

Materials for Workshops

In the next hour you may want to choose a topic from the following list, read the quotes, and study the information. At the end of each topic there are a series of questions that you may like to discuss in your groups. You will probably have time to address two of the following topics:

- Universal peace
- the Oneness of mankind - the elimination of prejudice – unity in diversity
- the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty
- the advancement of women
- Universal Education
- the preservation of the earth's resources

Universal Peace

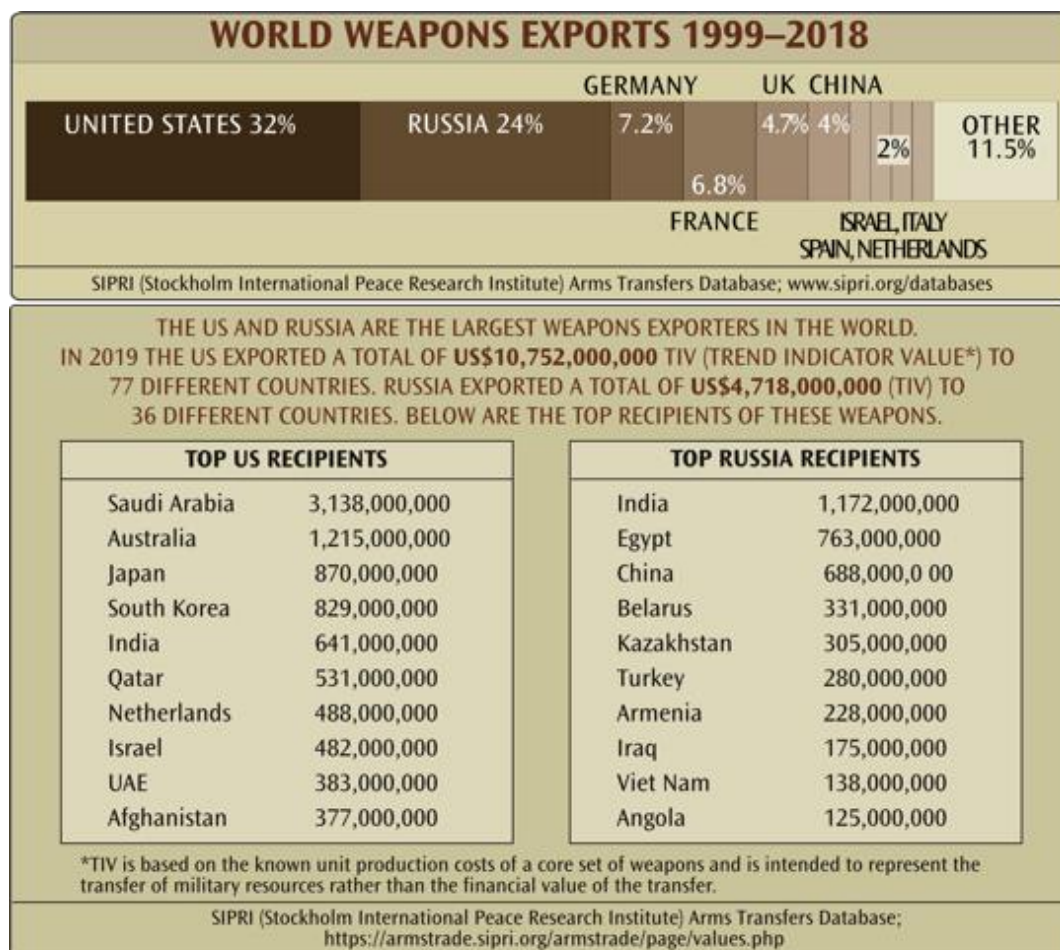
The Great Peace towards which people of goodwill throughout the centuries have inclined their hearts, of which seers and poets for countless generations have expressed their vision, and for which from age to age the sacred scriptures of mankind have constantly held the promise, is now at long last within the reach of the nations. For the first time in history it is possible for everyone to view the entire planet, with all its myriad diversified peoples, in one perspective. World peace is not only possible but inevitable.

