WELCOME TO THE ECO LEADERS GUIDE!

Over the next few pages, you'll find all the activity guides, aids, tests/quizzes, worksheets, and templates for **'Chapter 2: Developing an Advocacy Position'** from the Eco Leaders Guide. Use the hyperlinks below to quickly access the specific resource you need.

CHAPTER 2: Developing An Advocacy Position

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WWF

Eco Leaders Guide

WWF's Environmental Education and Youth Advocacy Toolkit for the Mekong Region

Disclaimer:
This toolkit is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as part of the USAID-WWF Mekong for the Future program. The contents of the report are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government.

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WWF

2025

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2.1

TOOL: ISSUE PASSION AND CONCERN RATING

WHAT ISSUE ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT?

Instructions:

1. Find a quiet and peaceful space, such as under a tree in a public park or next to a river or lake.
2. **Imagine the world you want:** Close your eyes and let your mind unwind. Picture yourself in a future where sustainability is the prevailing value and mindset among governments and societies in the Mekong Region. Consider the four aspects of sustainability: 1) Nature, 2) Economy, 3) Society, and 4) Human Well-being and Happiness. What might you observe in this sustainable Mekong Region? In the table below, **list some descriptive words that capture the essence of this envisioned future.**

Nature	Economy	Society	Human Well-being

3. **List the issues:** Based on the words you have listed, what are some key issues related to the three main topic areas (Freshwater Ecosystems Management, Climate Change and Renewable Energy) that you are interested in working on?
4. Once you have the list of issues, **transfer the different issues into the table** provided on the next page
5. From here, rate the issues: Carefully review and rate each issue based on your level of concern and passion. Consider how strongly you feel about each topic and how urgently you believe it needs to be addressed. Give each issue a score from 1-5 (refer to the rating scale below) and mark ☑ in the appropriate box.

1 = Very low passion and concern (not passionate about it)

2 = Low passion and concern about the issue, but it's not at the forefront of my thinking

3 = Moderate passion and concern about the issue, and want to know more

4 = High passion and concern about this issue and feel like I would like to contribute towards reducing or solving it

5 = Very high passion and concern and feel most passionate to do something to make positive change on the issue

Environmental Issues		Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
	PASSION					
	CONCERN					
	PASSION					
	CONCERN					
	PASSION					
	CONCERN					
	PASSION					
	CONCERN					
	PASSION					
	CONCERN					

6. **Compare your ratings:** Once you have finished rating all the issues, compare your ratings. Look for the issue that stands out with the highest combined score of concern and passion.
7. **Identify your priority:** The issue with the highest combined rating is the one you feel most strongly about and believe requires immediate attention. This indicates both your urgency to address the situation and your passion for making a difference.

2.2

SYSTEMS ICEBERG

The Systems Iceberg model can be used to understand the underlying causes of a problem or event. It helps focus our attention on areas of high potential for change (leverage). It is typically presented visually, with the visible event, impact or problem above the surface of the water and the underlying patterns and causes at different levels below the surface.

Age Group: 18 years old and above. For younger age groups, you may need a youth facilitator to provide guidance for discussion.

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

Group Size: This activity can be done individually or in small groups of up to 6 people maximum. If there are more people, please consider making additional groups and comparing your analyzes.

Materials:

1. The iceberg introduction video or the Systems Iceberg Explained video. You can also search for more examples online.
1. The iceberg template. You can print the provided template on an A4/A3 paper for small groups, or you can draw a big iceberg on a flipchart paper for larger groups.
2. Pens, pencils or permanent markers.
3. Post-it notes (if available)

How the Systems Iceberg works:

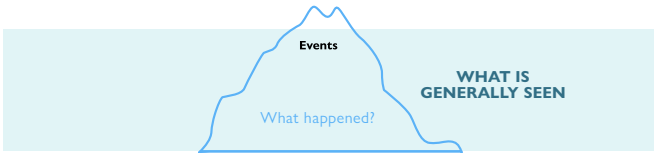
Moving down through the various layers of the iceberg, we find the following levels, starting with the top: Events; Patterns and Trends; Systemic Structures; and Mental Models. As we move down the iceberg we gain a deeper understanding of the underlying systems, and at the same time gain increased leverage for changing the system or its effects.

The layers of the Iceberg Model are:

1. **Events: What are the day to day events or situations that are most prominent or in view?**

   Events are what we can easily see. What we see above the water is just a small part of the iceberg, but that is where we focus most of our attention.

   What really draw our attention are events! These are HEADLINES in the newspapers, urgent emails with problems to solve, fires to put out, or some new proposal... The issues and factors that grab our attention and call for a response.



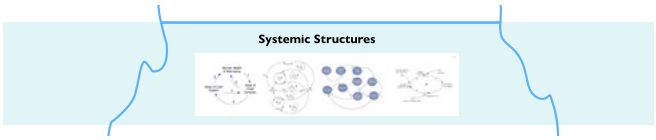
2. **Pattern of Behavior: What's been happening? What are the trends? What changes have occurred over time?**

   As we string events together we start to recognize trends and patterns. This provides a deeper level of understanding, which leads to the insight that 'this event has happened repeatedly over time—it has happened before.'

