

# Environmental Service Trip at Deserts in China

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# Background

- **Participation in co-curricular programmes is an integral part of the student life** (Kuh, 2001)
  - **Complement** curriculum (Sterling & Kerr, 2015)
  - Create **high impact** (Kuh, 2008)
- **Service Learning, Community-Based Learning**
  - “give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the Community” (Kuh, 2008)
  - Apply + reflect
  - Impact the community
- **Student perspective**

# Aim

**To enrich students' learning experience in environmental issues and enhance students' holistic well-being:**

- To expand students' subject knowledge
- To improve students' skills
  - Adaptability
  - Problem-solving
  - Teamwork
  - Leadership
  - Multicultural understanding
- To provide opportunities for students to impact the society
- To foster students' global citizenship



- **Organizers**

- Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong
- Xian YMCA
- MSc in Environmental Management programme (MSc ENVM), HKU
- Youth League Committee Dingbian County



- **Locations**

- Dingbian County (定邊縣), Shanxi Province
- Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region

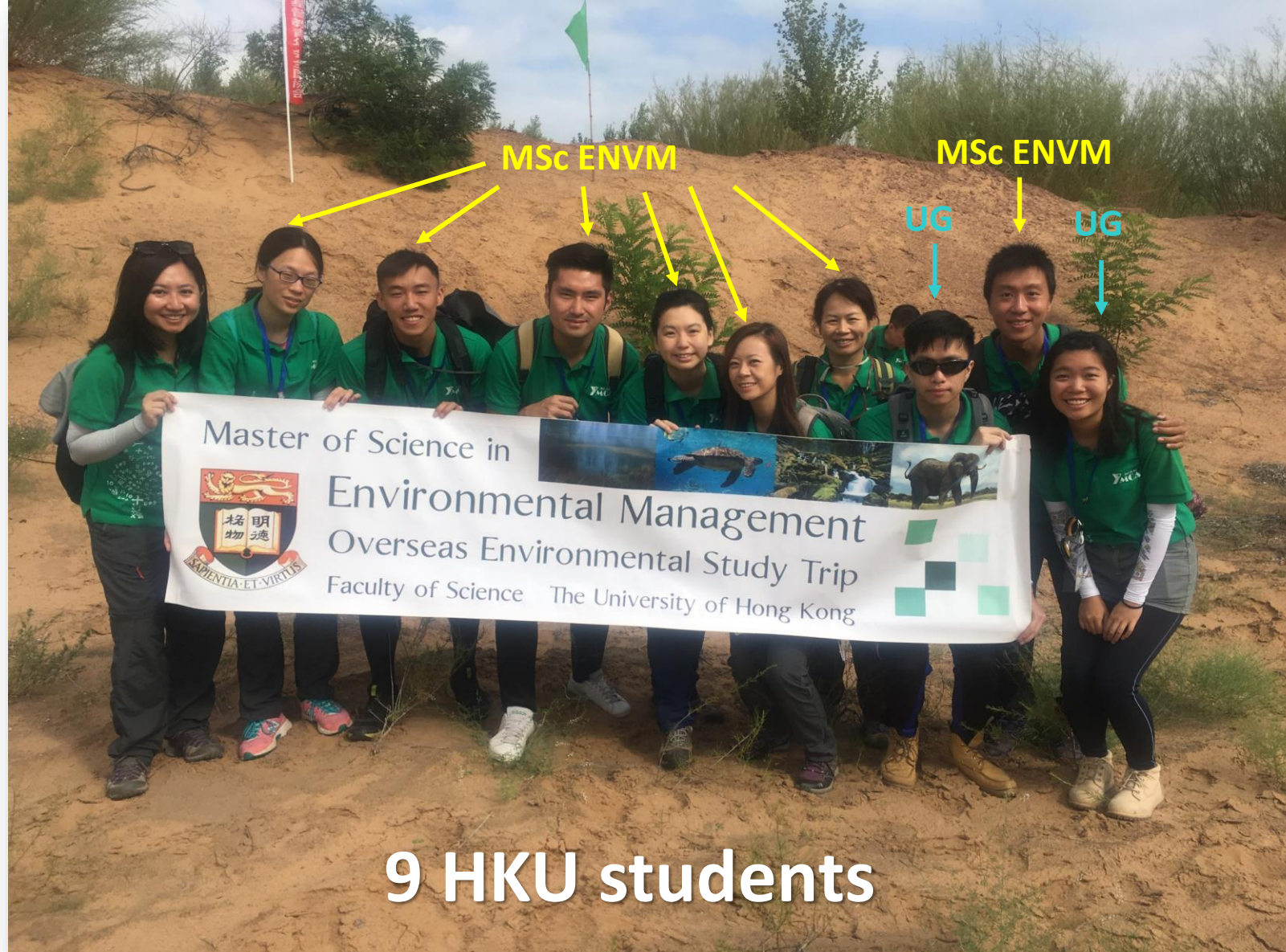
- **Participation fee (7 days)**

- HK\$2,920





# Participants





# Participants



- YMCA Youth members
  - HK, Macau, Taipei, Taichung, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Nanjin, Xiameng, Wuhan, Xian
- Youth from Dingbian County