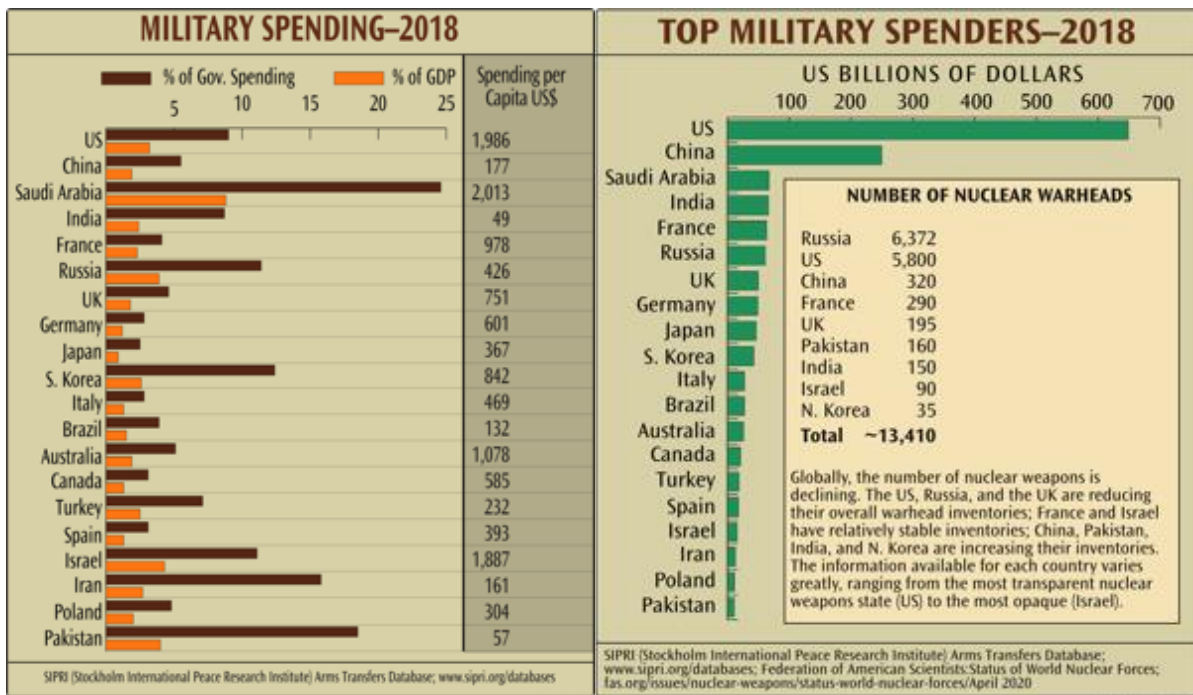
“The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men.”

The courage, the resolution, the pure motive, the selfless love of one people for another—all the spiritual and moral qualities required for effecting this momentous step towards peace are focused on the will to act. And it is towards arousing the necessary volition that earnest consideration must be given to the reality of man, namely, his thought. To understand the relevance of this potent reality is also to appreciate the social necessity of actualizing its unique value through candid, dispassionate and cordial consultation, and of acting upon the results of this process. Bahá'u'lláh insistently drew attention to the virtues and indispensability of consultation for ordering human affairs. He said: *“Consultation bestows greater awareness and transmutes conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leads the way and guides. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.”* The very attempt to achieve peace through the consultative action he proposed can release such a salutary spirit among the peoples of the earth that no power could resist the final, triumphal outcome.

Concerning the proceedings for this world gathering, ['Abdu'l-Bahá](#), the son of Bahá'u'lláh and authorized interpreter of his teachings, offered these insights: “They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking—the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world—should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another

definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure."





1. How far have we progressed towards world peace?
2. What are the reasons for war?
3. What can you do to contribute to the creation of World Peace?

The earth is but One Country and Mankind its citizens - Elimination of Prejudice - Unity in Diversity

World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of [the oneness of mankind](#), a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm. Anthropology, physiology, psychology, recognize only one human species, albeit infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life. Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice—prejudice of every kind—race, class, color, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others.

“Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men’s hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity.”

1. Looking at the Demographic Make up of our communities (circulated on a separate sheet), what does this mean for us?
2. What are the challenges of diversity?
3. What can we do to address these challenges?

Elimination of Extremes of Wealth and Poverty

O CHILDREN OF DUST! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

— [Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian no. 49](#)

O YE RICH ONES ON EARTH! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease. — [Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian no. 54](#)

The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, that everyone, as far as possible, according to his rank and position, shall share in comfort and well-being. — ['Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*](#)

Oh, friends of God, be living examples of justice! So that by the Mercy of God, the world may see in your actions that you manifest the attributes of justice and mercy.

