Playing our part

Think Global’s strategy for helping to create a Just and Sustainable World

Think Global’s strategy for the next ten years to 2026
Foreword

We want a world which is just and sustainable

Humans are infinitely creative and inventive. We've developed vaccines to prevent people falling ill, and medicines to save their lives when they do. We've explored most of the earth, and now we’re busy mapping the solar system. We’re shrinking the world at an ever greater pace, with globalisation and technology rapidly removing what until recently seemed like immovable boundaries. For many, it is an exciting time to be alive.

And yet – the world that we have created is far from being either just or sustainable. Indeed, in many ways it’s becoming less so. Inequality within and between nations is growing, and as fast as traditional barriers disappear, new ones are erected between people.

It’s useful to reflect on the two words that we use: just and sustainable.

Just: when Think Global says the world is unjust, we’re meaning it is fundamentally unfair. What somebody contributes, or deserves or needs, has little bearing on whether they have even the basics of life let alone a fair share. In 1880 Thomas Edison patented the electric light bulb – yet more than 135 years later, there are still 1.5 billion people who have no access to electricity. Visit Pompeii and you’ll see that the Romans had piped water and proper sanitation 2,000 years ago – yet today there are 750 million people who don’t have access to running water, and 2.5 billion who don’t have proper toilets. 30% of the world’s population lacks access to the World Health Organisation’s list of essential medicines. There are 20 million children born each year (more than all the children born in the European Union) who don’t receive the mix of vaccines which will prevent diseases and death – yet those vaccines are easy to produce, and they are cheap.

Sustainable: when Think Global says the world is unsustainable, we’re saying that we’re living in a way today which will lead to environmental catastrophe and suffering in the future. We’re using up the earth’s resources faster than they can be replenished; we’re destroying the biodiversity on which we depend both on land and in the sea; we’re pumping carbon into the atmosphere despite the high likelihood that it’s warming the earth and seas, melting the ice caps, and making our weather increasingly unstable. We used to talk about this affecting future generations – but current generations are already suffering from environmental degradation.
Despite these enormous challenges, we believe that the world can be just and sustainable. Why are we hopeful?

We’re positive, because human beings have time and again shown their capacity for overturning injustice, and overcoming barriers. 250 years ago, the world acted to outlaw slavery – a practice which had been long been seen as the natural order of things. 200 years ago in Britain, the first industrial revolution led to power and wealth being concentrated in just a few hands, with great swathes of the population living in squalor and miserable conditions – yet through individuals and communities pushing for greater justice, change came in ways which had been seen as impossible. Just over 20 years ago in South Africa, the evil of the apartheid system was vanquished in a peaceful transition to democracy – which many thought impossible to achieve.

Think Global doesn’t accept that the world has to be unjust or unsustainable. It is not the natural order of things – it is just the way that the world is currently organised. We believe that humans have the ingenuity, and the sheer gumption, to make the world a fair place where people live in a way which safeguards the future. What people need is the knowledge, skills, values and confidence to act for change. It is this belief in a better world, and the belief that it can indeed be achieved, which sums up Think Global’s purpose.

The increased complexity and unpredictability of the challenge

We are therefore hopeful – with reason. But we’re also realistic about the scale and sheer complexity of the challenge. We can see this in the refugee crisis which is sweeping across the world. Today, the number of refugees is higher than at any time since the end of the Second World War, and the immediate causes – for example, conflict – are often clear. But dig a little deeper, and you can see the inter-relationship between different global challenges - climate change, fluctuating commodity prices, shifting geopolitical alliances, for example. Look at the consequences of the refugee crisis and you can also see how it spills over onto other global issues – political systems under pressure, the impact on both the refugees and the host nations, and wider migration patterns. So what we have is a web of global issues which – through globalisation – is increasingly complex and unpredictable.

In the next pages, we’ll set out the distinctive part we’ll play in making the world a fair and sustainable place for all.

“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.”

Nelson Mandela
Think Global’s Theory of Change

We believe that the power to make the world more just and sustainable lies with us all. Every one of us – no matter who we are, what position we hold, how much wealth we have, or what circles we move in – has some power to change things for the better. Clearly, the amount of power is vastly different between people of different wealth, influence or social standing – but even those with relatively little power - when that’s added together with others - can make for huge momentum for change. All of us can do things that make a difference.

