**EXERCISE 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF SOIL COVER**

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| *OBJECTIVE*  **After this exercise the participants will be able to:**   * Demonstrate the importance of soil cover. | |
| *EQUIPMENT NEEDED*   * A bucket of water (and water source) and a small piece of heavy cloth (or carpet), at least one meter square. Find a location that has easily accessible bare soil that is slightly sloping and that can be wetted. | *EXPECTED OUTPUT*   * Group members have increased awareness of the importance and benefits of maintaining soil cover (either live cover or mulch). |
| *TIME*  20-30 minutes | *PREPARATION*   * Practice the exercise before the presentation to make sure that the cloth or carpet being used, and the rate at which the water is poured, produce different effects on the soil (with and without cover). The effect should be clearly visible for the group members. |

*SUGGESTED PROCEDURE:*

1. Gather the group at the selected site and pour the water from the bucket directly onto the unprotected soil. Ask the group members to describe what they see:

* What is happening to the water? (They should see some movement of soil and quite a lot of water running off the soil surface).

1. Place the heavy cloth or piece of carpet on the unprotected soil surface next to the area where the first bucket of water was poured. Pour a second bucket of water onto the heavy cloth or carpet. Ask the group to describe what they see:
   * + What is happening to the water?
     + Is it behaving differently from the first example?
2. They should observe that:

* The surface of the soil is disturbed much less
* The cloth has retained much of the water, i.e. there is less “run-off.”

1. Lead the group in a short discussion on the effects of soil cover on water movement. Ask:
   * What are some examples of natural cover? (Point to nearby trees, shrubs, grass, or mulch).
   * How can we replace natural cover? (For example, by planting trees, mulching).

