

# THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE LIFE OF TREES

*This is a small selection of activity-sheets, from a wider resource produced for a Creation Club in Kigali, Rwanda. Many thanks to Caroline Pomeroy for permission to use these.*

## HOW TO USE THESE SHEETS

These activities have all been designed to work in an African (or other majority- world) school or church group context. Although they are intended for primary school (age 4-11), all of the activities could be used or adapted for secondary school children or adults. As far as possible they require either no equipment or resources, or things which should be cheap and easy to obtain in the majority world.

Each situation is different, so we have tried to offer a variety of activities for you to choose from. Some can stand alone, but many activities link together or follow on from each other, so you can design a programme which suits your situation.

Before you start, consider the following points

- Children learn best by doing and seeing. Many of the activities are physical and practical. As far as possible, let the children do things themselves.
- Continually ask questions – What? Where? Why? How? When? Try not to tell the students the answers – let them work them out for themselves.
- Whenever possible, get the students to think about real life situations, the local environment, and links to what they are learning in school.
- Don't be afraid to experiment. Discuss whether something worked or not. Failure can lead to learning.
- Be creative – adapt these ideas and think of new ones. If you have new ideas for activities, please tell us so we can add to this list of resources to share with others.
- Many of the activities illustrate a bible story or biblical point. This is at the core of what we do – demonstrating that God cares for our environment and wants us to do the same. So wherever possible teach the bible point and environmental point together – do not separate into two lessons.
- If you do not want to refer to the Bible or God, most of these activities will still work well and have clear environmental message.

Each activity sheet should give you all you need to run the activity successfully. Read it through carefully well before the lesson. Make sure you have the equipment required. If you are not confident about an activity or teaching point, practise it first at home. If you



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are not sure about the science or facts behind the activity, check these before the session. Good sources include:

- 'Earthcare for Children', from the Quakers, with lots of practical ideas, aimed at children in America but easily adaptable for use in Africa. You can buy the book from their website either as a hard copy or a downloadable PDF [www.quakerbooks.org/search](http://www.quakerbooks.org/search) .
- Eco-friendly Kids website - lots of information and practical activities for children on the: [www.ecofriendlykids.co.uk/TeachKidsAboutCategory.html](http://www.ecofriendlykids.co.uk/TeachKidsAboutCategory.html)
- [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) - an online encyclopaedia with links to other websites
- Oxfam have a good selection of ideas for teaching and practical activities to do with climate change at [www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate\\_chaos](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate_chaos)
- 'Farming God's Way' is a Kenyan-based NGO providing training and literature in sustainable farming techniques [www.farming-gods-way.org/](http://www.farming-gods-way.org/)
- A Rocha has many resources including videos and talks on caring for creation [www.arocha.org/int-en/resources.html](http://www.arocha.org/int-en/resources.html)
- This website tells you about some of the activities and resources of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya <http://wildlifeclubskenya.wildlifedirect.org/>
- The Eco-congregation website has resources on Children and Creation Care, free to download <http://ew.ecocongregation.org/resources/module4>
- The African Bird Club has lots of information about birds in every African country [www.africanbirdclub.org/](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/)
- South African Faith Communities Environment Institute website with useful information on theology, news and links <http://safcei.org>

**Many of the activity sheets draw on ideas from the above organisations, for which I am very grateful. Most have been trialled by the CEAR Creation Club at GSPR School, Remera, Kigali. Many thanks to the staff and children, and to the CEAR team of Frank, Nicole, Claude and friends. Thanks also to Meg Guillebaud who used some of the sheets with the Byumba CEAR group, and helped with Scripture references.**

**Caroline Pomeroy  
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<b>Title</b>	<b>The web of life (circle game)</b>	<b>No. 14</b>
<b>Activity Type</b>	Game & discussion	
<b>Teaching Point</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All life is interdependent. Removing some elements from the web of life will impact others.</li> <li>• Links with Activity 15</li> </ul>	
<b>Number of students</b>	Min 10, max 50	
<b>Scripture Reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 (The different elements in the body of Christ. It is not the same as the web of life, but is a useful parallel).</li> <li>• Psalm 104</li> <li>• Genesis 1:1 – 2:4</li> <li>• Colossians 1:20 (Jesus came to reconcile all things – not just humanity - to God. We are all inter-connected)</li> </ul>	
<b>Time Required</b>	15 – 20 mins	
<b>Resources required</b>	Labels (optional)	
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Put students into a circle, standing and holding hands.</li> <li>2. Go round circle giving each student a name of a part of the ecosystem e.g. bird, worm, insect, water, human, beetle, tree, spider, ant, bee, flower, cloud, seed, fruit, etc. Repeat names around the circle so more than one student has the same name. (To help the students remember, you could prepare simple labels with words and/or pictures of each item)</li> <li>3. Get each student to remember and say their name in a circle.</li> <li>4. Then tell the students that e.g. a farmer cuts down trees (trees sit down on floor) and drains a swamp (water sits down); insects cannot breed (insects sit down), birds can't survive because there are no insects (birds sit down) etc. etc.</li> <li>5. As the relevant students sit down, gaps appear in the circle. Other students have to stretch across the gaps to reach their neighbour and keep the chain complete by holding hands.</li> <li>6. Eventually there are just a few students (humans) left with gaps between them, and finally there is nobody left standing.</li> <li>7. Discuss what has happened. When one part of the ecosystem is disturbed, other parts suffer. Humans, as top of the food chain, may be last to suffer, but we need to act now to prevent these problems.</li> </ol>	



