

Why will 40 million children in Africa not be at school today?

Objective:

- To find out what pupils think are the problems faced by African countries in providing education for all primary school age children.

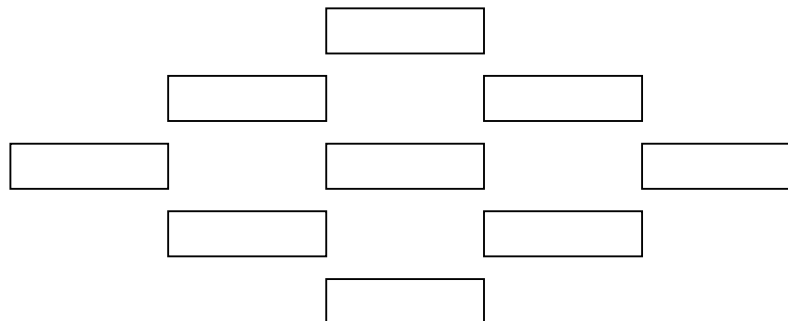
You will need:

- Copies of the 'Reasons' statements cut up (one set for each group).

Time required: Approximately 30 minutes

Instructions:

- Give a set of the 'Reasons' statements to each group of 4/5 in the class.
- Ask the groups to read the statements and decide, as a group, why they think 40 million children in Africa will not be at school today?
- Tell the groups to arrange the nine 'Reasons' statements in a diamond pattern, so that the whole group agrees with the arrangement. The statement the group agrees with the most is at the top, the one they disagree with most at the bottom, and the others placed in between.



- Ask each group to feedback their thoughts about the question; make a record of the most common 'Reason' statements.
- The groups will need to look at and discuss each statement separately, if the final decision is to be a considered one. The mechanics of the making of the diamond encourages discussion, although the discussion itself is the most important part of the activity.
- Bilingual groups may value the opportunity to operate in common language groups.

Discussion:

- Groups could feedback their first and last choices and discuss why they were chosen.
- Finally, in groups, talk about how the group came to its conclusions. Did the group come to the same choice easily? Was everyone involved?

Teacher Notes:

- Depending upon the age and ability of the class the 'Reason' statements can be used to explore a range of issues:
 - *Prejudice* – statements like 'Because they don't want to go to school' and 'Because they don't need an education', can be used to explore the negative ideas and images the class have of children in developing countries.
 - *Cultural* – statements like 'Because they can get their education elsewhere', and 'Because it is more important to educate boys' can be used to explore how different cultures view education.
 - *Economic* – statements like 'Because they can't afford to go to school', 'Because girls are needed to work in the home' and 'Because they have to earn money for their families' can be used to explore how poverty restricts access to education.
 - *Political* – statements like 'Because there are not enough teachers', 'Because schools are not near to where they live' and 'Because there are not enough schools' can be used to explore the reasons why some governments are unable to provide an education service for all.
- The 'Obstacles' sheet can be used as background information to make the link between the difficulties African countries have in providing an education for all and global economics and politics.

Reasons

Because they don't want to go to school.

Because they can get their education elsewhere.

Because they can not afford to go to school.

Because they have to work to earn money.

Because there are not enough schools and teachers.

Because girls are needed to work in the home.

Because they do not need an education.

Because the schools are not near to where they live.

Because it is more important to educate boys.

Obstacles to primary education for all in Africa

The governments of African countries would like to provide primary education for all their children by 2015 but have difficulties finding the money to pay for it. The main obstacles are:

Trade:

African countries don't get enough money from the sale of their products on the world market – foods like cocoa and coffee, minerals like copper and manufactured goods like clothes. African producers are also adversely affected by subsidies paid to producers in rich nations and by tariffs which make it difficult for African products to enter 'western' markets.

The Commission for Africa has called on rich nations to dismantle the unfair subsidies they pay to their producers and lower tariff barriers on African goods. At the G8 conference in July 2005, rich countries made a commitment to work towards cutting subsidies and tariffs, but did not agree how, or on a timetable for doing so.

Debt:

African countries have to use the money they earn to pay interest on international loans. These debts are owed to both individual countries and financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The Commission for Africa has called on rich nations to cancel 100% of the debt owed by poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa. At the G8 conference in July 2005, rich countries agreed to cancel the debts of the 18 poorest nations in Africa. However, critics argue that this cancellation comes with strings attached and that the debt relief package is being used as a way to force countries to open up to private inward investment and privatisation.

Aid:

African countries have often had little say in how international aid is to be spent – donor countries tend to fund large scale projects such as hydro-electric dams which do not always benefit the poor.

The Commission for Africa has called on rich nations to donate an additional US\$25billion per year to Africa and commit to giving 0.7% of their annual income in aid. This aid should be predictable and untied they say. At the G8 conference in July 2005, rich countries agreed to increase aid to the developing world by \$50 billion and much of this will go to Africa. However, there was no agreement on donating 0.7% of their annual income towards aid; European countries have agreed to work towards this figure by 2015.