Lesson Two: Rio +20

About this lesson
This lesson builds on the previous lesson where students looked back to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. In this lesson students will be looking at the ‘Rio +20’ conference that took place in June 2012 and simulate their own mini summit to discuss the issues currently facing the globe.

Learning Objectives
- Explain what the aims of Rio +20 were
- Be able to express opinions on the issues of Rio +20

Resources Required
- Handout 2.1: Rio +20 Fact Sheet
- Handout 2.2: Earth Summit Role play Cards

Key Concepts
- Rio +20
- Green Economy

Lesson plan

10 minutes
Put an image of a world map on your interactive whiteboard (or project one) and ask each student to briefly state the event in their news article – where was it, what happened and how does it relate to sustainable development? Map each event on the map to see how global the coverage is.

10 minutes
This next activity serves to introduce the key concepts, aims and results of the Rio +20 conference which was held in June 2012 and actively engage students with what it would be like to be part of such a summit. Start by going through the ‘Rio +20 fact sheet’ and asking students to answer the following three key questions: (1) What did Rio +20 set out to achieve, (2) What issues were discussed at the conference, and (3) What did the conference achieve?

40 minutes
In this activity your students will be simulating their own mini Earth Summit. What is it like to have to balance the demands and needs of a diverse range of people with respect for the environment? Divide your class into 5 groups and hand out the role play cards on handout 2.2. Give each group 20 minutes to prepare their argument by reading the information on their card and getting into their roles. Then call the summit to order, where you as the teacher assume the role of mediator. The aim of the summit is for all groups to agree on an action plan to protect our planet’s forests, the Amazon in particular. Can you reach a consensus that all groups are happy with? If you have time, have the groups write short press releases on the Summit.

5 minutes
Reflect on learning by asking pupils in pairs to summarize their opinion on Rio +20 and its success. Explain to pupils that in the next lessons you will be focusing on the lives of five different children over the past 20 years since the original Rio Earth Summit and looking at how their lives have changed.

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Handout 2.1 - Rio +20 Fact Sheet

Rio +20 Conference

20 years after the initial earth summit, global carbon emissions have risen by 48%, 300 million hectares of forest have been cleared, the population has increased by 1.6 billion people and 1 in 6 people are malnourished. In 2012 world leaders once again came together in Rio de Janeiro in the UN Conference on Sustainable Development. The aim of the conference was to "secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the majors summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges" (statement from UN Conference on Sustainable Development).

The conference focused on two main themes:

- A ‘green economy’ in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. A green economy would marry economic advancement with social and environmental concerns.
- An institutional framework for sustainable development

The conference highlighted seven priority issues to focus on:

1. Gainful employment
2. Energy
3. Sustainable cities
4. Food security and sustainable agriculture
5. Clean, accessible water
6. Ocean preservation
7. Disaster readiness

What did the Rio +20 Conference achieve?

The Rio +20 Conference has received a lot of criticism and has been called a ‘failure’ because the document it produced, ‘The Future We Want’, lacks detail and guidelines on the way forward. At the end of the conference the 190 nations that were present signed off on a plan to develop a set of global ‘Sustainable Development Goals’, that will follow up from the Millennium Development Goals that are set to come to an end in 2015. They also signed off other measures to strengthen global environmental management, improved protection of the oceans, food security and promote a green economy. But most agreements were made outside the main negotiations on a voluntary basis between governments and companies.

- “Despite the fact that the world produces enough food to feed everyone, there are more hungry people today than when the world last met in Rio in 1992” (Barbara Stocking, Chief Executive Oxfam)
- “This is a ‘once in a generation’ moment when the world needs vision, commitment and, above all, leadership. Sadly, the current document is a failure of leadership” (Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights)
- “In a world of plenty, no-one, not a single person, should go hungry; I invite all of you to join me in working for a future without hunger. The future We Want document will guide us on a more sustainable path but our job now is to create a critical mass. The road ahead is long and hard” (Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General)

**Meet the Children of Rio**

**Handout 2.2 – Earth Summit Role Play Card**

**Agenda Mini Earth Summit (led by the chair):**
- Ask each group to issue a press release
- Try to reach an agreement between the groups
- Open the floor to groups to suggest and discuss changes to the plan. Ensure everyone stays on track.
- Explain the plan for the development of a piece of the Amazon forest (scenario below)
- Ask each group to introduce themselves (their role)

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### Scenario:

Brazil has built up a large financial debt and 1 in 12 people live in extreme poverty. To create money to repay the debt, the government wants to develop a large area of the rainforest. This means cutting down trees to make room for roads, farm land and homes. It also means relocating indigenous tribes who have lived in the forest for generations. Brazil already exports timber, but as most of this is illegally logged, the government does not receive any of the money made.

#### Role Play Cards:

- **Brazilian Government**
  - You understand that you need to take everyone’s interests into account and reach decisions that will be best for everyone. You are under a lot of pressure to repay the national debt and see developing the forest.

- **Consumers**
  - You live in the UK and products that you buy come from the forest – wooden furniture, flooring, rubber, medicine, beauty products, fruits and nuts. You are concerned about the environmental damage caused by the products you buy. You worry about the sustainability of our planet.

- **Loggers**
  - You work in the Amazon forest cutting down trees for the logging company. The money you earn is your family’s only income. The logging company sells the logs to other companies for manufacture (e.g. into furniture or paper). You worry about losing your job if development does not go through.

- **Environmental Campaigner/NGO**
  - You work to protect the natural world and to make sure that future generations will also be able to benefit from the Amazon. You worry about the sustainability of our planet.

- **Amazon Tribe**
  - Your tribe has been living in the Amazon forest for generations. The forest provides you with everything you need – food, medicine, fresh water and shelter. You believe in living in harmony with nature and don’t waste anything. Redevelopment would mean you lose your home and way of life. You worry for the future of your children.

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