

WATER

Water is a basic human right, yet more than 840 million people do not have a basic drinking water service.

More than 260 million people, mostly young girls, have the daily task of collecting water from distant sources—time that could be spent in school or earning a livelihood. By cutting the time and distance to fetch water in half, girls' school attendance increases by 12 percent. Poor sanitation and contaminated water can lead to diseases like cholera, hepatitis A and typhoid. But with access to clean water, families are able to send their girls to school, watch their crops flourish and improve their personal health.

By 2050, at least 1 in 4 people will live where a lack of fresh water will be either chronic or recurrent.

A recent survey of 100,000 health care facilities in developing areas found that more than 50% lack running water and soap.

In countries dealing with conflict, children are 4 times less likely to have access to basic water services.

40% of the world's population is affected by water scarcity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How would your daily routine change if you did not have access to clean water?
- 2 Why do you think millions of people still do not have clean drinking water?
- 3 What do you think needs to be done to make clean water accessible to everyone?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to clean water at WE.org/exploringissues.

Take Action

Walk to raise awareness and provide people with access to clean water for life.

WEwalk
for water

FOOD

There are approximately 815 million people around the world who do not have enough food to lead a productive life.

With the global population expected to reach 10 billion by 2050, food production will need to increase by 50 percent globally in order to feed another two billion people. Climate-related events, such as drought, can limit the availability of food sources in many regions. Conflict, coupled with climate change, is beginning to reverse the long-term declining trend in global hunger. Many families suffering from food insecurity are forced to pull their children out of school to help with farming, having lifelong effects on the well-being of millions of youth around the world.

Soil erosion from croplands carries away 25–40 billion tons of topsoil every year, significantly reducing crop yields.

More than half of people facing hunger—489 million—live in countries affected by conflict.

More than 20 million people in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria are facing starvation and famine.

The United Nations has pledged to end hunger and malnutrition by 2030.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** Why do you think women do not have equal access to farming?
How can farming equity be improved?
- 2** How is food insecurity related to education, health and poverty?
- 3** What can be done to help reverse the effects of conflict and climate change on global hunger?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to food worldwide at WE.org/exploringissues.

Take Action

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EDUCATION

Education is the first step to breaking the cycle of poverty.

On any given day, more than 130 million girls are out of school. Many children face barriers that prevent them from attending school, such as needing to collect water for their families, staying home to perform household activities or living in conflict-ridden areas. With access to education, children gain the skills and tools to empower themselves and their communities. Education provides the opportunity for children to learn, grow and become empowered to lead the life they want to live.

Countries that provide all children with secondary education cut their risk of war in half.

Only 50% of refugee children are enrolled in primary school.

69 million new teachers are needed in order to achieve global universal primary and secondary education.

Girls living in areas of conflict are 90% more likely to be out of secondary school.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What can be done to ensure every child receives an education?
- 2 What would you do if you weren't allowed to go to school? How would your life be different?
- 3 How do education standards vary across the world?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to education worldwide at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.wearethevoice.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Your voice is a powerful tool for social change. Use it to speak up or go silent for all of those whose voices go unheard.

WE are  **silent**

DISCRIMINATION

The population of the United States is made up of many races, ethnicities, genders and backgrounds, who still face varying degrees of discrimination on a daily basis.

Forty-two percent of African Americans have experienced racial violence, and four in 10 LGBTQ youth say the community they live in is not accepting of them. In January 2017, the U.S. government introduced an executive order that put a hold on all refugee settlement. The executive order also banned entry of travelers from seven different countries.

Almost 75% of LGBTQ youth are more honest about themselves online than in the real world.

In 2016, 84,989 people were admitted to the U.S. as refugees.

Nearly 1.4 million adults in the United States identify as transgender.

As of 2017, one-fifth of the world's migrants live in the United States.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** What types of discrimination exist in your community?
- 2** How can you, your school or community become more accepting of people of all races, ethnicities, genders and religions?
- 3** Why is it important to share kindness and compassion with people from all backgrounds?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of discrimination at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.weareallinthis.org/exploringissues).

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POVERTY

More than 700 million people live in extreme poverty.

Despite the progress made in reducing poverty, 767 million people still live on less than \$1.90 a day. But it's not only about not having enough money to live on. Poverty affects many aspects of life, including not being able to afford access to education, food, health care and job security. On a deeper level, poverty is not having access to opportunities to improve your livelihood and take control of your future. Social safety nets, such as social pensions and school feeding programs, are making an impact in the fight against poverty. In fact, they have helped an estimated 36 percent of the very poor escape extreme poverty.

