



# Building effective school environmental clubs

A guide for teachers





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Environmental Governance Institute  
Paramount Street, Molyko  
P.O. Box 211, Buea  
Southwest Region, Cameroon

Tel: +237 33778882 / +237 33322631

Email: [info@engov-institute.org](mailto:info@engov-institute.org)

Website: [www.engov-institute.org](http://www.engov-institute.org)

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### **Acknowledgements**

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Sections of this guide have been adapted from previous work by other individuals and organizations. We have referenced this work accordingly.

We would hereby like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Environmental Education and Conservation Global (EECG), who granted us support through the John Judy Grant to enable us print the first copies of this guide and train teachers in Buea.

EGI has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this guide. We disclaim any liability, loss, injury or damage incurred as a consequence of direct or indirect use of this guide.

### **Credits**

Compiled by John M. Takang, Christine N. Bukania, Salome Ebangha, Yvonne Nso  
Design and layout by Christine Bukania

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## FOREWORD



For developing countries like Cameroon, educating populations about the environment, and creating public awareness and sensitization, are the cornerstone in the implementation of sustainable development strategies.

According to the framework Law No. 96/12 of 5 August 1996 on environmental management in Cameroon, Article 73 states that environmental education should be introduced in primary, secondary and higher institutions of learning.

In this regard, environmental education is vital in our efforts to ensure a sustainable world for our future generations. Engaging pupils and young adults in educational activities about nature will inform them how to live responsibly with the natural environment. Teaching young

people about the impacts of consumerism can bring about a new generation that will have a reduced ecological footprint.

Against this background, environmental clubs constitute an important tool and forum for young people to learn from nature, to experiment and to gain an insight into environmental processes. The pioneering work by EGI to set a framework for those who teach about the environment merits our recognition and I am delighted to introduce this first edition of *Building Effective School Environmental Clubs: A Guide for Teachers* to you.

This guide provides a set of fundamental principles on setting up a school club and how clubs should be managed. More importantly, it provides teachers with a set of tangible tools and concrete examples of activities that they could carry out with their students.

This guide was developed with teachers and for teachers, and I hope that teachers, civil society leaders and educational institutions will seize the opportunity provided by this guide to stimulate and engage pupils, students and communities to learn about nature and how to live in harmony with it.

I am convinced this guide will facilitate the work of teachers and will enhance their efforts to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, eradicating poverty and in ensuring environmental sustainability in Cameroon and beyond.

Mrs Ekwaingen Nee Mercy Boh  
 Chief of Service for Sensitization, Documentation and Information  
 Regional Delegation MINEPDED-SWR,

## INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) is drawing to a close. However, the world still faces serious environmental challenges and, there is no doubt about the importance of promoting sustainability principles to address these challenges.

Education to impart the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to foster sustainable development must begin at an early age and be nurtured in the long-term to become part of young people's day to day practice.

This guide will help teachers to use a participatory, holistic and youth-friendly approach to build this foundation among their students. It has been written as a support to teachers, to facilitate their teaching of environmental issues.

The guide highlights principles of education for sustainable development in the spirit of Agenda 21 – *to promote education that teaches children to seek and adapt values which enable them to live in harmony with others and their environment.*

It is not intended to be a comprehensive cookbook. Rather, it is designed to stimulate ideas. It provides tips to start, coordinate, maintain and improve environmental clubs in schools. Some suggestions for concrete club activities have been included. Teachers should not feel constrained by these suggestions, but should try to exploit their own and their students' creativity and innovation.

### What is sustainable development?

In 1987, the Report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, called for a kind of "development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

## 1. SETTING UP AND RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB

### 1.1. Steps to follow when setting up a new club

**Preliminary Preparations** - Arrange with the principal and administration for permission to start a club. Identify a venue, and suitable day of the week and time for meetings. Advertise meeting time and place.

**Elect club officials** - Supervise election of president, secretary, treasurer and publicity officer of the club. Paste names of elected officials on notice board. Inform them of their roles and responsibilities.

**Get enough people interested** - At least 1 teacher/ or community coordinator, at least 6 students, get school administration interested.

**Brainstorm on club's mission** - What do you want to accomplish? How can you accomplish it?

**Draw up action plan** - Which concrete activities and projects will you carry out to accomplish your mission and when will you carry them out?

