

# 2005 International Essay Contest for Young People

## List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 104

No. of entries: 3,661 (Children's category: 2,215 / Youth category: 1,446)

### 1<sup>st</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (1 entrant)

- *My job is to feed my hungry neighbor*  
Burunciuc Mihai (Age 14, Moldova)

#### Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Healing the World: how we can care for our planet*  
Nusrat Haque (Age 18, Bangladesh)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (2 entrants)

- *There is nothing in the world that is useless*  
Saori Yoshida (Age 11, Japan)
- *Is it the Real Thing or the Right Thing?*  
R.J. Dabbar (Age 15, U.S.A.)

#### Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Look at Environment from an Agricultural Point of View*  
Saori Ukigai (Age 17, Japan)
- *Awakening People*  
Evronia Fr. Angelos Fathy Azer  
(Age 18, Egypt)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (5 entrants)

- Jem Erika A. Nique (Age 10, The Philippines)
- Rika Imai (Age 12, U.S.A.)
- Linda Chu (Age 15, New Zealand)
- Moses Attrams (Age 15, Ghana)
- Monika Kowalska (Age 15, Poland)

#### Youth category (5 entrants)

- Kenji Nishiyama (Age 17, Japan)
- Chanda Mutale (Age 19, Zambia)
- Sarah Cameron (Australia)
- Tran The Phuong (Age 23, Vietnam)
- Tomas Sinicki (Age 23, Lithuania)

### Honorable Mention

#### Children's category (25 entrants)

- Jerrika C. Shi (Age 8, The Philippines)
- Regis Martin C. Andanar  
(Age 9, The Philippines)
- Jane Meryll Dalde (Age 11, The Philippines)

#### Youth category (25 entrants)

- Sachiko Tamura (Age 15, Japan)
- Ayushi Charan (Age 16, India)
- Olga Krasnyakova (Age 16, Belarus)
- Nicolas Damonte (Age 16, Argentine)

- Denitza Gonzalez (Age 11, Mexico)
- Carissa Bernadette Pobre  
(Age 12, The Philippines)
- Dalal Essa Abdul Hussain (Age 12, Oman)
- Bailee Renne' Rollins (Age 12, U.S.A.)
- Ayako Ishikawa (Age 13, Japan)
- Elina Enikeeva (Age 13, Uzbekistan)
- Jamshid Hakimov (Age 13, Uzbekistan)
- Natsumi Maeda (Age 13, Japan)
- Stepanova Anna (Age 13, Russia)
- Ekaterina Shulejko (Age 14, Belarus)
- Sharbil Sarkees Khattar (Age 14, Oman)
- Doris de Leon Vargas  
(Age 14, The Philippines)
- Melody Kay O. Carolin  
(Age 14, The Philippines)
- Andrea Serey (Age 15, Chile)
- Elias Sarkees Khattar (Age 15, Oman)
- Syed Hassan Ali (Age 15, Pakistan)
- Janice Hernandez Aguilar  
(Age 15, The Philippines)
- Jwan (Age 15, Russia)
- Jean Michelle Manalang Legasto  
(Age 15, The Philippines)
- Nadesda Alexandrova Ivanova  
(Age 15, Bulgaria)
- Bijetri Roy (Age 15, India)
- Lara Cristy S. Lava (Age 15, The Philippines)
- S.A.D. Pullsara Madhavi Ranamal  
(Age 16, Sri Lanka)
- Khatamova Lola Sanjarovna  
(Age 17, Uzbekistan)
- Jessica Kohler (Age 17, Germany)
- Natalia Rubio (Age 17, Chile)
- Michaela Vladimirova Georgieva  
(Age 17, Bulgaria)
- Kliukaite Kornelija (Age 18, Lithuania)
- Stephen Onajite Jagboro (Age 18, Nigeria)
- Yukinori Miyanaga (Age 18, Japan)
- Cherene Amoye McLeary (Age 19, Jamaica)
- Bismark Marfo Appah (Age 19, Ghana)
- Sanjeeta Devi (Age 20, Fiji)
- Megan van Eck (Age 20, South Africa)
- Katsanee Surinprateep (Age 21, Thailand)
- Gillian A. Koh (Age 21, Canada)
- Shunk Tatyana (Age 21, Russia)
- Suryani Lukman (Age 21, Indonesia)
- Veronika Kostyunina (Age 23, Russia)
- Clifford Emeka Okwesi (Age 24, Nigeria)
- Luis Reginaldo L. Medilo  
(Age 24, The Philippines)
- Medvetchi Mariana (Age 25, Moldova)
- Stephen Ryan Menzies (Oman)

### **Best School Award (1 school)**

- Fukagawa Dai San Junior High School (Japan)

## **My job is to feed my hungry neighbor**

(Original)

*Burunciuc Mihai*

*(Age 14, Moldova)*

The Planet is everything that surrounds us, but one cannot care about all of the millions of issues and problems that occur around the world. It is humanly impossible to suffer for every starving child, every hunted animal or every suffering living being in the world. This is why my philosophy is not to concentrate on helping the entire world, but to focus on lending a hand to my friends, neighbors and community. I improve the Planet by improving a tiny part of it.



Several years ago I was convinced that to solve problems is the job of my parents, governments or some authorities, but only not mine. I believed that being a simple 13 years old guy I have no power to make any difference. But it happened that a friend of mine invited me to participate in Youth Millennium Action which was an international project aimed to motivate children all over the world to solve global problems at the local level. I will always remember our first team meeting where our group coordinator told us "Maybe some of you came here hoping that you will change the world in one day. Dreamers, forget about this. We don't have enough money, power and influence to help entire Planet. But we do have resources to help our community. Then let's start here, help here, make a difference here and right now." This is how we started to make differences.

Our first project was to clean up the banks of our local river, to build there some benches and to plant trees. We worked for two months and honestly speaking we didn't transform this abandoned place in some sort of fancy beach, but obviously it turned out to be a nicer place than it was before we came there. The second project initiated by our team was aimed to help our local school for blind children. When we met our mates from that school we found out that most of them didn't read any book in their lives, because of lack of money the school couldn't buy any books or newspapers printed in Braille alphabet. Our team decided to help those

children in the simplest way we could. All we had to do is to buy some audio tape, borrow from library dozens of books, read them aloud and record everything. Those blind children couldn't read, but they could listen to fascinating stories articulated by us. When the big day came and we handed those tapes to our mates I couldn't decide who is happier: our team or our new friends. They were thankful for such a gift and care, while we were glad to realize how valuable our work is.

We started our project as a game joke, some sort of entertainment, but step by step it became for us a real work. Finally I started to realize that I am able to change something and that solving problems is my job too. Also I learned that the world is composed from individuals, and if every person will ameliorate somehow his or her community it will result in a global improvement, it will make my and your life better.

At the end of the project our coordinator gave us small cards where she wrote "Dear dreamer, if in the future you will try to feed the hungry world first of all don't forget to feed your hungry neighbor. You must think globally, but act locally." This experience changed me in the way I cannot explain, I didn't become some sort of Mother Teresa, but still it transformed me in a nice guy who doesn't forget to feed his neighbor and by this to change the world.

