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# Starting a water and environment club

## Why start a club?

- Water/environment clubs are fun and educational; they help to develop social responsibility and their work benefits everyone.
- They promote an awareness of environmental matters and encourage children to take responsibility for their environment.
- Learning and development takes place through active participation in an organised service that helps to meet the needs of a community.
- They are inclusive. Everyone can be involved – from young children to adults, from Early Childhood Development centres and schools to community-based organisations.
- They help to develop civic responsibility.
- The practical, hands-on water club projects and activities are easily accommodated, both in the Life Orientation learning area and across the curriculum.
- They offer an opportunity for learners to recognise and develop their individual talents and strengths outside the classroom; even learners who do not excel academically may excel in this environment.
- They develop skills like effective communication, team-building, critical thinking, problem-solving and project management.
- They build self-esteem and responsibility for decision-making as learners realise that their actions can make a difference.
- They entail team work which, apart from being more fun, is also much more effective than working alone.

## Structuring your club

There are a number of options for you to choose from when setting up your club, e.g.:

- Your school could form a committee on which elected representatives from each class sit. The staff and committee choose projects for the whole school to get involved in, which makes it easy to incorporate projects within the curriculum. This works particularly well for the Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) phases where learners can be responsible for more independent planning, decision-making and action. Different grades could work on different areas or everyone could work on the same thing.
- The water club could also be offered as a school based co-curricular activity under the guidance of a teacher or volunteer adult. Membership could be extended to community members or working relationships could be developed with community-based structures.
- You could also combine the two. The elected committee could ensure that all classes are involved and informed, while membership provides opportunities for really committed and interested individuals to initiate projects and keep them on track.

Be properly organised. Write a constitution, elect office-bearers (chairperson, secretary, treasurer, etc.), form sub committees (e.g. fund-raising) and keep proper minutes and other records of meetings and activities. If learners do not have organisational experience, provide guidance, especially when setting up the club. Stress the importance of keeping accurate records of money earned and spent. This will help them to manage the money efficiently, hold people accountable and make sure that the money is used for everybody's benefit.

eThekwini has a school-based water detectives programme. For more information on setting up your club, see Contacts on page 9.

## Recruiting members

- Make membership desirable and attractive; give it status.
- Acknowledge and praise club work in assembly and during class.
- Recognise committed individuals by awarding certificates, issuing badges or scrolls that can be sewn onto a school uniform or by putting up a wooden roll of honour in a public place in the school. Make an eco pledge (see example on page 11).
- Issue rewards like stars, small packets of sweets or small items of stationery for ongoing, committed participation. The type of reward depends on the age group.
- Make membership fun.

## Fund-raising and sponsorship

Club activities will cost money from time to time, and you don't want to exclude members because they can't afford to participate. The club may have to fund-raise and get sponsorship. Here are some ideas for doing this:

- Approach businesses in your area and ask them for sponsorship. For example, your local supermarket may be willing to donate food, sweets or stationery as prizes at an event, or for you to sell at or before an event in order to raise money. They may donate T-shirts or caps with their name on. Remind potential sponsors that you are fund-raising for a good cause.
- Approach large national or regional companies and ask for sponsorship for particular activities. For example, if you are having a campaign to encourage people to wash their hands after using the toilet, you could ask a national soap manufacturer to sponsor free soap. You could approach a hardware chain to sponsor gardening tools, plumbing spares or tools for the garden planting project.
- Write to the sponsor, outlining your project. Clearly explain how their product will be used and how it will benefit the general health and well-being of learners and/or the community.
- Keep sponsors and potential sponsors up-to-date on your activities. Write formal letters of thanks to sponsors and donors telling them how much their contribution has benefited your cause. Not only is this polite, but you may want to approach them again.

