



My Equal Life

Caritas Finland

Information and tasks
for 9 to 12-year-olds

My Equal Life – Glimpses into daily life in Bangladesh

This booklet contains information on My Equal Life-project and the photo exhibition accompanying it. First, we'll go through how the project is connected to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), guiding principles of Finland's Development cooperation and the concept of inequality. Then we will discuss whether compassionate approach can reduce inequality. Lastly, we will shortly introduce the photographer and his native country of Bangladesh.

After this we'll move on to the material for discussion, which deals with inequality-related issues and encourages adopting a compassionate approach to other people.

Finally, this booklet features a glossary, which helps understand the stories behind GMB Akash's photographs and the terms used in the material for discussion.

The objective of the project

Billions of people throughout the world live in unequal conditions. In September 2015 all United Nations Member States adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By 2030 they aim to eradicate extreme poverty, protect Earth's carrying capacity and promote equality and justice. The goal is to make the world a better place for us all. Reducing inequality is one of the Sustainable Development Goals. We all need to do our bit, and every one of us can be part of the change making the world a more just and equal place to live in!

You'll find more information on these global goals on My Equal Life project's website www.myequallife.org.



Ulkoministeriö
Utrikesministeriet



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

Sustainable Development Goals:

- Goal 1: **No Poverty**
- Goal 2: **Zero Hunger**
- Goal 3: **Good Health and Well-being**
- Goal 4: **Quality Education**
- Goal 5: **Gender Equality**
- Goal 6: **Clean Water and Sanitation**
- Goal 7: **Affordable and Clean Energy**
- Goal 8: **Decent Work and Economic Growth**
- Goal 9: **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**
- Goal 10: **Reduced Inequality**
- Goal 11: **Sustainable Cities and Communities**
- Goal 12: **Responsible Consumption and Production**
- Goal 13: **Climate Action**
- Goal 14: **Life Below Water**
- Goal 15: **Life on Land**
- Goal 16: **Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**
- Goal 17: **Partnerships to achieve the Goal**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

To end poverty, protect our planet and fight inequality and injustice



What does Finland's development cooperation hope to achieve?

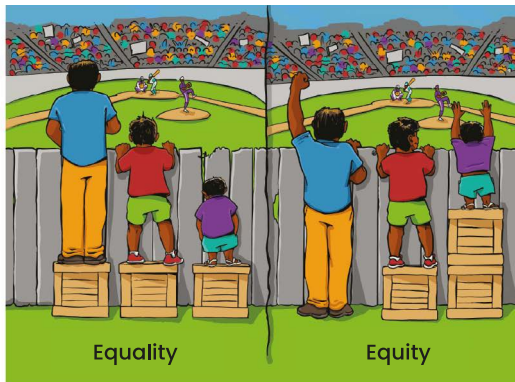
The goal of Finland's development policy and development cooperation is to support the developing countries' attempts at reducing inequality and promote sustainable development.

Development policy seeks to globally reduce poverty, realize fundamental right for all people and to promote sustainable development. Development cooperation is practical cooperation to achieve these goals. A key part of development policy is cooperation with various organizations. One way is to support organizations working in the field of development cooperation and global education aiming to eradicate global inequality.

What is inequality?

Inequality refers to the unequal and/or unjust distribution of resources and opportunities among people. This manifests itself for instance in individuals' well-being relating to health, gender, age or living conditions. This is often the result of unjust conditions and treatment of different people.

The opposite of inequality is equality. Inequality can be addressed by for instance examining the access different people have to education, healthcare, and clean environment. Inequality can be reduced by equal treatment, which means either distributing resources equally between everybody, or by



Equality and equity mean different things.

distributing them according to each individual's needs. Finland is widely considered to be one of most just and equal countries in the world. Still 80 percent of the Finnish people consider increase in inequality a genuine threat.

Inequality also reduces our ability to feel compassion. We can all contribute towards reducing inequality in our daily lives and learn compassion. What matters is paying attention to how the other person is feeling.



Compassion reduces inequality

Compassion helps reduce inequality. Sometimes it is good to think who gets to help, who gets to be helped and who has the permission to help whom.

Acts of compassion can comprise of a friendly look, warm smile, opening the door for someone, making the other person feel seen and acknowledge their agency. A compassionate person sees the other person's desires and needs. Compassion is also defending those less fortunate.

What is compassion?

Compassion combines knowledge, feeling and action.

The action can be a look, a warm smile, holding the door open, seeing the other and acknowledging the agency of the other.

A compassionate person sees the wants and needs of another person.
Compassion is also defending the weaker.