Gender inequality in the economy costs women in developing countries \$9 trillion a year.

Extreme poverty rates have been cut in half since 1990, but 1 in 5 people in developing regions still live on less than \$1.90 a day.

It would cost \$175 billion per year to end extreme poverty worldwide in 20 years.

Globally, women earn 23% less than men.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What would you do if you had to live on less than \$2 a day?
- 2 How can social safety nets help people escape poverty? What other steps can be taken?
- 3 Why do you think more men are in paid work than women? What would happen if women had access to the same opportunities?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to opportunity worldwide at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.weforum.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Empower female artisans in developing communities. Sell handcrafted Rafiki bracelets and give back to the woman who made them.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

A recent study revealed that nearly half of all working women in the U.S. have experienced harassment in the workplace.

Since 1998, 17,700,000 women worldwide have reported a sexual assault. The #MeToo movement, founded by Tarana Burke in 2006, and which became viral in 2017, encouraged millions of women to speak out about sexual violence and harassment. It brought important conversations into the media, helping destigmatize survivors by highlighting the impact that sexual violence has on women. The TIME'S UP movement is a unified call for change for women everywhere. It addresses systematic inequality and injustice in the workplace.

American women are earning, on average, 78 cents for every dollar a man earns.

Women hold 23% of seats in parliament globally.

Every year that a girl spends in school can boost her future income by 10–20%.

1 in 3 women worldwide has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in her lifetime.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 Who is a woman in your life that inspires you?

2 Why do you think it is important for both men and women to be treated equally?

3 How can you help support women's empowerment in your everyday life?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on women's empowerment at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.weforum.org/exploringissues).

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WE are 
rafikis

HEALTH

Health is a key factor in the livelihood of a population, but half of the world's population still lacks access to essential health services.

For the 800 million people who spend at least 10 percent of their household budget on health expenses, becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty is an unfortunate reality. However, preventative health measures, such as immunization, could help save millions of lives each year, making vaccinations one of the world's most successful and cost-effective health interventions. A healthy population contributes to the economy by being more productive in their everyday lives.

Almost half of all deaths are now recorded with a cause, meaning improvements are being made globally in collecting vital statistics.

Despite tuberculosis (TB) being a curable disease, there were an estimated 1.4 million TB deaths in 2015.

Since 2000, measles vaccines have prevented more than 15 million deaths.

High health care costs have pushed 100 million people into extreme poverty.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** How can we make health care accessible to everyone?
- 2** Why do you think poor health affects other aspects of life?
- 3** What are the consequences of not having access to health care?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to health care worldwide at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.we.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Host a health fundraiser and give health globally with **WE Give Health**.



HUNGER

One in six children in the United States is food insecure, meaning each day, millions of children do not have access to the meals they need to grow and develop.

Studies show that children from food-insecure homes are more likely to have lower math scores, repeat a grade, have more social and behavioral problems and be less prepared for the workforce. Hunger is not always easy to spot, but just because you can't always see it that doesn't mean it's not affecting people around you. In the U.S., high housing costs, rising food prices and unexpected expenses all contribute to millions of people facing hunger at some point throughout the year.

Over 41 million people face hunger in the United States—more than the population of Canada.

Each year in the United States, 72 billion pounds of good food is wasted.

Most families who are food insecure have at least one working adult.

5.4 million seniors over age 60 are estimated to be food insecure.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What health issues can develop as a result of hunger?
- 2 What are some examples of food that may be affordable but not nutritious?
- 3 How would your everyday life be different if you were to experience hunger on a daily basis? What are the long-term risks?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of hunger at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.wearehunger.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Want to help your community fight hunger? Take action with WE Scare Hunger.



CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying includes sending, posting or sharing negative, harmful content about someone else.

In a recent study, 34 percent of American youth said they have been cyberbullied. Major tech companies have strict policies against bullying behavior on their services, but it is hard to enforce and many rely on users to report abuse. Cyberbullying can be worse than traditional forms of bullying, as victims may not know who is targeting them. Hurtful actions have the potential to go viral, and since cyberbullying can be done from distant locations, it is easier for people to say things they wouldn't say to someone's face.

Bullying laws have been passed in all 50 states, and 48 states have also included electronic harassment in these laws.

11.5% of students admit they have cyberbullied others.

Cyberbullying is increasing due to an increase in online activity; 95% of teens in the U.S. are online.

