

Objective

To learn about the role of the UN in protecting the environment.

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Materials:

Photocopies of page 15, drawing equipment.

Procedure:

Trees and forests are one of the basic life-support systems (or ecosystems) along with mountains, lakes, rivers and soil. These *terrestrial* ecosystems are not only vital to all life on earth, but are closely interwoven with one another. Forests are one of the most threatened of these ecosystems, and when they are lost the results are devastating. For example, 40 percent of Ethiopia's land used to be covered with forests. That figure is now less than 4 per cent.

The UN is taking a lead in protecting existing forests and encouraging the replanting of those that have been lost. They do this mainly through the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) (reference: *Basic Facts About the United Nations, Everyone's United Nations*).

In 1982-83, UNEP directed a program for children to plant and learn about trees. Swedish artist Heidi Lange contributed a drawing (figure #1) which brings people, animals and a tree together on the premise that animals depend as much as people do on trees.

Ask students to identify the important functions of trees illustrated:

Figure #1:
Trees provide us with much of the food we eat.

Figure #2:
In many poor countries, people depend on firewood as their only fuel for heat and cooking.

Figure #3:
Trees are essential in the water cycle. They catch the rain and prevent it from running off quickly. The water then filters into the ground and seeps into streams and rivers. About 90 percent of the water for the Canadian prairies comes from the wooded eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

Figure #4:
Oxygen is an important by-product of trees. One acre of healthy, young forest releases four tons of oxygen a year. The leaves and needles of trees absorb air and by photosynthesis use the carbon dioxide and release life-giving oxygen - making them rather like the lungs of the earth.

Using the spaces provided, ask students to draw some of the functions of trees such as:

- preventing erosion
- affecting climate by giving off water (transpiration) and reducing the speed of wind
- giving protection to wildlife
- providing products such as lumber, paper, fibre for clothing, chemical products

Objective

To learn about the role of the UN in getting food to people.

Activity

Materials:

Photocopies of page 17, drawing equipment.

Procedure:

We take the availability of food for granted, but many people do not have enough to eat. The United Nations gets involved by providing emergency food aid through some of its agencies, most notably the World Food Programme (WFP) and the recently created Office for Emergency Operations for Africa.

The UN is also involved in long-term planning for food production in developing countries. Through its agencies such as the World Food Council, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) it helps with long-term plans to solve food problems.

Two examples of this long-term approach are shown on page 17. In figure #1, husband and wife farmers in Swaziland work on an irrigated cabbage field. They were helped by the FAO to use their available water in the most efficient way possible and reduce the effects of the dry spells in the area.

In the second example, figure #2, another aspect of the food problem is illustrated. This woman is preparing a meal in her home in Nepal. Every day she has to walk and climb further and further to obtain the fuelwood needed for cooking. In response, the UNDP is helping her village to plant and protect their own forest close to the settlement so that the people will have fuel at hand.

Have students draw under these two illustrations 1) how the food they eat is grown, and 2) how their food is cooked.

