



World Habitat Day, 6 October 2008

Theme: **Harmonious Cities**

World Habitat Day is a special United Nations day that people around the world celebrate every year on the first Monday in October. It is a day when we think about cities and where and how we live. Believe it or not but half of us live in cities. And more and more people are starting to live in cities. Some people live better than others. This year, World Habitat Day is about Harmonious Cities and how all of us, rich, poor, young and old can live together better in more caring and cleaner cities.

A note for teachers: We live in a world that is urbanising very fast. Already half of all people live in towns and cities and this number is growing irreversibly. In Africa, cities are growing faster than anywhere else in the world and because many countries are poor, up to seventy percent of people in African cities live in poverty in slums. From Cape Town to Cairo, and Dakar to Dar es Salaam, the problems of slum life evoked by these questions mean that most of our cities are not harmonious. This also means that the rich have access to good schools, good health care, clean neighbourhoods, decent clothes, and acceptable transport, while everywhere the poor are denied these very basic rights and amenities.

Experience teaches us that these problems can be surmounted, but they cannot be solved by one person alone, or one government or one municipality. We have to improve our urban environment collectively, working in consultation and coordination with one another. This is what this year's World Habitat Day theme **Harmonious Cities** is to remind us about.



What does harmony mean?

Being tolerant: You can think differently from your friend, brother or sister, and still work or play with them.

Being ready to give and take: You can have your own ideas and your own way of doing things and also accept others' ideas.

Welcoming people from all countries: Your friends at school and near your house can be from Britain, China, France, Mexico or Kenya. They can also be from different parts of your country. They can speak different languages and dress differently. Harmony is trying to be friends with them all.

Being friends with and accepting everyone: It does not matter if they are rich or poor. It does not matter if your school is better than others. It does not matter if they go to school walking or drive a posh car.

Caring for the places we live: This means using water, electricity, and cooking fuel carefully – remember to turn off the lights when you leave your room, turn off the water tap, and do not throw rubbish the street

Sharing what you have with others who don't have as much

Enjoying life! Work, play and don't fight



Exercise 1: Using any or all of the 10 questions posed below, how would you change your world – what would you do to make it better? How would you help others? Would you help someone from another country who speaks a different language? Do you agree that everyone has a right to feel happy in the city?

1. Imagine if you came to school hungry every day because your mother is so poor she cannot give you breakfast
2. Imagine if your home had no water and no toilet:
3. Imagine if your mother got attacked when she was walking to an outside toilet or to fetch water from the well
4. Imagine if your clothes were washed in a dirty river or pool.
5. Imagine if you had to walk two hours to school and back every day
6. Imagine if your mother got sick and there was no doctor to help or no hospital nearby.
7. Imagine if the street where you live was stinking with garbage that stayed there all year.
8. Imagine if you worked three years to buy a bicycle and it got stolen in the first week.
9. Imagine you could not go to school because you had to fetch water every day.
10. Imagine if you could not do anything at night because there is no light in your home, no electricity so you can't even listen to the radio or watch television.

Exercise 2: Are you in harmony with the world?

1	If my best friend came to school hungry, I would share my food with her	<input type="checkbox"/>	If my best friend came to school hungry, I would eat in front of them and not give them any	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	If my friend had no water at home, I would invite him to wash at my home	<input type="checkbox"/>	If my friend had no water at home, I would say that he stinks	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	When I finish washing my hands, I leave the tap running	<input type="checkbox"/>	When I finish washing my hands, I turn the tap off	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	If my mother was attacked on the way home, I would run and hide in the house	<input type="checkbox"/>	If my mother was attacked on the way home, I would call the police and neighbours to help	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	If the only place I could wash my clothes was a dirty pool, I would not wash them at all	<input type="checkbox"/>	If the only place I could wash my clothes was a dirty pool, I would ask my friends to keep the pool clean	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	If had to walk two hours to school and back I would not do my homework because I would be too tired	<input type="checkbox"/>	If had to walk two hours to school and back I would first rest and play, and then try to do my homework	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	If I had many toys, I would give them to my friends who had no toys	<input type="checkbox"/>	If I had many toys, I would destroy them	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	If the street I was living in was stinking with garbage, I would lock myself in the house	<input type="checkbox"/>	If the street I was living in was stinking with garbage, I would get all my friends to help clean it up	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	When I leave my room at night, I turn off the light	<input type="checkbox"/>	I leave the lights on all day long	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	I only speak to children who come from my country	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have friends from different countries and different parts of my country	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	I think old people are boring	<input type="checkbox"/>	I like talking to old people	<input type="checkbox"/>