



BUSH TELEGRAPH

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COMMUNITY



Be a true member!

The Community of Life

Wow, look here through the telescope! The universe seems to go on forever! I cannot believe how much 'stuff' I can see.



Me too! When I look at this water drop under the microscope, I can suddenly see all kinds of tiny 'things'.



From far away planets in the universe to the smallest bacteria that you cannot see with your naked eye, the world around us is made up of many, many different parts. Somehow, in some way, all these things, all these parts, big and small, are influenced by each other. For example:

- When the sun sets, birds stop singing and go to rest for the night.
- When plants decompose, nutrients return to the soil.
- When enough rain falls, our crops grow well and we have enough to eat.
- When a sidewalk is built, walking to school becomes safer.
- When we sing our national anthem, we feel a sense of pride in being a Namibian.

All of these parts interacting and working together forms the community of life. When the parts interact well, then the community is healthy, happy and can prosper.

Community (n): A community is a group of organisms of any size whose members live in a specific place and share common resources.



Wow, I am a part of this amazing community of life. So, where do I fit in? Do I really make a difference? Am I good enough to be here?

Yes, of course! Everyone and everything is important. We all have a part to play and depend on each other. We are on the same team.



From the smallest to the largest member, everything and everyone is part of the community that is our world. Let's learn more.

Communities and their Environment - The Ecosystem



My science teacher told me that everything in nature is about flows and cycles. I am not really sure what that means though.



I think that they are what makes the eco-"system" a "system".

Ecosystem (n): An interacting system made up of the biotic (living) community and the abiotic (non-living) factors.

No matter how big or small, all the different plants and animals on Earth are affected by the non-living parts of the ecosystem. We can understand how plants and animals interact with the non-living environment, by learning about flows and cycles.

Energy Flow: The sun is the Earth's original source of energy. As the sun shines, energy enters the ecosystem. It is converted into different forms of energy for living things to grow and survive. Energy moves in and out of our ecosystem.

Ecological Cycles: Matter, such as nutrients, is constantly recycled in the ecosystem. This occurs in cycles such as the water cycle, carbon cycle, nutrient cycle, oxygen cycle and nitrogen cycle.



Flows and Cycles in the Ecosystem

Directions: Study the diagram below and draw a line from the ecosystem terms to the correct cycles and flow. One has been done for you.



An ecosystem is made up of communities. Everything within an ecosystem is related and influences each other. An ecosystem can be tiny in size (e.g. a small oshana), but in the context of the entire universe, even the whole Earth can be seen as one ecosystem.

Ecosystems at Work



It is amazing how everything works together in an ecosystem. Everything has a purpose and it provides so much for us.

With all these different parts making up an ecosystem, how can it actually work so well?



To survive, each organism needs specific things from the ecosystem. For example, a bee needs flower nectar, while an elephant needs trees. As conditions change they may become more or less favourable for such species.

Now imagine a disturbance to an ecosystem, such as a bush fire. The affected communities must deal with the changes caused by the fire. The bee may now have to search harder to find nectar. Energy flows and ecological cycles need to adapt; for example, the ashes add nutrients to the soil and encourage new plant growth.

Ecological succession: Communities develop over time and go through stages called succession. They develop from a "pioneer" community stage through various successive stages until they reach the "climax" community stage. It is more diverse and energy-efficient, therefore making it more resistant to harmful disturbances. It can also provide us with more ecosystem services such as clean air and water, healthy soil and biological diversity.

Succession in the Ecosystem



Directions: Study the ecosystem succession below. Fill in the number of different types of living things you see in each stage in the circles. One has been done for you. *Hint: The first stage started with lichen on a rock.*



An ecosystem, even as it develops, naturally looks to find balance or "equilibrium". This is when all members of the community are in balance with one another and with their surrounding environment.

Ecosystems Breaking Down

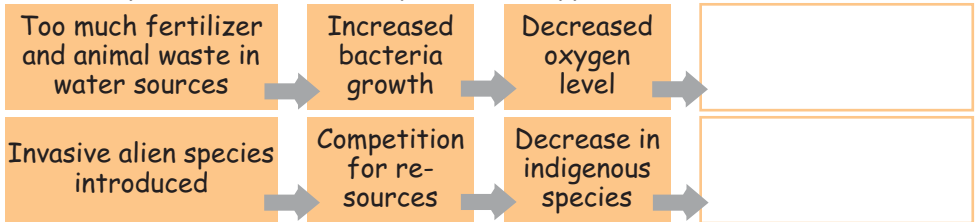


Could the ecosystem stop working if something really bad happens?