## Healing the World: how we can care for our planet (Original)

*Nusrat Haque*  
(Age 18, Bangladesh)

"Heal the world  
Make it a better place  
For you and for me  
And the entire human race"  
.....Michael Jackson



I watched in awe as the thirty eight people chorused this in unison till all I could hear was the echo bouncing off the white-washed walls of my classroom. The program ended there and I slowly started my way back home, the lyrics of the song still ringing in my ears. I looked around me and what I saw came as a sharp blow. The roads looked battered and defeated with all the grimy waste thrown over it, there was yesterdays coke can, the sandwich wrapper, plastic bags all meshing together and forming a solid bond that no amount of scraping could clean. For the first time I saw the overflowing drains crying to be repaired and cleaned. This was the road that I walked past for the last twelve years, always running to reach class on time, always ignoring what was happening to the surrounding and always thinking that there were other people who could do something about it. Now I realized how naïve and foolish I was to think that way, how a small effort from me could change people's perspective about our entire surrounding.

In a country like Bangladesh where people received almost no education on creating awareness for the planet it wasn't surprising that people ignored to care for the earth. I knew it was time for me to step in and lend a hand to really make this world a better place.

The next day at school I knew what I had to do. With the help of my principal we launched our first program; anyone who saved twenty drink cans and submitted them to the school cafeteria would receive a free ticket to the water park which was newly constructed. I held my

breath for the next few days and it looked as if no one really took this seriously and no one bothered. But then after almost a week we started receiving the cans and it seemed some of them have been picked up from the roads too. This meant people were littering less cans all over the place. I was excited and knew this was going to work after all. The next day I found myself delivering a speech in the morning assembly on creating a society where we would act like literate civilians and would make a stop in polluting the environment. The principal then reinforced the use of bins and anyone caught littering would have to stay an extra hour after school helping the cleaners clean the school.

I started with my school and slowly worked my way to the area where I lived. With the help of my father and the Rotary Club, where he was the former president, we launched door to door waste collection. People now did not have to go all the way to a certain point in a field and dump their waste from where the government trucks would pick them sometimes even a week later. Now all they had to do was put their waste in their front doors from where the collectors would collect them and then they would be disposed off in the far away waste lands where they would be recycled. Suddenly one could feel the change in the area, there was a less pungent smell in the air that used to come from the waste land pits. The area looked much cleaner and one could actually walk past the fields without holding their breath.

I continued my campaign on creating a better society and encouraged the various clubs like the Rotary Club and the Inner Wheel to start working on various programs so that globally they could start creating a better and healthy society. Pamphlets were made encouraging people not to use plastic bags; medical institutes were requested not to dump their wastes directly to the nearby rivers but to make maximum use of their incinerators. My school organized a student rally where students marched all over the town with banners demanding a green society where they could breathe fresh and clean air.

From that point on it went stronger. People responded more to these programs and suddenly it was not only me concerned about our environment and the society. I knew it was still a far cry from the time when the whole country would stand against polluting the environment but someone had to start somewhere. I guess I just started and I would always look upon the time when we can all sing out

"Heal the world  
Make it a better place  
For you and for me  
And the entire human race"

And feel the pride for making it truly a better place for the entire human race

**There is nothing in the world that is useless.**

(Original in Japanese)

*Saori Yoshida*

*(Age 11, Japan)*

My grandparents live in a country village surrounded by green. The air is very clean, and the rice paddies around their house are lively with the croaking of frogs. Every time I visit them, I pluck off fresh tomatoes and cucumbers they grow and eagerly bite into them. My grandparents say that tomatoes and cucumbers taste bad when they are cut into pieces with a knife. In any case, my grandpa's vegetables are exceptionally delicious.

I don't know when it started to happen, but someone began to throw away old cars in a vacant lot next to my grandparents' garden. At first, we thought that the old cars were left there temporarily to be scrapped later, but they have been sitting there untouched for many years. My grandparents told me not to go near that place because the cars are piled up high and they sometimes tumble down. I wonder who on earth comes to this beautiful green rural area to throw away such things. Beside the rapidly growing healthy rice, the decaying old cars look eerie and sad. Sometimes, someone comes in the middle of the night to throw away old batteries, or take home things that are still usable. To me, it is a disgusting display of human selfishness, and it gives me a very unpleasant feeling.

I wonder how much resources were used to make all these cars. Probably, many kinds of mineral resources including iron, rubber, glass and various other materials were used. There are many parts left that are still usable. I think it is a shame to use things once and then throw them away. Can't we think of ways to recycle them? We take part in activities to collect and recycle PET bottles and newspapers. In addition to these activities, we need to make every possible effort to reduce the amount of trash, and try not to leave artificial things in nature. Otherwise, the globe will soon be full of waste products all over.

I feel this way because I know how hard my grandfather works in the garden next to the pile of discarded old cars. He is thorough about recycling things not only in the garden but also in



everyday life. For example, he starts his farm work with soil making. First, he mixes vegetable debris and fallen leaves with soil, and then mixes in enzymes to ferment it to make strong and healthy soil. Synthesized chemical fertilizers are convenient, but he does not use them because they end up raising vegetables vulnerable to insects and diseases. He sows seeds just before rain comes, and when rainwater is not enough, he uses water from a well he has been using for 40 years. Weeding is really a hard work, and I help my grandfather, but he does not use herbicides. While my grandfather makes safe organic vegetables this way, he collects aluminum cans discarded in parks and brings them to a nearby elementary school. The school sells aluminum cans, and purchases unicycles and stilts for children. The house my grandparents live in is also amazing. My grandfather built it diligently by himself with my grandmother after work. I heard that his house-making story was covered in the newspaper. It is a small but airy house, and the roof does not get too hot since good Awaji tiles are used. He planted a lot of deciduous trees around the house so that it is warm in winter and cool in summer. He mixes fallen leaves from these trees and droppings of chickens he raises in the garden to make healthy soil.

Watching my grandparents' handmade lifestyle, I realize I should not be deceived by convenient life. Their lifestyle does take a lot of time, but it surely leaves behind something rich and wonderful. They always say, "There is nothing in the world that is useless." These old cars are made from various natural resources dug up from the ground. I wonder why we can't work out some good ideas to use them again, and put these ideas into practice from the beginning. In order for us to be able to keep using the limited resources of the precious Earth, we need to invent various effective ways and put them into practice. By doing so, we will be able to live a truly rich life without causing damage to the Earth.

## **Is it the Real Thing or the Right Thing?**

(Original)

*RJ Dabbar*  
(Age 15, U.S.A.)

I am a child of the world. Most of my fifteen years have been spent on foreign soil. I have experienced the thrills of skiing on glaciers, trekking thru rainforests and observing people different than me. I also have felt and seen the pain and suffering of indigence, discrimination and even war. Although our planet is an amazing place, these serious problems worry me. The dire consequences of poverty, ignorance and disease are omnipresent. I have personally been in villages without water and sanitation where the pestilence of AIDS is all consuming. Global warming, vanishing resources, and dependency on fossil fuel cause me great trepidation. I add to these the seemingly constant havoc of war. I am reminded that Winston Churchill once said, "War is beyond all words horrible," and I agree. Our great planet along with its incredible resources should offer everyone opportunities to reach remarkable goals; however, we are falling far short and have tremendous challenges ahead if we are to remain the rightful caretakers of this precious planet.

