

Wood of Life PILOT Project Report

Background

During the 80's & 90's the Wood of Life exhibition travelled to 80 venues on the Island of Ireland including Belfast and Omagh. The exhibition consists of 12 double-sided panels depicting people in developing countries and their dependence on forests in relation to food, fresh water, fuelwood, shelter, building materials, medical plants, environmental services, soil protection/erosion, biodiversity, recreation, and income generation. It also features a 'Talking Tree', which proved very popular with primary school pupils. The section containing hundreds of wood samples and other non-timber forest products (such as medicinal plants) from around the world exemplified the hands-on aspect of the exhibition. The exhibition now needs to be upgraded to reflect current issues in global forests.

While the *old* Wood of Life exhibition proved very popular as a means of encouraging a general global perspective, this particular project identifies and endeavours to bridge a serious gap in the formal education sector where practical, hands-on education resources with a development education perspective on environmental sustainability and human development leading to poverty eradication is urgently needed if Ireland is to meet its global responsibilities.

This attractive learner centred, interactive and participative exhibition with an accompanying CD-ROM for follow up classroom projects, is designed to help teachers, teacher trainers and teacher service support personnel to explore and present to their pupils and associates, in a development education format, the human development aspects, environmental contribution and economic importance of forests to humanity's long-term well-being.

The up-graded version of the Wood of Life exhibition will contribute to and support the objectives of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which commenced on 1st January 2005 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and will greatly compliment and enhance curriculum development at primary and secondary school level. Because of the involvement/input of the participating teachers and pupils in the PILOT the proposed up-graded Wood of Life exhibition will be appealing to pupils and sophisticated enough for adults.

Participating bodies:

The Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College at the University of Limerick produced the activity sheets and the prototype CD-Rom for follow on classroom projects based on the exhibition. A much-expanded version of the CD is planned.

Laois Education Centre hosted the exhibition. Staff at the Centre selected and scheduled all participating schools, dates, time, etc.

Evaluation of the PILOT was carried out by Colm Regan of 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World in the Centre on Tuesday 12th April 2005. Colm's report will be available soon. Anyone wishing to receive a copy please contact Just Forests.

Just Forests developed the exhibition and attended at the Centre each day of the PILOT to engage with teachers and pupils.

Funders:

Concern, Development Cooperation Ireland and Trocaire

In-kind contributions: Architect and board member of Just Forests, Mr. Duncan Stewart officially launched the PILOT. Laois Education Centre provided the administrative backup/staff. The Centre also provided refreshments for all the participating schools/pupils and for the official launch.

Pilot Project launched Tuesday 5th April 2005 in Laois Education Centre, Portlaoise.

Introduction:

The purpose of this PILOT project is to;

- review and revamp the Wood of Life exhibition
- facilitate the real involvement of young people in this review and subsequent re-developing of the Wood of Life exhibition
- reflect current social/environmental issues in forests
- reflect the spirit of Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals – *‘Ensure Environmental Sustainability’*
- expose young people (and adults) to development education that empowers them to take action for a more just and caring world

When teachers and pupils arrived they were given 10/15 minutes to browse the panels-a sort of settling down period after the bus journey. After that TR would introduce himself and his organisation explaining what the exhibition was about. He explained that this PILOT project was being conducted so that teachers and pupils would look carefully at the messages in the panels and make recommendations/suggestions based on a number of questions.

The format used to engage students and teachers in looking at the Wood of Life exhibition was as follows:

- **Initial browse and introduction 20 minutes**
- **Interaction with exhibition 1 hour**-during this time pupils and teachers could also engage with TR for clarification on aspects of the panels (light snack provided courtesy of Laois Education Centre)
- **Reporting back**-this stage involved the pupils and teachers in telling Just Forests exactly how the exhibition impacted on them. Just Forests documented all comments/recommendations below.

Just Forests emphasised that it was important that the pupils not be afraid or shy to critically analyse the panels and make their observations known to him during the reporting stage based on the following three questions:

Q1. What did you like/find useful about the Wood of Life exhibition?

Q2. What did you not like about the exhibition?

Q3. What do you think needs improving in the exhibition and how should they be presented?