3. **Systems Structure: What systemic structures have contributed to the behavior patterns and trends that we have identified?**

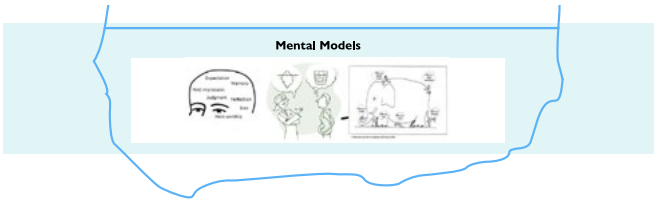
   A structure creates the foundation that supports the trends and patterns—which in turn result in events. These systemic structures are for example: policies, processes and practices.

   Structure is important as it gives us a deeper understanding of the system and can help us to predict systems behavior.



4. **Mental Model: What assumptions, values, and beliefs do people hold about the issue and system in general?**

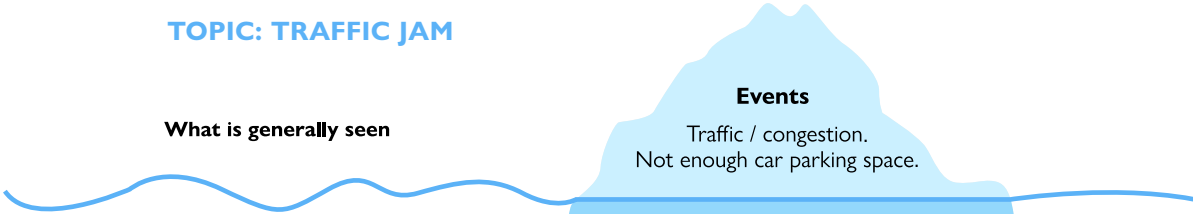
   Systemic structures, in turn, are frequently held in place by beliefs or "mental models." Beliefs may be undiscussable theories, residing in the minds of leaders, on what constitutes quality, service excellence or customer orientation. These beliefs may also affect interpersonal dynamics–such as approaches toward conflict, leadership or the best way to introduce change.



TOOL: ISSUE ANALYSIS ICEBERG TEMPLATE

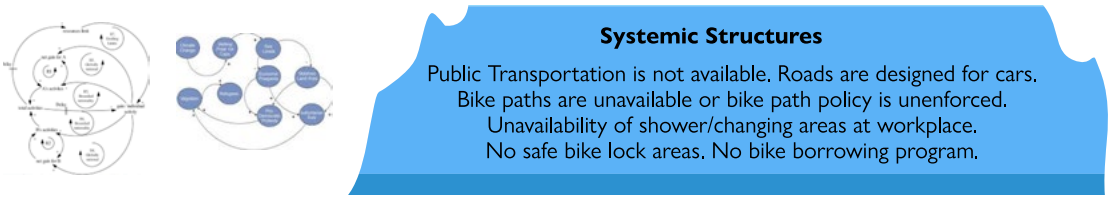
Instructions: The basic steps in using the Systems Iceberg to analyze an issue:

1. **Identify the Events:** Start by observing the visible occurrences or "events" related to the issue. These are the specific incidents or data points that are readily apparent and often reported in the media. Events are the "tip of the iceberg" and the most superficial level of understanding.

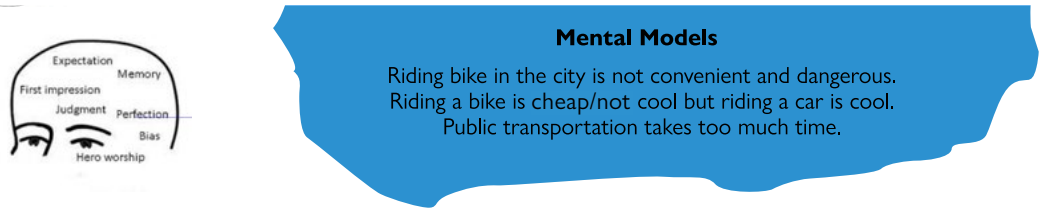


2. **Look for Patterns and Trends:** Next, identify any patterns or trends among the events you've observed. Patterns are recurring behaviors or outcomes that suggest a consistency over time. By recognizing patterns, you can begin to anticipate future events and gain a deeper understanding of the issue.