## Networking

Networking means establishing links with other individuals, organisations or clubs in order to share information and resources and publicise your activities more effectively. While a club can achieve more than an individual, a network can achieve even more. Here's how to network:

- If there are any other clubs doing similar work, establish contact with them in order to share ideas and information. Try to persuade other schools in your cluster to form clubs so that you can work together on projects.
- Get on to the mailing list of environmental organisations and subscribe to relevant magazines. You will then hear about competitions and campaigns and stay informed about current environmental affairs.
- Develop and maintain relationships with MPs, local councillors and other influential people with access to resources. Write to them about concerns and projects you are involved in, to keep them informed or to ask for assistance. Keep records of all correspondence.
- Publicity is a very important aspect of networking. Keep the public informed about the water club and its activities. Make announcements at assembly and create posters and fliers to put up in education centres and other public places. People will be happier to donate and get involved if they can see that your club is doing good, meaningful work. Also establish relationships with local newspapers and radio stations. They are always looking for interesting local news stories.

# Club projects and activities

Water club activities should be geared towards getting learners involved in protecting our environment and deciding how to use limited resources to ensure this.

## Observe special days

A number of special days have been set aside to raise awareness about water and sanitation issues, both in South Africa and internationally. These days are calls to action and provide us with opportunities to be more involved in protecting our environment, conserving precious resources and promoting health issues. Plan your projects so that you launch or culminate a project on one of these special days or so that class or club-based activities coincide with these. Learners could write pledges, prayers, poems or songs. Different classes or grades could take responsibility for different assemblies celebrating these days.

Although you can choose any project, it makes sense to choose a local issue. Your school buildings and grounds are the perfect place to start. You are more likely to get local sponsorship and community support and it is easier and cheaper to work in your own community. Everyone will be motivated by seeing and benefiting from the results.

Use the list below to help plan your action programmes, but remember – every day is Earth Day! Just because we celebrate something on one day of the year does not mean that we ignore it on the other 364 days. Setting aside a day or a week to highlight an issue serves to remind us how important it is every day of the year.

### MARCH

**National Water Week** takes place in the third week of March every year. During this time we organise events and activities that promote the conservation and development of water resources. Life on earth cannot exist without water. It is one of our most precious and scarce finite resources. Not only are we a water-scarce country that is prone to drought, but water is unevenly distributed, with some areas getting much more natural water than others. Despite this, we take water for granted; we pollute and waste it. National Water Week culminates in the **World Day of Water** on 22 March, which highlights the importance of water for the well-being, health and sustainable development of all humankind.

**Sanitation and Hygiene Week** is also celebrated in March. It highlights the fact that many communities in South Africa do not have access to proper sanitation, and encourages municipalities and communities to prioritise sanitation, health and hygiene.

- Action ideas:**
- Water use and management audits (page 5)
  - Water quality audit (audits in general page 6; river, stream or dam audit page 6)
  - Eco warrior quiz (page 10)
  - Monitor and save rainfall – make a rain gauge, get a rainwater tank
  - Sanitation audit (Intermediate Learner's Book page 3 /Senior Phase Learner's Book page 20)

### APRIL

**Earth Day** (22 April) provides an opportunity to focus on projects to improve our environment. We've committed many eco-crimes. There's the greenhouse effect, the hole in the ozone layer, and pollution on land, in our fresh water supplies and in the sea. The deserts are getting bigger and the rain forests are getting smaller. We're headed for disaster if we don't act soon to reverse the damage. We need to take responsibility for our actions, past and present, and together find solutions to the problems we've caused.

- Action ideas:**
- River health audit (page 5)
  - Litter recycling campaign (page 6)
  - Eco warrior quiz (page 10)

**MAY**

**International Day for Biological Diversity** (22 May) reminds us of the huge, negative impact that mankind has had on the environment, which has threatened biodiversity and caused the extinction of many species. South Africa has one of the highest levels of biological diversity in the world. Many of our plant and animal species are not found anywhere else.

- Action ideas:**
- Conduct a plant, bird or insect survey to identify and record the existing diversity of life in and around the school
  - Choose one plant or animal species that naturally lives in the area and study it
  - Alien plant attack (page 7)
  - Cultivate an indigenous garden

**JUNE**

**World Environment Day** (5 June) is celebrated all over the world. In South Africa, it forms part of our **National Environment Week**, during which we celebrate and explore our environment. It reminds us that we are part of nature and that we cannot exist without it. Contact your local municipality for the exact dates of Environment Week

- Action ideas:**
- Plant, bird or insect survey to identify and record the existing diversity of life in and around the school
  - Interview people who've lived in the area for a long time to find out if and how the environment has changed

**SEPTEMBER**

**Arbour Week** (1 – 7 September) celebrates the importance of trees as part of the environment. During this week we plant indigenous trees as part of the campaign to 'green' South Africa.

