

SPOTLIGHT ACTIVITY 4: HEALTHY EARTH, HEALTHY LIVES

HOW DOES CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECT CHILDREN'S HEALTH?

AIM: Children consider how their daily actions can contribute towards climate change or the efforts to mitigate it for the future and explore how they can take personal action as well as influence government action.

Preparation:

- Young people explore linkages of climate change to a child's right to a safe and clean environment starting with their own actions and looking outward to explore how cumulative actions impact the health of the earth.

Facilitator Materials & Resources

- Activity PowerPoint 4: Healthy Earth, Healthy Lives

Participant Materials

- Paper
- Pen or pencil
- Calculator (online or spreadsheet)

FACILITATOR INTRODUCTION

This text can be read out to the young people in your group:

Some people think about climate change only as an environmental problem, yet climate change is just as much a threat to people as it is to the planet. To live healthy lives, we are dependent upon a healthy earth.

The degree to which the earth's average temperature rises year on year has a lot to do with human activity. When we burn fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas to power our cars, create energy or heat our homes, for example, more greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere, causing global heating. Global heating affects not only the health of our own environment, its knock-on effects alter ecosystems that impact health – like food chains and clean water access.

When scientists talk about the CO₂ that is released into the atmosphere because of one person's (or one entity's) energy needs, they call this a "carbon footprint". Every one of us leaves a footprint on the climate through our daily actions. However, if we are aware, we can also take actions that can mitigate climate effects and contribute to a healthier environment for children in our own communities and all over the world (UNCRC Article 24).

Young people who have never done a personal carbon calculator exercise should begin with part 1, while those young people more experienced with carbon footprints may choose to begin at the activity extension.



Please be sensitive to the fact that some young people may have fewer choices about reducing their carbon footprint than others - for example, young disabled people may not be able to use public transport.

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Part 1: Carbon Calculator

1. Explain to the young people that we are going to spend the next week tracking our own carbon footprint using a carbon calculator to explore how much energy we use in our daily lives. (Timing can be modified depending on how much time there is between sessions).

2. Encourage young people to develop their own carbon tracker categories. The basic categories should include driving, energy use, flying, mass transit and heating. For young people with a developed understanding of climate, consider if there are any other areas they would like to track beyond energy use – like rubbish/recycling, fashion or food consumption.

Alternative Option: Young people with access to smart phones could use an online carbon calculator or app to complete this activity like this one: footprint.wwf.org.uk

3. Once young people have created their categories, research the average amount of carbon emissions tied to these specific indicators and determine how they will track each one. For example, burning 1L of petrol for driving produces approximately 2.3 kg of CO₂. Young people who track how far they have driven or ridden in a car will calculate the amount of fuel burned based on an estimate of the car's petrol mileage.

4. Encourage young people to create their own spreadsheet or tool to track their data over the activity period.

5. At the end of the week, ask the young people to calculate their estimated emissions.

6. Create a table (on a board for in-person facilitation, or on a shared spreadsheet for remote facilitation), and ask each young person to record their own emission tracking. Using the individual records ask young people to combine the data presented to compile a broader picture of the group's emissions.

7. Using the results of the carbon footprint data collection, ask young people to consider the following discussion points:

- Were there any large differences between members of the group that were surprising? Why do you think one family might have a higher or lower footprint?
- Which tracked activities emitted the most CO₂ for the individuals/across the group?
- How do you think your carbon footprint was different during the time that you and your family were staying at home due to the coronavirus pandemic? Did you drive less? Did you go for many months without flying on an aeroplane?
- Based on your understanding of climate change impacts, how might these daily actions you take link to a child in a place like Ethiopia, where there is drought?
- Explain how these actions you tracked might ultimately have an impact on a child's right to a clean and healthy environment.

Activity Extension: As a way to extend the activity and help young people explore the concept of how different lifestyles can have varying degrees of impact on climate, split young people into groups, assigning each group a generic scenario: a family in rural Zimbabwe, a famous A-List celebrity, a European politician, a sheep farmer in Scotland, a location-independent Instagram influencer, a nomadic family in Mongolia. Ask each group to create a story about their fictitious persona and lifestyle, then use the carbon calculator to imagine what their carbon footprint might be. Have each group describe the persona they analysed and their total emissions. Mixing scenarios to include populations from both the global north and the south (low- and high-income countries) can add to the understanding that it is the actions of the most developed countries that are contributing the most emissions, while the lesser developed countries are those experiencing the negative impacts of climate.

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Young people playing on a beach in Tuvalu. © Unicef/Sokhin

Part 2: Making the Link to the Right to Health

1. Remind young people that, when we think of climate change, we must think individually and locally as well as globally because the effects of our actions in the UK have an impact here as well as in far-reaching places and the children that live in them.
2. As an example, show the image of children playing on the beach in Tuvalu. Ask the young people what they observe in the photo and what story they think this picture might tell in relation to climate change and the activity they just created.
3. Using the Tuvalu image as a discussion, help young people to make the linkages that global warming (caused by some of the actions we just considered in the climate calculator) is causing ocean rise on the Pacific island nation of Tuvalu. As the ocean level gets higher, sea water is contaminating the water table, meaning that children in Tuvalu are lacking access to clean water that is essential for their health and well-being. This is not only a problem in Tuvalu. Because of the effects of climate change, it is expected that 600 million children – one in four worldwide – will be living in areas with extremely limited water resources by 2040¹. Guide the young people to conclude that, because human action is part of the problem, human action can also be part of the solution.
4. Wrap up the activity with a reflection exercise, asking the young people to write down three new things they learned, two actions they could take and one question that this activity made them want to know more about.

1. Source: www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/water-and-sanitation