Most teens feel there is a lack of consequences for online bullying versus in-person.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** What are some ways you can help someone you know who is being cyberbullied?
- 2** How would you respond to receiving unwelcome messages on social media?
- 3** What are some ways to make your online interactions more welcoming and respectful?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of cyberbullying at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.weschools.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Contact your WE Schools Program Manager to learn more about how you can take action.



ACCESSIBILITY

Almost 57 million Americans have some type of disability.

Disabilities come in a wide variety of forms, and many of them (e.g., deafness, learning disability) are not visible. This is why inclusive design is important, to ensure everyone can access the products and services they need. Promoting inclusion allows people with diverse skills, abilities and experiences to offer different viewpoints and ideas. And by focusing on people's capabilities, we can create equal opportunities for everyone and learn from each other along the way.

In 2018, Google Maps added wheelchair-accessible routes to their transit navigation.

74 athletes represented Team USA in the 2018 PyeongChang Paralympic Winter Games.

There are an estimated 10 million blind or visually impaired people in the U.S.

More than 170 countries and organizations have signed The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How does inclusion benefit everyone?
- 2 Why is inclusive design important?
- 3 What are a few examples of inclusion in your school? What are some changes to promote inclusion that you would recommend?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of accessibility at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.wecanmakeit.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Want to help your school and community become more inclusive? Take action with **WE Are One**.



ENVIRONMENT

Shrinking glaciers, loss of sea ice, accelerated sea-level rise, stronger hurricanes and longer, more intense heat waves are just a few of the current effects of climate change.

As the planet continues to warm, storm intensity and rainfall rates are predicted to rise. Some of these effects are already being seen. From June to November 2017, the United States suffered more than \$200 billion worth of damage—the most expensive hurricane season in U.S. history—from 17 storms, most notably Harvey, Irma and Maria. The warm temperatures also sparked chaos in California, where the wildfires of 2017 took the lives of 46 people, destroying more than 10,800 structures and burning 1.2 million acres of land.

5 of California's most destructive wildfires occurred in 2017.

Sea levels are rising 3.2 millimeters per year.

17 of the 18 warmest years on record have occurred since 2001.

Permafrost in the northern Arctic will thaw enough to become a source of carbon in the atmosphere in 40 to 60 years.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** Have you noticed any unusual weather patterns where you live? How have they affected you?
- 2** What are actions we can take each day to help reduce the effects of climate change?
- 3** What steps can the government take to help reduce the effects of climate change?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of climate change at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.earth.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Reduce your negative impacts and boost your positive ones with WE Go Green.



INDIGENOUS

More than 6.6 million people in the U.S. identify as Native American or Alaska Native.

As of January 2017, 567 tribal entities were federally recognized, meaning they possess certain inherent rights of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty) and are entitled to receive certain federal benefits, services and protections. In the spring of 2016, protests that drew international attention began in North Dakota, in reaction to the approved construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline and its impact on the environment. A number of Native Americans in Iowa and the Dakotas opposed the pipeline, including the Meskwaki and several Sioux tribal nations, under the assertion that the pipeline would destroy sites of great historic, religious and cultural significance, and threaten the quality of farmland and water in the area.

In 2010, the United States announced support of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The number of Native Americans who have taken advanced placement (AP) exams doubled between 2001 and 2010.

In 2016, there were 136,487 Native American veterans of the U.S. armed forces.

Culturally responsive schooling for Native Americans is associated with lower dropout rates and improved sense of self-esteem.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** How can schools incorporate Native American languages into their curriculum?
- 2** Whether you identify as Native American or not, what are some ways you can educate yourself and others about native histories and cultures?
- 3** What are some ways we could strengthen the relationship between Native and non-Native Americans?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats about the issues facing Indigenous peoples of the U.S. at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.weareteachers.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Contact your WE Schools Program Manager to learn more about how you can take action.



LITERACY

The definition of literacy continues to be redefined as our society changes and grows.

Being literate in the 21st century means having the ability to read, write and express critical thought through verbal, print, visual and digital formats. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 32 million adults in the United States can't read. Without proper literacy skills, things such as job applications, medication labels and basic signage can become inaccessible—decreasing the chances of a healthy and productive life. Well-rounded literacy skills allow people to function to their full capability.

43% of Americans with low literacy skills currently live in poverty.

Adults with low literacy incur more than \$230 billion a year in health care costs across America.

Inmates who are educated are 43% less likely to return to prison.