I believe the role each of us plays is determined by our education and life experiences; to be proper caretakers we must act responsibly with empathy and a sense of community, but more importantly, must lead with courage. I play football, a game which requires teamwork and commitment. Every time I step out on that field I make a decision: play for myself or play for the good of the team. Think about the results; now let us think about all the doctors, educators, politicians and even corporate CEO's that make this decision every hour. People around the world every day receive messages from these decision makers in the form of news or advertising. Imagine if these messages were not tainted with political agendas, selfish purposes or our insatiable appetite for profit. Imagine if the resources spent on just one of these huge advertising campaigns was aimed at a "play for the team" goal, something bigger more global than the bottom line.

Let us look at some of the numbers and take the corporate giant Coca Cola as an example. A superpower like Coke has more spending power, recognition and influence than some countries. Some would argue Coke can control how people think and even live. Coke spends close to 1.6 billion dollars a year on marketing a super brand which everyone knows. Let us dream that, for one year, Coke's management team led with extraordinary courage and reallocated this budget to provide for construction of schools and educational equipment. This would give our future leaders, inventors, or scientists a chance to change their lives; imagine if they could attend the Coke School in their village, or went on to university as a Coke scholar. In fact, Coke would almost certainly gain more notoriety from this campaign than any other in its history. To make this idea a reality would take more than just the traditional anti-big-business protests; this must start at the grass roots level in every home, school and community.

Let us continue with the Coke example. Coca Cola with the ubiquitous slogan "it's the real thing" could be changed to read "it's the right thing." With the aid of community advocates, kids like me, we could begin a movement to stop spending our money on Coke and start donating our soda money to education funding and global programs. Boycott Coke to force their management's attention and resources to address bigger issues. I could start by convincing my friends to donate their soda money to an education fund. A movement like this should start with kids; we need to create leadership by giving the younger generation, my generation, the responsibility and more importantly the accountability for protecting our planet. A measurable improvement in education and infrastructure in poor cultures may only be a "Coke away." Convincing corporate giants, like Coke, that my generation is serious about this issue may give us a chance.

This effort would be huge, but with a team attitude and a clear goal I am optimistic we could be successful. A superpower like Coke, Pepsi or even Nike could take a lead role in an initiative. I do not know which multinational corporation will be the first to send a loud and clear message by starting their "no-ad" campaign; however, I am committed to encourage one to do so. As a curious teen with an appetite for all things scientific, I hope I can wield my influence within my peer group. I want to become a citizen of the world, and a responsible caretaker. If I have to give up my Coke to do this, I will.

## **Look at Environment from an Agricultural Point of View**

(Original in Japanese)

*Saori Ukigai*

*(Age 17, Japan)*

Rice is growing, with its luxuriant green leaves pointing straight up at the sky. It spreads its roots deep into the ground to suck up nutrition from the soil, and it will bend low with an abundant crop in autumn. Amid the overflowing energies of nature, I was born and bred in a small town surrounded by rural landscapes that stretched as far as the eye could see. In spring, I played in fresh verdure that came into bud all at once, and I fell asleep listening to the croaking lullaby of frogs in summer. I looked out on rice fields with ripe golden ears that swayed in an autumn wind, and watched empty rice paddies that stood quietly in winter. My life is side by side with nature, and it is always with a green landscape. But, I sometimes feel uneasy. Is that landscape really good from an environmental point of view?

The question came to my mind first through the activities of a club I belong to. I am a member of an agricultural club, and am engaged in the conservation of the environment of Yatsuda (a rice paddy made in a valley between mountains) with other member students who are studying agriculture. About 60% of Yatsuda in Chiba Prefecture are neglected due to problems like inferior farming conditions, aging of landowners, a lack of successors, and so on. Yatsuda, however, is an important ecosystem for endangered aquatic inhabitants like Tokyo hynobiid salamanders and Japanese brown frogs. Also, the geographical features of Yatsuda bear a close resemblance to those of a habitat of extinct Japanese crested ibises. The latitude and the average annual temperature of a particular Yatsuda where we have our field activities resemble to those of an area in China where wild crested ibises live. That Yatsuda has been neglected for nearly 30 years, and the diversity of the fauna and the flora of the area has been lost because overgrown reeds and small bamboos prevented sunlight from reaching the ground surface. With shovels and plows, we used only human power to recover the Yatsuda, and we found that the work process was exactly the same as that of keeping the environment of a rice paddy in good condition, which is the starting point of agriculture itself. We decided to make a unique rice paddy with enhanced capabilities to foster living things, and named it "Bio

Rice Paddy". One of the characteristic features of Bio Rice Paddy is that the ridges are wider and dual-structured with a sunken center. Plants grow in the sunken area, and it becomes a place for frogs and other creatures to hide. We compared Bio Rice Paddy surrounded by dual-structured ridges and a rice paddy surrounded by standard ridges, and found out that the density of life forms was higher in the former, exceeding the goal for the creation of natural environments for crested ibises to live. But, the yield was low, which is a fatal drawback for people who make a living by rice farming. In addition, a dual-structured ridge is difficult to make and it requires a great deal of labor for maintenance. Far from establishing nature-friendly agriculture, it may become a cause for people to abandon Yatsuda. In the future, we plan to add improvements by carrying out experiments with various types and quantities of plants to grow in the sunken area, and continue to tackle the creation of a rice paddy that is friendly to everything including people and other living things. Through the club activities, I learned that nature I have been familiar with since my childhood includes these wastelands. What on earth was the thing that I have been seeing till now? I keenly realized that we needed to find new values in nature and make the best use of them.

Today, people are turning their eyes toward environmental issues. There are various types of agriculture in the world. Of course, some involve natural environments. Agriculture that depends on chemicals and herbicides surely saves us labor, but causes great damage to soil and living things. So, I hope to spread Bio Rice Paddy we are working on in our club activities to developing countries and to the world. If we can establish an agricultural method that utilizes living things, we will be able to provide farm products that are safe for everyone to eat and preserve healthy soil for next generations.

I think it is the power of agriculture that supports the Earth with increasingly population. And now, environment-friendly agriculture is needed to protect nature that is left on the Earth. In the future, I wish to be a teacher of an agricultural high school to educate people who can take the leadership in conservation activities. By offering environmental education to high school students as well as elementary and junior high school students, and encouraging regional activities and international exchanges, the circle will someday spread to neighboring towns and prefectures, and across the country to the world, and then people will be able to grapple squarely with environmental problems. There I believe lies a clue to solve problems.

## **Awakening People** (Original)

*Evronia Fr. Angelos Fathy Azer*  
(Age 18, Egypt)

When I read the theme of the contest, I felt like having to talk about an endless problem, because in my country, nature's problems have taken a long serious path. Everyone is having negative feelings about nature and one's duties towards it. This was the main reason that encouraged me to write about my experiences in this issue.