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	8. Leader read or summarise the bible reading from I Cor 12, and discuss parallels with the web of life.
<b>Web links</b>	A simple explanation of biodiversity and the web of life <a href="http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/biodiversity/biodiversity_and_you">http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/biodiversity/biodiversity_and_you</a>



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<b>Title</b>	<b>THE WEB OF LIFE (STRING)</b>	<b>No. 15</b>
<b>Activity Type</b>	Game & discussion	
<b>Teaching Point</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All life is interdependent. Removing some elements from the web of life will impact others.</li> <li>• Links with Activity 14</li> </ul>	
<b>Number of students</b>	10 - 30	
<b>Scripture Reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Cor 12:12-20 (This refers to the different elements which make up the body of Christ. It is not the same as the web of life, but is a useful parallel).</li> <li>• Psalm 104, Psalm 148</li> <li>• Genesis 1:1 – 2:4</li> <li>• Colossians 1:20 (Jesus came to reconcile all things – not just man - to God. We are all inter-connected)</li> </ul>	
<b>Time Required</b>	20-30 mins	
<b>Resources required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ball of string/wool (at least 15 metres long)</li> <li>• Label for each name underlined overleaf. (This can be made from paper or card. You can write the word and/or draw a picture on each card.)</li> </ul>	
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Put students into a circle, sitting on the floor.</li> <li>10. Give each child a label e.g. <u>sun</u>, <u>acacia tree</u> from the story overleaf. Make sure these labels are mixed up in order.</li> <li>11. Give one end of a ball of string or cotton to the student holding the label <u>sun</u>.</li> <li>12. Read Part 1 of either the Urban Web or the Akagera Web story overleaf.</li> <li>13. As you mention each name, pass the ball of string to the student holding that label.</li> <li>14. Each time you mention another element of the web, the ball of string passes backwards and forward, creating a criss-cross of string in the circle.</li> <li>15. As you go through the story, discuss each part so students have a clear understanding of each element of the web, and how they depend on each other.</li> <li>16. Continue until the end of Part 1. Everyone should be holding at least one point on the string. Pull tight to create a “web”.</li> <li>17. Then read Part 2 of the story. As each item is mentioned, the</li> </ol>	



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	<p>student holding it lets go of the string.</p> <p>18. The web soon collapses.</p> <p>19. Discuss the fact that all elements of creation are inter-related and inter-dependent.</p> <p>20. Talk about how we can help to prevent damage to any part of the environment.</p> <p>21. Read or summarise the bible reading from I Cor 12, and discuss parallels with the web of life.</p> <p>You can repeat this with the other story.</p>
<b>Variations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students could make their own labels with pictures before the game(s)</li><li>• Students make up their own stories in different environments e.g. mountains, Antarctica, home village</li></ul>
<b>Web links</b>	<p>A simple explanation of biodiversity and the web of life</p> <p><a href="http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/biodiversity/biodiversity_and_you">http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/biodiversity/biodiversity_and_you</a></p>



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<b>Title</b>	<b>TREES FOR LIFE</b>	<b>No. 19</b>
<b>Activity Type</b>	Drama (this can be used for a school assembly or other display)	
<b>Teaching Point</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trees have many functions and play a vital role in maintaining our environment</li> <li>• We need to protect trees and where possible plant more</li> </ul>	
<b>Number of students</b>	15-40	
<b>Scripture Reference</b>	Psalm 96:12, Isaiah 55:12. These two verses (and others) point to the fact that creation itself – including trees - praises God. Jeremiah 17: 7-8; Psalm 1:1-3	
<b>Time Required</b>	45 mins – 1 hour including explanation, rehearsal and performance.  Extra time if students make hats before the drama.	
<b>Resources required</b>	(Optional) Paper hats for Group 1 labelled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “oxygen donor”</li> <li>• “rain donor”</li> <li>• “treatment donor”</li> <li>• “food donor”</li> <li>• “fuel donor”</li> </ul> Paper hat labelled “destroyer” (this could be a different colour)	
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make simple folded paper hats and write labels on them (see ‘resources’ section below)</li> <li>2. Split the students into one large group (say 10-20 students) and two smaller groups (5-10 students), plus one student to be “the destroyer”  <b>Group 1</b> are the trees. The drama will be performed inside the circle of trees.  <b>Group 2</b> represent people who are working in harmony with the environment  <b>Group 3</b> are those who know that the environment is important but are doing nothing to protect it (at first).</li> <li>3. Group 1 (wearing hats) dance into the centre of the room and form a circle, representing trees using legs and arms to form branches and roots, waving in the wind etc.</li> <li>4. Group 2 come towards the centre of the circle, each one miming a benefit he derives from trees and their contribution to the</li> </ol>	