We also believe that the responsibility to use this power lies with every person. As citizens of this fragile and damaged world, we each have a duty towards each other and future generations to take action for a better world, to the best of our ability, capacity and understanding. It’s a moral duty – none of us should sit back and do nothing in the face of such injustice. This duty starts and ends with learning. The more we understand global issues, the more we are able to take decisions to act. The more we act, the more we need to reflect on what we do, and the difference we’re making.

Take any global issue - the phenomenon of ever greater migration, for example. By increasing our understanding – by really engaging and thinking critically about it - people will come to better conclusions about its causes and consequences, and what should be done. At Think Global, we’ve created a set of ten ‘critical questions’ to help people think critically about a global issue – and if we applied these to migration, they might look like this:

1. Where is migration an issue and why?
2. What’s the effects of migration on people/environment/jobs? (Look for positive & negative)
3. What things can people do in relation to migration?
4. Who has the power to make decisions about migration?
5. Who does not have the power to make decisions about migration?
6. Are there people who will benefit from migration?
7. Are there people who will lose out from migration?
8. How does your life/work link to migration?
9. How do we talk about migration in our community/ies?
10. How can the effects of migration be shared equally?

Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Through trying to answer questions like these, people develop greater understanding of global challenges. By connecting with global information, and learning critical thinking skills, people can develop the knowledge, confidence, skills and values they need to understand the complex global challenges around us, so that their decisions and judgements about global issues are informed and reflective. This means when people take action, those actions are likely to be informed by their learning, improving the opportunities to help create a more just and sustainable world.

The actions that people can take are many and varied, and will depend on their individual capacity and volition. They might get involved in particular campaigns; or make choices as consumers. They might pursue a particular career or become a volunteer as a result of their learning; or discuss the issues they learn about with friends and family. They might get actively involved in politics; or exercise their vote – if they have one - on the basis of their learning. Whatever the action, we believe that everyone has a duty as a global citizen to act according to their best ability and understanding.

The learning should also never stop. We believe that after taking action, people should reflect on what they’ve done. What has been the impact? Have they learnt anything as a result? Would they do the same or something differently again? This is what we call the Learning Loop.

This is Think Global’s Theory of Change. Whenever possible we like to test and refine this theory, and demonstrate its impact for a more just and sustainable world. However, measuring the impact of learning is notoriously difficult to do. Proving a direct causal link between a piece of learning and an action that leads to a better world – when the action might take place years after the learning – can be difficult if not impossible. Just because it is hard to measure doesn’t mean we won’t try – but it also means we won’t get trapped in a mind-set which says the only those things that can easily be measured are important. We’re confident that the powerful potential of learning can speak for itself.
Think Global’s Guiding Principles

Our Core Beliefs

Think Global’s work is based upon two core beliefs:

1. Each of us is a global citizen, with a duty to act to the best of our ability to create a world which is just and sustainable.

2. This duty extends to a responsibility to learn about global challenges and the options for action – so that when we act (which we should), we do so from the best understanding that we can have.

Purpose

Think Global’s purpose is to help create the circumstances in which as many people as possible can learn and act on global challenges. Although we’re based in England, we’re part of a network in the UK and around the world for change, which is empowering people to learn, and act on their understanding. Our 150 organisation members, and 10,000 supporter members – many of them teachers - are a vital part of our network, alongside the many others we work with from different sectors and walks of life.

We have a global outlook, actively seeking alliances and partnerships with others around the world so we can share understanding, and learn from others with similar aims.

Role

Our role is to work with policy makers and institutions to create an environment in which learning about global challenges is not only possible but actively promoted.

It’s also to work alongside many other organisations – public, private and voluntary – that are helping people to learn and to act: sharing and collaborating with them, advising and helping them, and learning from them so that we can do better ourselves.

Our role extends to helping individuals who are formal or informal educators – inspiring and supporting them. It also involves working directly with learners of all ages and backgrounds.
– helping people to learn about global challenges, and to decide the actions they want to take.

**Our three strategic goals**

Think Global has three broad goals for the next ten years, from 2016 to 2026, covering young people, those in formal education, and the wider population. These goals will guide the detailed work that we do. One of our strengths, as a relatively small organisation, is that we are fleet-of-foot – able to respond quickly to changing challenges and agendas. We’ll use these three goals as a compass, to help us decide how to respond when opportunities arise.