First, let me define some reasons why the people in my country feel irresponsible towards nature. For many centuries, Egyptians have fought for independence and freedom, which they were finally granted in the fifties. But it wasn't until the liberation of Sinai in 1973 that people began to realize they had to rebuild their country and get rid of all the destruction. Unfortunately, everyone took a path towards rebuilding a future, not for the country, but for one's self. People wanted to feel secure and nobody cooperated with the other; no one cared to remove the bombs implanted in the deserts and trees were cut down to allow larger spaces for buildings and factories. People became careless; they easily broke environmental laws and no one cared about the country's real development. This was fatally catastrophic for the country's nature and the people's health. I don't really know who to blame for this selfish behavior as wars don't necessarily make people behave so; many countries were rebuilt with cooperation among its people. However, this I-don't-care attitude towards nature has been a 'theme' for most people to follow. But it was time for the young people to interfere and try to stop this mayhem.

My friends and I started with the simple things first, trying never to throw any litter down the streets. It was a difficult task because the city provided very few trash cans, and the ones present were badly handled, sometimes even used for another tasks other than trash-throwing. Doing this made my behavior and habits better and helped me set a role model for others to follow.

When it was time to tackle the big environmental issues, we set up a group called 'Our Common Aim'. Our mission was to work on certain poor areas that needed an entire makeover in houses, garbage and the whole atmosphere. As a start, we used a questionnaire to test people's awareness about these areas, but it was hardly taken serious by anyone. We captured photos for the targeted areas and wrote about them so as to inspire people to move and donate to help those places, however, no one seemed interested in our work and our fundraising mission failed. In spite of all the enthusiasm that surrounded our work, watching what happened to this group made me realize that we need to "awaken" people first and tell them that caring for the environment was their responsibility. We couldn't get straight into the aim of our project which was to give a better life to people living in such horrible circumstances because no one even looked at those areas with a responsible criticizing eye. Everyone needs to realize that such places are like an epidemic, they spread fast. Therefore, people's habits and ideas need a crucial change. This should be done, not just by the government, but also through the media, schools and NGOs. Practical projects on the environment should be conducted, as well as trips to natural sights, to help create an interest in people, especially kids, towards nature and the places they live in.

I have taken "awakening people" as my aim through writing, because it is an effective, non costly way. I also work with the Youth Committee in the Egyptian Association for Friends of Bibliotheca Alexandrina, where we set up small projects and are given access to places where we can talk to kids and inspire people about different issues, of course including nature.

Although there are so many scientific and technical developments the world has reached, these things made life easier but not better. Due to pollution and natural problems that we face today, some diseases have evolved that had never existed before, when there weren't as many factories and facilities as we have today.

To sum up, the message I want to send to the whole world is that we shouldn't build our comfort on nature's account. Also, how the place we live in looks is part of who we are: caring for our planet means caring for ourselves and preventing diseases and disasters. Therefore, laws should be laid down to ensure that each citizen maintains and well keeps the appearance of his neighborhood, city and country in general. Nevertheless, these laws will need the presence of police officers who are ready to impose them and ensure that they are being obeyed.

The cries of the shameful status of our planet are getting louder. Will anybody listen?



## **Caring for Our Planet** (Original)

*Jem Erika A. Nique*  
(Age 10, The Philippines)

We love our regular visits to Mt. Isarog Natural Park, but this year it became more special because we were together with our cousins, Marcelli and Molli, who came home from the United States. We walked through the long 1.2 kilometer pathway going up the building of the Protected Area Office, and some more steps going down the Malabsay Falls. At first, our visitors: my cousins, their Dad and uncle, and some of their family friends were disappointed by the prickly heat from the afternoon sun. But, when they saw the pristine waters of Malabsay Falls, and they started diving into the cold waters, they forgot all the tiredness and heat they experienced earlier.

However, their joy was cut short because one of our visitors was cut by broken glasses found at the bottom of the pool. Then, Marcelli and I looked around, and we found many garbage around the area. My mom talked to us about garbages and other waste that damage the environment. She said that garbage and the broken glasses are only a few of the things that we should look after if we care for our planet.

Even if we don't look far, in our schools, we see garbage in most places because some pupils throw papers and plastics that clog the canals and the waterways. When canals are clogged, the mosquitoes lay eggs on them. When these mosquitoes grow they bite schoolchildren and sometimes cause dengue which may cause the children to die. Children should put their waste papers and plastics in the proper places like the garbage cans, or if they can't find one in schools, they can put them in their pockets or their bags, and when they go home, they can put them in their garbage bins at home.

At home, Mom said that we should segregate our wastes. We can re-use plastic bags instead of throwing them away. Some notebooks are recycled if not all are used or written on. She said that we can also compost food spoils or other materials that decay. Honestly, we do not

compost at home because we don't have a place to do it. Our city government has a Materials Recovery Facility, which collect waste from the households. This can help reduce wastage.

Our conversation went back to the tropical forest we were in, which was Mt. Isarog Natural Park. It is a Protected Area because our government wants to conserve the biodiversity of the plants and animals that live in its forests.

In a tropical forest like Mt. Isarog, trees stand so close together, their leaves form a kind of roof called canopy that shuts out much of the sunlight. Below this canopy live a variety of plants and animals. Fallen plants decay quickly in forest floors that are warm, damp and dark. They release lots of nutrients that are rapidly absorbed by trees and other plants. Forest are also full of foods for animals. Many creatures make their homes in the trees. Animals can also use the trees to hide from their enemies. They can find warmth in the trees during winter, and they raise their young in the branches of the trees.

However, our forests are quickly disappearing. Our population is increasing every day, and people need more places to grow food and places to live in. As people spread out, they cut down trees to make paper, furniture and lumber for buildings. Trees are chopped down to produce firewood, woodlands are cut down and burnt to make way for fields where crops can be grown. Grazing of domestic animals, who feed on leaves and young shoots stop new trees from growing.

Why are green plants important to us? Why should we care for them? It is because the leaves of green plants take carbon dioxide from the air. They mix it with water and sunlight to make food. When they are finished, the leaves release oxygen into the air. People and animals breathe in oxygen and out carbon dioxide. So, if we cut down trees, there won't be enough oxygen for us to breathe. Aside from producing oxygen, the roots of the trees and other plants reach down into the soil and help hold it together. The ground is then able to store water. If the trees are cut down on a mountainside, there is nothing to hold the soil in place. A little rain can wash away a lot of soil. A heavy rainfall can cause a flood.

What can people do to save trees:

1. When you go camping or hiking, take all your rubbish home with you; Be sure to put out all camp fires;
2. Don't break branches of the trees nor carve you're your name on the bark;

3. When a tree is cut down, be sure to plant a new tree to replace it;
4. You can collect old newspapers and magazines and the paper manufacturers can make new paper again.

That was the end of Mom's lecture. We used to play around while she gives lectures to the MIGs, the guardians of the mountain.

It was just another visit to my beautiful mountain, Mt. Isarog, which my mom loves so much and we her children also learned to love.

But this time, we learned more about it and how to care for it, not just because of the cut on the foot of our Tito who just came to enjoy diving in the pool below Malabsay Falls. We also learned because we share the same love for our planet, and we hope to make it a better place to live in, by caring for it in our own little way.

**True Nature**  
(Original in Japanese)

*Rika Imai*

*(Age 12, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)*

In Manhattan, New York where I live, I seldom see bugs. Outside, there are green lawn fields and trees are growing, but flies are about all the small bugs I have seen there so far.

