Animal Action

Education

Our Best Hope

Education is the key to a better future for animals. IFAW inspires young people and their communities to care about the welfare of animals and the environment.
Changing Hearts and Minds

For more than two decades, the International Fund for Animal Welfare - IFAW has joined with educators, parents and celebrities like Leonardo DiCaprio to bring our free Animal Action Education programme to classrooms, youth groups and families worldwide.

Today, the Animal Action Education programme educates and inspires more than 5 million educators and young people in dozens of countries each year to respect and protect animals and their habitats.

These initiatives benefit human communities, too. Numerous studies have found that humane education reduces school violence and that environmental literacy improves critical thinking skills, motivates students to become more engaged and promotes academic achievement.

Nancy Barr
Director, Animal Action Education

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IFAW’s Animal Action Education programme provides young people with the knowledge and motivation they need to take positive action on behalf of animals and the environment. The programme is designed to help students understand the nature of animals, key animal welfare and ecological concepts and human behaviours that impact the world we share, while building curiosity, respect, empathy and responsibility for all life on our planet. We promote global values and themes, while supporting the wide variety of teaching approaches and curricula from country to country and culture to culture. We provide free educational resources for primary and middle level educators, including standards-based teaching guides, lesson plans, worksheets, videos, student magazines, posters and interactive activities. They are available in numerous languages and regional dialects including English, Chinese, Spanish, German, French, Dutch, Russian, Arabic, Afrikaans, Hindi and Braille. Some resources focus on a particular species or group of animals such as elephants, tigers, marine wildlife and cats and dogs. Other resources focus on broad animal welfare and conservation themes that impact all animals and people, such as animal rescue and climate change.

What is Animal Action Education?
Aligning with Core Curricula
An over-loaded curriculum is a concern of many teachers. That’s why Animal Action Education provides tools that meet the needs of teachers to achieve educational objectives in core curricula - including language arts, science, and social studies - while building 21st century skills for critical thinking, problem solving, and communication. Our goal is to foster sustainable, teacher-led implementation of animal welfare and conservation education through easy integration with regular classroom lessons and school activities.

Beginnings: Animal Action in the United Kingdom
Animal Action started in England as a single week of activities in 1993. Ever since, IFAW UK has annually bestowed Animal Action Awards to both well-known and unsung heroes of the two- and four-legged variety, in recognition of extraordinary efforts to rescue and protect animals. Our education work in the region now extends throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Benefiting Students and Teachers
Animal Action Education aims to integrate animal welfare and conservation themes into mainstream classroom lessons and extracurricular activities of schools and other organised youth education programmes.

The globally-coordinated programme provides resources and activities that are locally adapted for relevance and alignment with school curricula in the countries and regions where we work. Our goal is to foster humane and environmental education while meeting educational outcomes in literacy, science, social studies and other core subjects. This has benefits not only for the future of animals but also for our children. Research has found a correlation between cruelty to animals and violence towards people and that integrating humane education into the classroom can lead to a decrease in school violence and bullying.

Humane education supports moral development in children and instills a sense of responsibility for others. Numerous studies also suggest that environmental education programmes improve critical thinking skills, motivate students and promote academic achievement, including better performance on standardised tests in reading, math, writing, social studies and science. The programme also provides meaningful extension activities and engagement opportunities for families and communities.
Our Global Reach

Through 15 regional offices, IFAW’s education programmes reach some five million educators and students ages 5-14 in more than 60 countries worldwide each year.

The DVD was very informative and educative. My science students really enjoyed the activities.

Biology teacher
European International School, Belgium

This pack helped encourage my children’s development of free speech and they showed a more mature attitude to wildlife and animals.

Key Stage 3/4 Teacher
United Kingdom

This is a successful and important programme for both the student and the teacher. It emphasises the importance of the animals’ welfare as it encourages the students to read, research and write.

Primary School Teacher
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

It’s valuable to have lessons that relate to the Common Core while at the same time providing information on how students can get involved.

Elementary School Teacher
California, USA

IFAW engages children in a different way in that it’s not every day where kids are asked to interpret issues on animals using art.

David Kimani
Juhudi Children’s Club, Kenya

Your commitment to helping our school is sincerely appreciated. The goal of the school is to continue to make a difference in the lives of our learners.

Headmaster
Factreton Primary School, South Africa

I like the resource especially for the discussions that followed with the students.

Primary Teacher
St. Gerard’s Catholic School, Australia

Inspiring student work from Animal Action Art Contest participants around the world
European Commission Endorsement

IFAW’s Animal Action Education programme is endorsed by the European Commission, which is supporting roll-out of the programme in as many as 24 European languages. “Investing in animal welfare education is the best investment we can make for future generations of animals and people,” says Andrea Gavinelli, Head of Unit for the European Commission Directorate for Animal Welfare, Health and Consumers. Our resources are promoted throughout the region via European SchoolNet, an online network of 30 Ministries of Education. Thousands of schools in Germany, France and the Netherlands take part through our country-specific educational outreach.

