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Aim

To understand the importance of working together and the role of co-operatives in fair trade

Resources

- Plastic straws
- Sellotape
- Scissors

General Introduction

Talk to the students about 'co-operation'. What does it mean? Every day we have to co-operate with people. At home this happens in lots of different ways, from sharing the washing up to getting help with homework. Elicit ideas from the students for ways in which they negotiate with people at school, with their friends and in everyday life.

If we didn't co-operate with people what would happen? Perhaps we wouldn't be able to do everything we wanted. We couldn't receive pocket money for cleaning the car; we couldn't ask parents/carers to pick us up from a football match. Would we have friends if we didn't co-operate with each other in little ways?

Co-operation is at the root of all of our relationships but it's not easy. Co-operation can mean we have to compromise and give up something that's important to us. We might not always agree with our friends but co-operation means that we look beyond our disagreements and try to find a middle way. Ask for ideas from the students of situations where they've found it hard to co-operate with people. Why was it difficult?

End the introduction explaining that we don't just co-operate with people in the UK. When we buy food or drink or items that are made in different countries we co-operate with people across the world.

Illustration

Ask for 8 volunteers and split them into two groups. Distribute straws, sellotape and scissors to **different** students in each group.

Explain that the teams are going to race each other to try to build the tallest straw-tower. To make it more interesting there are two rules:

1. Only the students who have been given each tool can use them (so only one person can use the sellotape etc)
2. The teams must work in silence.

Set a time limit of a few minutes.

Afterwards, discuss with the students how they felt during the task. Was it difficult to work with their team mates? Why?

Communication is a vital part of co-operation. Often this is verbal but when we can't speak the same language we find other ways. What other means of communication did the teams use?

Everyone has their own skills (represented here by scissors, sellotape and straws.) By co-operating and working together we can achieve a lot more than when working alone.

Fair Trade Links

There are many different levels of co-operation that happen when we commit to buying fair trade. If we buy a fairtrade chocolate bar then we are co-operating with producers in developing countries who are able to receive a fair price for their commodities. We are also ensuring that a little bit of what we pay for it is given back to the farmers to help their communities.

At the same time fairtrade producers in developing countries work together to form "co-operatives" (a membership organisation run by the farmers where profits are used to support the members). Through co-operating farmers are able to sell their goods for a better price and help develop their communities in different ways.

- They can install water pumps or bore holes
- They can pay for training
- They can buy machinery like tractors or rotavators

Next time students buy something which is fair trade, or convince their parents or carers to do so, they are joining millions of other people around the world who are co-operating together to try to make trade fair for everyone.