I noticed this for the first time when I went back to Japan during a summer vacation. I encounter various kinds of bugs in a house where my Japanese grandfather and grandmother live. Out in the garden, earthworms wriggle out when I dig the ground, and pill bugs roll up. I have to be careful not to step on a procession of ants, and I find cicada's shells all over the place. Whenever my little sister and I tumble into bugs in the garden, we are scared and scream.

My grandfather says to me, "There is nothing to be scared of. Bugs also live in nature, so we need them for our life." As I look at the garden, sparrows come down on the lawn and pick the ground. Not only sparrows, but sometimes some beautiful birds I have never seen before also come. They come to the garden to find food. Birds will suffer if they cannot find bugs. When I think that way, I feel it is OK to have some bugs even though they are creepy.

By the time I grew accustomed to life with lots of bugs, I returned to my house in Manhattan, and I found it strange to see no bugs in a nearby park. I see birds sometimes. But they do not pick the lawn for food. They pick at food crumbs scattered around trash cans. I sit on the lawn and look into it, but I see nothing moving there, nor on the ground under trees. I see no living things. It makes me feel uneasy.

In early spring, I see small yellow flags in various places in the park. People wearing a yellow protective uniform sprinkle something on the ground and put up a yellow flag there. I heard that they sprinkle herbicides and insecticides. Yellow flags are marks to warn us not to touch or come near the area because it is dangerous. The reason why I see no bugs and other small

creatures in the park is that these chemicals cut off the relationship with nature. When I moved to Manhattan, I was delighted to find a park in my neighborhood, but now I am not as happy as before. In a local newspaper, I read an article that proposed the need to use natural materials instead of these chemicals. I was glad to know that. Human beings are a part of nature, and chemicals we use must be friendly not only to nature but also to people. I hope that the park is turned into a truly natural one in the near future.

Human beings thought, acted and invented to make the Earth a friendly place for people. Compared to life of old times, our life is much more comfortable now. The more comfortable our life became, the more deeply the Earth was damaged. We do not realize that something serious is happening, until major changes, like global warming and acid rain, occur in our life that is so deeply related to nature. It is difficult for us to go back to life of old times. But, there are many things we can do before the Earth is irreparably damaged and the balance of nature is completely lost. We can make a difference if each of us takes care of small things around us, like trying not to use things wastefully, and trying to decrease the amount trash. I think the damage the Earth sustained will begin to heal, if we act not to cut off our relationship with nature but to give thought to our relationship with nature. We must remember that human beings are also one of the many species that live in nature, and live our life with a grateful heart for the Earth.

2005 International Essay Contest for Young People  
[Children's Category – 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize]

## **Caring for Our Planet** (Original)

*Linda Chu*  
(Age 15, New Zealand)

This is a topic that has been so widely discussed that Caring For Our Planet immediately brings on the flood of words into one consciousness like recycling, energy saving and pollution to name but a few. There is no doubt that these things are important but the stark facts of the matter are that these things are simply in themselves, not enough. The time has come for a radical rethink; a razing of our collective consciousness is long overdue. Up until now we have been paying lip service to the idea while continuing to enjoy our wasteful consumerism. As the saying goes, there is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come.

We are now at crisis point and it is obvious even to the most unaware among us that that time is now. We live in a global world and we are increasingly interdependent. It is time to broaden our sense of patriotism to encompass all humanity and even life itself. This essay will concentrate on three main points; population, greed, and caring for others and our surroundings.

To deal with the first of these, population, one has to realize that fifty years ago the world population was 3 billion. Now this has doubled to 6 billion and as consumers we are exceeding the capacity of the earth to sustain us. On governmental levels internationally draconian measures should never be resorted to, but research into sustainable worldwide population growth forecasts should be made part of an ongoing publicity campaign to raise the awareness of all nations. The U.S government, which used to be foremost in this field, has stopped funding family planning and population education both domestically and internationally. Those of us who are concerned of the future of our planet should pressure our leaders to take measures to curb overpopulation before it is too late.

The second topic under consideration here is greed, particularly the greed of the developed nations. Nobody would willingly return to the technologically deprived existence of the last

century when our grandmothers made their own soap and washing was hard labor. Once again however, we have gone too far, over stepping the bounds of necessity into the mindless realm of endless acquisition. We no longer eat for hunger but rather for taste, we no longer buy clothes for warmth and modesty but indeed for status and glamour.

I believe that there is a movement afoot that is leading us to an awareness of our shared predicament. We no longer see ourselves as an isolated tribe who feel driven to kill everyone who is not their kin. Rather we see ourselves as part of a larger whole that includes all of creation. Young people everywhere are open to a new zeitgeist and a renewing spirit is stirring our conscience. It is no longer acceptable to shoot endangered animals with anything but a camera now. So we have made the first tentative steps to committing ourselves to protect and honor the planet that supports us all.

The question is what can we do as individuals in our daily life or in our community?

There are four salient points to be made here. First and foremost it is our duty to be informed about the issues that affect us all. The internet is a rich source of information on environmental issues and there are many organizations such as Friends of the Earth and Green Peace where one can learn more about contemporary problems.

Secondly, we need to spread the word by word of mouth, letters to the paper and school debates. Art work and posters can also graphically convey the plight of endangered species and the beauty of our world that we want to maintain.

A third measure that can be taken by us all is to support local ventures. A good example of this would be the current one in my province, Canterbury, of The Air Plan which proposes to ban open fires and phase out older solid fuel burners in Christchurch. 90% of winter air pollution in Canterbury urban areas comes from home heating. So The Air Plan has come up with the solution to cut down the number of homes burning wood and coal, and we will make a big impact on the tones of fire smoke particles that literally hang around on still winter nights each winter, clogging our breathing passages and polluting our atmosphere.

Finally, we can live the life of a caring participant of our planet and in an everyday way put into practice what we know to be right in this regard.

Leading by example has great power, let us take heart from that and have the courage to stand up and advocate for our planet, our only planet.

Thank You!



## **Every Individual Matters and Makes a Difference**

(Original)

*Moses Attrams*  
(Age 15, Ghana)

When I first saw this essay contest on the Internet, I told myself "Now is the time to speak out." I am not writing this contest purposely for the prize but to join the ally with people who are helping to make the world a better place.

It is an undeniable fact that human activities have been harming our planet throughout the past. Our water bodies, which affect our lives in many profound ways, we pollute them with garbage; untreated sewage; dyes and chemicals from our homes and factories. This renders them unsafe and killing most aquatic organisms living in them. Human conflicts have also affected our water resources in various ways; for instance, water sources in South Korea have been contaminated due to oil-related accidents during the Korean War.

Animals as well as plants are all at risk due to our countless activities; such as regular cutting down of trees; bush burning; poaching and hunting, etc., by farmers; poachers, and wood cutters.

Building a global society in which everyone can enjoy a good and happy life depends upon the role of every person. Ranging from governments; Non-Governmental organizations and most importantly individuals.

First part, our governments must help to create a suitable atmosphere for 'sustainable peace' by refraining from wars; assassinations and . They must 'turn over a new leaf.' Instead of spending millions of dollars buying and making weapons of mass destruction, these money can be used in addressing our humanitarian and environmental problems – such as poverty and hunger; environmental degradation; child mortality; HIV/AIDS; malaria; cancers and other deadly diseases. It is only by 'peace' that development in all areas of life can be achieved.