# Timeline

- Pre-trip training
  - July 2018
- During trip
  - **29 July to 4 August 2018**
- Post-trip
  - Until end of November 2018



# How students enrolled & their tasks

Optional + relevant to curriculum

Not under any course

ENVM7018 Environmental Field Studies  
(3 credits)

ENVM8015 Directed Studies in ENVM  
(6 credits)

Video

+

Self-  
reflection

Climate change  
Desertification  
Global citizenship  
Knowledge exchange

**3+1 Is**

**Internationalization**  
Cross-cultural encounters

**Innovation**  
Use of social media for learning

**Interdisciplinarity**  
Partner with a social NGO and government

**IMPACT**  
For the betterment of the world

Study guide / FB  
page & FB Live

+

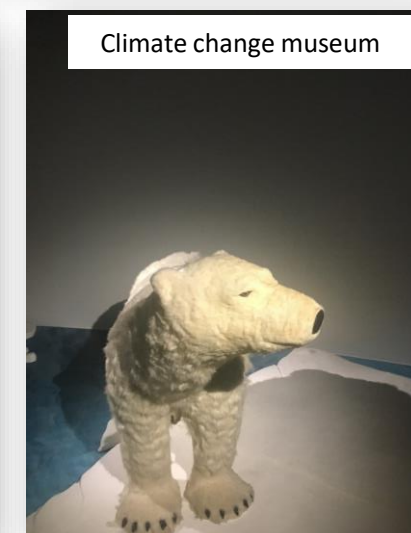
Presentation to HKU  
fellow students

+

Presentation  
to YMCA staff



# Pre-trip training (July 2018)





# During the trip (29 July – 4 Aug)



- Lead and build a team
- Train the participants





# Student-led workshops on climate change









# Prepare for teaching children in a remote school



Team up & lead a team









# Lunch








# Afternoon







栽上一棵树   
风兒有色彩  
捡起一张纸  
 小草也愉快  
珍惜一滴水  
云朵来喝采  
省下一度电  
 太阳笑颜开  
来呀来呀来呀来呀  
爱护咱家园  
从我做起

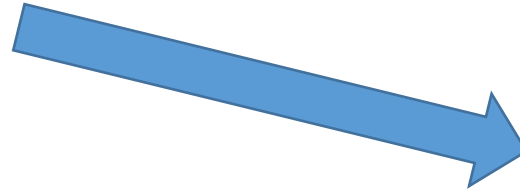
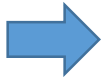


- 100+ camp participants
- 150+ primary school students





# Plant trees at Mu Su Desert (毛烏素沙漠)



>700 pine trees



# Plant trees at Baiyu Mountain (白于山)





# Build sand-protection barrier

1. Dig a hole
2. Put in pine seedlings
3. Cover the hole with sand
4. Add 1-2 buckets of water
5. Build sand-protection barrier

Pedocal layer will form on soil surface through calcification





# Trek in Tenggeli Desert (騰格里沙漠)









# Support each other





# Cultural night



The background of the slide is a photograph of a desert landscape. It shows rolling sand dunes with distinct horizontal ripples. Long, dark shadows of several people are cast across the sand, stretching from the left towards the right. The lighting suggests it is either early morning or late afternoon. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is centered horizontally across the middle of the image, containing the text.

# **Students' reflection**



# \*Step out of my comfort zone

“From the get go, this trip has forced me to *venture out of my comfort zone and challenged me to rethink familiar issues from a whole new perspective.*”



# Step out of my comfort zone

“I used to study and worked in UK and I rarely speak mandarin, ***but this is my first time in my life to get to know more friends in a day by speaking lots of mandarin!*** This not only makes me feel that my Mandarin is capable, in the process of mutual communication, we are willing to share the uniqueness of our living and it is very rewarding!





# \*Evaluate myself, make adjustment to impact others



“.....9 of us really struggled to condense the huge topic of climate change within a 20-minute presentation..... With the help of *tough comments and many sessions of trial-and-error*, .....*we downplayed the academic and data-based approach that we were accustomed to.*”

“With so much thought put into this presentation, it was *extra rewarding* when our local audience in Ding Bian told us that they have never learnt about climate change in such *a down-to-earth approach* before and that *they felt more empowered to combat climate change after listening to us* because they now know that their choices have a direct influence on climate change.”