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	<p>environment e.g. harvesting fruit, picking up firewood, breathing air full of oxygen, eating berries and fruit, mixing medicines, cultivating crops (made possible by trees' contribution to water cycle), birds nesting, planting and caring for new trees etc. Get students to suggest other ideas (e.g trees act as a carbon 'sink' by absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> and thus reduce global warming).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Group 3 come to centre of the circle. Stand and watch Group 2, then mime asking them what they are doing. Then mime deciding to join them in their activities. Continue for a few minutes.</li><li>6. The destroyer (wearing hat) then arrives in the circle. He mimes cutting down trees. One by one the trees fall until only the destroyer is left standing.</li><li>7. Members of Group 2 and 3 mime the consequence of cutting down trees – those who were breathing fall down because there is no oxygen, those who cultivate die of hunger, others stop what they are doing or act out consequences.</li><li>8. One person from Group 1 calls for help. As he does so, the destroyer comes to him to ask for help finding more trees to cut down.</li><li>9. A leader comes into the circle. He explains that the destroyer is not the only one responsible. It is up to every one of us to sensitise others about the importance of trees to our environment.</li><li>10. All students join together to shout <b>“Protect the environment! It’s for you, for me, for us!”</b></li></ol>
<b>Web links</b>	For a good summary of the importance of trees and their many functions, see <a href="http://www.janegoodall.ca/planet-releaf/WhyAreForestsImportant.html">http://www.janegoodall.ca/planet-releaf/WhyAreForestsImportant.html</a>



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<b>Title</b>	<b>TREE PLANTING</b>	<b>No. 20</b>
<b>Activity Type</b>	Practical environmental action	
<b>Teaching Point</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students plant seeds and care for young trees</li> <li>• They observe germination from seed and growth process</li> <li>• Links to Activity 19</li> </ul>	
<b>Number of students</b>	Any	
<b>Scripture Reference</b>	Psalm 96:12, Isaiah 55:12. These two verses (and others) point to the fact that creation itself – including trees - praises God.	
<b>Time Required</b>	From seed planting to transplanting young trees – approx 6 months.	
<b>Resources required</b>	Tree seeds, tree tubes (or old newspaper), water.	
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discuss with the school or group what kinds of trees they want to plant. Trees for fuel/firewood? Trees for fruit? Trees for shade? Trees with beautiful flowers? Indigenous trees? How many?</li> <li>2. Begin to discuss with the school or church where the trees will be planted. On school/church grounds? In students' homes?</li> <li>3. Obtain tree seeds. You may collect these locally, or go to Government agricultural research stations, or local tree nurseries. Follow instructions about preparing seeds for planting – some types need to be soaked in cold water for 24 hours, some need to be soaked in boiling water, some can be planted direct</li> <li>4. Prepare a seed bed ('pepiniere') – should be a small area of well-tilled land in partial shade, protected from damage by children and livestock (you can use a tyre garden for this – see Sheet 21). Mix in some well rotted manure or compost to provide food for the young plants.</li> <li>5. Plant seeds in rows in shallow trenches.</li> <li>6. Label each row with name of tree type and date of planting (you can cut labels from old margarine tubs or other plastic containers)</li> <li>7. Water well immediately after planting, and daily thereafter. Keep the plot weeded.</li> <li>8. After about 2 months when the tree seedlings are approx 10–15cm tall, carefully transplant them into plastic or newspaper tubes (you may be able to buy plastic tubes from</li> </ol>	



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	<p>agricultural stores, or make them from old newspaper : 15-20 cm tall, 10 cm diameter). Lift each seedling out with its roots and soil around them, pack tightly with more soil to fill the tube.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. Keep these seedlings well watered in a sunny place.</li><li>10. After a further 2-4 months, when the seedlings are between 20 and 40cm tall, they are ready to be planted in their final positions.</li><li>11. Dig a large hole, at least twice as deep and wide as the tree tube. Fill with mixed earth and compost/manure. Slit the side of the tree tube, and plant the whole thing so roots are not disturbed.</li><li>12. Press well down with more soil. Water well.</li><li>13. If necessary, protect the young trees from damage by animals and children with stakes and sticks.</li></ol>
<b>Web links</b>	This website gives good instructions on how to grow a Moringa tree from seed <a href="http://www.treesforlife.org/our-work/our-initiatives/moringa/how-to-grow">http://www.treesforlife.org/our-work/our-initiatives/moringa/how-to-grow</a>



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