It seems as though ecosystems are very tough. What could go wrong?



Most of the time a healthy, diverse and functioning ecosystem can recover and balance out again after a disruption. Sometimes it takes only a few days and sometimes decades. How often and how severe an ecosystem is disturbed determines how well it can recover and provide for its members. **Look at these two examples and fill in what you think happens next in the last box:**



Some species or communities may depend on more than one particular ecosystem and are therefore more vulnerable to disturbances. Migrating birds, for example, rely on a number of ecosystems on their travels.

Follow the Arctic Tern's 70,000 km Migratory Route



Directions: Look at the map below and write the correct number from the map next to the ecosystems that the Arctic Tern can be found in during its annual journey around the world. One has been done for you.



- Antarctic ice wintering grounds
- 1 Arctic tundra breeding grounds
- Open North Atlantic Ocean
- Walvis Bay Lagoon
- West African coast

Not only Arctic Terns depend on a healthy ecosystem, humans do too. It provides us with ecosystem goods and services. Why don't we take better care of it?

Our Human Community



— We have learned so much about communities in nature.

— What about our own human community?

We already know that we rely on the ecosystem to help us get our basic needs, such as food, water and shelter.

— Yes, but we are human beings. We are social animals.

— Community means more than that for us, doesn't it?

Do you mean that we need to share our experiences, exchange ideas and discuss our feelings with our friends and family?



Just like in an ecosystem, all the members in our human communities interact. Humans can of course talk, think and act differently from any other living organisms. Therefore our culture, gender, age, income and many other things influence what is important to us, how we interact with others and understand the world around us. Despite differences, we all live together and depend on each other and the natural resources we share.

Let us explore some examples of human communities:



Many people help out their neighbours by watching their house if they go away for the weekend, to prevent crime. They might also feed their pets or water the garden. In some towns, communities have developed a neighbourhood watch.



Without even knowing it, you might be part of a global community. Think of all the social networks like Facebook that you are part of. Through these social networks, you can share ideas and resources from Mariental, Namibia, with someone who is in London, England.



A community may form in response to an event in the area, such as a fight between residents. Or, citizens may join together to protest against a planned development, such as a waste dump, that they do not want in their neighbourhood.



Soccer fans around the world united to support their favourite team during the World Cup in Brazil 2014. Perhaps a Namibian, Zambian and Ghanaian met in the stands and, together as Africans, supported Ghana.



Many communities form around religious and spiritual beliefs. People from the same religion first join together and then reach out across religious communities.

The ability for humans to listen to each other, share ideas, give support, laugh loudly, cry, feel pride and be happy together with others makes us stronger. As we interact, we work together as a system.

Have We Lost our Sense of Community?



— But sometimes I feel that no one cares or that the community has no real boundaries or support.



Me too. Every time I read the newspaper or talk to my friends, I hear about another girl or mother being abused. It shouldn't be that way.

Namibia is experiencing a rapid increase in extreme violence in our communities. Often people cause harm to somebody they know. There is violence in families, between friends and in romantic relationships. Many times this violence is made worse because of alcohol abuse.

What is Gender-based Violence (GBV) and child abuse?

Gender-based violence (GBV) and child abuse is violence or harm that is directed against a person on the basis of gender or towards a child. This violence or harm can be in the form of physical abuse through beating and passion killings, sexual abuse by raping and molesting, psychological or emotional harm, including threats to women.

What is rape?

The crime of forcing another person to submit to a sexual act without their consent.

What is molestation?

Subjecting someone to unwanted or improper sexual advances.

What is abuse?

Cruel and violent treatment of a person.

NO MEANS NO!

Read this excerpt from Legal Assistance Centre's story about child abuse.



It is difficult to believe that this kind of violence exists in the world. As difficult as it may be to talk about it in our communities, we must. We can start by listening to our friends and families. When someone asks for help, take them seriously. Support people instead of laughing at them. Be a true community member!

Where can I get help today?

- Talk to a social worker, school guidance teacher or pastor
- Call the emergency police line.....10111
- Call Lifeline/Childline: Child abuse hotline.....116
Crisis line061 - 232 221 SMS line.....081 - 140 0222
- Call the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC).....061 - 223 356
- Call the Ministry of Gender Equality & Child Welfare061 - 283 3111

"It takes a whole village to raise a child." - African proverb
Our values tell us to share, sacrifice for others and look out for the common good. When did we begin to look the other way "?