**Publicize club activities** - Announce upcoming events and updates of club activities on notice boards, assemblies, in the school magazine or paper, and through press releases to local newspaper

**Implement** - Carry out your activities and keep records of your progress. Regularly review your projects and revise your action plan accordingly.

## 1.2. Role of club officials

As the coordinator, it is your role to help the leaders of your school's environmental club understand and perform their duties well so that the club can grow strong. Here is an example of the roles which you can adapt.

### President

- Chairs the meetings using the circulated agenda
- Ensures that club members follow procedures and rules
- Keeps discipline during meetings and tries to get everyone actively involved
- Provides a summary of discussions
- Gives all members the opportunity to participate in decision making

### Secretary

- Writes meeting agendas and presents to the president for approval
- Composes the meeting announcements and for the Publicity Officer to post up
- Takes the minutes of club meetings
- Arranges appointments and bookings
- Drafts correspondence for approval by the president and circulates them
- Keeps records of club members, attendance lists, minutes, activity reports etc.

### Treasurer

- Collects money that is due to the club either from members or other contributors
- Keeps record of all club materials
- Prepares budgets of club activities and keeps records of financial

### Publicity Officer

- Advertises the club and encourages other students to join
- Informs students about upcoming activities and events on assembly and using posters
- Updates environmental information on the notice board



### NOTE

- It is good for club officials to meet before each meeting. They can then agree on how the meeting will be conducted and harmonize their roles appropriately.
- In order to attract more support for club activities, it is a good idea to invite school authorities such as the Principal, Vice Principal or Discipline Master to be patrons or trustees of the club.

## 1.3. Organizing a successful meeting

- As a club coordinator, one of your roles is to guide students when they conduct meetings. Here are some suggested steps that you can adapt to suit the particular circumstances of your school.
- Start with an environmental pledge
- Let new guests and members introduce themselves
- Read the agenda
- Start the meeting with a brief summary of the last meetings proceedings. This should be quite easy if accurate minutes are kept
- Make announcements if there are any, e.g. special thanks to active members, any new developments and opportunities, club recognitions and achievements
- Discuss the progress of ongoing projects, challenges and successes, lessons and revise action plan if necessary. It is important to set timelines and give responsibilities to individuals or groups
- Address the day's topic according to the annual club calendar. Incorporate environmental games and other enjoyable activities into this section
- Close with the environmental pledge

### Important tips

- The club should keep a register, in which club members who participate in meetings sign in.
- Punctuality contributes to successful meetings. Set strict punctuality rules and let the students identify penalties for late coming.
- Remember that club activities should be informational, creative, practical and enjoyable for students. To achieve this, meetings should comprise of a mixture of theoretical and practical activities.
- Once in a while, invite external speakers to visit and address club members. This will motivate students and give them a different perspective.
- Recognize achievements, both of individual students and of the club as a whole.
- As much as possible, let the students run the affairs of the club, under your guidance and supervision. For example, let them be the ones to agree on rules and how to enforce them.

#### Definition of environmental club

An environmental club (also called eco-club) is made up of a group of students that are concerned about the environment and are committed to learning and raising awareness about environmental issues. They have a desire to reduce negative environmental impacts in their schools, homes, communities and the world at large.

An environmental club is a platform through which students can learn to take personal responsibility to live in a sustainable manner and improve their environmental leadership skills. They discover how decisions and actions taken by the government promote sustainable use of natural resources. Above all, they learn the values of peace and dialogue, cooperation, harmonious coexistence and sustainability.



## 2. CLUB ACTIVITIES

### 2.1. Some guiding principles

#### Build the foundation

To change their values and behaviour, students need to understand how their actions impact their environment. Guide them to acquire this knowledge, so that their attitudes and actions can be based on fact and evidence. This will often require you to carry out some research. You can find resources in your library, local organizations, and government departments or through internet research.

#### Carry out practical activities

Often, students will understand better when they apply their newly acquired knowledge. Therefore, you should guide club activities in such a way that they apply theoretical knowledge. Remember too that actions speak louder than words, so students are likely to attach a greater importance to their club if they can practice what they learn there.

#### Link club activities with everyday life

Help students to realize that they live in an interdependent world, and whatever they do to the environment is likely to affect them too. You can do this by using everyday examples which they can identify with. Encourage them to draw parallels and make comparisons between what you do with them in school and what happens in their own homes. Discuss the weaknesses and strengths of some common practices that they or their families are used to.