Executive Summary:

Twelve primary schools involving 16 teachers and 310 pupils took part in the PILOT project. The enthusiasm and interest shown by the pupils involved confirmed to us that the Wood of Life is still a very appealing and popular means of conveying a sense of the social, economic and environmental significance of forests. However, the pupils, though generous in their praise for the exhibition overall and the messages it endeavours to project, were very explicit in their critique of the exhibition. They did not like the small text and that there was too much of it to read. They thought some of the panels were not relevant or necessary like the Press Panel showing newspaper cuttings about forest issues worldwide, though this comment was more to do with the small text. Surprisingly, some identified the absence of panels showing solutions to the problem a weakness of the exhibition and I have to agree.

As you will see from the following documented comments nearly all schools emphasised the need for larger posters/panels depicting people's and animal's dependency on forests. Also most schools stated that the exhibition should use more colour, larger text, more short snappy facts and lots of pictures and other creative ways of presenting a message such as the use of graphs. Some felt Irish forests should feature as well as rainforests.

They particularly liked the hands-on aspect of handling the medicinal and wood samples from the rainforest. The presentation of the exhibition (using poles of Irish timber as stands) was commented on as very good. A lot of pupils expressed a desire to see images on PowerPoint slides showing the social significance of forests to people in developing countries randomly projected on to a screen. They also stated they would like to hear rainforest sounds, like running water, animal and human sounds in the background.

The following is a list of the schools, teachers and numbers of pupils involved in the PILOT and the comments/suggestions that resulted.

Wednesday 6th April – Morning Session

School: St. Philomena's, Tullamore.

Time: 10.30

No. of Pupils: 64- 5th & 6th Class

Teacher(s): Mrs. Brid Stone (principal), Ms. Carmel Rafferty, Ms. Margareth Allen

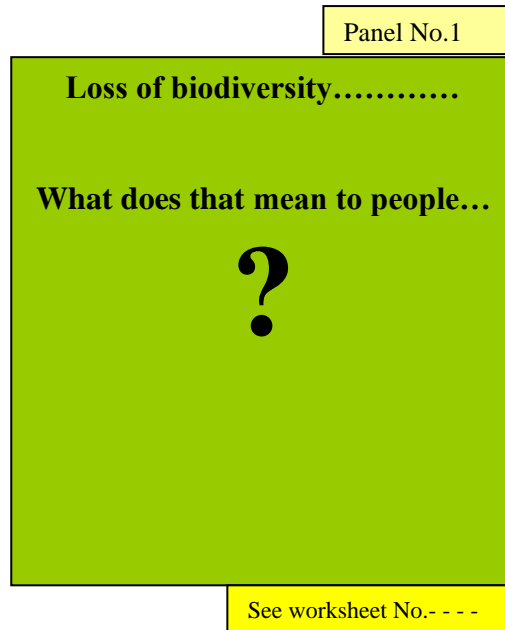
Phone: 0506 21983

Comments/recommendations: (from both teachers and pupils)

The teachers from St. Philomena's thought there were too many worksheets. Specific directions are needed for children. Not too many children at a time (they felt their class was too big and unmanageable). Keep the language simple. Maybe 3 worksheets per group (max)? The CD could have information for follow up work in classrooms.

- Put number on panels –this was highly emphasised.

- Put numbers on worksheets to correspond with number on panels
- Numbers in sequence on panels as well as on activity sheets when there is more than one activity sheet to a panel
- On each panel hang a coloured card reflecting page numbers on worksheets to do with each particular panel



Thursday 7th April – Morning Session
 School: Camross N.S.
 Time: 10.30
 No. of Pupils: 22
 Teacher(s): Mary McCarthy
 Phone: 0502 35230

Comments/recommendations: (from both teachers and pupils)

- Develop a programme entitled '*Caring for the Earth*' in which schools would produce a project on different aspects.
- Visual art Poster Competition- '*Caring for the Earth*' on themes such as biodiversity-forests,etc.
- Too much information on panels
- Produce BIG posters with little sentences with impact that leads to questions.
- More information could then be incorporated into work sheets for classroom work
- Impressed with the pack

- See the existing pack as good-not over done with information and a very good “dip in” resource pack
- Panel numbering not necessary as it would make it too easy to find the information- prefers existing headings on panels as this system makes the pupils search for the information thus learning more.
- More pictures and less information on panels is best
- More BIG pictures needed-in particular the picture with logs on the truck in Cameroon
- More colour needed
- Liked Concern’s ‘Miti ni Mali’ panels
- Would like to see more forest products (medicines, wood samples) included
- Show items made from wood-musical instruments, furniture, etc.
- 2nd panel with press clips-‘What They Sat In The Papers’
- More pictures of wildlife/animals should be included
- Poster showing animals/life at different layers of the forest
- Poster showing the way indigenous tribal peoples live in the forest
- The man planting a tree picture too be made much BIGGER
- Poster of tree showing the different parts-leaves-twigs-blossom, etc

Thursday 7th April – Afternoon Session

School: Scoil Aonghusa, Stradbally.

