



PlanetAtivo

LESSON 9

Acting for the Environment

"Calm down, Roberto. One question at a time, said Sofia. Of course we are willing to help. The Earth is a beautiful planet and this is the reason why we are here. We do not have environment problems in Uno anymore, but I know that the planet experienced serious difficulties on that matter. The Uno ecosystems are different from Earth, but we can use our knowledge to help you."

(Chapter IX – A Plano of Action (Chapter 9 – A Plano of Action – Sophia's Mission on Planet Earth)

Action is mandatory

If we wait by governments, it may be too late. If we act as individuals we can do little, but if we act as a community, it can be enough and in time!

Environmental problems have become more evident in 20th century. Urban centres and cities had to face lack of space to store the waste. In some parts of the world, there was shortage of clean water and in other parts, the soil has lost its fertility. Air pollution has affected the health of thousands of people and the climate began to change and the consequence is extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods.

In the 21st century, people wake up to be aware of the problems and organize for action. Environmental protection and conservation of natural resources are big issues now. Non-governmental organizations have emerged and increasingly enhance its effect on society. But what are they?

What is an NGO?

The NGO or Non Governmental Organization is a group of people in society that is organized to defend common interests, society issues. They do not have any bond with the government and that is why they carry the name of "non-governmental".

An NGO has four main features, according to the Commonwealth Foundation, a group that studies the NGOs:

1. Volunteering: You join in free will spirit! NGOs work with people who choose voluntary participation in the organization. They may be in a small number of or a large number of members.
2. Independence: They act according their own rules. NGOs are independent and controlled by their founders or persons chosen by a board. The right of NGOs is based on the free right of association, one of the basic human rights.
3. Not profitable: It is not for making money! NGOs are not for profit or personal gain. The organization resources are used only for the institution's social projects. NGOs in many countries may be involved in activities that make money, but they should use the income to fulfil the mission of the organization.

4. Non-Personal Interests: NGO's goals are to improve the conditions and prospects of people and acting in the interest of the common good, to put it

What does a NGO do?



The NGO belongs to the third sector of society. The first sector is the government and the second sector consists of companies. The third sector has to provide the services functions that companies and governments do not want or have no capacity to provide. NGOs provide an opportunity for individuals to be together and be heard on the issues they find important.

The NGO should complement the work of governments and perform actions that bring benefits to people. The NGOs can receive financial assistance of companies or other private entities to carry out this work.

Ideally, in a company the three sectors are cooperating with each other.

NGOs can act in various areas of interest to society:

- Promotion of pluralism, diversity and tolerance in society. The NGOs protect cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic and other identities.
- Advancement of science and thought, development of art and culture; protecting the environment and supporting all activities of interest to civil society.
- Promoting services to society that governments cannot perform. They have greater flexibility and independence.

Why are NGOs important?



They are important because they give opportunity for people to build a work based on trust to achieve goals and interests of the group and the society.

The number of NGOs is increasing all over the world and this increase is also happening to NGOs that defend the environment, the preservation of natural resources and ecosystems of our planet.

Individual action for society

Some people take individually initiatives that will make a difference. A good example of how individual action can contribute to the common good is Roz Savage, considered one of the Climate Heroes Environment of United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP. Her did was to row alone across the Pacific to spread throughout the world the idea of environmental sustainability.



Jadav "Molai" Payeng is an example of individual working for society. He has planted a forest in his native country, India all alone. He started planting bamboo and it did not take long to the barren sandbar turn into a forest with birds, deer and cattle. The forest is now larger than New York Central Park.

Roz Savage is another individual caught the world's attention to the environmental challenges facing the world. She rowed more than 18,000 km in a 3 meters rowboat, facing waves of up to six meters for 352 days alone in the ocean. Roz worked as a management consultant in London before deciding that the real sense of life is in who we are and not what we have.