



## Lesson 2: A taxing issue

### Aim

To understand the implications of taxes on the health and welfare of citizens and to empower students to take action to end tax dodging.

### Materials required:

- copies of the 'Essential services' cards (see below)
- projector
- computer.

### Tax, everywhere (5 mins)

Ask students to tell you which public services they have used in the past week that are partly or completely provided by our government.

Examples might include: public transport, schools, electricity, roads, parks, emergency services, water supply, etc.

### Essential services (15 mins)

Split the students into groups of five and hand out a set of 'Essential services' cards to each group.

Ask students to order the services from the most important to the least important.

Discuss, as a class, why some of the services were chosen as being more important than others. Challenge the groups to rethink some of their decisions.

Try, as a whole class, to come to a consensus on the most important essential services, giving some time for debating.

Ask the students why they think some countries, like Ireland, have these simple, yet essential, services and some countries, like Ghana, don't? Take suggestions. See if anyone suggests tax.

**Explain:** Tax may be something we moan about paying, but without it we wouldn't have many of the services we rely on every day. Our pavements, roads, school buildings and teachers – all these things are funded by the tax system.

Anyone who earns money – or any company that makes money – is expected to give some of their earnings back to the government in taxes. The government is then expected to use that money to run the country and to provide things such as roads, schools and hospitals.

If people don't like the way that the government is using the money, then in a democracy – like in Ireland – they have the power to vote for a different government at the next election. So a good tax system not only provides a government with the money that it needs to provide services for its people, it should also make the government more responsible – because the government needs to spend the money wisely and in the way that people want, or it will be voted out of power.

Now ask students to imagine that the government has not been able to collect enough tax and can now only pay for seven of the 10 services. The groups have to decide which services should be dropped from the government bill.

Get them to share their thoughts and discuss as a class what the consequences would be of losing these services.



**Essential services cards**

**Health care  
(including ambulances)**

**Electricity**

**Water supply**

**Police and armed forces**

**Fire fighting**

**State pensions**

**Prison system**

**Education**

**Transport infrastructure**

**Welfare**



### Lukman's and Sulemana's stories (10 mins)

The consequences of losing services like these are not often felt by multinational companies. Instead it is people on the ground who shoulder the burden.

Show Lukman's and Sulemana's story: *Hungry for change in Ghana's schools.*  
[vimeo.com/89314855](https://vimeo.com/89314855) or [christianaid.ie/schools](https://christianaid.ie/schools)

**Explain:** Lots of Ghana's children do not get enough to eat, so the government has identified addressing hunger as an important goal. Recognising that poor diet not only affects children's health but also limits what they can achieve in other areas of their lives, including gaining a good education, Ghana's government introduced its School Feeding Programme in 2005.

The project provides free lunches for children attending participating schools, ensuring pupils get at least one nutritious meal every day. It also provides an incentive for the poorest families to send their children to school. (Schools are encouraged to buy ingredients locally so the project also increases demand in the local market for food, meaning local farmers get more income.)

With support from Christian Aid partner SEND, Ghana's School Feeding Programme has been hugely successful. In some areas school enrolment rates have risen by as much as 30% and more than 50,000 children now benefit from this work in Ghana's Northern Region alone.

But it is yet to reach many schools and without finding additional funds through donors or tax, Ghana's government will be unable to scale up this work to reach many communities in urgent need of this support.

### The missing billions (10 mins)

Show one of the following films to help explain how tax dodging happens and what effect it has on the ground.

- *Where has all the money gone? STOP tax dodging (Ireland)*  
[vimeo.com/89314856](https://vimeo.com/89314856) or [christianaid.ie/schools](https://christianaid.ie/schools)
- *Tax Justice in Central America*  
[vimeo.com/89314857](https://vimeo.com/89314857) or [christianaid.ie/schools](https://christianaid.ie/schools)

### Conclusion (5 mins)

Write this fact on the chart/board:

**'For every \$10 given in aid to the developing world, \$15 is lost through tax dodging.'**

**Explain:** Christian Aid estimates that tax dodging by business costs poor countries \$160bn a year. This is money that could be spent on essential services.

The international financial system allows multinational companies to avoid paying taxes and money to be held secretly in tax havens. The tax laws need to be updated. Too many rich companies are hiding their money and this affects those living in poverty the most.

Christian Aid is campaigning for a public register, open and accessible to all, that reveals who owns which companies, where they are located, and for whose benefit. This will make it easier for tax authorities, the media and ordinary citizens to uncover who is dodging tax, hold them to account and ensure developing countries get the tax money that's rightfully theirs.

Encourage the students to take action by visiting [christianaid.ie/tax](https://christianaid.ie/tax) where they can find out more information and add their voices to the calls for more transparency around tax.