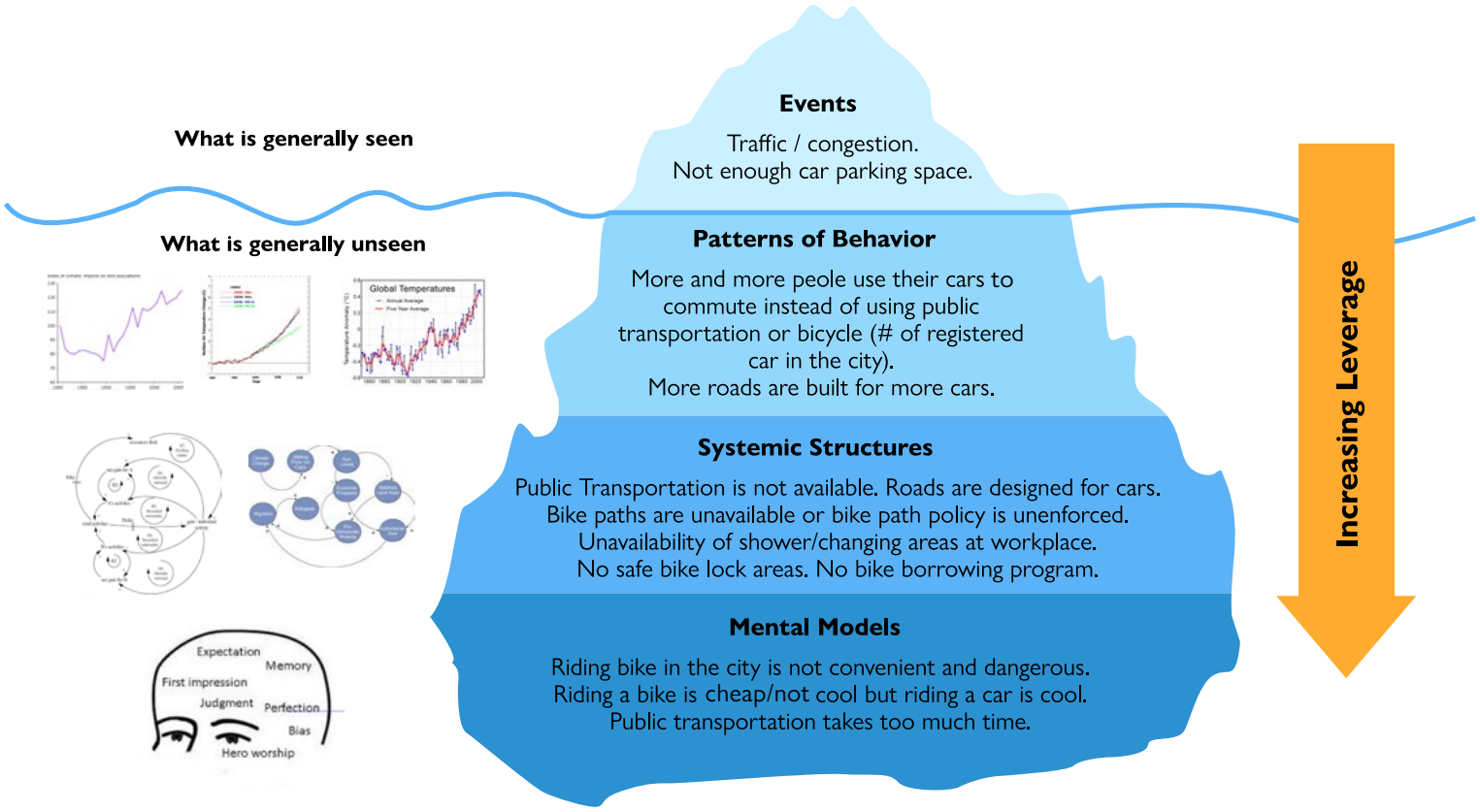
3. **Analyze Underlying Structures:** The structures layer of the iceberg consists of the systems, rules, and norms that shape the patterns and trends observed. This includes policies, feedback loops, and physical infrastructures. Analyzing these structures helps to understand why certain patterns persist and what forces are shaping the behavior of the system.



4. **Examine Mental Models:** At the deepest level of the iceberg are mental models: the beliefs, values, assumptions, and cultural norms that inform the structures. Mental models influence how we perceive the world and, consequently, how we design and interact with systems. To truly address an issue, it's important to uncover and possibly challenge these underlying mental models.



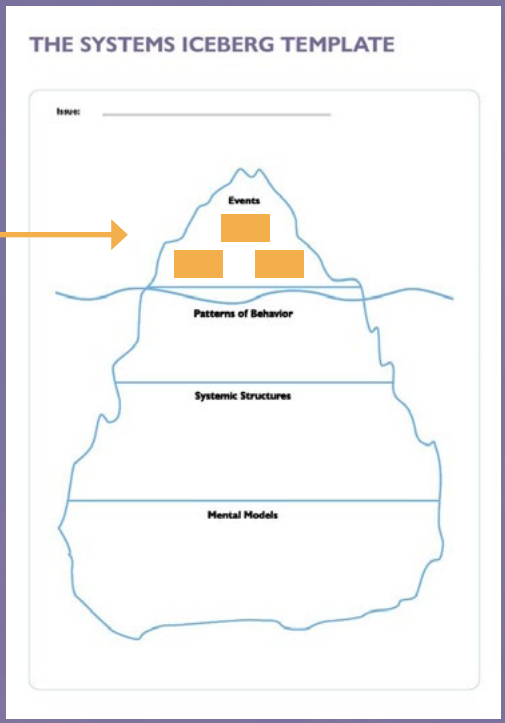
EXAMPLE OF THE ICEBERG MODEL



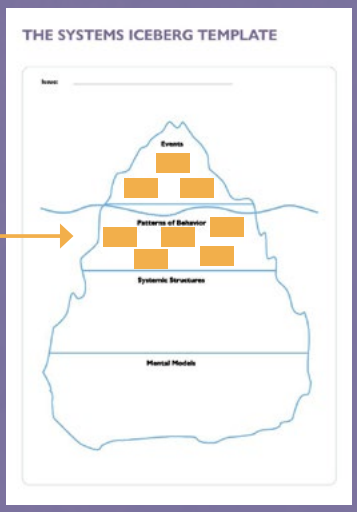
ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

Now it's your turn!

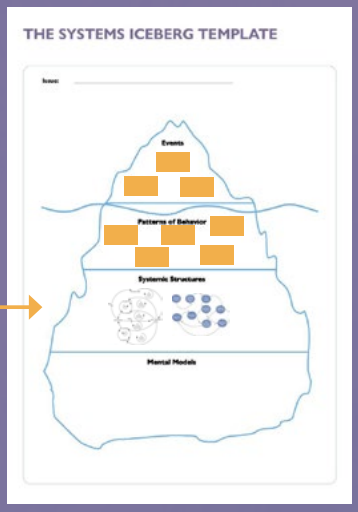
1. Based on your topic of interest, gather a group to look deeper and understand the underlying causes of a problem or event.
   - Place the Iceberg Systems template in the middle of the group
   - Watch the iceberg model explanation video and go through the example provided together.
   - Start the group discussion by looking at the **Events** level, asking yourself a question: *What are the day to day events or situations that we see in relation to our topic of interest?*
   - …Write your answers directly on the template or on post-it notes.