Justice is not limited, it is a universal quality. Its operation must be carried out in all classes, from the highest to the lowest. Justice must be sacred, and the rights of all the people must be considered. Desire for others only that which you desire for yourselves. Then shall we rejoice in the Sun of Justice, which shines from the Horizon of God.— ['Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*](#)

Certainly, some being enormously rich and others lamentably poor, an organization is necessary to control and improve this state of affairs. It is important to limit riches, as it is also of importance to limit poverty. Either extreme is not good. To be seated in the mean is most desirable. If it be right for a capitalist to possess a large fortune, it is equally just that his workman should have a sufficient means of existence.

A financier with colossal wealth should not exist whilst near him is a poor man in dire necessity. When we see poverty allowed to reach a condition of starvation it is a sure sign that somewhere we shall find tyranny. Men must bestir themselves in this matter, and no longer delay in altering conditions which bring the misery of grinding poverty to a very large number of the people. The rich must give of their abundance, they must soften their hearts and cultivate a compassionate intelligence, taking thought for those sad ones who are suffering from lack of the very necessities of life...

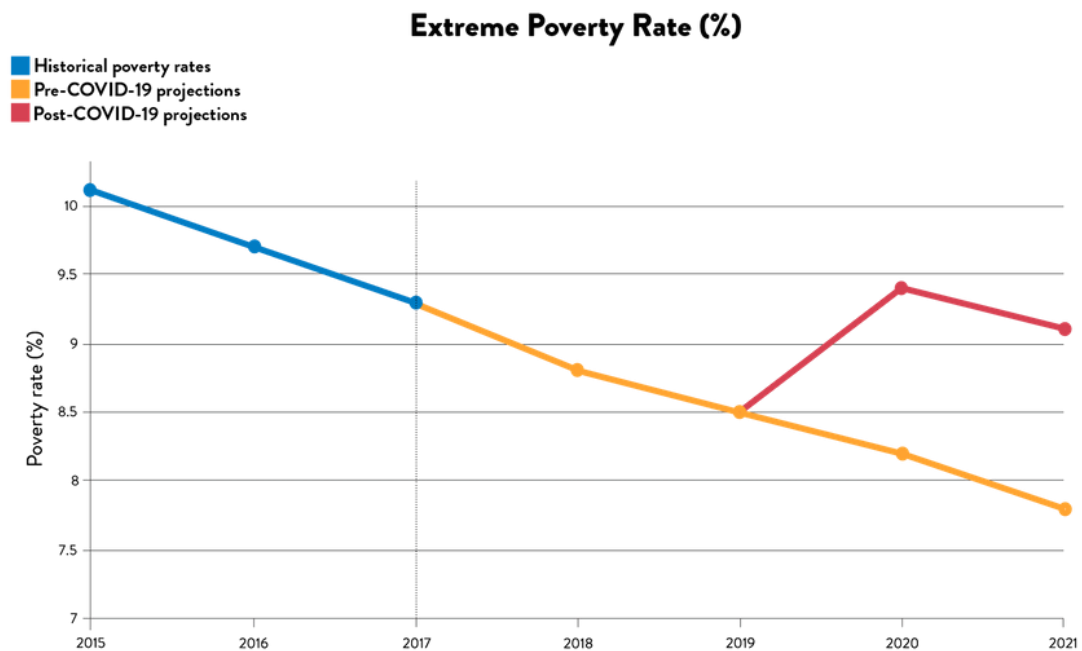
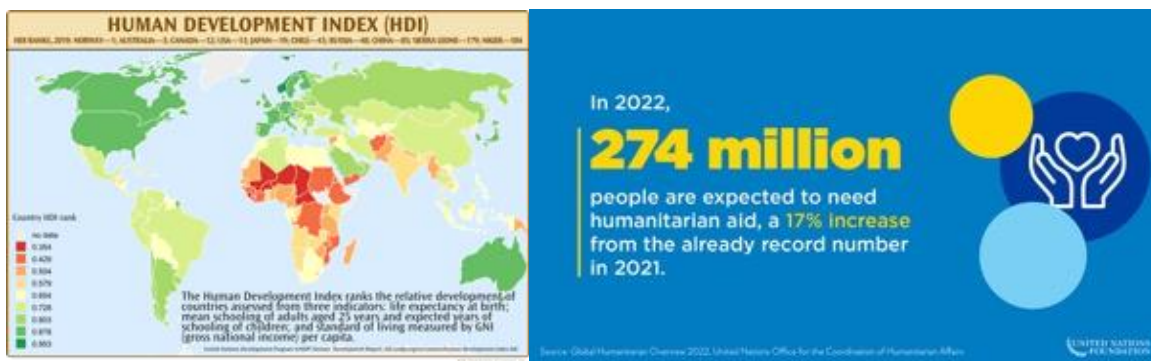
There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved. The government of the countries should conform to the Divine Law which gives equal justice to all. This is the only way in which the deplorable superfluity of great wealth and miserable, demoralizing, degrading poverty can be abolished. Not until this is done will the Law of God be obeyed. — ['Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*](#)