The other part, depends upon we the individuals; our individual roles. We must learn to respect and understand other cultures, religions and other ways of life different from our own. It is necessary to learn to live together on this planet disregarding the differences in our cultures; ethnic groups; religions and nations, because, this brings peace and it stops mocking; hatred and fight among us.

The happy life we want to create for everyone will not be complete if the less fortunate orphans; refugees; street children and the disabled are uncatered for. Once in a while, we must visit them to give them help materially and emotionally so that they would feel being loved and catered for. This was what an orphan girl once told me. She said, "You know, 'bro' (brother), if everyone were to be like the way you are to me, I'll not feel sad; lonely and helpless again." In fact, I was moved. If we all help to make these unfortunate ones to feel they have a father and a mother then have we really build a global society in which we all can enjoy a good and happy life.

## **Taking care of our planet**

(Original)

*Monika Kowalska*

*(Age 15, Poland)*

I am a 15-year-old inhabitant of Gdansk, the city, which once used to be called the city of lowers. Unfortunately those days are long gone. When I was born in 1990 I became a resident of the most polluted region in Poland.

As a member of the youngest generation I want to protect my planet against destruction. I want to live, play and work in an ecologically friendly city. I hate the thought of living in the monstrous agglomeration, which, in a hundred years' time, will become a symbol of selfish civilization of the turn of the second millennium. We all must know that our contemporary civilization is unfriendly, not to say harmful, to our planet. All the industrial plants polluting the air and water, waste disposal grounds causing ground contamination, motoring with its fumes, power plants, both conventional and nuclear, have led our environment to the verge of the ecological catastrophe. To say nothing about the environmental outcome of the world wars waged in the previous century. It is impossible for me to think that we really want our planet to become an ecological wasteland. I say NO to such a possibility!

I am convinced that our planet needs ecological agriculture and small local industry with modern and environmentally harmless technologies. More National Parks and natural reserves should be created, which would combine human and nature's needs. I dream about the plastic-like substance produced from proteins, starch and fat contained in soy beans which undergo special treatment in hot steam. Used paper should be recycled in 100%. My biggest dream is that the centers of towns and cities become pedestrian areas with culture, entertainment and commercial centers and with parks and squares full of greenery. Terraced houses with gardens and mini parks should be the dominant element of architecture. Streets crossing one another at right angles should be busy with means of public transport and a neat network of bike paths should be created. My mum, my sisters and I go on bike trips along the sea shore every day. These trips are really unforgettable experience to us. I just love admiring

lush greenery of fresh leaves and listening to birds singing in the trees, which is hardly possible among concrete blocks of flats without a single shrub in sight.

However, to make it possible for us and others to use a bike as a usual means of transport for commuting our city needs more bike paths. These could be created by adding additional lanes to existing streets or by building new ones. I think cars should be used only in emergency. Moreover there should be special bike stands in housing estates, which, in turn, should be full of relaxing greenery.

I wish there were small specialized shops, where only healthy pesticide-free food would be sold. I hate enormous supermarkets where typical families spend their weekends instead of going for a walk to the park or taking the children to the zoo or to the seaside. These supermarkets should be changed into swimming pools and other sport facilities, as well as culture places with art galleries, cinemas and theaters. And these should be available for everybody, no matter rich or poor. Crime would almost disappear in such a city.

My uncle, who is a farmer, could use segregated organic waste in compost. Apart from organic waste also used glass should be recycled like paper. Even my parents hardly remember eating an apple with a small worm inside because nowadays everything is so full of chemicals.

Our houses should be built of thermo-insulated materials and their architecture should harmonize with the surroundings. They should be heated by the solar energy. Moreover, they should have water and energy saving devices. Only then we could say that the young generation really took care of our planet. Our planet is in our hands, metaphorically and literally, and that is why I think that we are the ones who may save it from destruction in the same time saving our lives and happiness.

Everyone of us may give a promise today that they will take care of our planet so that the next astronaut who will go into space could exclaim like Edgar Mitchell from Apollo 14 in 1971 that it looks like a sparkling bluish gem veiled in white moving mist, like a pearl in the blackness of the sea of mystery. He would be disappointed if he saw the Earth now... He would see ozone holes over Antarctic and North America. And instead of bluish gem he would see brownish dirty earth surrounded by clouds of sulfur and carbon dioxide. That is why my appeal as a 15-year-old is:

"If you like nature, water, the sun and clear sky,  
Let them like you as well and don't ask why"  
So:

Let's care about our planet  
As it is our home.  
It's beautiful and lovely  
So we're not alone!

Our planet can't suffer  
Cause we want to live here.  
So we all now promise  
You'll be clear as a tear!

## **A Tree to Plant in the Mind** (Original in Japanese)

*Kenji Nishiyama*  
(Age 17, Japan)

OISCA, the parent organization of my high school, carries out a project called “Children’s Forest” to encourage school children in Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar and several other developing countries to participate in tree planting activities. The purpose of the project is to inspire children to feel affection toward trees through tree planting, and to keep the Earth green for their future. Although I attended several classes in environment at OISCA High School, and I was probably more informed about tree planting than average high school students, I had no actual experience in tree planting. The gap between the amount of knowledge I had and the lack of hands-on experience made me feel uneasy, and I nursed a strong desire to participate in tree planting activities.

Last winter, I had an opportunity stay in Indonesia for one month on a high school study tour, and I participated in “Children’s Forest” for the first time in my life. Working with local children and staff, we planted thousands of mango and olive trees. There, I found a world that was much more fantastic than what I imagined through the classes in environment I attended. I recalled the old saying “Seeing is believing”. It was true. At first, I was amazed at the brightness of the smiling faces of the local children every time I saw them, but eventually it became a common scene in everyday life. It was not because I grew accustomed to seeing their smiling faces, but probably because I myself was smiling like them. In fact, my face I see in the pictures I took in Indonesia is so surprisingly shining. Every time I see these pictures of the bright smiling faces of my friends and myself that worked together in tree planting, I am convinced that we do not have to worry about the possibility of forests disappearing in the future. I believe with confidence that our future is clad in green. To be honest, before I participated in tree planting in Indonesia, I believed in despair that there would be no future full of fresh green. It became a firmer belief whenever I attended a class in environment and gained knowledge about the present state of environmental destruction. Even now, I sometimes feel horrified when I learn about the present state of environmental destruction

through Internet and books. But, having spent a month in Indonesia, I now believe that forests will not disappear in the future as long as we have the smiling faces of “these children” – including me – that were captured in my precious pictures. To have a firm belief in our bright future is the most important thing. That is what I learned through the one-month study experience in Indonesia.

If someone says to me, “Some people are so enthusiastic about tree planting, but it is a mere drop in the bucket,” it is unfortunately difficult to argue against it, considering the present state of environmental destruction. But still, I am determined to stay with these “some people” as one of them. Even when I grow up and become an adult, I will be one of “these children” when facing nature. If everyone stops caring, gives up believing, then the day will come when forests disappear from the Earth. To say it the other way around, forests will not disappear in the future as long as we have the smiling faces of “these children” – including me. If we do not give up believing, our wish will never be brought to naught.

