

ISSUES OF IMPROVING THE ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN NON-GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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Abstract: This article examines environmental protection, which is becoming an increasingly pressing issue today, along with external factors affecting nature — including the influence of non-governmental and non-profit organizations (NGOs/NPOs) located in Uzbekistan and foreign countries on the environment, and ways to improve their activities. Scientific research and foreign experience in this area, as well as cases of their implementation in Uzbekistan, are also considered. The article discusses factors hindering the development of environmental non-governmental organizations in Uzbekistan and worldwide, ways to eliminate them, and prospects for implementing new initiatives aimed at environmental protection through such organizations. Proposals aimed at protecting the environment and preventing certain problems are also presented.

Keywords: wildlife, water resources, desertification, technologies, companies, iVolunteer, HI5, foreign organizations, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, funds, national and foreign experience.

Introduction

Today, the rational use of the natural environment and natural resources is of urgent global importance. This is driven by population growth and the proliferation of various industrial enterprises. Factories and enterprises that treat the natural environment carelessly are limiting the reserve resources that future generations will need. In recent years, significant work has been carried out in Uzbekistan to improve the organizational and legal framework of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) and other institutions of civil society. This aspect is clearly reflected in the activities of NGOs in our country. In particular, while 5,431 non-governmental non-profit organizations were operating in Uzbekistan in the 2010s, 8,240 organizations are currently registered (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). Among these organizations, environmental NGOs exist that are currently working to protect and restore the natural environment, fighting ecological problems through whatever resources they have. In turn, NGOs are being improved in order to study global practices in identifying and addressing ecological problems and to apply them to our national legislation and way of life. This demonstrates that the attitude of non-governmental, non-profit organizations toward the natural environment, and the role and participation of the state and the people in their development, are of great importance.

Furthermore, national and foreign environmental NGOs are active not only in protecting the environment, but also in raising the ecological culture of the population and in shaping ecological policy. This article analyzes the ways and available opportunities for improving the activities of national and foreign environmental NGOs.

Discussion and Results

Today, the role of environmental NGOs in protecting the environment is growing increasingly significant. First, it should be emphasized that not only environmental NGOs, but all citizens are obliged to treat the natural environment with care, as stated in Article 62 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). This is because the deterioration of the atmosphere caused by emissions from newly established industrial plants and factories, the waste they generate, and

the attitude of citizens toward each plant, tree, and living creature make the role of ecological organizations in protecting the natural environment critically important. In particular, the *Yangi O'zbekiston* newspaper noted that "the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the excessive release of exhaust gases into the air has created a greenhouse effect, leading to global climate change — a serious ecological problem that is causing concern to the world community today" (Yangi O'zbekiston, 2023).

In the scientific article "Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations for the Human Factor" by Qodirova Mamlakat Mo'minovna, Associate Professor at Karshi State University, it is stated: "NGOs also play an important role by promoting environmental education, shaping environmental consciousness in society, and providing assistance when natural disasters or ecological catastrophes occur. Such organizations call on the public to conserve natural resources, reduce waste, and use green energy sources" (Qodirova, 2023).

First, environmental NGOs, like other types of non-governmental non-profit organizations, are established and operate in the manner prescribed by Article 15 and other provisions of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations" (Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations, 2003).

Several NGOs operate in the field of environmental protection in Uzbekistan. For example, organizations such as "Ekosan," "Tabiat," and "Ekologik harakat" (Ecological Movement) are focusing on environmental problems and implementing projects to preserve and restore the environment. According to observations, there is a public association called the Ecoforum of Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations of Uzbekistan (Ecoforum). Ecoforum was established in September 2004 at a conference of leaders of 48 non-governmental non-profit organizations and initiative groups. It was registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan on April 7, 2007, as a public association of environmental NGOs in Uzbekistan (O'zbekiston Ekoforumi, 2024). The goals of Ecoforum are:

- To unite the efforts of NGOs to enhance the effectiveness of public participation in shaping and implementing a national ecological strategy;

- To promote the conservation and rational use of natural resources in order to achieve sustainable development of the country;
- To support the development of civil society based on ecological values.

In our view, such organizations play an important role in combating ecological problems when support provided by governments and other official agencies is limited or ineffective. Nevertheless, the activities of environmental NGOs face a number of challenges. Their resources are primarily formed through charitable and donor funds, which in turn creates certain difficulties in ensuring the continuity of their operations. Since national environmental NGOs often lack the capacity to influence state ecological policy or operate with limited resources, the need for international cooperation and experience-sharing is growing. Foreign environmental organizations can help support methods developed on the basis of experience and scientific research in many countries.

Several factors are important in improving the activities of environmental NGOs, including: establishing effective cooperation with government and state agencies, sharing experience with international organizations and developing new innovative methods based on scientific research, and focusing on environmental education and the formation of an ecological culture among the population. At the same time, in order to make their work more effective, environmental NGOs need to properly allocate resources, strengthen cooperation between organizations, and introduce new technologies.

Today, a number of measures are being implemented in our country to protect the natural environment. First and foremost, a prominent example is the establishment of the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change by Decree No. PF-269 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 24, 2022, "On Measures for Implementing Administrative Reforms in New Uzbekistan" (Presidential Decree PF-269, 2022). This is significant because the establishment of this ministry alone has an impact down to its subordinate organizational structure — from the departments to the directorates within the ministry's system, the tasks and functions related to natural environment protection are defined.