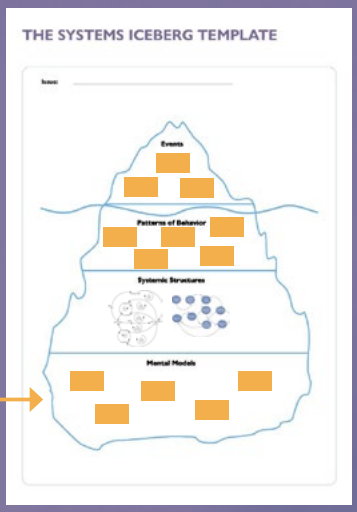
2. Next, look for **Patterns and Trends**: Identify any patterns or trends among the events you've observed. Patterns are recurring behaviors or outcomes that suggest a consistency over time. Ask yourself the questions below and record your answers on the second level of the Iceberg.
   - *What's been happening?*
   - *What are the trends?*
   - *What changes have occurred over time?*



3. Next, look for **Systemic Structures**: What structures have contributed to the behavior patterns and trends that we have identified?
   - *What are the policies, processes and practices that generate these pattern of behaviors?*



4. Then, explore the **assumptions, values, and beliefs** that people hold about this issue and system in general.
   - *What are the mental models and shared values that design the existing systems structures?*



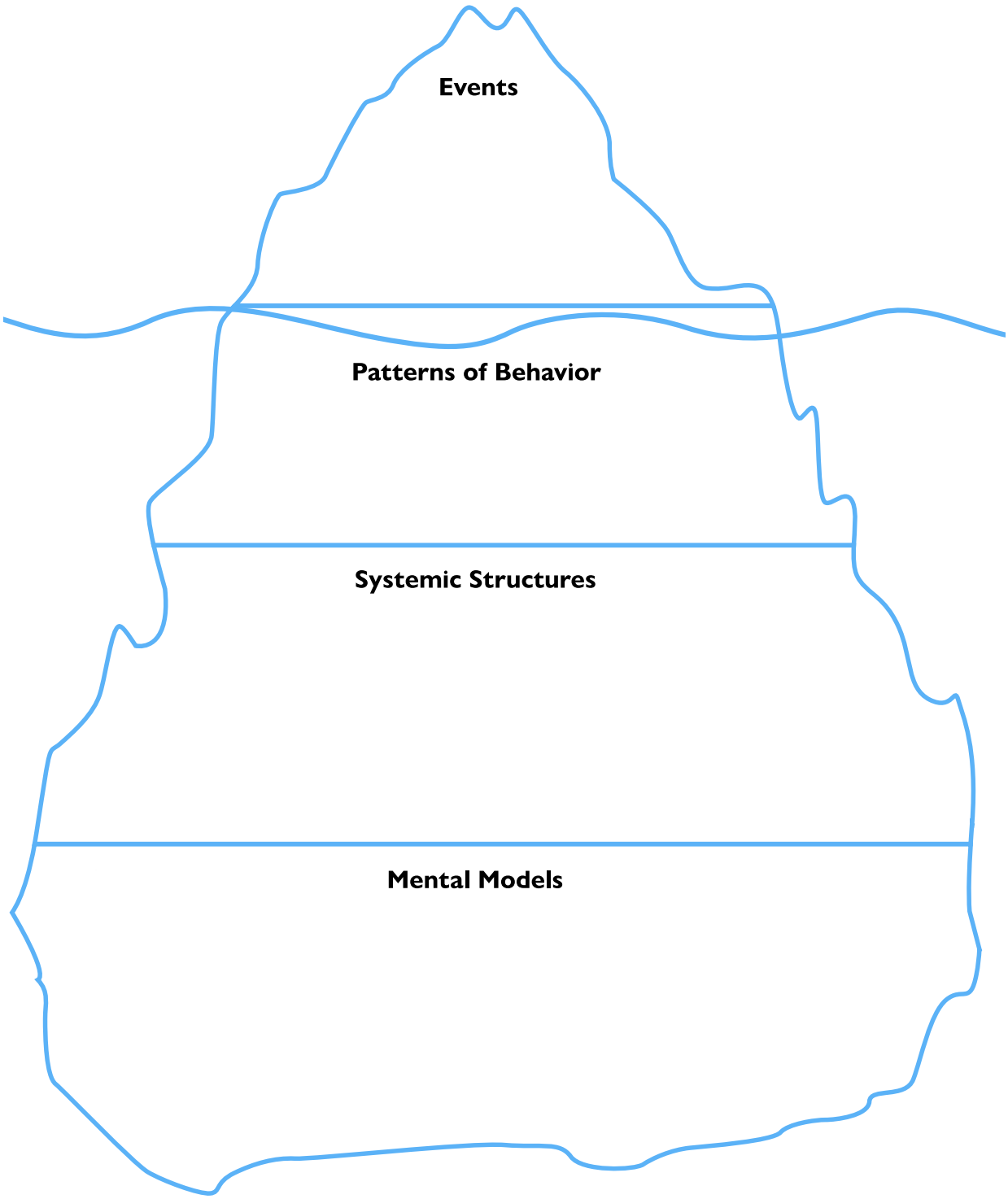
ANALYSIS & DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

When you've completed the Systems Iceberg analysis, try to go through some or all of these questions below…

1. What insights did the Systems Iceberg model analysis reveal about the situation or issue?
2. Did any unexpected factors emerge during the analysis that were not initially apparent?
3. How do the underlying factors identified in the analysis influence the visible situations or patterns?
4. What implications do these insights have for addressing the issue or making decisions moving forward?
5. Are there any gaps in the analysis that need further exploration or investigation?
6. How might stakeholders be affected by addressing the hidden factors identified in the analysis?
7. What strategies could possibly be implemented to address both the visible and hidden aspects of the issue effectively?
8. How can the insights gained from the Iceberg model analysis be communicated and utilized within the organization or team?
9. What lessons have been learned from this analysis that can be applied to future situations or projects?