Time: 12.30

No. of Pupils: 28 - 5th Class

Teacher(s): Deirdre Costelloe

Phone: 0502 25348

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

This group were particularly solution focussed and FAIR TRADE came across strongly as part of the solution from pupils

- No mention about solutions-but one girl recognised the Pierce Brosnan poster promoting independent forest certification as part of the solution-Green School participant
- Wood samples were good but more needed. They should be grouped under country/region of origin and labelled to reflect their environmental status-Red= Endangered. Yellow= Threatened and Green= Plentiful
- Snappy sentences needed on large posters such as:
 1. Loss of biodiversity leads to poverty and dependency
 2. Number of acres of rainforests exploited daily to provide Ireland with tropical timber-they liked the Croke Park connection
 3. Animals threatened with extinction because of habitat loss
- Medicinal samples and seeds should be labelled
- Overall pictures in the exhibition are very good
- More solutions needed that people can feel empowered by such as: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- More about Ireland’s contribution to biodiversity loss needed

- Prevention measures should be emphasised
- Need to spell out more clearly how we here in Ireland will be affected by the loss of global biodiversity
- Need to emphasise how we in Ireland can prevent the loss of biodiversity
- Explain how our lives will change by the loss of biodiversity
- More about Irish forests
- At least two panels needed spelling out how FAIR TRADE can act as a tool for better forest management-“people work so hard for little wages” (one pupil stated and ALL agreed)
- To be aware of how Irish people can help by insisting that building suppliers and DIY stores should sell fairly-traded timber and wood-based products to help people in developing countries
- FAIR TRADE practice should be more widespread in Ireland
- More colourful poster showing the world’s rainforests needed
- More colour
- More information on forests in different countries like Brazil and EU countries
- Liked the Concern panels but need to enlarge upon type of trees planted and their uses to local communities in developing countries
- Would like to see more about Trocaire’s work in forests around the world
- Existing animal charts great-but more animal charts needed -so that when people see how their favourite animal is threatened with extinction due to habitat destruction they may do something about it
- “Stands are great”- very much liked the existing use of ‘tree poles’ with the bark on as stands for the panels
- Liked the hands-on aspect of the exhibition picking up the wood and medicinal samples
- The ‘talking tree’ should be activated again. Use a famous voice for the voice of the tree
- Like the Irish language signs on some of the panels
- Like the connection made between forests wood and medicine
- Need short snappy sentences that make you think and ask questions.

Monday 11th April – Morning Session

School: Scoil Aonghusa, Stradbally.

Time: 09.30

No. of Pupils: 22 - 6th Class

Teacher(s): Nuala Casey

Phone: 0502 25348

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- Panel on Global Warming-showing climate change over the past 50 years and anticipated patterns into the future. This was emphasised as a way of prompting people into action.
- Animal chart spelling out the species extinction rate. This was suggested as a way of prompting people into action when they see their favourite animal facing extinction because of habitat loss.

- Panel on common household medicines from rainforests that people can identify with
- Spell out the services provided by rainforests that impact on Irish society
- More Slogans. Big Slogan: **IF YOU ARE NOT PART OF THE SOLUTION THEN YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM!**
- Show chart of the number of trees people use over a particular span of life
- Panel on re-cycling wood
- Some students thought some panels contained too much text. If someone wants to explore an issue further that information could be contained on CD. A note on the panel to this effect would be good.
- Simple Language-Large Text-Snappy Points is best
- One panel should read: **CARING FOR THE EARTH –HANDING ON RESOURCES TO FUTURE GENERATIONS**
- Panel with solutions-such as FSC needed
- Panels should contain **CLEAR CONCISE STATEMENTS**-further information would be on CD-ROM
- Panel needed depicting a logical process of **HOW THE DESTRUCTION STARTED-WHAT’S HAPPENING NOW-SOLUTIONS**
- Big colour posters very important for visual impact.
- Not too much text

Monday 11th April – Afternoon Session

School: St. Paul’s N.S., Mountmellick.