I hope that more people take interest in nature, and there will be more of “these children” in the future. It does not have to be a tree planting activity on an international scale. It can be a small contribution like growing flowers and petit tomatoes on the balcony. If each of us cares about nature within the extent possible, and becomes one of “these children” who have a tree called “compassion to nature” planted in their mind, we can make a difference in the present state of environmental destruction.

Now I am back in Japan, and I am sure the trees I planted with the children in Indonesia are growing. They will keep on growing. I will keep my mind full of sunlight and moisture so that the “compassion to nature” tree deep-rooted in my mind will grow as strongly and healthily as the trees growing in Indonesia as a reflection of our hope, believing that, someday, bright shining forests will become a common view on the Earth, and the words “tree planting” will be obsolete in this world.

2005 International Essay Contest for Young People  
[Youth Category – 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize]

## **Unite and Change, or Perish** (Original)

*Chanda Mutale*  
(Age 19, Zambia)

Nature has blessed us with abundant resources. It has also inspired our technological advancement, from it we have acquired brilliant ideas; submarines, planes, fridges, the list is endless. Besides, nature enthralls us with wonderful scenery; magnificent mountains, beautiful rivers, diverse wildlife, and many breathtaking strongholds of nature. But for these wonderful things humanity has paid back in a very harsh way. We have axed our forests to deserts, drained our rivers to valleys, melted our icebergs to floods and hunted our wildlife to near extinction.

We are responsible for global warming, pollution, deforestation, floods, droughts and many other destructive forces we have set into play. So we must not expect these problems to simply go away, we must do something about them. The solutions to our environmental problems are very simple, straight forward and available, you and I are the best solutions, but only if we change our attitudes. We have converged at Kyoto, like many other places and signed many agreements, but have we really implemented the things that we so much talk about? We must become more practical.

My appeal to the world is that we must unite genuinely, not just in words and plans but in our actions too. This unity entails that one country must not dump its nuclear waste in another country, neither must harmful chemicals be dumped in the seas. This unity of purpose excludes the superiority of profit over public interest. For the world to achieve this there must be peace, trust and mutual respect among nations. If we fail to unite we will continue to deceive ourselves while our planet wastes away, without unity we will continue to fight, and war is not only the sum of all evils but it is also a sure way to the irreparable destruction of our planet. So my silent prayer remains that as we seek to correct these wrongs we have made, we must first of all seek to correct ourselves by uniting for a noble cause.



The world has advanced technologically because nature has provided us with raw materials. But unfortunately we have turned our technology against nature. A worrying example is the satellite photographs showing that an area of forest the size of a football field disappears every eight seconds in Brazil, how can this be so? Well with the chain- saws and heavy duty vehicles we have developed it is very much possible. Instead of using our technology to ruthlessly deplete our resources, I think we should use it to sustain them. We must use technology to come up with substitutes for natural materials and invest more in research on synthetic material. It is shameful that we spend so much on research in inappropriate technology, something so bad in name and use-Weapons of Mass Destruction. Why not channel those resources to more constructive things like making nuclear energy safe for us and our environment. We must change.

Education plays an important role in sustainable development, but like technology it has also not being fully used for this purpose. Over exploitation of the land by some farmers especially in developing countries is a result of ignorance, to curb this problem governments and other NGOs should invest in environmental education, instead of fighting the effects of our problem we should fight the causes. Youths and children especially should be informed on the need to care of our planet for they determine its future. The media should also indiscriminately expose the devastating results of our careless deeds so that those who think that our environmental crisis is a joke can at least have the heart to change or perhaps the fear to do so.

Let us, however, not be deceived that as an individual you cannot do anything to correct this situation, after all it is you and I who make up this world. As an individual I contribute to the environmental condition in my community by either what I do or don't do. The small things that I do in my community really do matter, if I planted two trees today and everybody else in my community did the same, wouldn't we plant a whole forest in a month? Picking cans may seem to be an insignificant task, but wait until we have littered shores and undecomposing plastic becomes an environmental hazard, then my community will appreciate my seemingly useless task. It is my duty as responsible person to see to it that I don't by pass a running tap in my community. Above all, the greatest contribution I can make in my community is being a good example, when my actions speak louder than my words.

My message to the world is simple, let us unite and change, or we will perish. Development which cannot be sustained is only destruction in disguise, we should not only be concerned about our immediate needs, we must be more concerned about the future because that's

where we all plan to spend the rest of our lives. Our planet takes care of us, we must also take care of it.

## **Caring for Our Planet** (Original)

*Sarah Cameron*  
(Age 21, Australia)

Certainly we can continue to live the way we are now, investing our hope in better and more sustainable options for the future. We can wait for technology to save us from the mess we create. We can chop down ancient forests, and bury waste far from view, with the idea that we will fix it later. Yet, it would be absurd to do this when we already have simple solutions available to us that can take an ever increasing burden off future generations to come up with magical solutions to the problems we create only for short term convenience.

Being environmentally minded since I was very young, there came a time when I realised that my lifestyle was causing damage to the planet I endeavoured to protect. The moment of truth came in a supermarket when I was about to buy some cheap spaghetti packaged in plastic. It occurred to me that even when I could consider myself wealthy enough to buy slightly pricier organic, unpackaged food, that plastic spaghetti packet would still be lying in landfill, and it would remain there for centuries to come. I could not bear the thought of creating such a mess, I put the spaghetti back on the shelf, walked out of the supermarket, and I never looked back. Since making this decision to practise what I preach, I have lived each step of my life with consideration for the planet and, therefore, our human race who depends on it. Every action and every purchase must come with the questions "Where has this come from? and, "Where is this going to?" When I realise that a purchase is coming from unrenewable resources, and that once consumed it will end up as waste, polluting the earth, air or water, it is difficult to buy. There are many sustainable alternatives for food, clothing, transport, and power available today, what form this will take depends on where we live. For me this means that as well as buying unpackaged, organic, and wherever possible, locally produced food, I have also ceased buying unnecessary clothing, which has a huge, yet often unthought of, environmental impact. I walk, rather than drive and obtain the minimal amount of electricity I use through renewable energy.

Through these simple solutions I ceased having such a negative impact on the earth through unsustainable and unnecessary consumerism. Many have mocked me, arguing that changing one's own actions is not enough to tackle the problems we face, with still millions more creating waste that our grandchildren would too have to contend with. Yet, I have stood firm in my position that the way to lead is through example. For some years this had little visible effect on others. Then I started to receive word from friends, family and distant acquaintances, telling me that they had noticed how I lived and after some time, had begun to apply the same philosophy to their own life. A friend in the UK had begun to spend nearly two hours a day cycling to work, determining that this would be better than polluting the atmosphere. Others have started specifically seeking me out for advice on how they can minimise their impact on the environment. It is through simple actions like these, that we can create sustainability now.

In the quest for environmental sustainability and global harmony, we can never lose sight of the fact that our actions create the world we live in. We need to be examples of sustainability, showcasing solutions to the problems this modern world faces. For me, this means living a life of simplicity, thinking about the global ramifications of seemingly simple actions and acting accordingly. It means minimising consumption to needs. It means consuming consciously in order to show companies that the future is a valuable commodity, and developing interests beyond consumerism, so that our pastimes are not based on unnecessary consumption of the earth's limited resources. We must imagine that for every item we buy, there are 6 billion others doing the same, or aspiring to do the same, and then ask, "Is this sustainable?"