#### Promote cooperation and team work

Clubs promote dialogue and cooperation among students and other levels of the community. As a coordinator, you should create an enabling environment for the students to work in teams as often as possible. It will help them develop a sense of shared responsibility and respect for one another.

#### Give students the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity as leaders, problem solvers, decision makers and critical thinkers

Support club members to demonstrate their knowledge through collective action in their communities. An individual student might find it difficult to be heard at home, but if they work together, under the umbrella of their club and with the full support of the school, then their message might have greater meaning. Their morale will be boosted when they know that their views and opinions are heard and respected.

#### Show results

Club activities are often geared towards achieving a specific objective. Afterwards, it is important to reflect on the results. After successful completion of activities, acknowledge the students hard work and encourage them to identify success factors and lessons they learnt. They should also reflect on their own individual achievements, the benefit of their activities to their families, communities and others who depend on the ecosystem.



## 2.2. Types of activities

If you already have an environmental club in your school, some of the suggested activities in this section of the guide will not be new to you. Your students will probably have implemented many activities in a similar or more creative way.

This list is neither complete nor mandatory for your club. It is intended to help you and your students start off in the right direction or refine your way of imparting sustainability values. You should encourage your students to come up with some new ideas, or improve the ones that they already have.

### 1

#### Practical lessons on environmental issues

Often, students will understand better when they apply their newly acquired knowledge. Therefore, you should guide their club activities in such a way that they apply theoretical knowledge acquired from you and from the school curriculum. Some examples of practical lessons include:

- How to recycle paper, plastics and biodegradable waste
- How to plant and nurture trees
- Demonstrating the effect of pollution
- How to construct energy saving stoves
- Separation of biodegradable, non-biodegradable and toxic waste
- Establish a waste separation system in school

### 2

#### Education and awareness creation

Members of environmental clubs can be powerful agents for change in their schools and communities. Here are examples of activities they can do.

- Carry out research on local environmental issues and present findings to fellow students
- Draw informational posters and flyers and hang them up
- Instal an environmental club notice board in the school and update it regularly with information, announcements and progress reports
- Develop a catalogue of trees in the local community, including diagrams, common and scientific names, and common uses
- Establish a tree nursery in the school, where club members can learn to nurture trees. They can then identify a day to transplant the seedlings either in the school or in their own community
- Plan and implement information sessions, debates, workshops, conferences and seminars
- Sensitize the public using music, drama and dance
- Invite guest speakers to talk to students
- Organize community focus group discussions on various environmental issues



## 3

## Community service

In carrying out community service, students get motivated to practice what they learn at school. They get engaged as change agents in their community and learn to be proactive citizens. At the same time, they will be able to see a connection between community resources and opportunities to an improved way of life. Some activities they can do are:

- Clean-ups in the community
- Walks and runs to raise awareness on specific issues
- Prevent soil erosion through tree planting drives
- Organize community focus group discussions to educate people on waste management
- Petition your local council to take action on specific environmental problems
- Hold concerts and theatre events in the community hall
- Organize a campaign where you go door to door to talk to your neighbours about a specific problem and how they can help to solve it

## 4

## Field visits and excursions

Excursions and field trips help students to gain more insight about environmental issues and offer them an opportunity to have a first-hand experience of what they only hear or read about. They learn about the current situation and get information that could improve their performance in other subject areas.

- Visit a recycling plant or industry to learn about pollution and waste management
- Go to an environmental organization or government department to learn about their functions
- Visit a protected area to learn about the functions of forests
- Visit a zoo, botanical garden or wildlife park to learn about different types of plants and animals
- Go to a power plant using alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal to learn how they function
- Carry out an exchange visit with other school environmental clubs

Some sites where students can go to learn about animals, plants and forests, aquatic animals, birds and other types of biodiversity and conservation:

Botanic garden – Limbe  
 Wildlife center – Limbe  
 Bimbia, Bonadikombo forest - Bimbia in Limbe  
 Mt. Cameroon National Park – Buea  
 Bakingili Park – Limbe  
 Companies in/around Fako