THE SYSTEMS ICEBERG TEMPLATE

Issue: _____



2.3

TOOL: POLITICAL, ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, LEGAL AND ECONOMIC (PESTLE) ANALYSIS TOOL

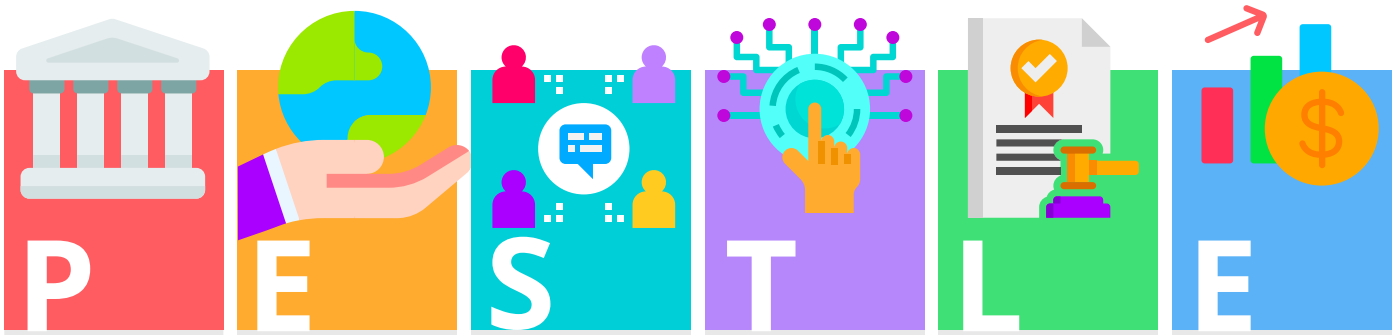
PESTLE analysis encourages you to think about what is happening in wider society that is influencing your issue. This tool has been used in business contexts to analyze the factors that impact an organization's strategies—we can adapt it to use in environmental advocacy projects too.

Age Group: 18 years old and above. For younger age groups, you may need a youth facilitator to provide guidance for discussion.

Time Required: 60-90 minutes

Group Size: This activity can be done individually or in small groups of up to 6 people maximum, to allow everyone to have the opportunity to share their knowledge and thoughts. If there are more people, consider having multiple groups and compare the answers.

Examples of factors that fall under the PESTLE analysis can be found below.



Political	Environment	Social	Technology	Legal	Economic
Government system	Environmental impact	Population growth	Access to technology	Laws and regulatory frameworks	Economic growth (GDP)
Level of corruption	Environmental education	Gender equality	Innovation culture	Enforcement of laws	Foreign investment
Policies	Protected areas	Media pressure	Impact of new technology (e.g. smart phones)	Labor rights	Wealth inequality
Government budgets	Pollution	Cultural beliefs and traditions	Internet access	Copyright laws	Tax incentives
Technical capacity	Environmental awareness	Education system (quality, level of attainment)		Health and safety standards	Infrastructure
					Corporate reporting
					Access to financing

Instructions:

Step 1: (30-45 minutes)

Complete a PESTLE analysis by looking at your study or the Iceberg analysis and brainstorm a list of the Political, Environment, Social, Technological, Legal and Economic factors you think have an impact on your topic of interest. Brainstorm a list of factors for each of the PESTLE aspects in the appropriate column.

Your Issue / Topic of Interest: _____

Political	Enviroment	Social	Technology	Legal	Economic

Step 2: (30-45 minutes)

Based on the list of factors you have identified in Step 1, transfer them onto this table and think about the impact each factor has on your topic of interest. What research methods can you use to find out more?

PESTLE Aspects	List of factors impacting your issue	In what ways are each of the PESTLE factors impacting your main issue?	What do you need to know more about concerning any of these factors to have a more solid understanding about the issue you want to address? Jot down your ideas. (e.g. related policies, international agreements, past or ongoing projects, trends, etc.)
Political			
Environment			
Social			
Technology			
Legal			
Economic			

2.4

CONNECTION CIRCLE

Connection Circle is a tool to help you visualize and understand the complex interactions and dependencies among different components within their issue, promoting a more holistic approach to advocacy efforts.

Age Group: 18 years old and above. For younger age groups, you may need a youth facilitator to provide guidance for discussion.

Time Required: 60 minutes

Group Size: While you can use the tool by yourself, it is recommended to work in a small team of 4-6 people so you can collaborate and get a wide range of perspectives looking at your issue.

Materials:

1. The Connection Circle Video
2. The Connection Circle Template. You can print the template on a big sheet of paper or you can draw a large circle on a flipchart paper
3. Pens, pencils or permanent markers
4. Sticky notes (if available)

KEY QUESTIONS

While drawing a connection circle, ask yourself these questions:

- What are the key variables or elements in this story and what are the cause and effect relationships between the variables?
- Where are the important connection hubs? Why are they so connected?
- Are there any complete feedback loops present?
- After gaining a big picture view of the various interconnections between linked elements in the system, what insights can draw out in terms of interventions to change the behavior of the system in a positive direction?