- Action ideas:**
- Cultivate an indigenous garden
  - Plant indigenous trees

**OCTOBER**

**Alien Plant Buster Week** provides opportunities to do something about alien plants in our environment. (Contact your local municipality for the exact dates.) Invasive alien species are plants, animals and microbes that are introduced into a country, and then out-compete the indigenous species and take over. They make floods and fires worse and waste about 7% of our water resources. They reduce the amount of water that flows to rivers and dams and cause wetlands, waterways, dams and other catchments to silt or dry up. This is a very serious threat to such a water-scarce country. According to the *Working for Water Annual Report* (2001/2), if we don't clear invading alien plants in the next 10 to 20 years we will lose 30% of our run-off to rivers. In 20 to 40 years 74% will be lost.

- Action ideas:**
- Alien plant attack (page 7)
  - River, stream or dam audit (page 5)

**NOVEMBER**

**World Toilet Day** on 19 November provides an additional opportunity to organise events and activities that promote public awareness of sanitation issues. It highlights that everyone needs access to toilets, and that women, mothers with babies, children and people with disabilities all have different toilet needs. It also emphasises the responsibility that all toilet users have to keep toilets clean, hygienic and well maintained.

- Action ideas:**
- Sanitation audit (see Intermediate Learner's Book page 3 / Senior Phase Learner's Book page 20)
  - Survey elderly people to find out how toilet facilities have changed since they were young

## **Raise awareness and educate**

Have inter-house, inter-grade or inter-school enviro quizzes. Teams of between four and six learners could represent their class, house or school. If you make these fun, the whole school will attend. You could get learners to submit the questions and answers in advance.

Make information/education posters for school and community. Depending on the messages, you could place these inside toilets, on notice boards, at libraries or education centres, in community halls, outside churches, etc. Keep your slogans interesting and change them regularly.

Hold your own enviro competition about an important local issue. You could have a poetry, essay, design, or art competition. Try to get sponsorship or prizes donated for different age groups.

Invite speakers to present talks about relevant and topical issues. For example, a bird expert could talk about how to identify indigenous birds in your area, an indigenous gardening expert could present a talk and demonstration on choosing, planting and maintaining an indigenous garden or vegetable plot.

## **Become a health-promoting school**

In a health-promoting school all members of the school community work together to promote the health and well-being of learners, staff, parents and the wider community. Because health is about so much more than just not being sick, a health-promoting school will address all factors affecting people's health and well-being, for example, violence, abuse, hunger, pollution, sanitation, hygiene – the general environment in which people live. The challenges and priorities will differ from school to school, but could dovetail perfectly with the water and environment club activities and projects. For more information, advice and assistance, contact your nearest Health Department district office. See Contacts, page 9.

## **Conduct audits**

### **WHAT IS AN AUDIT?**

An audit gives a very clear picture of the way things are now – of existing systems and practices. Use the information to decide whether you're happy with the existing situation or if you need to make changes. Once you've made and started implementing action plans to improve the situation, monitor and evaluate your progress by auditing on a regular basis. This will show you where things have improved and will highlight areas that you still need to work on. Seeing improvements will help to keep everybody motivated.

You can audit any area of concern at school or in the community, for example, water use, water quality, sanitation matters like hand washing and toilet care and maintenance, litter, use of waste materials and recycling, alien vegetation, conserving the natural environment, erosion. The Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phase learning materials all have examples of audits.

Remember to record dates, times and enough detail to ensure that data is properly recorded and that others can do follow-up audits in the same place.

### **RIVER, STREAM OR DAM AUDIT**

Study your local river or stream to get an idea of how healthy the water and surrounding area are. The action you take after that depends on your findings. For example, if there is lots of litter, you could clean it up. However, if there is a bad smell coming from a pipe leading into the river, you should contact your local municipality.