## 5

## Creative and visual arts productions

- Do craft works using recycled materials like bottle tops, cardboard papers and old paper while teaching them about recycling waste
- Use theatre and musical concerts to illustrate how environmental care can be of benefit to all e.g. you could act a short play on how a group of young people teaches their community to stop polluting their river and thus stops the negative effects of water pollution
- Drawing, poetry and essay competitions on selected themes, which could correspond with important environmental occasions
- Do paintings of animals on paper mask and do plays with roles of a hunter, animals and their natural habitat

Here are some topics for drawing, essays, poetry and lectures by external speakers:

*Every drop of water counts, save water save lives, sustainability in our community*

*Alternative sources of energy: Benefits and challenges*

*Green transportation*

*Small solutions to large environmental problems*

*Reusing rubbish in our homes*

*Effects of climate change in our community*

*Using environmentally friendly cleaning products*

*How to reduce our carbon footprint*

*Endangered animals in our country*

*Whose responsibility is it to reduce pollution?*

*Clean energy in our community*

*I can make a difference in my environment*

## 6

## Commemorating important environmental days

There are many environmental days that are commemorated globally. On these days, people all over the world carry out activities that highlight the significance of different aspects of our environment, through educating others, learning and participating in concrete actions. Often, different sectors such as the government, non-governmental organizations, community groups, schools and other citizens collaborate to organize joint public events to educate the public. Alternatively, you can choose to do any of the above mentioned activities, using the specific theme that has been selected for the year. You can approach the government department in charge of environmental public awareness or any local environmental organisation to clarify the theme, get ideas on how to organize it and find out if you can get some of the materials you require, such as posters.

Here are some important days. You can agree on the ones you would like to participate in and mark them in your club's annual calendar.

**2 February:** *World Wetlands Day - Marks the date of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, on 2 February 1971*

**21 March:** *World Forestry Day - Highlights importance of forests and increasing green cover*

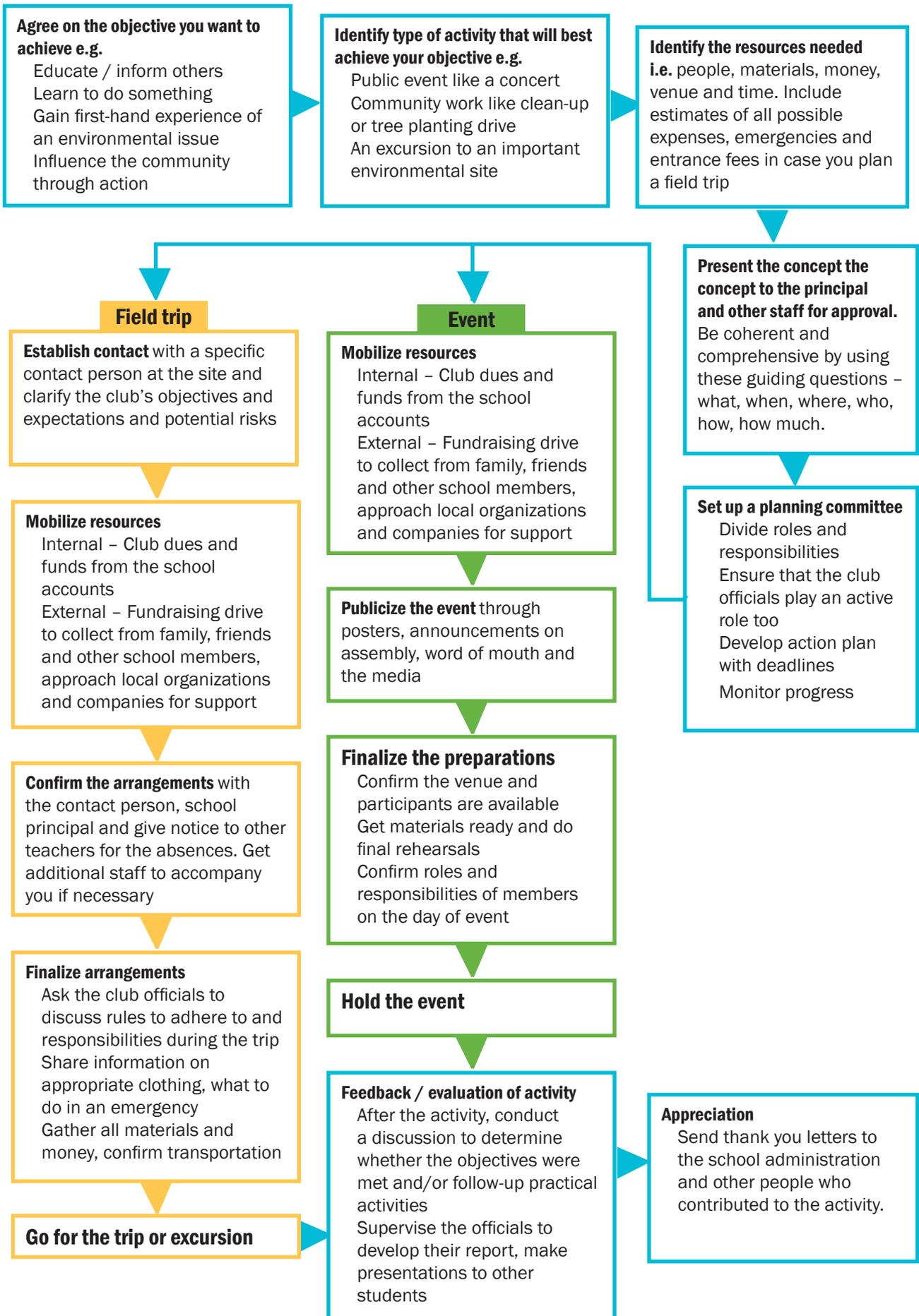
**22 March:** *World Water Day - Highlights water's importance in environment, agriculture, health and trade*