# \*Self reflection and broadened appreciation

“When I stepped into the classroom, I felt a simple and plain learning atmosphere! .....***I was shocked!*** At the same time, when each student continued to hold a naive look and attitude to respond to our volunteers, there was a tear dropped in my heart! ***What is the motivation to make them happy from this simplicity or restricted life? Can life really be so simple?*** That day, I was not only able to see the students listened carefully to the ***environmental information*** we promoted to them, I also saw ***love, relationships and unconditional pay!***





# Intercultural understanding on my discipline

“What environmental problem could you think of?.....The girl’s answer surprised me. She said it is **cutting down trees and soil erosion**.....I asked my son and daughter what environmental problems they could think of. Their answers were **air pollution, waste management problem and global warming**, etc. I believe one of the main reasons [for such different answers] is the different environment in which they live.”





# \*Communication & collaboration

*“Talking to others with such diverse backgrounds* really broadened my horizon as it would be difficult for me to think from perspectives that were so different from me.”

“I also had *better skills in communicating and coordinating with my peers*. For example, for the children activities, one of us held the booth while another one managed the queue and ensured no cutting in line happened.” ..... “For planning trees, my groupmates and I had to carry the trees and the water buckets on the slope, which was very tired. *We helped each other when others needed help.*”





# Appreciate other cultures

“.....Their commitment amazed me and the results in **combating desertification** was remarkable. New villages were now built on land that were once inhabitable due to serious **desertification...The locals of Ding Bian** showed me what humans are capable of achieving with the **‘Can-do’ attitude and priorities in solving environmental issues.**”



# Cultural exchange

“I cannot express how thankful I am to have met wonderful companions in this trip. Both my fellow classmates and my teammates were so supportive and friendly. The other *YMCA participants from China, Taiwan, and Macau were all passionate in their service, willing to share their own culture and open-minded to new cultures and experiences.*”





# Knowledge exchange

“I made a lot of friends from different regions and we were able to *share different point of views about environmental issues*, which broadened my horizons and enlightened me a lot throughout the journey.”





# \*Being a responsible global citizen

“The trip also let me know that it is important to plant a plant but it is more essential to **‘plant a seed inside the heart of every single participant’** so that we can spread the message and share what we witnessed to more people.”



“.....We don't just want to plant the trees in front of us, **we have to plant the trees in other people's lives**. It turned out the purpose of planting trees, and this was not only limited to understand the issues of **extreme climate and desertification** but also to **build love** with each other through **mutual exchange, sharing, cooperation** and care about the people who is in needed or who is less willing to share their own.”





# \*Global mindset

*“Staying in hometown could not enrich my mind but keeping me from new insights.* Knowing how do other people work is critical if you really want to be a successful person, or even *a future leader*. Being aware of the ever changing *global issues can bring me new ideas* and allow me to follow to the trend closely. *The world needs everyone to protect,* instead of one or a few countries.”



# Global citizenship

“Walking in Tengger desert highlighted the whole field trip.....*I wondered how Mother Nature created all these.* Another question that came to my mind at that moment was how fragile the nature is since it is so susceptible to human destruction. *It is easier to create a desert than a forest. It reminds me to always protect the Earth because we only have one.*”





# Advocacy for the improvement of our environment



“Everything needs a pioneer. If we can *take the lead* in environmental protection, we will *raise the awareness* of people around us and involve more people.”

# Mindset – local vs global

“While we do not really feel the environmental problems in Hong Kong, we do contribute to them, especially *global problems* like climate change.”





# \*Attitudinal and behavioural change

- Prior to this field trip, in my opinion, *climate change is very distant*, ..... in short *nothing related to me*. However after listening to my groupmates presentation about climate change and visiting the climate change museum in CUHK, I not only had a better understanding about climate change, ..... but also *I realized that my daily habits could actually worsen the climate change*..... From then on, *I have been making an effort to change my habits.*”



# \*Sustainability

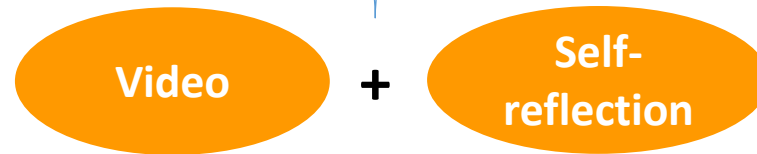
“The battle to *protect the environment* does not just rely on *our generation* but also *future generations*.”





