



Guidelines for activities which will let you further develop your sense of responsibility!

Case study

The participants will be divided into seven small groups of 3-4 persons. Every group gets a description of a situation of people affected by environmental problems. They will discuss the descriptions and answer the following questions:

- What are the causes of the situations these people are in?
- What are the (visible) consequences?
- How would you approach the problem as a young European individual / as a member of an NGO / as a government of a developed country?

After the discussion and analysis the participants will present their case and the discussion results in the plenary.

Case study 1: Coca-Cola Charged with Groundwater

Depletion and Pollution in India (from Earth Talk, The Environmental Magazine)

Dear EarthTalk: I heard that Coca-Cola is depleting groundwater around bottling plants in India so surrounding villages have no safe water supply? Is this true?

--Dan Ehl, Centerville, IA

An ongoing drought has threatened groundwater supplies across India, and many villagers in rural areas are blaming Coca-Cola for aggravating the problem. Coca-Cola operates 52 water-intensive bottling plants in India. In the southern Indian village of Plachimada in Kerala state, for example, persistent droughts have dried up groundwater and local wells, forcing many residents to rely on water supplies trucked in daily by the government. *Groundwater Problem Began Several Years Ago.* Some people there link the lack of groundwater to the arrival of a Coca-Cola bottling plant in the area three years ago. Following several large protests, the local government revoked Coca-Cola's license to operate last year, and ordered the company to shut down its \$25 million plant.

Similar groundwater problems have plagued the company in the rural Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, where farming is the primary industry. Several thousand residents took part in a 10-day march in 2004 between two Coca-Cola bottling plants thought to be depleting groundwater. "Drinking Coke is like drinking farmer's blood in India," said protest organizer Nandlal Master. "Coca-Cola is creating thirst in India, and is directly responsible for the loss of livelihood and even hunger for thousands of people across India," added Master, who represents the India Resource Center in the campaign against Coca-Cola. Indeed, one report, in the daily newspaper Mathrubhumi, described local women having to travel five kilometres (three miles) to obtain drinkable water, during which time soft drinks would come out of the Coca-Cola plant by the truckload. *Coca-Cola Offers Sludge "Fertilizer" and Beverages with Pesticides.* Groundwater isn't the only issue. The Central Pollution Control Board of India found in 2003 that sludge from Coca-Cola's Uttar Pradesh factory was contaminated with high levels of cadmium, lead and chromium.

To make matters worse, Coca-Cola was offloading cadmium-laden waste sludge as "free fertilizer" to tribal farmers who live near the plant, prompting questions as to why they would do that but not provide clean water to local residents whose underground supplies were being "stolen."

Another Indian non-profit group, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), says it tested 57 carbonated beverages made by Coca-Cola and Pepsi at 25 bottling plants and found a "cocktail of between three to five different pesticides in all samples." CSE Director Sunita Narain, winner of the 2005 Stockholm Water Prize, described the group's findings as "a grave public health scandal."

Coca-Cola Responds to Charges of Pollution and Groundwater Depletion.

For its part, Coca-Cola says that "a small number of politically motivated groups" are going after the company "for the furtherance of their own anti-multinational agenda." It denies that its actions in India have contributed to depleting local aquifers, and calls allegations "without any scientific basis."

Case study 2: Computers pile up in Ghana dump (by

Will Ross, BBC West Africa correspondent) *Have you ever wondered where old computers end up? China and India have been popular destinations, but in Ghana the piles of old computers are increasing every week even though the trade is illegal. As we upgrade at an ever faster rate, campaigners are calling for action to prevent toxic, electronic or "e" waste being dumped on poor countries. The United Nations believes we generate between 20m and 50m tonnes of e-waste around the world each year. Agbobloshie dump site in Ghana's capital, Accra, is a computer graveyard. But PCs are not given a decent, safe burial - they are dumped on this expanding, toxic treasure trove. Many of the well-known brands are there: Compaq, Dell, Gateway, Philips, Canon,*

Hewlett Packard. Labels give away the fact that many lived their useful lives in the UK: "Richmond upon Thames College", "Southampton City Council", "Kent County Council", are just a few. They are dissected for any reusable parts like lenses from the disc drives and circuit boards, and with global scrap prices soaring, metals are in high demand.

Fifteen-year-old Ibrahim Adams picks up a rock and smashes an old computer screen to smithereens. He then tears off the mesh behind the glass, and after a couple of minutes he is squashing the screen's metal casing under foot. If he collects five of them he might be able to trade them in for about 20 cents (10p). "My headmaster sent me home last week because I hadn't paid the school fees. "I'm looking in the computers for copper and iron which I can sell to pay the fees," he tells me as his eyes dart around the dump in search of more treasure.

Moon boots

To gain an idea of how people in the rich countries sometimes provide inappropriate gifts, you only need to take a look at Ibrahim's footwear which he found abandoned on the same rubbish heap. He is wearing a pair of red moon boots that once graced European ski resorts. No, it has not started snowing in steamy Ghana. But this seemingly out-of-place attire provides good protection as Ibrahim trudges through the toxic sludge, smashing screens in search of scrap.