Instructions:

1. **Draw a Circle:** Begin by drawing a circle in the center of a piece of paper or a whiteboard. This circle represents the system you are examining, **in this case, water pollution**.

2. **Identify Key Elements:** Start by identifying the key elements related to the issue you would like to work on.

   Place each key element you identified around the circle. Try to keep it within 10-15 elements.

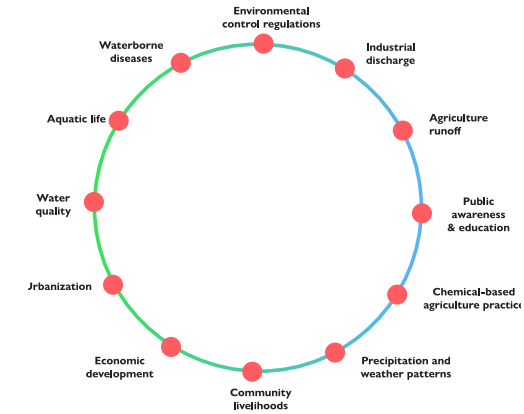
   For the water pollution example, these elements may include sources of pollution (e.g., industrial discharge, agricultural runoff, sewage), affected bodies of water (e.g., rivers, lakes, oceans), impacts on ecosystems and wildlife, and consequences for human health.

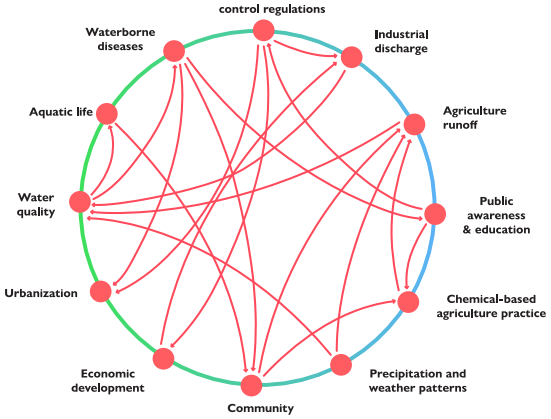
3. **Draw Arrows:** Draw arrows between the elements to indicate the directional relationships and connections between them. Use arrows to show how one element influences or impacts another. For instance, you can draw an arrow **from "Industrial Discharge" to "Water Quality"** to show how pollution from industries affects the quality of rivers.

   Continue this process until you cannot see any more direct causal connections between these elements. Links may be based on actual data or on hypotheses.

4. **Identify Feedback Loops:** Identify any feedback loops in the system. A feedback loop occurs when the output of a process loops back and affects the input.

Example using issue of Water Pollution





For example, Agricultural runoff negatively impacts water quality, which in turn harms aquatic life. This degradation of water quality and aquatic ecosystems affects community livelihoods, often driving farmers to increase chemical-based agricultural practices in an attempt to boost their income. These practices, however, exacerbate the agricultural runoff, creating a harmful feedback loop that further deteriorates water quality and aquatic life.

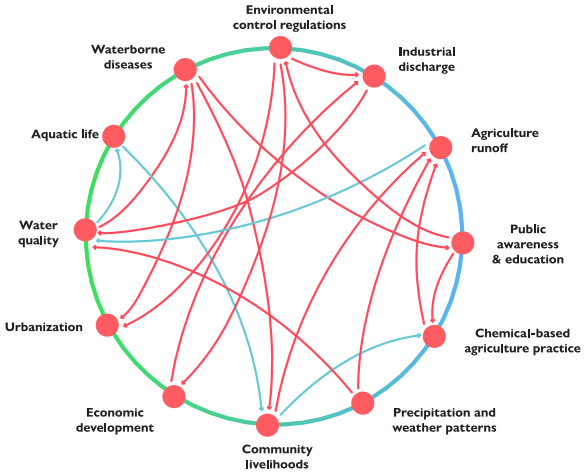
Draw feedback arrows to represent these loops. Use a different color to distinguish feedback loops from regular connections.

5. **Review and Refine:** Step back and review your diagram to ensure that the connections and feedback loops accurately reflect the complexity of the water pollution issue. Make any necessary adjustments or additions to improve clarity and understanding.

6. **Selecting an Advocacy Feedback Loop:** There might be several feedback loops represented in your connection circle. However, it is unlikely that you can effectively intervene in all of them. It is recommended to select the feedback loop sub-system that you and your team have the ability to intervene in and make some level of measurable change.

   Discuss with your team to select the feedback loop that most makes sense to you as a "story" of cause and effect. It should be a loop that you can build an advocacy campaign strategy around that will resonate with different stakeholders in your community.

   In Chapter 3 of the toolkit you will identify those stakeholders, and in Chapter 4, you will develop an advocacy plan that draws from this Connection Circle system feedback loop story.



ADDITIONAL TIPS: HOW TO READ AND ANALYZE A CONNECTION CIRCLE

Below are some key consideration points for you to look at in your Connection Circle. These are not strict rules, but can give you some insights about the connections you identified using the Connection Circle.

Which elements have lots of arrows around them? Why? Elements with lots of arrows moving to and from them tend to be leverage points in the story. Because of all their connections, key elements create lots of changes. In a connection circle about "French Fries in the economy", "French Fries Sold" might have lots of arrows pointing to and from it because it drives the key issues raised in the article.