Ecological organizations operating in Uzbekistan:

No.	Organization
1	National Association of Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations of Uzbekistan
2	"Yuksalish" National Movement
3	"Taraqqiyot Strategiyasi" (Development Strategy) Center
4	"Ekolog" Public Association
5	"Ekomaktab" (Eco-School)

In addition, various legislative norms related to nature protection are currently being adopted, updated, and amended. As an example, we can cite the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Nature Protection." This law establishes the legal, economic, and organizational foundations for preserving natural environmental conditions and for the rational use of natural resources. The purpose of the law is to ensure the harmonious development of the relationship between humans and nature, to protect ecological systems, natural complexes, and individual objects, and to guarantee citizens' right to a favorable environment (Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Nature Protection, 1992).

Furthermore, in our national legislation, the supervisory function of ecological NGOs is reinforced. Specifically, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Ecological Control" includes ecological NGOs as a category of subjects of ecological control and establishes their rights and obligations (Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Ecological Control, 2013).

According to legal scholar H. To'xtashev, public ecological expertise gives citizens the right to participate in and monitor state management bodies in their activities. Public ecological expertise can be conducted by NGOs and citizens regarding various planned, ongoing, and existing facilities (To'xtashev, 2024).

In order to make the activities of national environmental NGOs more effective, it is first necessary to introduce environmental protection projects by drawing on foreign experience. For example, regarding the fight against desertification, if we look at foreign experience, Iran has implemented many projects in this area — specifically, tree planting projects and the creation of irrigation systems to prevent wind erosion (MDPI, 2022). Uzbekistan could also develop similar projects in Kyzylkum and Karakalpakstan. Regarding water-saving technology, Iran conducts volunteer-based awareness campaigns on water conservation and modernization of irrigation systems. Since Uzbekistan also faces a water scarcity problem, Iran's experience could be very useful. As another example, regarding improving urban ecology, Iranian cities such as Tehran are paying great attention to developing bicycle lanes, green spaces, and waste recycling systems to address ecological problems (MDPI, 2022). Uzbekistan could also learn from this experience to improve the ecological environment in Tashkent and other cities. It is no exaggeration to say that the examples mentioned above can help national environmental NGOs develop by drawing on foreign experience.

Additionally, several examples from foreign experience can be used to develop ecology and effectively implement the activities of organizations in Uzbekistan on various topics. For instance, in the Republic of India, there is an NGO called "My Bharat," established on October 31, 2023, which, despite its recent founding, has already engaged over 450,000 young people in education, animal protection, and environmental conservation (My Bharat, 2023). This organization helps to increase the ecological responsibility of citizens. If a similar organization were established in Uzbekistan, public oversight in the Republic of Uzbekistan would increase, and citizens would treat the natural environment with greater care. In this regard, through our research, we also found evidence that this foreign experience has been partially introduced in our country. Specifically, according to Article 23 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Ecological Expertise," public ecological expertise can be

carried out on the initiative of NGOs and citizens in any field of activity that requires ecological justification. Thus, national NGOs can also conduct public oversight on their own initiative.

Furthermore, in our neighboring state of Kazakhstan, there is an NGO and initiative organization called the "Recycle Birge" movement. This social movement is an organization aimed at recycling plastic waste and keeping the natural environment clean (Recycle Birge, 2023).

In addition, the David Suzuki Foundation, established in Canada in 1990 by Dr. David Suzuki and Dr. Tara Cullis, is a non-profit, non-governmental charitable organization registered in Canada and the United States. It studies the impact of humans on the environment with a primary focus on finding solutions. With a mission to protect the diversity of nature and the quality of life, the Foundation works toward its goals through large-scale projects (such as the Nature Challenge), education (such as consumer guides), research and publications, and advocacy (David Suzuki Foundation, 2023).

Furthermore, today several practical initiatives are being undertaken in foreign countries in this regard. As an example, we can cite Greenpeace International, which operates in the areas of environmental protection, combating climate change, and preserving biodiversity. The organization campaigns against the ecologically harmful activities of major corporations and governments. Recently, Greenpeace filed a lawsuit in the United Kingdom challenging the approval of the Rosebank and Jackdaw oil and gas field developments. The organization considers this decision unlawful because the ecological impact assessments of the projects did not account for greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the combustion of the extracted fuel, which negatively affects climate change (Greenpeace International, 2024).

Another foreign organization, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), implements projects worldwide for the conservation of wildlife, forests, oceans, freshwater resources, and climate protection. The organization operates in more than 100 countries and supports thousands of ecological initiatives. WWF is implementing the LILA (Living Landscapes for Armenia) project in collaboration with EcoLur in Armenia. This project is aimed at improving the living conditions of people living in mountainous areas, ensuring the sustainable

use of natural resources, and strengthening adaptation to climate change. Within the framework of the project, measures such as sustainable management of forests and pastures, development of ecological tourism, and support for women and socially vulnerable groups are being implemented (WWF, 2024). The goal of these organizations is to transform all areas into waste-free zones and, through recycling, to bring benefits even to the economy.

Conclusion

First and foremost, caring for nature and nurturing it is the duty of every citizen. Second, ecological problems are not issues that can be resolved within the framework of a single state or organization alone — they require a global approach. Therefore, supporting the development of environmental NGOs in Uzbekistan and enriching them with international experience is an important step toward preserving the environment. In this process, it would be appropriate for every citizen, every state body, and every organization to include the function of protecting the natural environment among its primary goals. Effective cooperation between the state, the private sector, and civil society will undoubtedly yield significant results in addressing ecological problems.

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