Finding Balance in the Community



→ We should start to act more like a community, just like in an ecosystem. We should promote diversity and work together to be strong.



I agree. What have we learned from communities in an ecosystem that can help us to do just that?

The actual workings of an ecosystem are extremely complex, but the concepts are very easy. Just like in an ecosystem, in our human communities:

- things are always changing, but aim to return to a balanced state.
- every action has a reaction.
- everything is interconnected.

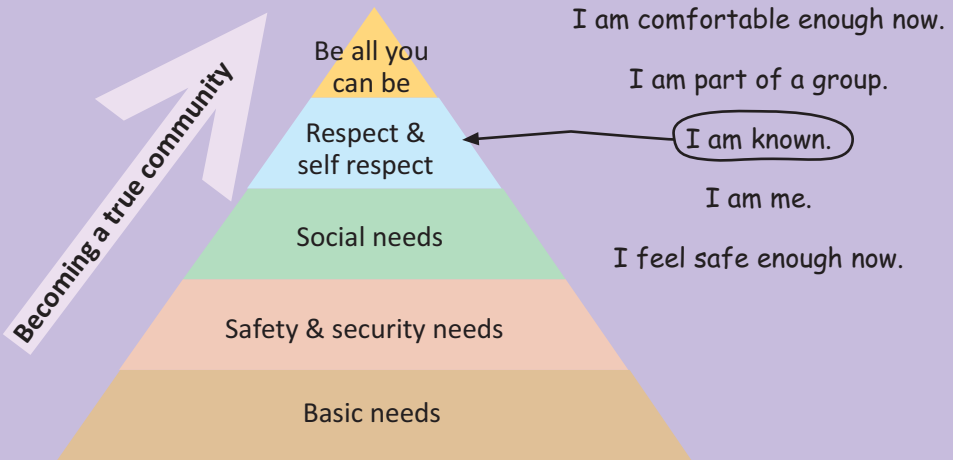
Ecosystems favour environmental conditions that promote life instead of suppressing it. As people we should do the same. Let us work together and be a real community. We can form a "sense of community":

This usually begins with a **shared emotional connection** such as a common interest, like a love for soccer or the environment. Through sharing of ideas people **influence each other's beliefs and actions**. People become **more integrated and gain fulfilment for their needs**.

Succession within our human communities



Directions: Just like in an ecosystem, human communities develop to different levels. Study the pyramid of becoming a true community and match how you feel with the correct level. The first one has been done for you.



The ancient philosopher Aristotle said "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts". It is the **combined voice** of the members of these communities that makes them strong.

Personalities in Community

Name: Jacky Hoff



Organisation: ESDA-Friendly Haven

Job Title: Director

Number of years on the job: 5 years

What is Friendly Haven?

It is a shelter for abused women and children established in 1996 as a project of the Ecumenical

Social Diaconate Action (ESDA). The shelter accommodates women and their children who need a safe place away from their abusive environment.



How did the organization come into existence?

The idea of creating a place of safety for abused women was born from the experiences of a pastor whose parsonage served not only as a home, but also as a place for women to run to for help and protection from their violent husbands. After discussing his experiences with a group of women from the congregation who regularly undertook charitable work, it was proposed to create a special place where battered women could stay for rest and healing on their path of recovery and restoration.

What does Friendly Haven do?

We have many services including:

- Provision of a place of safety for up to 21 days for women and their children
- Counselling and spiritual support
- Support with court cases and police assistance
- Follow-up and aftercare support to clients who have left the shelter
- Opportunities for self-development

What are some of the challenges you face every day at work?

Every day I am a witness to what men in Namibia can do to the person they claim they love. It is a challenge to believe that what is being done to women and children on a daily basis country-wide, is mostly perpetrated by someone they have loved and trusted once. Working daily with the abused women and children is exhausting, especially for the staff working at the shelter. We have to remind ourselves to practice self-care continuously in order to prevent burn-out and stress.

What do you feel Namibians must change to improve our communities?

We must continue to honour the young people of our nation. Our present challenges of unemployment and skills shortages require us to initiate sustainable development projects that must empower and prepare the next generation for the future of Namibia. As a nation, be it the corporate sector, community grassroots, parents or teachers, we all have a duty to create an enabling environment and ensure that the dreams of our young people are realised.