Think Global will continue to be based in England, and it’s likely the majority of our work will still take place for the benefit of people in England. Our goals are set in this context, and many of the references are to institutions and situations in England and the wider UK. However, over the past few years we’ve become increasingly global in our own perspective. We envisage this direction of travel continuing – looking for alliances and opportunities with others around the globe that share a similar perspective. We will therefore aim to apply these goals in a global context wherever it makes sense to do so.

**Goal 1: Young people engage with global challenges and take action for a more just and sustainable world**

There are more young people in the world today than ever before. They are a generation growing up in a globalised world, where many of the biggest problems are global, requiring global solutions, and where they need global skills not only to be active global citizens, but also to succeed in the future world of work.

Although school – which is covered in our second goal - provides the bedrock opportunities for much global learning, there are many other ways young people can engage as global citizens beyond the school gates: in groups such as the Scouts or Guides, in faith groups, or youth groups. Post 16, young people can engage at VI form, further education colleges, or higher education institutions. The work, for example, which the National Union of Students has led around encouraging actions on sustainability, and the enthusiasm of students for this, shows the potential which exists.

In a very welcome move, the UK’s Department for International Development (DfID) is putting young people at the centre of its activities. It sees young people as championing international development, and that young people’s concerns should be at the heart of DfID’s work in the global south. It’s International Citizens Service gives a generation of young people the opportunity to volunteer in a practical way, and then to bring those skills and experiences back home and apply them throughout their lives.
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed by the United Nations in 2015, are a good platform for engaging young people. The goals are meant to be delivered within 15 years – so they span the years of today’s generation of young people. Young people can become the champions of the goals, critiquing them, monitoring them, and holding governments to account. 

Objectives for 2026:
Young people will:

- Have the opportunity to engage with, learn about, and influence the key global challenges.
- Take action, based on their global understanding, to help make the world more just and sustainable.

Achieving the goal will include action to:

- Help young people become advocates for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals - engaging their peers in the debates, and holding those in power to account for their delivery. Alternatively, because the Goals themselves are contested, to encourage young people to challenge the orthodoxy behind the Goals.
- Campaign for learning about sustainable development to become a golden thread running through all levels of education – from primary and secondary school, through further and higher education, into adult and informal learning.

Think Global has developed a simple framework to synthesise some of the complex ideas of good practice in global youth work. This framework is based on the concept of **Connect, Challenge, Change**, providing youth work practitioners with a model for planning and evaluating their own global youth work.

We encourage youth practitioners to:

- Help connect young people to the global issues that matter to them. We support them to make the links between the personal, local and global, and to connect with peers who share their passions and concerns.
- Encourage young people to challenge themselves, to gain a more critical understanding of the world around them, and to challenge inequality and injustice.
- Support young people to plan and take action to bring about positive change towards a more just and sustainable world.

See more about Connect, Challenge, Change
education. No part of the broader education system should be excluded from learning about sustainable development.

- Help young people engaged in activism – whether that’s the simple ‘clicktivism’ of signing an online petition, the International Citizens Service, or protest movements – to have opportunities to reflect on their actions and to increase their learning about global issues.

- Ensure young people have access – whether via a web platform, social media, or other ways - to information about the global issues they care about most: how they can learn more about them, and how they can take action.

- Work alongside other organisations with a youth focus, to make sure we’re coordinating what we’re doing so that young people find it easier to learn and act on global issues.

**Expected impact by 2026**

More young people will have a better understanding of global issues, and will be engaged in taking actions for a more just and sustainable world.

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**Resources to learn about the SDGs**

*In the run-up to the UN approval of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, Think Global worked with the World’s Largest Lesson to develop a database of resources to help young people get more understanding of the 17 goals.*

These are hosted on our website, Global Dimension, which is for teachers and other educators. In the future, we’d like to use our expertise to provide more support directly for young people to help them increase their understanding and sense of agency.

See more about the SDG resources.
**Goal 2: Young people leave school as global citizens, with good global understanding and the ability to act.**

Although learning takes place throughout our lives, the foundation is set when we are at school. Research from Think Global shows that those who have learnt about global issues in school are more likely to be involved in global causes, and to donate time and money to global causes, later in life.\(^1\) We also know that a large proportion of teachers come in to the profession primarily because of their desire to help develop young people into global citizens who will play a positive part in the world. It is what sustains many teachers throughout their teaching careers.\(^2\)

There are many inspiring examples of schools that put global learning at the heart of what they do: both through their curriculum and their ethos. However, schools are under incredible pressure to push exam results ever-higher, and to please regulators. This can push global learning to the margins. Our teacher members tell us that although they want to help develop young people into rounded global citizens, the reality is that often this is set aside because of our ‘exam factory’ education system.