Hearts must be so cemented together, love must become so dominant that the rich shall most willingly extend assistance to the poor and take steps to establish these economic adjustments permanently. If it is accomplished in this way, it will be most praiseworthy because then it will be for the sake of God and in the pathway of His service. For example, it will be as if the rich inhabitants of a city should say, "It is neither just nor lawful that we should possess great wealth while there is abject poverty in this community," and then willingly give their wealth to the poor, retaining only as much as will enable them to live comfortably.

Percentage of the Population Living in Slums

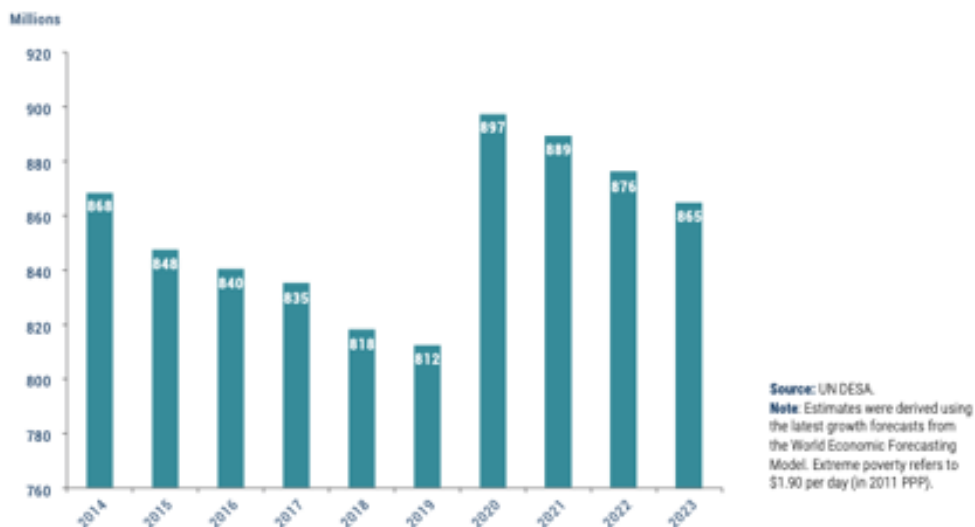
Although the proportion of the urban population living in slums worldwide fell from 28% in 2000 to 23% in 2014, the number of people living in slums rose from 792 million to an estimated 880 million over the same period. In Least Developed Countries, nearly two-thirds (62%) of urban dwellers live in slum conditions.

The UN defines a slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof with one or more of the following conditions: lack of access to improved water; lack of access to improved sanitation; insufficient living area; and lack of durability of housing.



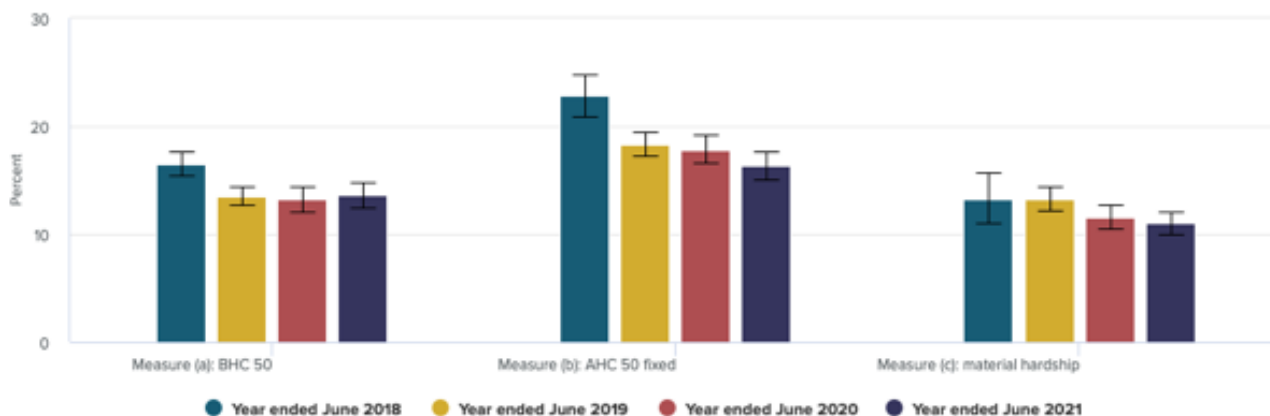
Source: PovcalNet via the World Bank Group