Connecting Coast to Coast in the USA

In the United States, IFAW works with national educational publishers such as Scholastic and Time for Kids to engage more than 100,000 teachers and an estimated 4,250,000 students in all 52 states each with our Animal Action curricula, which supports national and Common Core standards for educational achievement. We have partnered with the Los Angeles Unified School District, which is the second largest school district in the United States, and rocker Matt Sorum’s foundation Adopt the Arts to bring Animal Action Education curricula and activities that foster arts integration into more than 5,000 classrooms in 600 elementary and middle schools throughout the District.

Ministerial Collaboration in the Middle East

In 2011, IFAW Middle East collaborated with the Ministry of Education of the United Arab Emirates to introduce the Animal Action Education programme to 20,000 elementary students in all public and private schools overseen by the Ministry in the UAE. Since then, the programme has expanded to additional grade levels, reaching more than 70,000 students. Regional Animal Action Education programmes in the Middle East include schools in Jordan, in partnership with the Princess Alia Foundation, as well as in Kuwait, Yemen and Tunisia.

Collaboration is key to our success. Working with a wide range of partners—from schools and like-minded non-profit organisations to national governments and international institutions, such as the European Commission and United Nations—we can make a much bigger and more sustained impact than by working on our own.

Partnering for Impact

Actor and activist Leonardo DiCaprio, an IFAW Honorary Board member, is global ambassador for IFAW’s Animal Action Education program.

An inspired nine-year-old student at Otbah Bin Azwaan Primary School Dubai, UAE
Wildlife Heritage in India

Through agreements with regional education ministries, Animal Action Education materials, translated into Hindi, Bodo and other regional dialects, spread the message of conservation and animal welfare to more than 720,000 children in 3,000 schools in India and neighboring Bhutan. With our partner Wildlife Trust of India, IFAW education teams focus on schools in and around wildlife reserves to help build positive relationships between the local communities and endangered species such as tigers, rhinos and elephants, which share their habitat.

Diversity in South Africa

Animal Action Education is the only animal welfare education programme specifically created to meet educational outcomes for learners ages 5-14 in South Africa. Educational resources are provided in English, Afrikaans and Braille, making them accessible to students in diverse schools and communities, including visually-impaired learners. In Cape Town, we incorporate animal-themed theater as a powerful tool for connecting with children from disadvantaged communities. At IFAW’s Community Led Animal Welfare (CLAW) veterinary clinic in Johannesburg, a Saturday Kids Club for children from nearby Soweto townships offers arithmetic, reading, music and art activities that incorporate knowledge about wild and domestic animals and why it is important to protect them.

Conservation and Literacy in Malawi

IFAW is piloting a model education project in schools serving villages along the boundary of Malawi’s Liwonde National Park in Southern Africa. IFAW has been working with local communities and park authorities to better protect wildlife, including elephants and habitat, while supporting livelihood development. Our new education project in partnership with HELP Malawi, will provide a conservation and animal welfare curricula integrated with literacy outcomes, support much-needed infrastructure development and capacity-building for local primary schools serving more than 2,500 students and their families in four communities.

Integrating for Community Development

We support basic education outcomes, foster cultural approaches, build educator capacity, provide experiential learning and connect youth with animals and nature in under-served schools and communities grappling with human development, animal welfare and conservation challenges.
Learning Animal Welfare Concepts in China

After launching in 1999, Animal Action Education has become the largest animal welfare education initiative in China, reaching more than one million children in 19 provinces. Through special workshops and trainings, IFAW has a strong core group of teachers who motivate and engage other teachers and authorities to join and promote Animal Action Education as a pioneer project in their region.

In the remote Yunnan Province, where IFAW has worked for many years with ethnic minority communities to protect China’s last remaining elephant populations, we partnered with regional educational authorities, schools and teachers to create and introduce a new science textbook based on IFAW’s elephant education program.

Life-Affirming Environments in Kenya

IFAW launched a project with schools and children’s groups to craft a series of elephant mosaics for the hallways of a children’s hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. Children learned about elephants while also creating a colorful, inspiring and life-affirming environment for patients, their families and hospital staff. The project also provided an opportunity for children from different schools, cultural, religious and social backgrounds to meet, interact and make new friends.

Through globally-coordinated Animal Action projects, young people have joined together around the globe to clean up beaches, plant trees, sign pledges, send letters, compose essays, create artwork, raise their voices and march for change to protect animals and our shared environment.
Founded in 1969, IFAW (the International Fund for Animal Welfare) rescues and protects animals around the world. With projects in more than 40 countries, IFAW rescues individual animals, works to prevent cruelty to animals and advocates for the protection of wildlife and their habitats.

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.  
- Nelson Mandela

Mosaic created by students at Mtwapa Primary School in Kenya