We believe there is no higher purpose for our education system than children leaving school ready to play their part as global citizens, and we will work alongside educators to achieve this.

This goal will be pursued through working with government and education bodies, with other NGOs, and most importantly with schools and teachers – helping to create a better policy environment for global learning and acting; collaborating on projects to inspire; and sharing good practice.

**Objectives for 2026**

More school children will leave school:

- With a good understanding of the main global challenges facing the world;
- Feeling that they can make a positive difference in creating a more just and sustainable world
- Already taking actions, and able to reflect on them, as part of a lifelong habit of global citizenship.

**Achieving the goal will include action in the following areas:**

\(^1\) [The impact of global learning on public attitudes and behaviours towards international development and sustainability](http://thinkglobal.org) Think Global: 2010

\(^2\) [Bridging the Global Skills Gap: Teachers’ views on how to prepare a Global Generation for the challenges ahead](http://thinkglobal.org) Think Global: 2013
Training for teachers

Think Global delivers training to help teachers bring global issues into the classroom – so their pupils can develop into knowledgeable global citizens.

A lot of our training is delivered after school and online, helping teachers from rural schools – or who can’t get cover for teaching duties – to take part, and meet like-minded teachers from across the country and globally.

See more about our training

Favourable education policy

- Organise to persuade government to place global learning and understanding at the heart of the education system, from pre-school through primary, secondary, further and higher education.
- Work particularly with Department for Education and Ofsted, the two bodies most influential in setting education policy, to ensure that the drivers which influence schools – inspections, examinations, and curriculum – include global learning and action.
- Persuade government to continue and strengthen specific programmes of support for global learning for schools.

Support for schools

- Develop support for schools, to help them develop their global learning, particularly across the school as a whole.
- Provide support for the wider school community: senior leadership teams, governors, academy chains, and local authorities in developing a global ethos – showing what works, demonstrating the benefits of helping students develop their global understanding, and spreading good practice.
- Support other organisations – for example, local Development Education Centres and national charities – involved in providing support for schools on global learning and action, by promoting best practice and being a hub for sharing ideas, including through membership.
- Support schools in providing careers advice, linked to the global skills which students will need to live and work in a globalised world
Support for teachers

- Help teachers access training in how to teach about global issues in the classroom and encourage students to develop their own views and to take action on them, and develop a whole school global approach.
- Encourage teachers by highlighting excellent practice and rewarding effort.
- Make it easy for teachers to access high quality teaching resources on global issues, for subjects right across the curriculum, as well as resources for topical issues.
- Support teachers helping other teachers, through maintaining a network of teachers interested in global learning.

Support for students

- Make it easy for students to access global learning materials which they can use themselves.
- Signpost for students a range of actions that they can take on global issues.
- Encourage students to lead work themselves.

Expected impact by 2026

More young people have a greater understanding of the big global challenges which the world faces, are motivated to make the world both just and sustainable, and possess a sense of agency –

Highlighting excellence

Think Global runs the Global Educator of the Year Award, to recognise and reward educators who help their students develop as active and engaged global citizens.

The winner in 2015 was Sarah Maile (pictured). Sarah is a Religious Studies teacher, and the Pupil Voice/Citizenship Co-ordinator at Sandbach High School. She was nominated by one of her students, who wrote,

“Many students in her classes gain a better understanding of what human rights they have through her regular teaching of global, national and local issues. In addition she regularly gives up time to prepare and run assemblies based on these prevalent issues….Everything she does for our school and its pupils is admirable to everyone; she has influenced many pupils and teachers and will continue to inspire people wherever she goes.”

Read more about Sarah on our Global Dimension website.
understanding that they are able to influence the world, and are taking actions, big and small.

Goal 3: The wider public is better informed about development issues, and is motivated to take actions for greater justice and sustainability.

Public support for international development has been falling in recent years, after the high point of the Jubilee Debt Campaign and the achievement of the campaign to commit the government to spend 0.7% target of GNP on alleviating global poverty. The harder economic times have ushered in a greater *charity begins at home* mind-set, particularly in an era when public services are facing unprecedented cuts.