**22 April:** *World Earth Day - Creates support for environmental protection*

**5 June:** *World Environmental Day - Platform to express the concerns for the increasing environmental problems*

**17 June:** *World Day to combat Desertification and Drought - Highlights the fight against desertification and drought and creates awareness drought and water scarcity in the dry lands and beyond, as well as the importance of sustaining healthy soil*

## 2.3. Planning an event or field trip



## 2.4. Example of activities

### (i) Sorting garbage (paper, plastic, glass, composting materials)

Waste is also referred to as litter, trash, garbage, junk and refuse. It is what remains when we have taken the material that is immediately useful to us. Biodegradable trash breaks down naturally into small particles and eventually converts into soil. Non-biodegradable waste on the other hand, will not break down and will stay for thousands of years. In this activity, students will learn to distinguish between biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste.

**What you need to have:** A tool to dig with, 4 flat sticks you can write on, a marker, a fruit, leaves from any vegetable like cabbage or huckleberry, a plastic packaging, a piece of paper and a calendar

#### What should students know?

- Respect for the environment is also respect for oneself and for the other people who share that environment.
- Poor waste disposal can have negative health effects and can lead to irreparable damage to water, soil, air and the lives of students and other members of the community.
- Waste can be a resource to students if they know how to handle it. It can be used as compost for our gardens, as recycled materials and even for generation of biogas etc.
- Decomposing garbage in landfills produces methane which leads to greenhouse gas accumulation and climate change.

#### Steps

1. With a marker, write the type of trash on the flat stick, i.e. fruit, vegetable, plastic, paper. Additionally, write the current date on the stick.
2. Find a warm, moist place in the school yard, dig four wide and deep holes and bury each of the four pieces of trash separately. Fill the holes completely with dirt.
3. Use the sticks to mark the different holes, ensuring that they match what you buried in each one.
4. Take your calendar and mark the date you buried the trash, and then mark the one month later, when you will dig them up.
5. On that day, go back and unearth the four pieces of trash.
6. Respond to the following questions: Which pieces of trash are still there? Which ones have decomposed partially or fully? Which types of trash are biodegradable, which ones not?
7. Discuss what one can do with biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste.

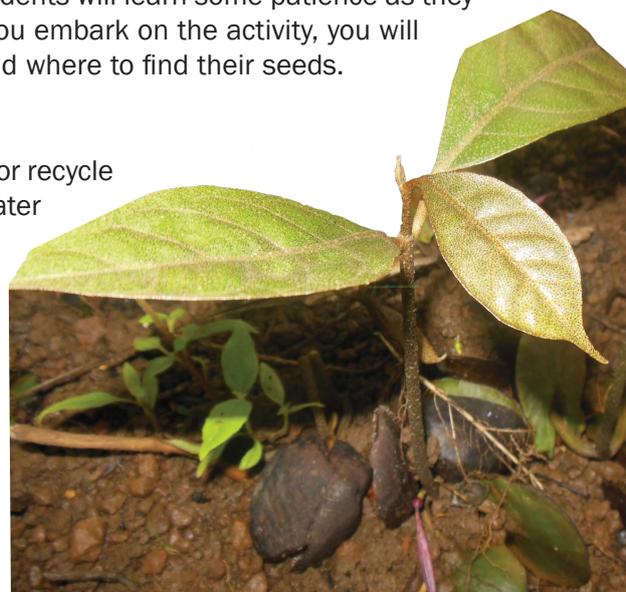
### (ii) Growing and taking care of trees