Always remember water safety rules. Do not taste untreated water. Do not swim or wade in water unless you know it is safe to do so. (Ask the following questions: Is the water clean enough to swim in? Can you swim? Are there crocodiles or other wild animals in the vicinity?) Wear rubber gloves or plastic bags on your hands when collecting samples.

Here are some sample questions for the survey. Adapt them to suit the water you plan to audit – for example, if you want to audit the school's water supply instead of a river, litter may not be relevant.

**Origin and usage:**

1. Where does the water come from?
2. Who or what uses it and what for? (for example: people, for drinking)

**Surrounding land:**

3. What is the surrounding land used for? farming/ industry/ residential – formal/ informal/ commerce/ recreation/ nothing)
4. What is the vegetation like in the immediate vicinity? (indigenous/alien)
5. Is there any erosion?

**Litter:**

6. Is there any litter?
7. Is there litter in the water? If yes:
  - a) how much?
  - b) what is it?
  - c) where could it have come from?

**Pipes and drains:**

8. Are there pipes or drains coming into the waterway? If yes:
  - a) what is coming out of them? (Do NOT touch or taste it. Try to identify by smell or sight.)
  - b) How much do you think is coming out?

**Smell – collect a sample:**

9. How does the water smell? (unnatural or chemical smell/decaying smell/sweet smell/no smell)

**Water clarity – collect a sample:**

10. How clear is the water? (can hardly see through it/some cloudiness and particles/clear like tap water)

**Insect and animal life:**

11. Are there any insects? If yes, what kind?
12. Is there any animal life, e.g. birds, fish or amphibians? If yes, what kind and how many?

## **Litter recycling campaign**

1. Survey the school's grounds and surrounding areas.
  - a) How much litter is there?
  - b) Where is it mainly found?
2. Survey the rubbish bins.
  - a) How much rubbish is there at different times of the day or week?
  - b) Why do you think the results are different at different times?
  - c) What happens to the rubbish and when?

3. Empty one rubbish container on to a large plastic sheet.
  - a) Categorise the rubbish (paper/cardboard, wood, cartons, metal, glass, plastic, chemicals (including medicine), organic materials).
  - b) If you have a scale, weigh the different categories of rubbish and reflect them on a graph.
  - c) How much rubbish could be recycled?
  - d) Where can it be recycled?
4. Start a litter bug and recycling action campaign. This could include:
  - a) Informing and educating learners about the campaign.
  - b) Persuading them to throw their rubbish into separate bins (for different categories of rubbish). You could have two bins in each classroom – one for recyclable rubbish and one for other rubbish. Eco club members could conduct surprise audits. Reward the classes that don't put any recyclable rubbish in the general bin.
  - c) Getting learners to reuse waste materials, for example, 2 litre plastic bottles can be used for many things – as water bottles for hand-washing; with holes in as planters or watering cans; filled with sand as doorstops, weights for strength training, field markers, goal posts. Use materials for art and craft projects, donate suitable materials to ECD centres for toys, arts and crafts or make toys for them.
5. Once you have your school under control, organise litter clean-ups of parks and other open spaces, streams and rivers. Make a fun day of the clean-up by getting sponsorship and awarding prizes for the most litter collected. Try to make sure that everyone who participates gets refreshments or a small gift.

## **Alien plant attack**

1. List and map all the invaders in your school or an identified area.
2. Form a hack group and clear out the invaders.
3. Do not leave the ground bare. Replace aliens with indigenous plants.
4. Once the area is free, divide into groups and take responsibility for keeping different sections alien free. Different classes could compete around keeping their areas invader free.
5. Use alien plants for firewood, charcoal, crafts, furniture, toys or building materials.
6. Talk to people who plant alien plants and explain why they shouldn't do this.
7. Contact DWAF's Working for water for more information. See Contacts, page 9.

## **Water and enviro pledge and certificate**

Members can complete and decorate an environment pledge. They could design their own or you could photocopy and use the example on page 11. You could make a ceremony, of taking the pledge, with each learner/member reading the pledge out. They could then be given a membership badge or card.