# How students enrolled & their tasks

Optional + relevant to curriculum



Climate change  
Desertification  
Global citizenship  
Knowledge exchange

**3+1 Is**

**Internationalization**  
Cross-cultural encounters

**Innovation**  
Use of social media for learning

**Interdisciplinarity**  
Partner with a social NGO and government

**IMPACT**  
For the betterment of the world

# Videos produced by students



**MSc Environmental Management, HKU**  
Create Page @Username

- Home
- Posts
- Videos
- Photos
- About
- Community
- Info and Ads
- Manage Promotions

Like Follow Share

**Posts**



**MSc Environmental Management, HKU**  
Published by mscenvman@gmail.com [?] · December 12 at 11:33 PM ·

Desertification is regarded as "cancer" of the earth. It turns fertile land into desert, which is no longer suitable for food production.

See this video made by HKU MSc ENVM students and a biological sciences student to understand more about desertification, its causes and how human beings restore degraded land.

This video is one of the work tasks completed by students who join the desert service trip co-organised by the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and HKU MSc ENVM.

Video created by Eddie Ng (MSc ENVM), Karie Ma (MSc ENVM), Ally Lee (Biological Sciences Undergraduate)



YOUTUBE.COM

**Desertification Video**

Msc ENVM x YMCA Volunteers Desert Tree Planting Service Camp

413  
People Reached

24  
Engagements

Boost Unavailable

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdkkyo6VrxHU>



**MSc Environmental Management, HKU**  
Published by mscenvman@gmail.com [?] · December 12 at 11:29 PM ·

Climate change and extreme weather has long been a global issue and caused different natural disasters around the world, badly affecting people's living and productivity.

See this video made by HKU MSc ENVM students to understand more about climate change in Dingbian and how human activities, tree planting and desert management has contributed to the micro climate.

This video is one of the work tasks completed by students who join the desert service trip co-organised by the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and HKU MSc ENVM.

Video created by Gary Suen (MSc ENVM), Kenneth Lam (MSc ENVM), Grace Chau (MSc ENVM)



YOUTUBE.COM

**Climate Change in Ding Bian**

Overseas field trip in Ding Bian (shaanxi) & Tengger Desert (Mongolia) MSc Environmental Management 2018 The University of Hong Kong

498  
People Reached

30  
Engagements

Boost Unavailable

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6DBdjXoRg4>



# Reflection

ENVM8015 Directed studies in environmental management  
2018-19 Reflection article

Lam Chiu  
3035458402

different when compared with the primary students I taught in Hong Kong. I was really surprised seeing students enjoyed their lunch though the food were absolutely basic to Hong Kong people such as potato, corns and pumpkin and they also washed all the cutleries by themselves after lunch. Not only should most of students in Hong Kong count their blessings but we also need to remind ourselves of this. One thing to be suggested is to include more environmentally friendly elements in camp design. For instance, many disposable materials like plastic shoes cover and were used during different camp activities and the booth games were not quite educational. Thus, reusable materials can be used to replace the disposable items and more games with environmental friendly concepts should be included in hopes of instilling correct concepts about environmental issues in younger generation, which also matches the theme better.



Aside from the camp is desert safari in Tengger Desert, which is one of the most



## 香港中華基督教青年會「常青林」沙漠植樹服務營



香港中華基督教青年會「常青林」沙漠植樹服務營  
@ymcadtpc



- Write articles related to the themes
- Scientific-based
- Reach the general public
- Knowledge sharing



