



A1 HIDDEN ISSUES – INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

Tools in this section of *Reveal* provide background information on hidden issues for facilitators. Tools in other sections are designed to be used with communities.

Revealing environmental degradation: information for facilitators

Questions for a facilitator to consider:

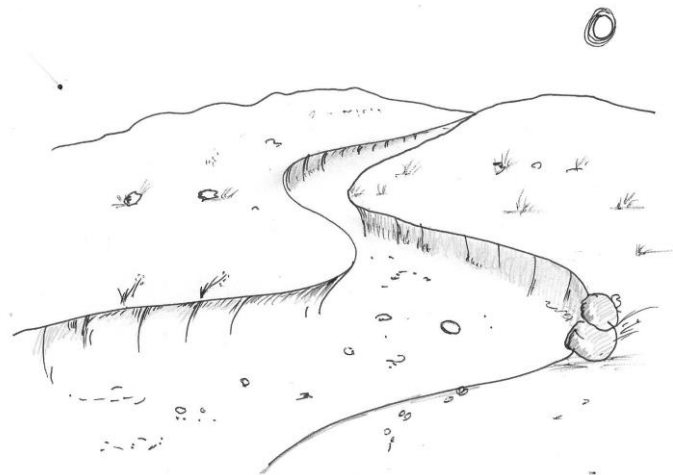
Is the natural environment around you changing? Are some lakes or rivers drying up? Are you seeing forests disappear?

And what about animals, insects, trees and plants? Have some types disappeared?

The natural environment includes land, water, oceans, climate, plants and animals. In many places, the natural environment is changing because people are harming it. This is a process called environmental degradation.

Sometimes, environmental degradation is caused by governments and private companies. But perhaps people within your communities are also doing things that cause damage to the environment in which they live.

This may be because they do not realise the damage they are causing, or because they feel they have no choice but to do these things for their families to survive. They may lack the information to do things in different ways and stop causing harm. In this way, environmental degradation is a 'hidden issue', and it may be important to help the community understand that there are different ways of doing things that will not damage the environment.



Climate change is part of environmental degradation, but because it has a very big impact, we describe it separately in **Tool A1: Revealing climate change: information for facilitators**

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

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Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene

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What does the Bible say?

God created the world and all that is in it (Psalm 24:1). In his love, God has given us – women, men and children – the authority to look after the earth (Genesis 1:28).

Throughout the Bible, we are reminded that God created the world for his purposes. He delights in his creation, and we have a responsibility care for it.

The environment matters to God! The natural environment is God's creation, but it is being harmed in many different ways. Environmental damage can worsen poverty. Christians are called to love and care for creation – and to love our neighbours and not cause them harm (Romans 13:10).

For Bible studies on this issue, please see **Section B** of *Reveal*.

Understanding environmental degradation

People can harm the environment in many different ways. For example:

- Many rivers and lakes are drying up because too much water is being taken from them. Forests are being destroyed without new trees being planted. And farmers may use land in such a way that it does not have chance to recover between harvests.
- People's actions, for example the poaching of animals and the cutting down of forests, can also lead to types of insects, animals, plants and trees disappearing completely.
- People can add harmful things to soil, air and water, which causes damage to them. This damage is called pollution. Sometimes pollution is caused by using certain fertilisers and pesticides in agriculture.



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- Pollution can also be caused by industrial processes, or by throwing away chemicals and other waste products in the wrong way.



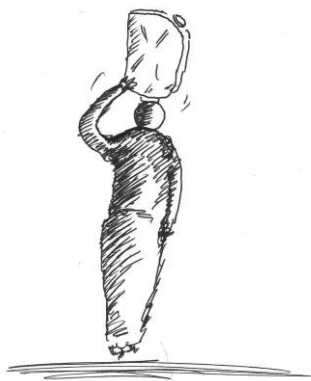
Environmental degradation can be caused by people in places far away. Or it can be caused by companies nearby acting in ways that are harmful to communities. Or it can be caused by communities themselves.

How does environmental degradation affect people?

Many poor communities, particularly in rural areas, depend directly on their natural environment for survival. For example, people often rely directly on farming or fishing for food. And people use water from local sources, as well as firewood and wild plants close to where they live.

Environmental degradation can have a big impact on women, men and children in poor communities:

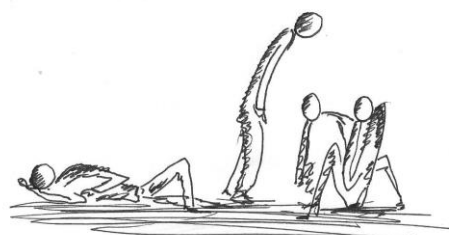
It can lead to soil becoming poor quality. Soil may lose its nutrients and be unable to store water. This can affect crop yields. In turn, this affects how much food people can grow for their families and whether or not they are able to earn a livelihood.



It can lead to there not being enough clean water for people and animals to drink. This means that women and children often have to work harder and walk further to collect water.

In some places, lack of productive land, food, water and other resources can lead to increased conflict within and between communities and groups. It can also lead to people migrating (moving) to other places in search of these necessities.

Pollution can damage people’s health, causing sickness and in some cases even death. Pollution also harms plants, trees and animals.



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Using *Reveal*

Reveal includes tools to help you raise the issue of environmental degradation with communities. You can find these in Section **A2**. You can find Bible studies to explore what God thinks about the environment and how we should treat it in **Section B**. And there are tools to help communities protect and care for their environment in **Section C2**.



Finding out more

- Tearfund (2009) Roots 13 – *Environmental sustainability*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/roots/13_environmental_sustainability/
- Tearfund (2010) Footsteps 82 – *Natural resources*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_81-90/footsteps_82/
- Tearfund (2011) Footsteps 85 – *Trees*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_81-90/footsteps_85/

Related tools:

- A1 – Revealing climate change: information for facilitators [*A1: Climate & environment-1*]
- A2 – Raising awareness of environmental change [*A2: Climate & environment-2*]
- A2 – Slides and ladders – helping or harming the environment? [*A2: Climate & environment-3*]
- A2 – Linking climate change, environmental degradation, food, water and disasters [*A2: Climate & environment-4*]
- A2 – How is our environment changing? [*A2: Climate & environment-5*]
- A2 – Mapping our past, present and future environments [*A2: Climate & environment-6*]
- B – Caring for God’s world (Bible study) [*B: Climate & environment-2*]
- B – Caring for our environment (Bible study) [*B: Climate & environment-3*]
- B – Stewardship of the land (Bible study) [*B: Climate & environment-4*]
- C2 – Composting [*C2: Climate & environment-1*]
- C2 – Establishing a tree nursery [*C2: Climate & environment-2*]
- C2 – Conservation agriculture [*C2: Food & livelihoods-5*]
- C2 – Developing rural home gardens [*C2: Food & livelihoods-8*]
- C2 – Developing urban home gardens [*C2: Food & livelihoods-9*]

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