If you issue certificates in recognition of achievements and work done, try to get a local councillor, a municipal official or the principal to sign it and hand it out at a ceremony.

You could extend this idea to the whole school with the adoption of a school water and environment charter or policy which deals with issues around water use and safety, toilets, health and care of the environment in general. The policy could provide an excellent framework and guide for school and club environment-related action planning.

## Eco warrior quiz

Members can test their eco-friendliness by completing the Eco warrior quiz on page 10.

## Learning outcomes and assessment standards

The list below shows the Life Orientation learning outcomes and assessment standards that are covered in this book. However, there are links other learning areas. For example, environmental audits, investigations and data collection activities link well with the Natural Sciences curriculum, while exploring the history of different elements of the environment and employing research techniques and interviews, integrate with the Social Sciences curriculum. Marketing, sponsorship and awareness-raising campaigns offer opportunities to link activities to the Languages curriculum. Fund-raising and organisation have a strong EMS component, while activities involving measurement and calculation have links to Mathematics.

### LO1 Health promotion:

The learner will be able to make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health.

#### *We know this when the learner:*

*Grade 4:* AS2 Explores and reports on links between a healthy environment and personal health.

*Grade 5:* AS1 Explores and reports on ways to protect the quality of food and water in various contexts.

AS2 Investigates a local environmental health problem using different data sources and plans a strategy to address the problem.

*Grade 6:* AS2 Participates in a problem-solving activity to address an environmental health issue to formulate environmentally sound choices and/actions.

*Grade 7:* AS2 Evaluates actions to address an environmental health problem.

*Grade 8:* AS1 Plans an action in which laws and/or policies for protecting environmental health are applied to address an environmental health issue.

*Grade 9:* AS2 Develops and implements an environmental programme.

AS5: Discusses ways to apply insights gained from participating in an activity related to national health or a safety promotion programme.

### LO2 Social development:

The learner will be able to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.

#### *We know this when the learner:*

*Grade 8:* AS2 Explains how to use democratic processes to address a local problem.

*Grade 9:* AS2 Reports on participation in, or planning of, the local celebration of a national day.

### LO4 Physical development and movement:

The learner will be able to demonstrate an understanding of, and participate in, activities that promote movement and physical development

#### *We know this when the learner:*

*Grade 4:* AS5 Identifies dangers and responsible safety measures in and around water.

*Grade 5:* AS5 Demonstrates knowledge of safety measures in and around water.

## Contacts:

NAME OF CONTACT	WHAT THEY PROVIDE	CONTACT DETAILS	
Department of Water Affairs and Forestry	Posters, pamphlets, booklets free of charge to schools	0800 200 200 Call centre	
Department of Water Affairs and Forestry	Posters, pamphlets, booklets free of charge to schools	031 336 2700 Regional office	
Sharenet	Environmental Education Resources for Teachers at nominal cost	033 330 3931 sharenet@wessa.co.za	
Working for Water	General information on Alien Invasive Vegetation, Government policy on Alien Vegetation and who to contact if you have a problem with Alien Invader Vegetation Posters, pamphlets, booklets free of charge to schools	0800 005 376	
Wildlife and Environment Society of SA (WESSA)	WESSA offers services to schools, teacher's groups and other environmental educators. They engage increasingly in community development work and run a number of environmental education courses.	033 3303931	
Wildlife and Environment Society of SA (WESSA) Durban Office		031 201 3126 wstadler@wessakzn.org.za www.wessa.org.za	
The Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa	Environmental Education Resources for Teachers	Tel : 033-3303931 Fax : 033-3304576 eeasa@futurunet.co.za	
eThekwini Municipality, Department of Community Education	Information on eThekwini's water detective programme Posters, pamphlets, booklets free of charge to schools	031 311 8667	
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DISTRICT OFFICES: HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME</b>			
Ugu	039 688 3000	uMgungundlovu	033 897 1000
Uthukela	036 631 2202	Umzinyathi	034 289 9100
Amajuba	034 328 7000	Zululand	035 874 2302
Umkhanyakude	035 572 1327	Uthunga	035 787 0631/3/4/5/6
Ilembe	032 437 3500	Sisonke	039 834 8307
eThekwini	031 240 5300	Provincial Office	033 846 7517