We also must acknowledge that we live in an interdependent world. We are part of a community, these days at international as well as local levels. We therefore need to take responsibility for the role we play both locally and globally, considering the effects of our actions beyond our borders. Most of all, we must remain positive in outlook, we need not always blame problems on governments, companies or certain nations, rather we should acknowledge the part we each play and then work together to live with ethics, integrity and sustainability.

**From your window**  
(Original)

*Tran The Phuong*  
(Age 23, Vietnam)

In early morning, you open the window to welcome a new day. What do you expect to find? Trees being covered with leaves and fruit, green mountain, blue sky, or just a smile from the small friend at your neighborhood? Or do you expect a large road with smoke and dirt, a lonely bird trying to find a tree to make its home? Every of these scenes could be found somewhere on our planet. And it depends on human beings' activities whether there will be more beautiful scenes or not.

We human beings are enabled to live through the blessings of nature and relations with other people. On this planet, our ancestors were living and building their world. We inherited from them so many things, and will give more to our next generation. People are somehow greedy, as they always want more for a better life. However, many of them do not understand thoroughly the phrase "better life", so they get it at the cost of some values that they have not yet realized. They are harming our beautiful planet in several ways. I have seen people pouring tons of discharges into the water. I have watched them releasing tons of gases and dirt into the air. Not only in big cities but also in the countryside, I heard noise breaking the peacefulness of the scene. I have also heard about wars. After any war, every side is a loser, as the people and environment in their countries all suffer from the war.

Is "harming our planet" only defined as ruining the environment? That is what we can see clearly with naked eyes. However, there is another kind of "harming" that not every one can realize. It is the ruining of cultural and spiritual values. I go to some historical places and find the last pieces of the remnants there. We are losing these representatives from the old civilizations if we do not protect them in a proper way. Also, we are losing several language systems, which results in the loss of fairy tales, traditional customs and other cultural values. Our ancestor passed them on to us, but how can we explain if we can not pass them on to our next generation? This way of "harming" is somehow more dangerous than harming the

environment, since it may lead to the harming of environment. This could be explained by the matter of education. How can people provide good education to others when their cultural values are ruined? Then without this good education, how can they realize that through some activities, they are harming their environment?

Let's return to the window that we have opened in early morning. There is no need to go out, just from this window; we may see the results of our daily activities. The more I love peaceful scenes, the more I want to keep them out there forever. Should I clean the dirty water? Should I invent a machine to move dirt and smoke from the air? Or should I make a nest for the homeless bird? Those actions may not help much, as I know that I have not touched the original reasons. It is better to prevent people from making mistakes, rather than to correct the mistakes. And a single person can not make any change for the whole planet either.

The reasons for people's harming activities could be found in their perceptions. If they do not think that an action is bad, then they still carry it out. In other words, if they do not see the benefits from caring for our planet, then they do not care. How to change their perceptions or attitudes? It is advisable to begin with education and propaganda. Let's make the love for our beautiful planet start in a child's heart when it is still going to school. They should be given stories, pictures, films, etc...about the planet. If possible, we may take them to some specific sites for field trip study. If "caring" then could be translated into a kind of "fashion", people will be very willing to take it. For adults, it is critical to bring out the combination of punishment and prizes. Education is still necessary, but I assume it would not be as useful as for children, as it is more difficult to change adults' perceptions, which have been formed for a long time.

Last but not least, each individual can not improve the situation. We need the consolidation from many people. Let's talk with our dearest ones about the problems. Let's give your hands to the friendly neighbors you can see from your window every morning, and hold theirs tightly. You all can do something better for this beautiful planet.

## **Little Things Matter** (Original)

*Tomas Sinicki*  
(Age 23, Lithuania)

I never cared much about environment. I thought people on a ship cruising in the middle of the sea protesting against pollution are useless and should be doing something more productive. I knew about Kyoto Protocol just enough to pass an introductory environmental science exam at university. I earned four credits for it. In fact, thanks to Kyoto Protocol I even won a public speaking competition in my first year at university. At that occasion, I managed to perfectly fake my concerns over the future of the Earth, which almost made my English professor cry. Four years later, things are different.

I was born in the most industrial part of Vilnius, Lithuania, in 1982. With thirty thousand people and six huge factories, we believed we lived in a Lithuanian Manchester. All these factories are now empty, employ nobody and produce nothing. They were all closed down at the beginning of the nineties as a result of diminishing demand from former Soviet Union. Our neighborhood went from full employment to eighty percent unemployment. No wonder ordinary workers were protesting against the new order. At that time, nobody really cared that the river which is passing our suburb was so dirty that parents never allowed their children going by the riverside. Once I got a week of home arrest for trying to catch fish there. That was 1988 and I could not possibly catch anything. But about a week ago I caught a 20-inch trout from the same river.

Paradox as it may seem, the river cleaned up thanks to changing political and economic order. In a way, this clean river is a symbol of improved transparency and clarity that we achieved after the shift in our political system. We are living a happier life with less heavy production and less dirt around us. But as ever, there are areas in which we can improve.

Like many Lithuanians, I am obsessed with fishing. My favorite pond is situated about half a mile away from my home at the outskirts of Vilnius. In the summer, my brother and I go there

almost every day. Two years ago, a furniture factory was built next to it. At the beginning of spring, they spilled some unidentifiable substances to the groove near it, but it soaked through to the pond. Fish died. My brother and I, and a bunch of childhood friends got upset. Suddenly, I found myself protesting, just like those "useless people on a ship in the middle of the sea", against pollution. A soon-to-become business graduate was protesting against a new venture which was bringing over a hundred workplaces to families of workers who lost their jobs at the beginning of the last decade – me, who was taught to always advocate entrepreneurship, investment and job creation!

Fortunately, we were very persuasive. We went to municipality, but that did not help. We called a Lithuanian television program called TV Help Line to help us clean the pond and threatened the factory their brand would suffer if we showed this on TV. That worked, and thanks to their financial support, we cleaned the pond. We bought several hundreds of small fish and let them into the pond to have it full like in the old days. This was an achievement that made me proud much more than the speech on Kyoto Protocol. After all, this was true.

Two years have passed and the director of the factory is a friend of ours. We suggested him using the pond for personnel management practices. Consequently, twice a year, the company organizes fishing competition among its staff members. This, they say, help them unify people and make their personnel stronger. Moreover, the manager went beyond mere use of environment for internal business purposes and became a spokesman on responsible environmental practices. He started to deliver speeches on environmental issues as a guest lecturer in business ethics at my business school. This surely can be thought of as a mere public relations campaign, but if his words can raise awareness of at least one young soul, I am willing to applaud it and will have nothing against an increase in demand for this man's production.

Two years ago, I suddenly understood that it takes one moment, one single instance to enlighten a person to change his mind for the better. I wish everybody to have this moment. I wish every single one of us to experience a few seconds in which something or someone strikes you so much that you start to care. Be it a polluted pond, a dead fish, a smoking chimney, burning fields of grass in early March, or a piece of garbage in the middle of a forest – as long as it can make you care, YOU will make the difference.