GMB AKASH

Photographer GMB Akash is also a benefactor

GMB Akash is a Bangladeshi photographer, whose work focuses on marginalized people, such as poor, prostitutes, casteless (Dalits) and disabled people. Through his photographs he seeks to give them a voice.

Akash has helped several of the people he's photographed for instance by providing poor families with warm clothing, students with school uniforms and food to those celebrating Muslim festival of Eid. He has also helped people set up businesses: street kids sell popcorn, one man trades in clothes he sells out of his rickshaw while another one sells cucumbers.

Akash has founded a school to ensure children of poor families, too, have access to education. He also trains people in photography. Akash has received several international awards for his work.



- Bangladesh is located in South Asia.
- Its neighbouring countries are India and Myanmar.
- Bangladesh declared independence from Pakistan in 1971.
- Bangladesh occupies an area of 143 998 km².
- Its population is 162,7 million.
- Capital Dhaka is home to some 7 million people.
- The official language is Bengali.
- Currency is taka.

Bangladesh is a densely populated country

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Natural calamities, such as monsoon floods and tropical cyclones are an annual occurrence. During the floods significant parts of the country have been inundated and left underwater. The effects of natural disasters are aggravated by deforestation and erosion.



More than half of Bangladeshis work in agriculture. The country has several factories producing clothes to Western market. Majority of the employees of these factories are women. They get paid very little while toiling in poor conditions.

Most of the Bangladeshi population are Muslims. The country has religious minorities such as Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians.

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world. While the quality of healthcare and education have steadily improved, there is shortage of clean water. Majority of the people live in the countryside. There is inequality within the Bangladeshi society. The country has a Muslim majority and casteless Hindus, Dalits, are a disenfranchised group.



TASKS FOR DISCUSSION

For you, dear reader,

This material has been created as a guide for all those, who wish to learn more about global issues. Some instructions are specifically geared towards teachers and others working in global education. Material is part of Caritas Finland's My Equal Life-project. In conjunction with that, between 2021-2024 we will be hosting Bangladeshi photographer GMB Akash's photo exhibition both in various locations around Finland and online.

We wish to encourage all viewers to go over the following tasks and discuss, what kind tools we have for reducing inequality.

You'll also find the photographs and tasks at www.myequallife.org.

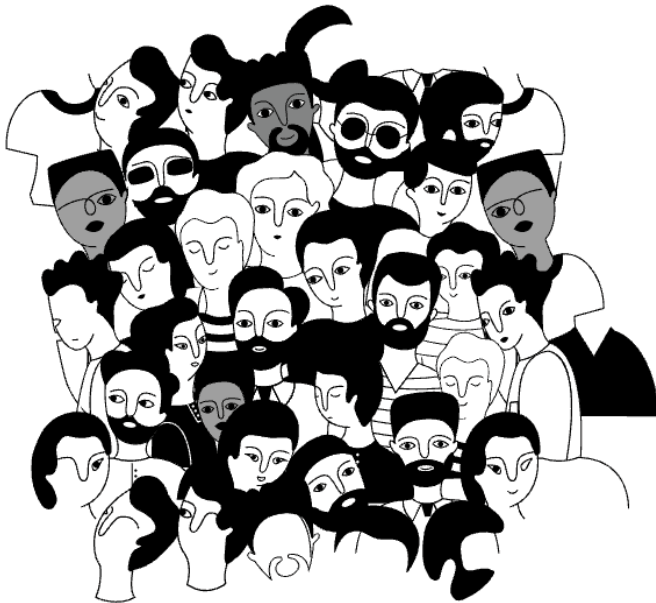
For educators and teachers:

These tasks are designed for 9 to 12-year-olds. On the project's website assignments.myequallife.org you'll also find group assignments, which the teacher or educator can implement at any grade.

Some of the photographs on display at GMB Akash exhibition may be upsetting to some viewers and some of the captions or tasks may feature concepts a child is unfamiliar with and the discussion of which may seem challenging. That is why at the end of this material we have compiled a glossary of terms, aiming to help educators to process these topics with children.

Inequality adversely affects the lives of billions of people worldwide. Those of us living in Finland can make a difference through development cooperation and civic participation. Educators are in key position in teaching children to grow into compassionate individuals capable of recognizing inequality, questioning the structures that sustain it and working in their own lives towards equality and reducing inequality.

We hope to inspire you to address the theme of inequality in classes, in hobby groups and discussions taking place at home. Feel free to adjust the material to suit your needs and to find useful ideas for your educational work and daily life. Some of the tasks are related to persons and stories featured in GMB Akash's photographs, but you may also take the opportunity to think of another person you find more beneficial.