Trees are an important part of human life and existence. In this activity, In this activity, you can teach students about types of trees, how to plant and nurture the seedlings, what plants need in order to grow, and even recycling old packaging into plant pots. Furthermore, students will learn some patience as they take care of their seeds and wait for them to germinate. Before you embark on the activity, you will need to carry out some research on the types of trees to plant and where to find their seeds. Students can help in collecting the seeds.

**What you need to have:** A plant pot or polythene bag (you can buy or recycle plastic drinking bottles), soil, a small area to set up a nursery, water and sunshine

#### What should students know?

- Trees can improve soil structure and fertility. The roots make the soils porous while they also add nitrogen to the soil. Trees reduce soil erosion. With healthy soils, farmers can produce more food.



- In urban areas, trees provide shade and have a cooling effect on hot days.
- Trees are carbon sinks. They absorb carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and contribute to reduction of climate change.
- Trees reduce air pollution by trapping airborne particles and absorbing carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. They reduce noise pollution, especially in busy urban areas.
- Selling tree seedlings can generate income. When trees are mature, fruits and other products such as food, medicine, spices, building wood and firewood can be harvested and sold
- Trees act as windbreaks during storms and in that way, they prevent destruction of property.
- In some communities, some trees are considered sacred, that is, they have religious and spiritual significance.

### Steps

1. If you use recycled plastic bottles, cut the top part off and drill a drainage hole in the bottom
2. Fill the plant pot or bottle with good fertile soil
3. Make a small hole in the middle with your finger or thumb. Depending on the type of seeds, the hole could be a few millimetres or centimetres deep.
4. Place the seed in the hole and cover it with soil
5. Keep the pot moist, when dry, water it, if it is too wet, and check to make sure it is draining well.
6. Place the pots somewhere outside in a well protected area, where they get sufficient sunlight.
7. Take care of the plants until the day they germinate, usually within a few days or weeks, depending on the type.

### (iii) Create a poster on Recycling: Reduce, reuse, recycle to display on the environmental club notice board



*Recycling* is the collection and reprocessing of manufactured materials which are then remanufactured in the same or different form, or as part of something else.

*Reducing* is putting in place measures and practices that help to reduce the quantity and extent to which a particular product is used.

*Reusing* is to use an item again in the same way or by making some changes to it so that you can use it in another way.

In this activity, students will learn the concepts of recycling, reducing and reusing; they will realize the impact of their everyday habits on the environment. In addition, they will be able to practice their creative skills.

**What you need:** cardboard paper, markers, coloured pencils or paints, different types of items that can be reused and recycled, e.g. bottles, tins, cardboard packaging and cloth).

### Steps

1. Discuss examples of how to reduce, reuse and recycle common waste in households or schools and what can be improved.
2. Form three groups. Let each group handle only one theme, either reduce, reuse or recycle. If the club is very large, you can divide it into more groups so that everyone has something to do.
3. In groups, discuss the diagrams to draw and the message that will best convince others to practice the 3Rs of reduce, reuse and recycle.
4. Share these initial ideas with other club members to get their opinions.
5. Draw or paint the pictures and write the messages on the poster. Working as a team, everyone can do some of the work.
6. Display your final posters in an exhibition to commemorate an environmental day or display them on notice boards in the classrooms.

## (iv) Role play: How to deal with human-wildlife conflict

Whenever people and wildlife live side by side, there is bound to be conflict. However, how it is dealt with depends on the knowledge and attitudes of the people. Furthermore, it is not only animals that encroach into the areas in which people live and farm. People too, go into the forest where animals live, destroy their habitats to carry out economic activities like agriculture and logging, and also hunting.

In this role play, students act out a predefined hypothetical situation. This will help them to understand the concerns, attitudes and opinions that other people can have, and gives them a solid basis to debate issues related to conservation. You can carry out this activity over a number of club meetings.