Time: 3.30

No. of Pupils: 6

Teacher(s): Hazel Goodwin, Noeleen Pratt

Phone: 0502 24781

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- Panels too high
- Text too small-too hard to read
- Poems are good and should be part of exhibition
- Pie-charts and graphs should be used to convey message
- Logs on truck photo should be made much bigger (Cameroon photo)
- Clear simple text – labels to explain photos
- Short snappy facts on panels-further information can be on the CD-Rom
- Colourful presentation charts (with clear snappy text) in different shapes
- Rainforest chart needs to be colourful-present one very drab
- Real tree showing different parts should be included
- Wood samples need to be labelled-name, uses, origin, and colour-coded to explain the environmental status of the wood
- More pictures – more colour

Tuesday 12th April – Morning Session
School: Scoil Naisiunta Thromaire, Mountrath.
Time: 10.45
No. of Pupils: 20 (boys and girls) 3rd/4th & 5th Class
Teacher(s): Liam O’Neill
Phone: 0502 56306

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- Like the hands-on aspect of the exhibition-touching the wood and medicinal samples
- Like to see more wood samples from around the world
- Like the panels that are colourful
- Like the mahogany board with the story of its development
- Would like to see more pictures
- BIGGER pictures-especially the picture taken in Cameroon with logs on the truck
- Writing too small
- Would like to see picture of people cutting down trees and use it as background to make a point
- After cutting trees we should re-plant

Tuesday 12th April – Afternoon Session
School: St. Paul’s N.S., Portlaoise
Phone: 086 3899028
Time: 12.30
No. of Pupils: 31 (boys) 3rd Class
Teacher(s): Roise Nevin (086 3899028)
Phone: 0502 21132 (school)

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- Like most of the posters and the one in particular about BIODIVERSITY and the Australian Rainforest poster with the game and the one on *Caring for the Earth* because of its “colour”
- Like the medicinal and wood samples-touching them
- Don’t like the posters about animal extinction
- Dislikes the panels on ‘What It Says In The Papers’- text too small
- Dislikes the World Rainforest Chart-no colour and text too small
- Would like to see more graphic posters
- Would like to see BIG posters-with more colour

- Would like to see the room that houses the exhibition dressed up to reflect a rainforest theme with background rainforest sounds and running water, etc.
- Would like to see a video or film of rainforests available as part of the exhibition-(Maybe an interactive touch-screen with video clips and all the sounds of the rainforest, birds, animals, tribal people, musical instruments could be developed- *comment by TR*)

Wednesday 13th April – Morning Session
 School: Derrylanogue N.S., Rosenalis.
 Phone: 0502 28702
 Time: 10.00
 No. of Pupils: 24 (Girls/boys) 5th & 6th Class
 Teacher(s): Aideen Timmins

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- Liked the detail on panels-lots of information in exhibition
- Would like to see more wood samples and medicinal samples from rainforests with labels explaining their origin and uses in communities
- More colour charts needed-Rainforests-Animals facing extinction
- Liked how project was put together
- Put labels on stands
- Would like to see background rainforest sounds as part of the exhibition with a touch screen for further information
- Logs/truck picture from Cameroon should be made larger with text;
 ILLEGALLY LOGGED IN CAMEROON AND USED IN IRELAND
- Need an UP-DATED world map of forests
- Mahogany board should have a small tape with voice reading the story
- Restore ‘talking tree’ voice
- A panel emphasising the solutions (like FSC) is needed to offer people guidance and hope (*this suggestion came after a number of pupils expressed fear for their future about global environmental issues. They said they feel powerless to do anything to change present forest destruction trends.*)

Wednesday 13th April – Afternoon Session
 School: Cloneygowan N.S.
 Phone: 0506 43594
 Time: 12.30
 No. of Pupils: 28 (girls/boys) 5th & 6th Class
 Teacher(s): Maureen Fox, Triona Wallace