1. Basic human needs. Have a look at the list below or on the next page and think what these words mean to you:

- nourishing food
- clean water
- television
- bicycle
- opportunity to express your opinion
- health care
- your own room
- candy
- sense of security
- education
- your own money
- holiday trip
- home
- opportunity to exercise religion
- clean nature
- mobile phone
- place where to play

- a. Which ones of these matter to you the most?
- b. Which do you think are basic human needs that everyone across the world has right to?
- c. Now think about the photos you've seen. Do they depict some of the things listed above?

Basic human needs



Nutritious food



Clean water



Television



Bicycle



Opportunity to express your opinion



Health care



Your own room



Candy



Sense of security



Education



Your own money



Holiday trip



Home



Opportunity to exercise religion



Clean nature



Mobile phone



Place where to play

2. Think back to the basic needs that we went over in the previous task.

- a. What is your school like? What kind of food do you eat? Where do you go in case you get sick?
- b. In case you feel like it, do you have the opportunity to go enjoy clean nature, for instance in the woods, in the park or at the beach?
- c. Who looks after your needs?
- d. Is there something you can do in your daily life to make sure that you and other kids, too, have the access to these things?
- e. Many children have chores to do at home – maybe you do, too? What do you think these chores are usually for? Is there something you could add to your weekly list of chores?

3. Pick one of the people you saw in the photos. Try to think, what the world looks like in their eyes.

- a. What kind of places and things would seem familiar to them? What would feel weird and exotic?
- b. What kind of place do you think the person would like to live in?
- c. If you could take that person to a place you know well, what would it be? Why did you pick that place?

4. Think about what would make you happy right now.

- a. If your birthday were next week, what kind of a gift would you wish for?
- b. What if a fairy godmother promised to make any dream of yours come true?

5. Can you remember a time when you did something wrong? Do you perhaps remember a moment when you did the right thing though you could have gone the other way? What do you think: does being and doing good matter?

6. Think of your friends, classmates, and other people you know. Do they have it good? Do you think they all get treated well in their daily lives?

7. Has any of your mates, friends or nearest and dearest been treated wrongly?

- a. What do you think you could do in a situation like that?
- b. Do you think there's a way to stop something like that from ever happening again in the future?

8. Think back to one of the people you saw in the photos.

- a. What are the first things you remember about them?
- b. How would you describe them?
- c. Why do you think those are the things you remember so well?
- d. What kind of hopes and fears does this person have? What are they like as a person?
- e. Do you think that they're actually the kind of people you think they are?
- f. In real life, have you ever made the mistake of assuming somebody was completely different from what they were actually like?

We all have prejudices, which means we all have certain ideas and assumptions about people we've crafted before we even got to know the person or thing in question. However, often they are not true. That's why it's so important to recognize and acknowledge the prejudices.

9. Do you remember seeing a person in the photos who was sad or angry at the situation they find themselves in? What are some of the moments you felt particularly unhappy?

10. Think about the people you saw in the photos.

- a. What do you think they fear?
- b. Now think about your own loved ones: your friends and family members. What kind of fears or sorrows might they have?
- c. What makes you push through the difficult situations? Where do different kind of people get their inner strength from?
- d. Are you powered by the same things as the people in the photos or the people in your life?

11. What are the situations here you feel your friends and family live and care for you?

- a. How do they show it?
- b. How would you yourself wish they showed it?
- c. Do you show them often enough that you care about them?
- d. Do you think you could find a moment in the middle of your daily life where you could show them how much they mean to you? Could that be already today?

12. Think back to the people in the photos and the stories.

- a. Which ones of them do you remember being happy? Why is that?
- b. What makes you happy? Are the things that make you happy similar to the things that make the people in the photos happy?

13. Equality means that people are considered to have the same worth and we strive to make sure we all have the same rights and opportunities.

- a. How are human rights and equality realized in different parts of the world?
- b. How do you think you could promote equality for instance in your own class or in your hobby group?

Glossary of terms

- **Allah** – Allah is an Arabic word that means God. In other languages this term is used to refer to God in Islam.
- **Anorexia** – Anorexia is an eating disorder triggered and fueled by various reasons as a result of which a person starts to restrict, evade and avoid eating. It's a psychiatric long-term illness characterized by patient's compulsive need to lose weight.
- **Bazaar** – a covered market or a place of business consisting of various stalls, typical for Oriental and specifically Islamic cultural tradition.
- **Caste** – Caste system is social classification system where individual's position, opportunities available to them in life and their culture are defined by their origin, i.e., the class they were born into. Hindu society is divided into different castes, societal classes. According to the rules of the system those higher up in the ranking should avoid coming into contact with those lower in the system. Those who are left outside the four casts are called Dalits and only have access to the most menial jobs.