He needs to raise the equivalent of around \$80 before he can return to school. It will take him a few weeks but in the meantime he, his nine-year-old brother Dallad and the rest of the army of young workers in Agbobloshie are putting their health at risk. In large areas of this dump the ground is no longer brown earth, it is a carpet of broken glass. But what is not so visible poses a greater danger. Environmental campaign group Greenpeace took soil and water samples from the scrap market and found high concentrations of leads, phthalates or plastic softeners and dioxins that are known to promote cancer. "Chemicals like lead are very dangerous especially for children. They affect the brain when it is developing and therefore cause a lower IQ when they grow up," Greenpeace's Kim Schoppink says. "Other chemicals we found cause cancer or disrupt your hormone system."

Goal posts

Agbobloshie may well be leading in the competition to find 101 uses for an obsolete PC. A game of football is under way in a clearing and upturned computers provide a seat for a bored goalkeeper. PCs even provide rickety stepping stones over a toxic bog in one area of the rubbish dump. As people tip-toe across the "crazy paving" of obsolete monitor casings, they balance bags of recyclable computer innards on their heads. They are heading for the fires where bundles of computer cables are thrown. Thick black smoke blows across the site seven days a week. In order to retrieve the valuable copper from the cables, the plastic coating is burnt off and old car tyres are thrown on to the flames to keep the fires burning. You are fortunate that the internet does not provide you with a sense of smell because Agbobloshie is a real test for the nostrils. In addition to the toxic e-waste, the discarded rubbish and the acrid smoke which blows over the suburb, it is also a huge open air toilet. People work there seven days

a week, taking showers after a brief visit, and the water runs black down the plug hole.

'Poisoning the poor'

In the port of Tema, environmental journalist Mike Anane watches as two more containers stacked with old computers are unloaded onto trucks. One is from the UK and the other from Holland. There are international laws banning the export of computer waste but people are getting round this by labelling the shipments "usable second-hand goods". "My research shows that about 90% of the computers are just junk. They just don't work. This is dumping." "About 10% are put to good use the rest go straight to Agbobloshie dump site and other dumps around the country where they contaminate ground water, surface water, the rivers and the streams. And they all end up in the sea and that's where we get all the fish," he tells me. Greenpeace is calling for an end to what it calls "poisoning the poor". It wants electronics manufacturers to stop using hazardous materials and to take responsibility for the whole lifecycle of their products. But unless waste management policies are enforced, in our disposable age of frequent computer upgrades, this poisonous supply will not be drying up soon. The next time you throw out an old PC you might want to find out if it is headed for a landfill site near your home or for Ghana where it could be crushed under Ibrahim's moon boots.

Case study 3: A Day in the Life of a Flower Worker in Colombia

In low season, workers at the plantation regularly work about 50 hours per week. The high season working week is often 70-80 hours. Men report waking up around 5 a.m.; for women it is often as early as 3 a.m. in order to finish housework, feed their children and prepare them for school. The bus arrives between 5 and 5:30. Once at the plantation, they put on their work clothes, and must be in position when the bell rings at 6:15 a.m. The post-harvest section, in which flowers are sorted by quality and color, employs only women, while the cultivation and packing sections mostly employ men. The number of hours worked daily depends on the worker's department, but a typical worker will stay at work during the low season from 6:15 a.m. until 3 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 6:15 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays. They are allowed 30 minutes for lunch and at least one 15-minute break. During the high season, workers report working 14 or 15-hour days. They begin work at 6:15 a.m. and often stay until 10 or 11 p.m. At the end of the day the workers return home in buses, then start all over again the next day. Below, Stella Orjuela talks about her daily schedule and her experience as a worker in the flower industry. Other videos of flower workers are available on our Flower Resources page.

Background Information: Flower Workers

Industry Overview: Colombia and Ecuador Dominate U.S. Flower Market

1. Colombia is the largest flower exporter to the U.S., followed by Ecuador.
2. Approximately 60% of all flowers sold in the U.S. come from Colombia.
3. A third of Ecuador's yearly production is exported to the U.S. for Valentine's Day. Working Conditions: Poverty Wages, Long Hours, Unhealthy Conditions, Sexual Harassment Afflict Workers
4. workers earn poverty-level wages, making less than half of what is needed to meet basic needs
5. 55% of women workers in Ecuador's flower plantations have been the victims of some form of sexual harassment in the workplace
6. 66% of Colombian and Ecuadorian flower workers suffer from work-related health problems.
7. pesticide abuse is rampant; flower workers experience higher-than-average rates of premature births, congenital malformations, and miscarriages
8. 70-80 hour work weeks are common in the high season. Core Worker Rights Denied
9. Core worker rights are not respected.
10. No new unions have been formed in Ecuador in years and no independent unions have been able to win a collective bargaining agreement in Colombia's flower sector.
11. The most important worker organizing effort in the Colombian flower sector in years was crushed in 2006 and 2007 at the Splendor plantation by the country's largest flower owner and exporter, U.S.-based Dole.

U.S. Trade Programs Benefit Colombia's and Ecuador's Flower Sector

12. Over 95% of Colombia and Ecuador's flower exports enter the U.S. duty-free under a U.S. Trade program for Andean countries.
13. Flowers are one of the biggest recipients of Andean trade benefits, outside of petroleum.
14. By U.S. law, Andean trade benefits require qualifying countries to take steps on worker rights. This short video, from War on Want, gives a good overview of working conditions in the flower industry.

Group size: all

Materials needed: printed descriptions of the situations, flip-chart paper, pens

Outcomes

- to analyse the various causes and consequences certain styles of life have on other people in the world, and to show how strong these links are

- to develop different possible approaches
- to give an insight in the elements of historic and contemporary responsibilities of developed countries

(c) The activity has been created by EYCE



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