

## Module 1: What is the Environment

### Three guiding principles that shape our approach to this Journey

- The earth is the only suitable habitat we have, and we exist interdependently with the environment.
- We humans have had a profound effect on the environment, and continue to shape it going into the future.
- Through our capacity for conscious awareness, we are able to identify problems and implement solutions for better ways of existing in relation to the environment

### Three key questions

1. What do we mean by the environment?
2. How can we understand and analyse the environment (with a view to identifying areas for change)?
3. What are the environmental domains that determine behaviour?

### What do we mean by the environment?

- **the environment:**
  - o the multifaceted context within which behavior takes place
  - o **comprehensive term** embracing the **physical** and **social** context that is the setting for human and nonhuman existence.
  - o Not a single tangible thing
  - o **encompasses everything**, from the very small to the very large – a vast system of interconnected systems.
  - o the context in which we exist
  - o **time** is a significant, albeit neglected, feature of the environment.

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### Part 2: How can we analyse the environment? Systems Theory: The environment as a system of systems 'Ludwig Bertalanffy (1928)'

- **A system:** a set of interacting parts that function as a whole, which interacts with and adapts to the wider system in which it has formed and exists.
- **Living systems:** typically refer to groups of organisms that interact in particular ways, to achieve some goal or produce some outcome, and they interact with the wider context in which they exist.
  - **ie our body:** has many interacting parts which can be separated logically but do not function independently systems theory has been applied to meteorology, ecology, economy, sociology and psychology
- **Fundamental principles of systems theory**
  - units within a system interact with one another and the environment, or other systems
  - systems adapt to changing conditions;
  - there are processes that initiate, guide, and control adaptation; and
  - systems are “greater than the sum of their parts” because systems have emergent properties that arise from interaction at different levels of the system