- **Cyclone** – Cyclone is a large air mass that rotates around a strong center of low atmospheric pressure. In tropical regions it often causes strong rotating storms such as hurricanes, typhoons, or tropical cyclones, which in turn cause rotating winds, torrential rains and thunder.
- **Dalit** – a term in Hindu caste system reserved for those ranking so low in the caste system they are considered to be outside of it, i.e., casteless. In Hinduism people are divided into castes and the status of Dalits, the casteless, has traditionally been the worst. Members of higher-ranking castes often refer to casteless derogatively as “untouchables”. Dalits can be found in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.
- **Disabled** – a person with some form of long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sense-related impairment, which, in conjunction with other obstacles, can exclude an individual from fully and actively participating in society equally with everybody else (UNs disability treaty of 2008, adopted in Finland in 2016). Disability is something that can and should be discussed, provided guidelines of good conduct are respected. “Disabled” is not a derogative term.

- **Drugs** – Drugs are substances which alter person's mental or physical state. Some drugs can initially induce feelings of happiness and pleasure, but their effect is very unpredictable, and they can be very dangerous to those using them.
- **Eid** – id al-Fitr- Eid celebration concludes the month of Ramadan, during which Muslims fast every day from sunrise to sundown.
- **Erosion** – Erosion is process where soil is worn away and or transported to another location by various natural forces such as water, ice, wind, or another soil-eroding factor. Up to one third of agricultural land has been destroyed because of erosion and pollution.
- **Iftar** – evening meal consumed after sunset, which marks the end of daily fast during the month of Ramadan.
- **Immigrant, "mamu"** – A foreign-born person, who's not a Finnish citizen, but lives in Finland and has a permit to stay here. Immigrant is not a derogative term, though its colloquial Finnish abbreviation "mamu" is sometimes used in such a manner. Term is often mistakenly employed based on a person's name, appearance, or mother tongue alone.

- **Monsoon** – is a weather phenomenon that is characterized by seasonal changes in the direction of strong wind and heavy, long-term rains. Monsoons are common in tropical regions around the world, particularly in Southeast Asia. prevailing wind.
- **Prostitution** – Sex and prostitution are topics that should be discussed with a child or youth according to the level of their development. You can open by asking, how the child perceives words such as “making love” and clarify it is affection and pleasure shared between two adults. You may proceed to explain for instance that “prostitution is somebody acting being affectionate towards another person and something some people resort to in order to earn a living.”
- **Ramadan** – Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar a month of fasting for Muslims around the world. During this month people abstain from eating and drinking from the sunrise to sunset and focus on spiritual growth – gratitude, patience, mercifulness, and compassion.

- **Rikshaw** – a passenger cart designated to carry one or two passengers; a cart that is pulled by a person riding a bicycle or a scooter. They are particularly prevalent in Far East, but also in Africa and Latin America, where they go by different names.
- **Sari (saree or shari)** – a garment worn by women in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. It is essentially a piece of fabric, several meters long, which is draped on a person in a way that covers the body.
- **Sehery (the 'suhoor' or 'sehri')** – morning meal that Muslims consume right before the sunrise after which they start their daily fast.



In the photo taken by GMB Akash, Md. Rabbi who cleans drains and works as a sweeper.

- **Shrine** – is a holy place devoted to praising and worshipping certain deity, hero, or an idol.
- **Suicide** – Death and suicide are topics that should be discussed with a child or youth according to the stage of their development. You can open by asking, how the child perceives words such as “death” or suicide”. After their answer you may proceed to explain for instance that “when a person dies, they stop breathing and thinking. A suicide means that a person has done something that has stopped their body from working.”
- **Sweeper** – a person who sweeps the streets and cleans the drains, often with bare hands. This job is traditionally thought to belong to Dalits, the casteless.
- **Taka** – the currency of Bangladesh (BDT). One euro is roughly the equivalent of 100 takas.

This material for discussion is part of Caritas Finland's My Equal Life – project. It consists of a photo exhibition by GMB Akash, a social media campaign and workshops in vocational schools.

The project will be carried out 2021-2024 and it is one of the recipients of Finnish Foreign Ministry's Global Citizenship Education funding.

The texts for the material are written by Mervi Hakoniemi and Laura Koskelainen.

More information about the project at www.myequallife.org.

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 **Suomen
Caritas**