Part of the fall in support can also be put down to fatigue with those development organisations that have tended to put forward simplistic solutions to complex global challenges. “Give £3 a month and we can stop X, Y or Z” is often the message. This ignores the complexity of international development – and suggests that simple solutions can solve these challenges. These messages can often raise more funding in the short term (which is why charities adopt them) but in the longer term, when the promised solutions fail to materialise, people become disillusioned. Telling people that solving problems like extreme global poverty is easy can leave people feeling cynical when they can see for themselves that it is not. They sign a petition, or they support a campaign, and then the problem persists – so they feel helpless.

We believe that a new dialogue is needed to engage with people about development and global issues, to level with people that although a just and sustainable world is possible, there are few quick and easy fixes. The issues are complex, and the solutions are likely to be just as complex.

**Working with NGOs**

Think Global has teamed up with BOND to run a course for NGOs to look again at public understanding of development.

The course looks at the latest evidence of what the public thinks, and works with NGOs to re-cast traditional messages. Think Global believes that putting forward simplistic solutions to complex global issues can lead to public cynicism.
and contested. And at the same time, there are many examples of how individual agency can make a difference.

Objectives for 2026:

More people will:

- Have gained greater understanding of at least one global challenge.
- Be empowered to take action in their personal or professional lives linked to those challenges.

Achieving the goal will include action to:

- Run campaigns on a range of global topics, particularly those which gaining political and public attention – for example, supply chains, the social economy, the SDGs, the rise of extremism and xenophobia, and migration – to engage the public in how the global impacts upon their lives, and encourage greater global learning and action.

- Work with NGOs and government to help incorporate learning into their work on global issues – helping to advise on engaging the public.

- Collaborate with universities and researchers to improve the evidence base for global learning – demonstrating the link between global learning and action, and the impact from this.

- Develop a high profile public global learning programme, involving community groups across England and beyond, to engage the public in getting better understanding of global issues.

- Work with the media, alongside media NGOs, to promote global understanding, and alongside media NGOs.

Expected impact by 2026

More people engaged in global issues, and taking action based on their learning.
Achieving our ambitions

Since its inception in 1983, Think Global has adapted its structure and activities to take account of changing circumstances (even changing its name). However, the core purpose has remained unchanged: to promote understanding about global issues, to help to create a more just and sustainable world. This flexibility will continue to be important in the future, as we set out to achieve our ambitions to increase our impact with the wider public, young people in general, and those in formal education.

The funding climate is the toughest it has been for decades for charities such as Think Global. However, opportunities do exist to make linkages between our education/action mission and the priorities of funders. Over the past few years, Think Global has diversified its income base. However it is likely to continue to rely on core government funding in one form or another, because of the nature of our work. We also have a developing network of other organisations that we work alongside, from different sectors and from around the world – working together can be a great way of achieving more influence than we can on our own.

We have a small and highly dedicated staff team, alongside volunteers who give their time and expertise for free. Achieving our ambitions will be dependent on developing our staff and volunteers.

Objectives for 2026

Think Global will:

- Have at least doubled the resources which it has available to achieve its goals – this will be made up of finance, people skills, and networks.
- Have at least tripled the level of impact which it can demonstrate it is making.
This will include action to:

- Persuade government of the importance of continuing to fund global learning activities and organisations which promote global learning – both Think Global and other organisations.
- Develop a more diversified funding base, especially with a mix of: government grant and contract; European funding; consultancy; grant funding from trusts and foundations; and paid-for training and support.
- Develop our network of individual and organisational supporters and members – recognising that not everyone (or every organisation) wants to join as a full member, but still has much to contribute. This may include partnerships and alliances with other organisations which share some or all of our objectives.
- Develop a separate communications strategy, keeping people informed about the work that we do and key developments on understanding of global issues.
- Stay at the forefront in the way that we use technology – increasing our effectiveness and flexibility, and reducing our costs.
- Recruit more regular volunteers – particularly those who have relevant skills and who may be recently retired, for example, educators.
- Develop greater understanding of measuring the impact of our work – particularly our projects and programmes.

Expected impact by 2026

Think Global will be recognised as an effective advocate, partner, and deliverer – where everything it does is focused on achieving its mission of encouraging greater understanding of global issues, and action for a more just and sustainable world.