What is your message for the youth?

Pursue or learn your God-given talents; do not neglect that gift in you, pursue it with all your heart, despite the challenges you might face.

Contact details: Tel: 081 124-3010 esda@iway.na www.friendlyhaven.org

Taking Action for the Community - Together

We need to work together to help each other. We learned from nature's communities that every part of a healthy, functioning ecosystem has an important role to play. Let us start by challenging our gender and cultural stereotypes.

What do you think about these statements? Circle True or False

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1) It is a woman's job to cook and clean. | True | False |
| 2) Men are better than women. | True | False |
| 3) Children are there to wash dishes and serve us. | True | False |
| 4) It is okay to hit someone. | True | False |
| 5) I can have sex with whomever I want, whenever I want. | True | False |
| 6) My culture says it is okay. | True | False |



Umm, I am not sure what I think...
(or can be allowed to think).

Culture is really important to me. I don't want to betray my grandfather. But...



These statements are all false. They are stereotypes. A stereotype is when we make assumptions about how people are, based on gender, race, culture etc. That means that they are not true facts. Stereotyping can be harmful and may lead to issues like gender-based violence. Stereotypes prevent our human community from being the strong, united community that we can be!

Let's look at the statements again.

- 1) Even though women traditionally have been the main cooks and cleaners, men can do this too. Did you know that most professional chefs are men?
- 2) No one is better than someone else. Just because someone has more money, a bigger house or a man's body, doesn't mean that this person is a better community member than others. Judge people on the quality of their character and not on their gender, race, culture and wealth.
- 3) Every member should contribute to the well-being of the community. Children should help at home, but they are not slaves.
- 4) Why do we think it is okay to hit others? Are we trying to teach respect? Hitting someone teaches fear, not respect.
- 5) Two adults can have sex with each other if they both consent (this means they verbally agree). Children cannot give consent because they are underage.
- 6) Culture is a beautiful thing, but should not be an excuse to treat others with disrespect. Culture is also always changing. For example, cellphones were not part of our culture ten years ago; today everyone has one!

The ecosystem can only take care of the human community if humans take care of the environment and themselves. So what are you going to do from today to protect your community?

HOLDEN'S HANG-OUT



Holden Mole is the name. NaDEET's my hangout spot. I love Namibia. My number one job is to get the basics - my food, water and shelter. "Education is the key"- I know everyone says it, but it is true. So if you don't know, ask me.

Holden Mole, NaDEET, PO Box 8702, Swakopmund
email to: admin@nadeet.org or post them on NaDEET's Facebook page

Dear Holden,
Where does snow come from?

Melissa, Aus

Dear Melissa,
Snow is a form of precipitation, just like rain, fog and mist. It is in the form of crystal water ice flakes. Snow is made up of small ice particles from the water cycle after condensation. Snow forms when the temperature in the atmosphere is below freezing point. In Namibia, we mostly only get rain because our climate is hot and dry. Only on rare occasions do some places in Namibia, such as the mountains of Aus near Lüderitz, get snow. Sometimes we do get hail stones which are small ice stones.

Holden Mole

Dear Holden,
Why is the sea salty?

Joanne, Rehoboth

Dear Joanne,
Salt from the sea comes from the soil and rocks on land. Did you know that 97% of all water on earth is salt water? The rivers wash salts and other minerals out of the ground and rocks. These dissolve in the rivers and the rivers then flow into the ocean. When water in the sea evaporates, it leaves the salts and minerals behind. Because the sea collects all the salt and minerals from all the rivers that flow into it, the sea is much saltier than a river. Did you know that the salt you put on your food is mined on our coast from the ocean?

Holden Mole

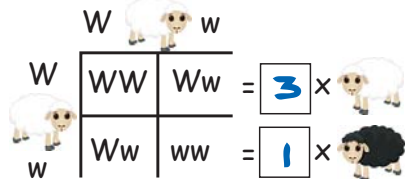
Check out
NaDEET
staff next to a
pile of salt,
not snow!



Update from Last Issue

Example 2:

Key:
WW - white sheep
Ww - white sheep
ww - black sheep



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NaDEET Centre: A Sustainable Living Experience



NaDEET Centre offers week-long programmes for school, youth, educator & adult groups in the Namib Desert.

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