Figure 1.8
Global number of people living in extreme poverty



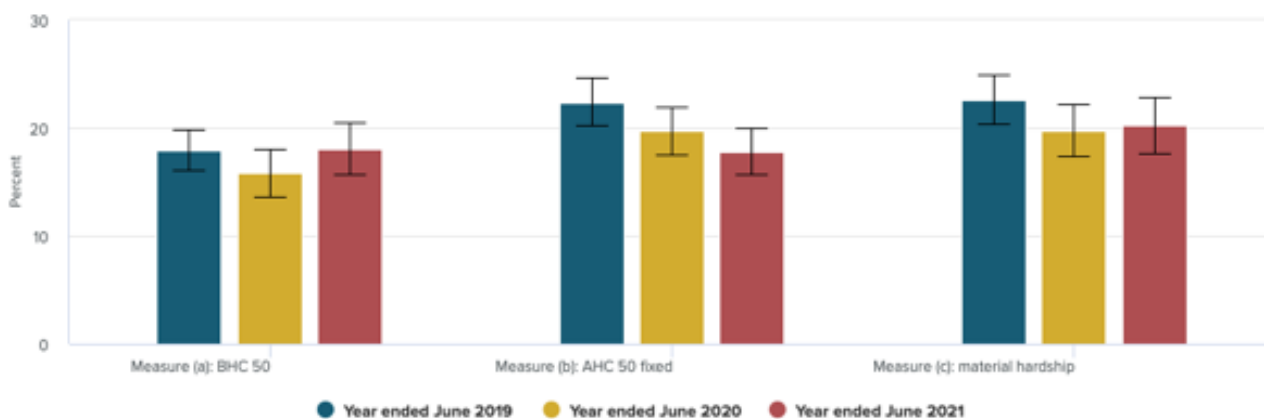
In New Zealand Approx 150,400 children (13.1%) are living in **severe** income poverty. Initially, these include **children going hungry and living in cold, damp housing**. Being socially excluded results in poor school achievements. In the longer-term, child poverty correlates with unemployment, poor physical and mental health, and higher rates of criminality.

Percentage of all New Zealand children in poverty, by selected measure, year ended June 2018–2021



See Materials tab for more information

Percentage of Māori children in poverty, by selected measure, year ended June 2019–2021



See Materials tab for more information

Equality of Men and Women

The status of woman in former times was exceedingly deplorable, for it was the belief of the Orient that it was best for woman to be ignorant. It was considered preferable that she should not know reading or writing in order that she might not be informed of events in the world. Woman was considered to be created for rearing children and attending to the duties of the household. If she pursued educational courses, it was deemed contrary to chastity; hence women were made prisoners of the household. The houses did not even have windows opening upon the outside world. Bahá'u'lláh destroyed these ideas and proclaimed the equality of man and woman. He made woman respected by commanding that all women be educated, that there be no difference in the education of the two sexes and that man and woman share the same rights. In the estimation of God there is no distinction of sex. One whose thought is pure, whose education is superior, whose scientific attainments are greater, whose deeds of philanthropy excel, be that one man or woman, white or colored, is entitled to full rights and recognition; there is no differentiation whatsoever.

— ['Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#)

Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible. Even granted that woman is inferior to man in some degree of capacity or accomplishment, this or any other distinction would continue to be productive of discord and trouble. The only remedy is education, opportunity; for equality means equal qualification...And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. — ['Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#)

The principle of religion has been revealed by Bahá'u'lláh that woman must be given the privilege of equal education with man and full right to his prerogatives. That is to say, there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind. — ['Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#)

When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. Equality between men and women is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the reason that women will never be willing to sanction it. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*

The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other.

If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favour in the Kingdom of heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm.

Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds. — *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*






Globally, **1 in 5** girls under 15 are growing up in extreme poverty


SOURCE | UN Women/UNICEF, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2021


1 NO POVERTY 



Half of all refugee girls enrolled in secondary school before the pandemic will not return to school.


SOURCE | UN Women/UNICEF, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2021

4 QUALITY EDUCATION 



In 2020, employed women fell by **↓ 54 million**. Women out of the labour force rose by **↑ 45 million**.

SOURCE | UN Women/UNICEF, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2021

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 



Women's unequal decision-making power undermines development at every level. Women chair only **18%** of government committees on foreign affairs, defence, finance and human rights.

SOURCE | UN Women/UNICEF, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2021

16 GENDER EQUALITY 

While in transit to their new destination, **53%** of migrant women report experiencing or witnessing violence, compared to **19%** of men.*



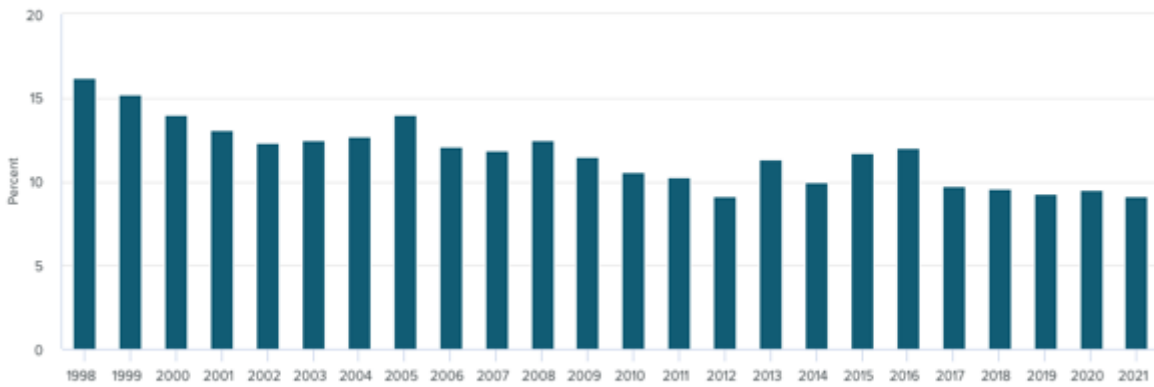
*Data are for those travelling along Western and Central Mediterranean routes.

SOURCE | UN Women/UNICEF, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2021

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 

In **New Zealand** One Example of inequality is the gender pay gap.

Gender pay gap, June quarter 1998–2021



Stats NZ

Figure 3, Mean salary by gender and ethnic group at Stats NZ at 31 May 2021



1. What does gender equality and inequality look like in our communities?
2. What might be some of its specific manifestations?
3. What does it look like in our homes and work places?
4. What can we do to ensure gender equality?

Universal Education

Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom. — [*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Lawh-i-Maqsúd*](#)

The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High. — [*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, LXXXI*](#)

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. — [*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Lawh-i-Maqsúd*](#)

Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for training and education of children, to be spent for this purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the House of Justice. — [*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Lawh-i-Dunyá*](#)

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech. — Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet, translated from the Persian

Man is even as steel, the essence of which is hidden: through admonition and explanation, good counsel and education, that essence will be brought to light. If, however, he be allowed to remain in his original condition, the corrosion of lusts and appetites will effectively destroy him. — Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet, translated from the Persian

There are many things which will, if neglected, be wasted, and come to nothing. How often in this world do we see a child who has lost his parents and who, unless attention be devoted to his education and training, can produce no fruit. And better off dead than alive is he who produceth no fruit. — Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet, translated from the Persian

It is the bounden duty of parents to rear their children to be staunch in faith, the reason being that a child who removeth himself from the religion of God will not act in such a way as to win the good pleasure of his parents and his Lord. For every praiseworthy deed is born out of the light of religion, and lacking this supreme bestowal the child will not turn away from any evil, nor will he draw nigh unto any good. — Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet, translated from the Persian

The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. — [*'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization*](#)

Man is in the highest degree of materiality, and at the beginning of spirituality — that is to say, he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. He is at the last degree of darkness, and at the beginning of light; that is why it has been said that the condition of man is the end of the night and the beginning of day, meaning that he is the sum of all the degrees of imperfection, and that he possesses the degrees of perfection. He has the animal side as well as the angelic side, and the aim of an educator is to so train human souls that their angelic aspect may overcome their animal side. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 235

Observe carefully how education and the arts of civilization bring honor, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people. — [‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*](#)

“...education is of three kinds: material, human and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease. This education is common to animals and man. Human education signifies civilization and progress—that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions and discoveries and elaborate institutions, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal. Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education; for in this state man becomes the focus of divine blessings, the manifestation of the words, “Let Us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness.” [1](#) This is the goal of the world of humanity.

