

Activity 1.2

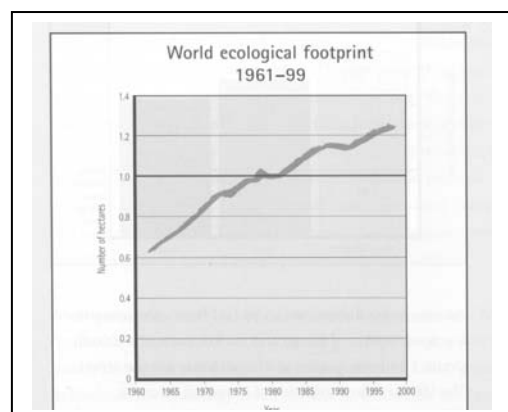


Play a game

The African ecological footprinting challenge

Background

One of the key outcomes of the Earth Summit was the challenge to reduce our impact on the earth. The world has experienced rising waste, poverty, disease, loss of forests – an increased ecological footprint (as shown in the following diagram). This takes us many steps away from reaching sustainability. *But just how far are we from sustainability?*



One of the challenges associated with ESD is to make the unsustainable nature of our lifestyles and actions more visible to students and to ourselves! Ecological footprinting provides us with a practical and fun way of doing this.



An *ecological footprint* is a concept based on how much land and/or water area a human population would need to provide the resources required to sustainably support itself and to absorb its wastes. Thus, an ecological footprint is an indicator of the sustainability of our lifestyles and activities. It is determined through a process of calculating the square area of land or sea needed to supply us with the resources we consume and absorb the waste we produce. It is also based on the assumption that we all have an impact on the earth, because we consume the products and services of nature. Therefore, our ecological impact corresponds to the amount of nature we 'occupy' to keep us going.

Measuring our own ecological footprints

Ecological footprinting has been used and popularised in countries such as the UK and the USA to assist individuals, organisations and nations to develop an understanding of their environmental impact and the steps they can take to address this. In southern Africa, the IBIS Regional Environmental Programme recognised the value of ecological footprinting as a tool for education and awareness-raising, and working with Rhodes University's Environmental Education and Sustainability Unit and Bestfootforward (an Ecological footprinting NGO), researched and produced an accessible footprinting game that would address African reality.

Read more about the game in the pack provided.

Reflection activity

Could you use this game with a group of students or other learners?