

HOËRSKOOL ELSPARK

LIFE ORIENTATION

GRADE 8: TERM 3

ACTIVITY 2: HEALTH, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Read through the following theory and answer the questions that follow:

1. Environmental Health Issues

The main objective of Environmental health is to prevent disease and create environments that are healthy to live in. The WHO (World Health Organisation) gives the following definition of Environmental Health:

Environmental Health comprises those aspects of human life, including quality of life, that are determined by chemical, physical, biological, social and psychosocial factors in the environment. It also refers to the theory and practise of assessing, correcting, controlling and preventing those factors in the environment that can potentially affect adversely the health of present and future generations.



Environmental health is any issue that may have a negative effect on human health. In order for an environment to be healthy it has to be assessed, monitored for change and progress, and current problems need to be sorted. This includes anticipating and identifying potential environmental health waste management, controlling communicable diseases; vector control; environmental pollution control; disposing of dead bodies; chemical safety and noise control; port control; malaria control; hazardous substances control; and air quality management.

In South Africa there has been a major move of people from rural to urban areas causing a shortage of land and houses. Service delivery has been slow in many areas and many homes do not have adequate supplies or availability of water, sanitation and electricity. This along with climate change, globalisation, air pollution and poverty are important concerns for environmental health practitioners. Climate change is a challenge to health as it affects the quality of water and access to sufficient safe water, around the world. Food production has been reduced because there is less land suitable for growing food. There are laws that govern the production and selling of all crops including maize, wheat and vegetables.

Waste management is a major problem in both rural areas and towns and cities. Landfill sites are filling up quickly and they are a potential health hazard. The rotting material produces large amounts of methane gas that is a major factor in the greenhouse effect. Items that do not decompose, like cans, bottles and plastic, take up space. These items should be recycled. A shortage of suitable land space for burying the dead has also become a problem in urban areas.

Communicable diseases are a problem throughout the world. The spread of diseases that were thought to have been under control and new diseases that have been brought into South Africa due to globalisation are becoming an issue. Immunisation projects are underway for these but many children living in rural areas do not have adequate access to clinics and so are not immunised and are vulnerable to these diseases. Measles, German measles, polio and whooping cough may be fatal in poorly nourished children and adults.

Malaria is a disease that is carried by certain types of mosquitos and is a problem in certain areas in South Africa. Unless treated early, malaria can cause long term damage to one's internal organs especially the kidneys and may be fatal. The government is spending vast sums of money on the research and control of malaria in South Africa. Controlling other diseases that are carried by insects and animals are priority issues for both government and provincial departments. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, there has been an increase in the number of humans dying from rabies. The provincial government has spent large sums of money on a campaign to inoculate dogs and cats in rural areas, in an effort to control the increase.

2. Application of laws and policies to protect the environment

Our Constitution states that every South African has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being.

Government departments are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the laws and policies are carried out and that the environment is healthy. The provincial departments and local municipalities are also responsible for the issue. For example, noise control is dealt with by the municipal health services as part of pollution control, and port control is a provincial matter.

The government has drawn up a National Environmental Strategic Action plan (NESAP). This action plan has two basic ideals: the first is to develop secure and higher standard living conditions and improve the quality of life for disadvantaged people now and for future generations; the second is to protect and improve the environment immediately and in the future.

2.1. How effective are the policies?

Sadly, even though there are government policies in place many people in South Africa live in extremely unhealthy environments. There is a shortage of housing, electricity and safe water for drinking and cooking. These basic necessities are a priority but the development in some areas has been very slow.

Answer the following questions (in your workbook):

1. Define the word Environmental Health

_____ (2x1=2)

2. Environmental problems will not go away if we ignore the following (*Write down Agree/disagree next to the question number*):

2.1 We need take action in our homes and communities to reduce _____

2.2 Our carbon footprint and recycle our waste. _____

2.3 We need to protect nature and the wildlife that inhabits it _____

2.4 We need to unite our voices in a call for a sustainable future and demand action from our leaders _____

2.5 We need to be the catalysts for change. _____ (5x1=5)

3. Do you think management of COVID-19 also falls under Environmental health? Give a reason for your answer. _____

_____ (1+ 2x1=3)

4. List 3 laws or policies that were put into place to address environmental health amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. _____

_____ (3x1=3)

5. What is Climate Change?

_____ (2x1=2)

TOTAL: 15 MARKS