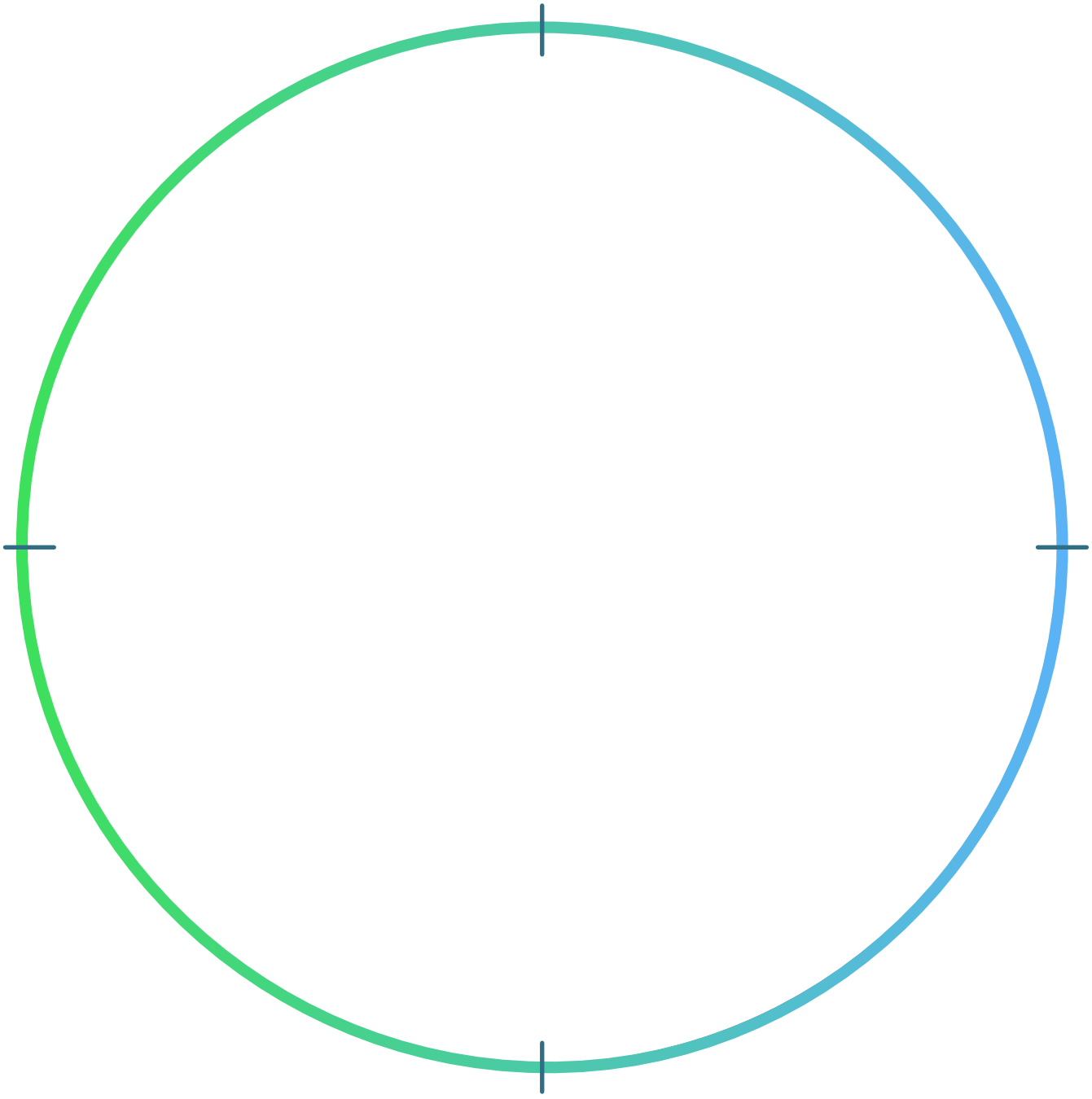
What is the significance of an element that has no arrows pointing to it? When an element has no arrows pointing to it, it is not being changed by any other element represented in the circle. If it is important, you may need to add another variable that causes the first variable to change.

What is the significance of an element that has no arrows coming from it? No arrows out means that the element doesn't influence anything that is currently in the circle. You may need to add one or more new elements.

What is the significance of an element with no arrows connected to or from it? No arrows at all means the element is not critical to the part of the story being traced, or other elements have been omitted that need to be included.

What does it mean when a pathway of arrows leads back to the starting element? When a pathway of arrows loops back to the original element, there is feedback in the story. Each closed loop identified is a feedback loop. When one element in the loop changes, the effect ripples through the whole loop, eventually affecting the original element as well.

CONNECTION CIRCLE TEMPLATE



2.5

TOOL: GMS YOUTH ADVOCATE RESEARCH PLAN TEMPLATE

Instructions:

1. **Write down the Issue or Problem:** Start by writing the specific issue or problem you have identified at the top of the template.
2. **Develop Specific Questions:** In Column A, write out questions that specifically reflect the issue or problem you want to address. For example, instead of a general question like "Is there a problem?" for the issue of "sand dredging in river systems, which is causing massive erosion of river banks," you could write ***"What are the associated problems caused by river sand dredging?"***
3. **Identify Key Stakeholders:** In Column B, list the ***stakeholders you need to speak with to find out more about the issue***. Include individuals or groups who are already working on this issue and try to consult with them early in your planning. They may become valuable collaborators in your advocacy journey.
4. **Choose Research Methods:** In Column C, select the research methods you will use to answer each question. Refer to the Research Methods section of the toolkit. You can use one method, such as interviewing, to answer multiple questions.
5. **Analyze and Reflect on Your Research:** Use the tools provided in the toolkit (or your own tools) to help you analyze, organize, and reflect on your research information. For example, to answer the question "What needs to change?" you could use a Problem Tree or the Systems Iceberg for analysis.