香港中華基督教青年會「常青林」沙漠植樹服務營

Published by Gary Suen [?] · November 29 at 10:46 PM ·

<為什麼中國能做到大規模治沙國家?>

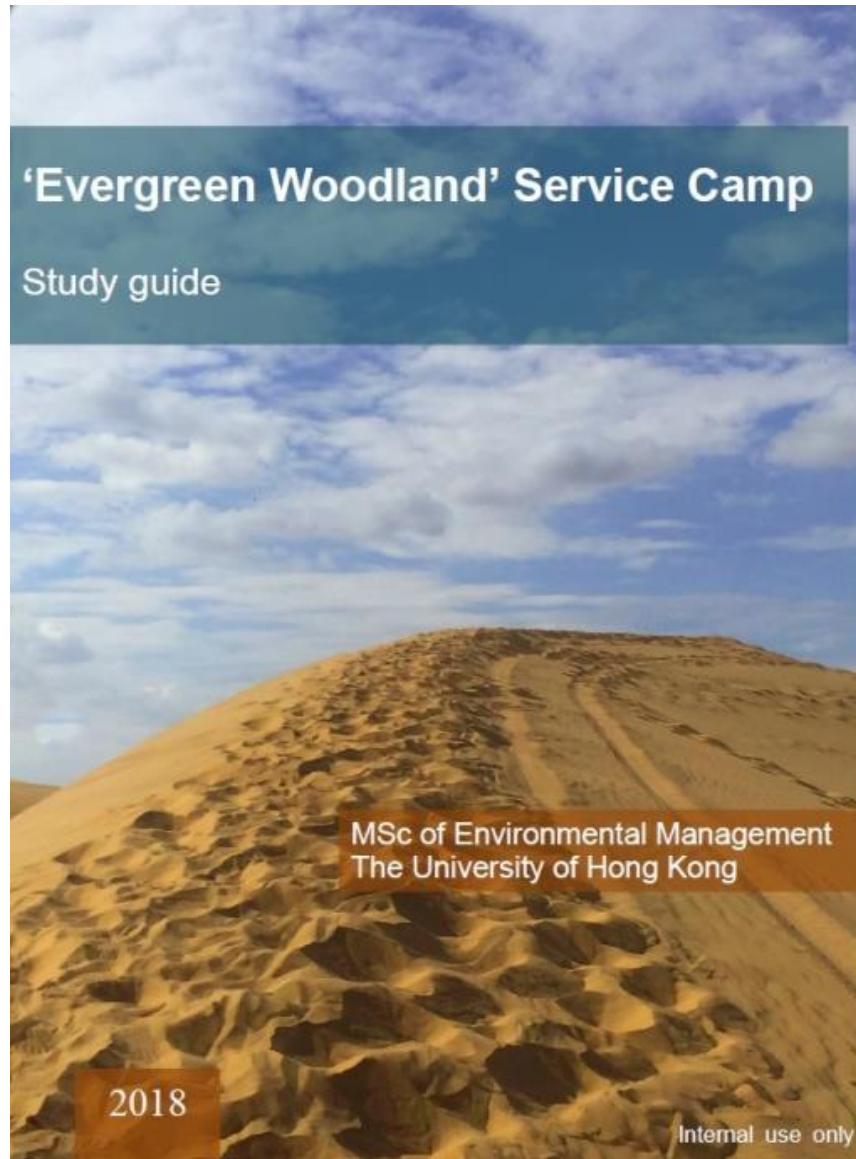
大家好! 唔知大家有諗過中國既沙漠地區咁大, 究竟佢係點樣做到咁大規模既治沙管理架呢? 今日就想大家分享吓呢個題目啦!

相信大家都知道沙漠既成因係由於氣候變化同埋人類活動而導致既旱地生態系統持續退化, 呢個情況基本上所有大洲都有發生, 今日我就唔再多講啦! 但係呢有一個好成功既政策真係好值我地去參考既就係-[集體林權制度改革] 政策啦! 呢個政策既特別之處就係擁有「誰造誰有、自主經營、利益歸己」的得徵! 政府透過政策既實行, 很多農民積極承包國有荒灘, 自己籌措資金係沙漠上種樹, 向世界上農業強國以色列學習, 打造節水灌溉技術, 水肥一體化技術, 種植棗樹、葡萄、土豆、甘草等經濟作物。呢樣野唔單止好成功咁治理左大片沙漠, 亦都俾左內地既農民一條致富既道路, 大大提高左治理沙漠既積極性。在很多人眼中, 沙漠其實呀, 已經唔再係狂風肆虐既妖魔, 但係擁有潛力的聚寶盆! 現時, 有很多企業都來到沙漠地帶除左發展小篤上一個posr講到既再生能源之外, 亦都係沙漠地帶植樹造林呀! 中國既沙漠總量持續有下降既趨勢與呢個政策既推出有密切既關係。... See More





# Study guide



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# Presentation to YMCA staff





# Presentation to classmates





### Student 1

1. Reflection
2. Video making:  
Climate change
3. Study guide:  
Climate change
4. Presentation:  
Climate change

### Student 2

1. Reflection
2. Video making:  
Desertification
3. Study guide:  
Desertification
4. Presentation:  
Environmental  
education

### Student 3

1. Reflection
2. Video making:  
Climate change
3. Study guide:  
Global citizenship
4. Presentation:  
Global citizenship &  
Follow up actions

### Student 4

1. Reflection
2. Video making:  
Desertification
3. Facebook page
4. Presentation:  
Desertification &  
biodiversity

### Student 5

1. Reflection
2. Video making:  
Climate change
3. Facebook page
4. Presentation:  
Introduction



# What's next?

## Be a Global Citizen Campaign

21-06-2016



# References

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Thank you!