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*.

1. What are the education needs of our community?
2. What can the Baha’l community offer in education?
3. What can we personally do in assisting with education?

Environment

Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise.[2](#)

(C)o-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.[7](#)

Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.[8](#)

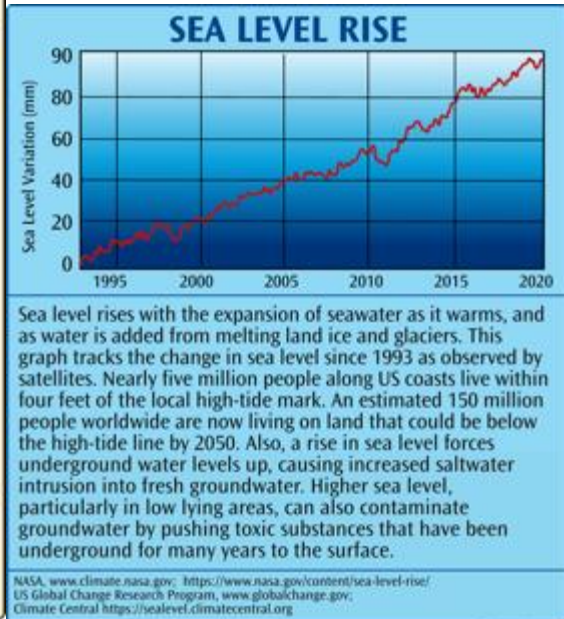
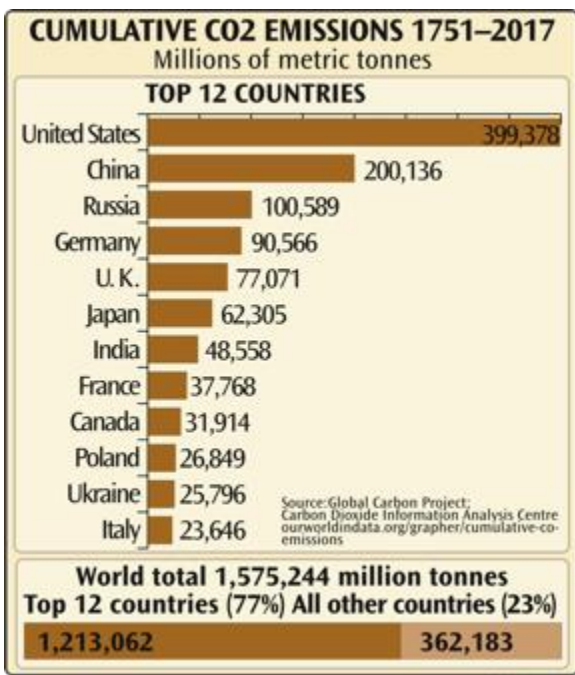
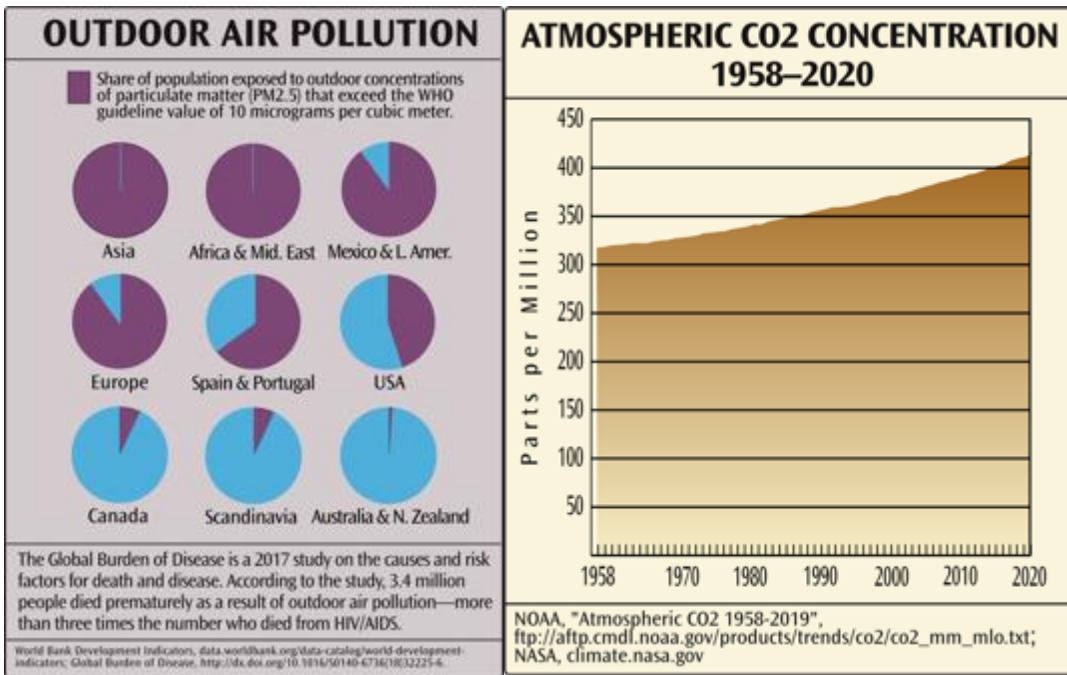
All beings, whether large or small, were created perfect and complete from the first, but their perfections appear in them by degrees. The organization of God is one; the evolution of existence is one; the divine system is one. ... When you consider this universal system, you see that there is not one of the beings which at its coming into existence has reached the limit of perfection. No, they gradually grow and develop, and then attain the degree of perfection.[9](#)