Example:

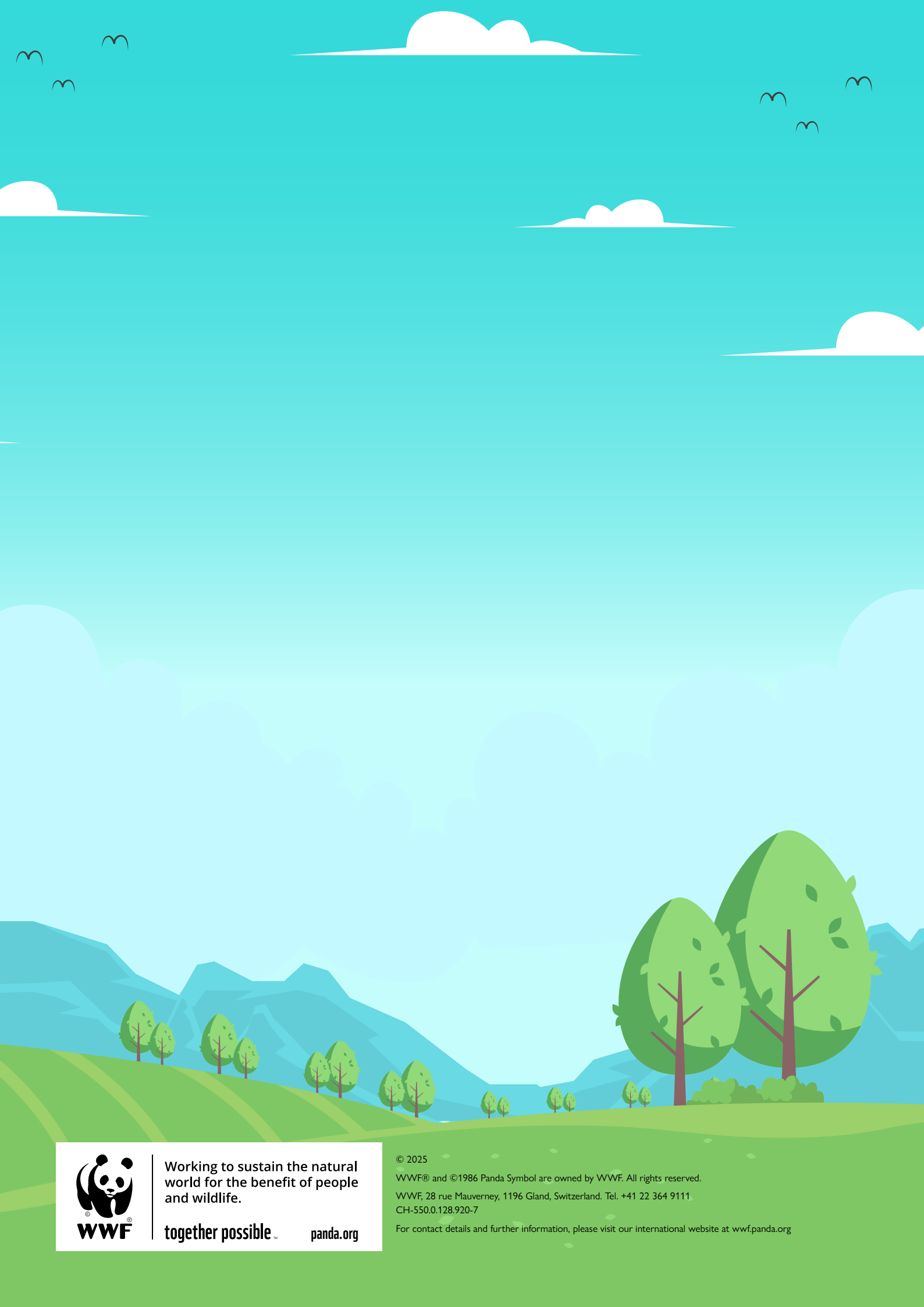
Issue Identified: Sand dredging in river systems causing massive erosion of river banks.

COLUMN A: Key Questions	COLUMN B: Stakeholders	COLUMN C: Research Methods	COLUMN D: Analysis Tools
What are the associated problems caused by river sand dredging?	Environmental scientists, local residents	Interviews, field observations	The Sustainability Compass, Problem Tree, Systems Iceberg, PESTLE
How does river bank erosion impact local communities?	Local community leaders, government officials	Surveys, focus groups	Stakeholder Mapping, System Mapping
What regulations exist regarding sand dredging?	Legal experts, regulatory agencies	Document analysis, expert interviews	Regulatory Framework Analysis
What are potential solutions to mitigate the erosion?	NGOs, environmental engineers	Literature review, case studies	SWOT Analysis

By following these steps, you will be able to systematically approach your issue and gather the necessary information for your advocacy efforts.

TOOL: GMS YOUTH ADVOCATE RESEARCH PLAN TEMPLATE

COLUMN A: **Key Questions**	**COLUMN B:** **Stakeholders**	**COLUMN C:** **Research Methods**	**COLUMN D:** **Analysis Tools**



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