More than 1.2 million young adults drop out of high school each year.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** How different might your life be if you had never learned to read and write?
- 2** What does it mean to you to be literate?
- 3** What are some ways that society could benefit from having a higher level of overall literacy?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of literacy at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.wereadtogether.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Increase awareness about the importance of literacy with WE Read Together.



HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness isn't just what we see on the streets—it takes many forms and affects many different people.

While homelessness decreased nationally across every major category between 2007 and 2017, there is still work to be done. There are an estimated 550,000 homeless people on any given night in the U.S. And with the high demand for shelters, people are staying on the streets for longer, leading to an increase in severe mental illness and medical disorders. To help combat homelessness, there has been a shift in recent years to place more emphasis on permanent supportive housing rather than transitional housing programs.

As real estate prices have soared, Hawaii's homeless population has grown by 30% since 2007.

1 in 5 homeless Americans lives in California.

2 million Americans experience homelessness at some point over the course of a year.

7 of the 10 states with the highest homelessness rates are in the western half of America.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What do you think of when you hear the word “homeless”?
- 2 What steps can you take to help reduce homelessness in your city?
- 3 What circumstances could lead to someone becoming homeless?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of homelessness at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.wecareabout.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Help fight homelessness in your community by taking action with WE Volunteer Now.



VIOLENCE

Violence in the United States is largely characterized by the high rate of gun violence.

The gun homicide rate is 25 times higher than the average of other high-income countries, and there are approximately 265 million privately owned guns in the U.S. Research shows that with proper resources in place, such as background checks for handgun sales and restrictions on multiple purchases, the gun homicide rate can be reduced. On March 24, 2018, students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School led a historic march for gun control, March for Our Lives, just five weeks after a gunman killed 17 of their friends and teachers in one of the worst mass shootings in modern U.S. history.

On an average day, 7 children and teens are killed with guns in the U.S.

In states that require background checks for handgun sales, there is almost 50% less gun trafficking.

An estimated 3 million American children per year are exposed to shootings.

Between 2001 and 2015, the percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported gangs in their school decreased by 9%.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** What can and should schools do to keep students safe?
- 2** March for Our Lives was one of the biggest youth protests in history. How else can youth make their voices heard?
- 3** How does violence affect a community?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of violence at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.we.org/exploringissues).

Take Action

Contact your WE Schools Program Manager to learn more about how you can take action.



MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is defined by the World Health Organization as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

More than 40 million Americans have a mental health condition, but, for many, the stigma surrounding the topic of mental health prevents them from seeking health care. Having a positive outlook, wellness skills and good habits help youth to cope with the ups and downs of life while decreasing the risk for dropping out of school.

70% of mental health challenges have their onset in childhood or adolescence.

Mental disorders can be diagnosed, managed and treated as accurately as the most common physical disorders.

Mental and substance-use disorders are the leading cause of disability worldwide.

More than 1.7 million youth with major depressive episodes do not receive treatment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How can we reduce the stigma surrounding mental health?
- 2 How do healthy eating and physical exercise affect mental health?
- 3 Why do you think mental well-being is important in leading a healthy life?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of mental health at [WE.org/explore/mental-health](https://www.weforum.org/explore/mental-health/).

Need help?

To learn more, visit erikalegacy.com/find-help.

OUR FOUNDING PARTNER:



NUTRITION

Healthy eating helps fuel the body and mind.

By making healthy choices with every meal and snack, you will be better equipped to live an overall healthy lifestyle and develop lifelong healthy eating habits. Having a healthy breakfast with protein is associated with better memory, higher school attendance and improved mood. Drinking lots of water helps improve cognitive functions. Fruits and veggies are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber, which help promote good health and development, strengthen your immune system, and even protect against disease. Half of your plate at lunch and dinner should be filled with vegetables to help support a healthy mind and body.

Kids ages 4 to 13 should drink at least 6 to 8 cups of water a day.

Sugar-sweetened drinks account for 10% of total caloric intake among children and youth.

Drinking 2 cups of milk or fortified soy beverage a day helps build strong bones and meet calcium and vitamin D needs.

Eating whole vegetables and fruits is more nutritious than drinking juice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How can healthy eating help you excel in school?
- 2 What factors do you think contribute to childhood obesity?
- 3 What lifestyle changes can people make to lead a healthier, more nutrient-filled life?

Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on nutrition at WE.org/exploringissues.

Take Action

Spread awareness about the benefits of healthy eating by taking action with WE Give Health.