### The situation

Farmer has lost his entire crop to wild animals that strayed from the neighbouring farm. He is very angry and wants to deal with his 'enemies' once and for all. Getting a hunter to kill them is the easiest way out, but it could get him arrested. Moving his farm is possible but too expensive. What can he do?

### The characters

**Farmer** – He was going to harvest his crops and take to the market, he found that they had all been destroyed by wild animals. He is looking for a way to deal with this problem.

**Village chief** – He has mixed feelings. On one hand, he understands the problems that villagers have with animals coming from the neighbouring park. On the other hand, he has a responsibility to take measures that will protect the animals.

**Hotel owner** – Supports anything to do with wildlife and tourism, their presence in the area have made his business grow and he is now a rich man.

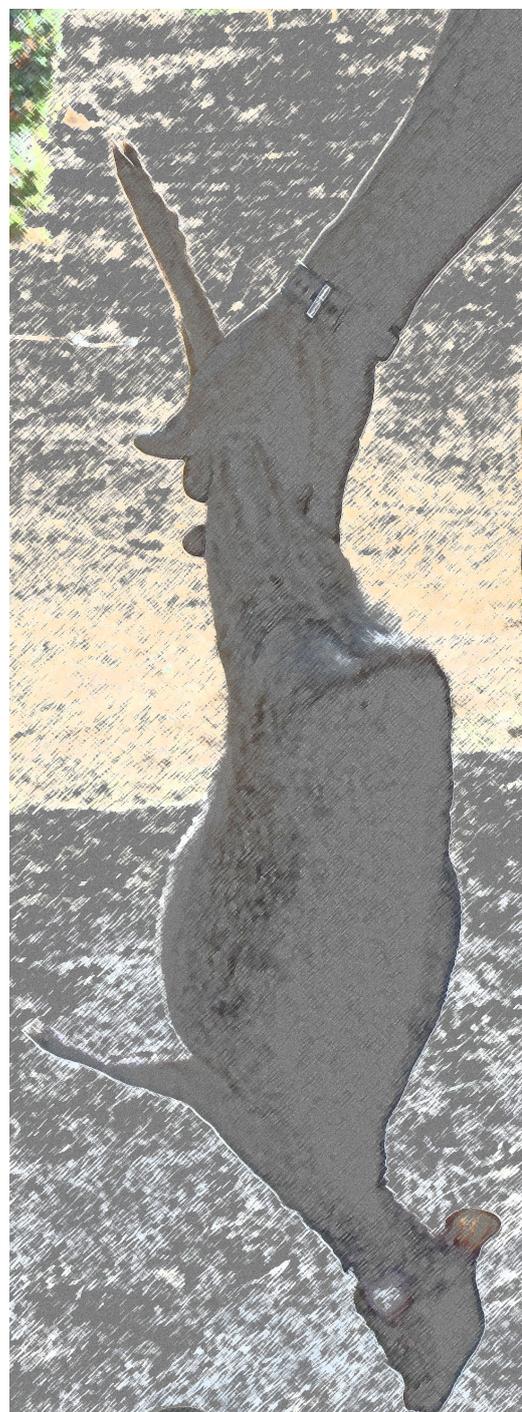
**Hunter** - Wild animals are a source of income. He sells the meat and skin for a lot of money. He has many traps which he is willing to put on the farmer's land.

**Wildlife enforcement officer** – He is there to enforce the law. Anyone caught breaking it will pay for his crimes.

Students should assign their own names to the characters. Other group members can also take part as supporting characters e.g. other villagers.

After the role play, discuss using the following questions as a guide:

- Who supports the decision taken by the farmer? Who does not? Why?
- What do you think about the actions of the other characters?
- What are the possible consequences of this situation?
- If you were in a similar position, what would you do?
- What does the wildlife law say about dealing with such a situation?
- Students can democratically select the best role play and develop it into a longer play to be presented to the rest of the school.



### 3. Conclusion

This guide provides tips and ideas for you to set up and coordinate an environmental club in your school. It also offers some examples of simple, cost-effective activities that you can carry out with students.

However, you should consider this as only a start, the real success of the club in your school will depend on the motivation you give your students to get creative and take their own lead in learning about environmental issues and taking action to resolve them.

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