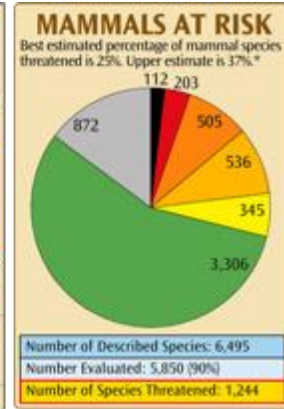
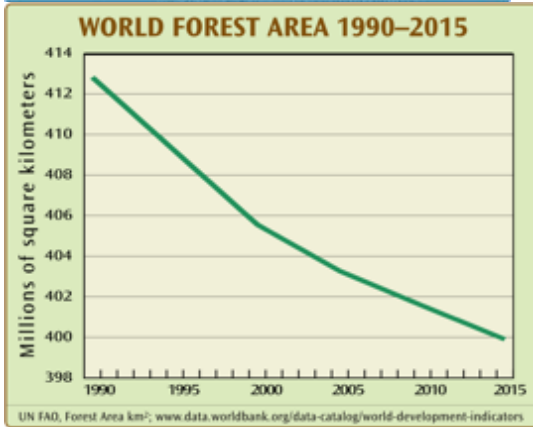
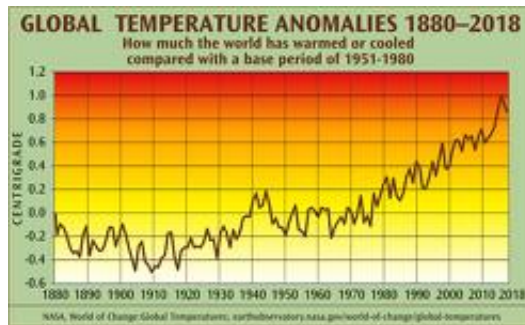
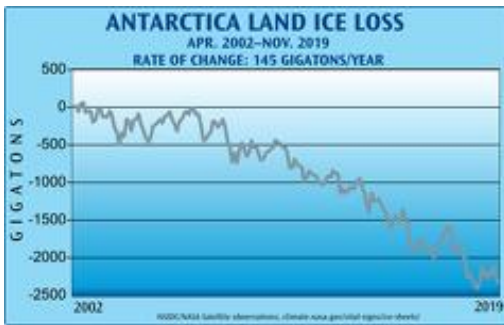
We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.[11](#)

(A)ny agency whatever, though it be the instrument of mankind's greatest good, is capable of misuse.[13](#) If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation.[14](#)

Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory....[15](#)

"...ye walk on My earth complacent and self-satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you and everything within it shunneth you. Were ye but to open your eyes, ye would, in truth, prefer a myriad griefs unto this joy, and would count death itself better than this life.?"





1. What are the implications of the environmental crisis for us?
2. What can we do?
 - In our communities
 - In our neighbourhoods?
 - In our homes?