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- Text too small and complex-simple text needed
- Ethiopia panels should be explained
- Poems a good but more needed
- Like touching the wood samples (hands-on)
- Panels too high
- Would like to see worksheets on panels
- Websites for further study
- Games on CD not suitable for 5th & 6th class – too easy
- Poster on tree planting needed
- More animal charts on extinction rates would be good
- Panel showing a day-in-the-life of a 12 yr old girl & boy in the rainforest and what happens when forest destruction impels them to move to the city
- More samples of medicinal plants and label them
- One-page handout should be provided for pupils to take home to parents showing PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS and on the back HOW TO PLANT A TREE
- Update press panel
- Background sounds of rainforests would be good
- PowerPoint slides continuously running depicting forest related images- people, livelihoods, animals, plants, musical instruments
- Make paper snakes, birds, leaves, etc, to hang over the exhibition
- Revive ‘talking tree’
- Diagram of the anatomy of a tree showing critical parts
- Highlight the medicinal benefits of rainforest plants more-show examples
- Panel showing an intact rainforest and a destroyed rainforest
- Keep language/text simple
- Cameroon picture of logs on truck to be ENLARGED
- A solutions-based panel showing what adults can do to promote responsible forest management is needed

Thursday 14th April – Morning Session

School: Maryboro N.S., Portlaoise

Time: 9.30

No. of Pupils: 24 (boys & girls) 4th/5th & 6th Class

Teacher(s): Gloria Armitage

Phone: 0502 22561

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- Use simple words
- More pictures
- More colour needed on posters
- More information on illegal logging

- Snappy short factual statements are best and more information can be accessed by the internet or CD Rom
- Rainforest Chart needs to be more colourful and show importing countries
- Poster showing progressive decline in rainforests
- Show people depending on rainforests
- Wood samples need to be labelled
- Like touching wood samples
- Speech bubble on all wood samples with information on uses and origin
- Audio/Visual Presentation in PowerPoint slides showing aspects of forest dependency with background rainforest sounds
- Welcome Panel (1). The importance of forests to society, (2). The decline in forests, (3). Solutions, is needed in the exhibition
- Bi-lingual is good (Irish/English)
- Revive the ‘talking tree’

Thursday 14th April – Afternoon Session

School: Sandylane N.S., Portarlington.

Time: 11.00

No. of Pupils: 19 (boys & girls) 3rd/4th/5th & 6th Class

Teacher(s): Leslie Bennett

Phone: 0502 43281

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- Posters of more animals facing extinction so adults will do something about it
- More posters of trees from around the world
- More wood samples with information about the uses, and origin
- Plant more trees
- More explanation of goods (medicinal plants, nuts, spices,) and services (fresh water, oxygen, soil conservation,) from forests
- Panel showing a HOT LIST of: 10 most endangered animals, 10 most endangered plants, 10 most endangered trees, 10 most endangered forests.
- Chart of snappy FACTS to concentrate the mind
- PowerPoint slides showing images of life in a forest with background rainforest sounds

Monday 18th April – Morning Session
School: Gaelscoil - An Eiscir Riada , Tullamore.
Time: 10.30
No. of Pupils: 22 (boys & girls) 6th Class
Teacher: Donna Ni Mhairtin (Principal)
Phone: 0506 52058

Comments/recommendations: (from both teacher and pupils)

- As a result of seeing the exhibition feel more aware of deforestation and the importance of biodiversity
- Exhibition is creating awareness to make the world a better place to live in
- Global awareness of our role in the environment
- Like the presentation of materials-panels, etc
- Good that exhibition is about the social importance of forests not just about trees
- Medicinal connection is important
- Like the pictures as they describe rainforests
- Soil erosion is highlighted very well in some pictures
- Rainforest destruction panel to be more colourful with information on countries imports
- Like the ‘Caring for the Earth’ panels-very colourful and easy to understand what the people are doing
- Don’t like the Press panel-‘What They Say in the Papers’-text too small
- Would like to see larger text and more colour in some panels
- Language is hard in some panels-needs to be simplified
- Vocabulary chart explaining some words needed-such as de-forestation
- Should have panel on Irish forests
- Picture of logs on truck should be made BIGGER with text
- Present messages in a fun and challenging way-example, puzzles, word search and like the Australian poster
- Develop a panel with 10 animals, 10 plants and 10 forest regions in trouble
- More varied presentation of messages is better for interest retention-example cartoon, animation
- Enlarge forest-cover panel
- More colour-short statements and bullet point facts are best
- New world map showing forest decline since 1996 (existing world map) is needed
- Label medicinal samples
- Revive the ‘talking tree’.

END