

Friday 27th November 2015 was a landmark day for young people in the West Midlands. Wolverhampton University was the setting for a unique conference entitled 'Young People on the Global Stage' which was hosted through the partnership between Tide Global Learning, The University of the First Age and the European Union.

During the day, over 180 delegates from six schools throughout the West Midlands attended pupil-led workshops which explored the concepts of 'Sustainable Development', 'Poverty' and 'Hunger'. Some workshops explored the idea of sustainable lifestyles changes whilst others looked at responding to the 17 Sustainable Development goals set out by the UN in September 2015. Other workshops explored the concepts of poverty and hunger in addition to gender equality in all areas of society.

However, these workshops were preceded by an awe inspiring speech by Radzi Chingyanganya, a presenter for Blue Peter, who explored his own beliefs and vivid experiences surrounding poverty, hunger and sustainability. One of Radzi's main points was to highlight the difference between 'absolute' and 'relative' poverty and he spoke passionately about the fact that although the UK is considered a high developed nation, poverty still exists within our communities today and raising awareness towards these issues was something he personally strongly supported.

Another fascinating part of the day was when contact was made via Skype with other supporting schools, across the world taking part in the project located in Kenya, The Gambia and Spain. Students and teachers from these schools talked passionately about how they were also exploring and starting to contribute towards achieving the worldwide Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Kenyan schools encouraged their students to compose an essay around the personal goals to improve their living quality, such as sustainable energy, end to all poverty and equal gender rights in which one student, sadly unnamed, produced an essay to ensure poaching of endangered animals was enlisted as a priority.

All the workshops showed that students had developed their own leadership credentials and started to think about setting their own personal goals towards achieving a more sustainable future for our planet. One student commented "We should learn to believe in the world around us for sustainability and aspire to achieve our dreams".

Today I learnt that poverty is a very big problem in all the countries around the world, everyone suffers. Secondly that we, as the current generation inhabiting our planet, have to ensure that we can do something to revisit it at school to make more people more aware of the problems around us as a community. This point was neatly summarised by one student who reflected on the conference by stating "I have learnt how important it is that every individual has an important part to play in sustainability across the world as global change starts with the individual citizen taking more responsibility for more sustainable behaviour."

So after today we can all agree that we have learnt about how to make the world more sustainable for the future generations to live in and enjoy the environment that we have protected throughout the years.

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