the right space. Leave time for everyone to feedback to the whole class.

5 minutes
Consolidate learning by asking students to summarize in pairs what they have learned in this lesson and ask them to feedback with three key words.

Homework
Ask each student to bring a news article to the next lesson on an event that’s happened in the past month somewhere in the world that relates to either an issue or solution of ‘sustainable development’.

Resources Required
- Handout 1.1: Expert sheets
- Handout 1.2: Rio Earth Summit info sheet
- Handout 1.3: 20 years since Rio Timeline

Key Concepts
United Nations
Sustainable Development Poverty
Rio Earth Summit
Handout 1.1 – Expert Sheet Poverty

What is Poverty?

Poverty has many different definitions – many taking income as a base. The World Bank defines poverty as being "a lack of basic income, "living on less than $1.25 per day."

Poverty has many different definitions – many taking income as a base. The World Bank defines poverty as being "a lack of basic income, "living on less than $1.25 per day."

Absolute Poverty

Absolute poverty measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Absolute poverty is concerned with physical quantity of the resources available to people. The concept of absolute poverty is based on the idea that people who are poor lack access to basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter.

Relative Poverty

Relative poverty is concerned with people who are poor in comparison to others. Relative poverty is based on the idea that people who are poor are poor relative to others. Relative poverty is concerned with people who are poor in comparison to others. Relative poverty is based on the idea that people who are poor are poor relative to others.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is about more than just the environment – it is about balancing competing needs and ensuring that development is sustainable.

Sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but essentially it is development that is not only environmentally sustainable, but also socially and economically sustainable.

Sustainable development is about more than just the environment – it is about balancing competing needs and ensuring that development is sustainable.

Sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but essentially it is development that is not only environmentally sustainable, but also socially and economically sustainable.

Sustainable development is about more than just the environment – it is about balancing competing needs and ensuring that development is sustainable.

Sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but essentially it is development that is not only environmentally sustainable, but also socially and economically sustainable.
MEET THE CHILDREN OF RIO

Handout 1.2 – Rio Earth Summit

Rio Earth Summit Statement

"Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a paradox of disparities in wealth, a problem of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the continuing destruction of the ecosystems on which we depend. Our well-being, (stated by world leaders at UN Earth Summit 1992),

The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 attracted more heads-of-state than any other conference to date. It aimed to help governments rethink economic development by recognizing that economic and social progress needs to go hand in hand with finding ways to preserve our natural resources base and prevent further degradation of the earth. Summit participants emphasized the importance of recognizing the interdependence of economic, social and environmental development.

Ref: Handout 1.2 – Rio Earth Summit

www.envirofuturing-africa.org

Breaking News: Headlines Around the Earth Summit

The global warming may be only hot air.

Headline 2 – Rio Earth Summit
Can you put the events next to their year on the timeline below? Use the internet if you need help.

Handout 13 - 20 Years since Rio Timelne

1972: Creation of the UN Environment Programme

1973: Oil Crisis and Yom Kippur War, also known as the Arab-Israeli War in which the United States backed Israel and thus raised the price of oil. The Arab Oil Exporting Countries (OAPEC) proclaimed an oil embargo.

1979: First World Climate Conference, Geneva. One of the first global meetings on climate change, which produced the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

1987: World population reaches 5 billion. The Brundtland Commission Report is published, which coined and defined the term ‘sustainable development’.

1992: UN Conference on Environment and Development; the Rio Earth Summit. This summit led to Agenda 21 action plan and blueprint for global sustainable development. The Rio Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) were established. The CBD is an international treaty that sets binding obligations for parties to protect biological diversity. The CBD was also the first treaty to be signed by all countries, which committed the world to sustainable development. The CBD has been mostly successful.

1994: UN Convention on Desertification (UNCCD) to combat desertification, especially in Africa.

1997: Kyoto Protocol – an international treaty that set binding obligations to reduce greenhouse gases and combat global warming.


2000: UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs are 8 goals that aim to reduce the causes of poverty.

2002: World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, which was held 10 years after the 1992 Earth Summit.

2006: World population reaches 7 billion. An additional challenge for pupils is to research when the initial Earth Summit and thus referred to as Rio +10. Main result was a treaty to restore world’s fish stocks. Renewable Energy and Development: The Rio Earth Summit. This summit led to Agenda 21. This treaty was adapted to combat drought and desertification, especially in Africa.

2009: UN Convention on Desertification (UNCCD) to combat desertification, especially in Africa.

2012: Rio +20 Conference in Rio de Janeiro (have students write this on the timeline themselves).

2007: Global financial and food crisis

2008: World population reaches 7 billion. An additional challenge for pupils is to research when the initial Earth Summit and thus referred to as Rio +10. Main result was a treaty to restore world’s fish stocks.

2012: Global financial and food crisis

2012: Rio +20 Conference in Rio de Janeiro (have students write this on the timeline themselves).