## References

Share-Net, Enviro Facts, 2001

Share-Net, Resource pack

Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, State of the environment in South Africa, 2001

[www.plantzafrica.com](http://www.plantzafrica.com)

[www.randwater.co.za](http://www.randwater.co.za)

[www.thequotegarden.com](http://www.thequotegarden.com)

[www.stthomas.edu](http://www.stthomas.edu)

[www.gfdl.noaa.gov](http://www.gfdl.noaa.gov)

[www.gmd4.org](http://www.gmd4.org)

## Eco warrior quiz

Are you an eco warrior or an eco criminal? Just answer the questions, add up your points and find out.

1. When you wash, do you use:
  - a) a bucket? (0)
  - b) a shower? (5)
  - c) a bath? (10)
2. When you turn on a tap, what do you think?
  - a) It takes a lot of resources to get this water to me so I shouldn't waste it. (0)
  - b) I've never thought about it. (5)
  - c) I don't pay for this so I can use as much as I want. (10)
3. If you got a water bill, what would you think?
  - a) It is my duty to pay for the water I use because it costs a lot to get it to me. (0)
  - b) I won't pay until they force me to do so. (5)
  - c) I have a right to free water and they shouldn't ask me to pay. (10)
4. Your neighbours install a rain water tank. What do you think?
  - a) Great idea! I must try and get one too. (0)
  - b) Why are they bothering with that? (5)
  - c) What a waste of time! Water is a constitutional right and the government must provide it. (10)
5. What do you put down your toilet?
  - a) Only human waste (faeces,urine) and toilet paper. (0)
  - b) Mainly human waste and toilet paper. (5)
  - c) Anything I like. (10)
6. What do you think when you use the toilet?
  - a) I must leave this as I'd like to find it – someone will be using it after me. (0)
  - b) I don't think about it or notice if I leave a mess or not. (5)
  - c) I don't care if I leave a mess – It's someone else's problem. (10)
7. Do you throw your rubbish:
  - a) into a recycling bin? (0)
  - b) into the rubbish bin? (5)
  - c) on the floor? (10)
8. At home, you have planted:
  - a) indigenous plants, vegetables and fruit trees. (0)
  - b) nothing. (5)
  - c) all the plants you like even if they are invasive aliens. (10)
9. Where do you put your garden rubbish (cuttings, leaves)?
  - a) Use it for compost or mulch. (0)
  - b) Throw it over the fence. (5)
  - c) Throw it in the rubbish bin. (10)
10. When you see a bird, do you:
  - a) Watch it, try to identify it and value it as a living creature? (0)
  - b) Not notice it, or not care if it lives or dies? (5)
  - c) Try to kill it? (10)

0 – 20: Congratulations! You are a true eco-hero and Mother Nature is delighted to be sharing the planet with you. Keep up the good work!

25 – 55: You are sitting on the fence – often apathetic. Sometimes you do the right thing, but other times you just don't think about it or care. Find out more about the issue and try and be more thoughtful about what you are doing. It does matter. Become a permanent part of the solution instead of a part-time warrior. Come on! Just a bit more effort. You're nearly there!

60 – 100: You're a living nightmare, destroying the planet and our resources at every possible opportunity. What is wrong with you? Don't you want to preserve the planet for future generations? What a pity we can't expel you from the planet! Sort yourself out and get with the programme!

# Water Club Certificate of merit

Awarded to

.....

*In recognition of work done towards saving the environment*

Signed: .....

Date: .....

## ***Enviro Pledge***

*I, \_\_\_\_\_ promise that I  
will not waste water,  
will not litter,  
will not pollute, damage or destroy my environment,  
will conserve and protect our resources,  
will respect and care for the living things around me.*

*I promise that I will do everything I can to look after the world  
and make sure that all living things survive on our planet,  
today and in the future.*



