

## Environment and Animal Welfare

Students from the first year of the secondary school at St Monica School Gzira have prepared a report to highlight current global issues about the environment and animal treatment. The report covers four areas being Endangered species, Treating animals with respect and Cars, Air Pollution and Health.

### Endangered Species

An endangered species is a population of organisms which are at risk of becoming extinct because it is either few in numbers, or threatened by changing environmental or predation parameters. Also it could mean that due to deforestation there may be a lack of food and water.

Many countries have laws offering special protection to these species or their habitats: for example, forbidding hunting, restricting land development or creating preserves. Only a few of the many species at risk of extinction actually make it to the lists and obtain legal protection, many more species or potentially will become extinct, without gaining public notice. The greatest factor of concern is the rate at which species are becoming extinct within the last 150 years. The International Union for Conservation of Nature has calculated the percentage of endangered species at 40 percent of all organisms based on the sample of species in the human controlled environments with restricted settings, such as Wildlife preserves, zoos and other conservation facilities. Captive breeding is meant to save species from going extinct. It is supposed to stabilize the population of the species so it is no longer at risk of disappearing. The list of endangered species is almost never-ending and includes, amongst other, the Asian Golden cat, the Asian Elephant and the Brown Robber Frog.

### Treating animals with respect

Animals are like people so they need to be treated with respect. If you bring a pet at home you need to take good care of it. You need to groom it, feed it and potty



**Proper feeding for pets - appropriate food and water**

train it. Pets need special, proper food to keep it healthy and not table scraps. If you want a happy, well behaved pet you have to have a lot of patience. Besides all this, you have to play with the pet and it has to have something to amuse itself while you're away. Things like balls, hard-baked bones etc.... make wonderful toys.

Some people have to "get rid" of

their pet because they don't have enough money for food or to pay the vet's bill so these pets end up on the streets to fend for themselves. However the most common reason why people dispose of their pets is because they do not have enough time for it. These pets would probably get run over or die because of starvation. So before you get a pet, think about it.



**Appropriate toys for pets**



**A happy pet**

## Environment

In order to analyse our local scene, a survey has been conducted to identify if people agree or disagree with the efforts allocated by the government to

improve the environment. The survey shows that from twelve people, seven disagree that the Maltese Government is not making enough effort in trying to take care of the environment. They say that there are far too little left of the Maltese countryside. People should be more encouraged not to pollute beaches and the countryside.

For a short while, the government should stop spending money on unimportant things like new buildings and technology and start using it to create more recreational areas full of trees. About three years ago, in the year 2007, in a local Recreational Park, there was a small area allocated for children who wanted to learn how to ride a bike. This area also included a section for children that required assistance from their parents as they were too young to ride it alone. This was pulled down and instead the area was replaced by a parking site. This is understandable because there has



**Recreational Park**

to be a space for cars but at least, the government could have relocated the bike park as these children need a safe place to ride.

Children should be even more educated about the huge problem concerned with Global Warming and how important it is to decrease pollution in the air because we are not just harming the environment around us, but we are harming ourselves. We can decrease the use of cars by instead of using a car to go to a near by place, we can go on foot or ride a bike.

## Cars, Air Pollution and Health

Driving a car is the most air polluting act an average citizen commits. Air pollution is not a good idea for a variety of reasons, large and small. The right ideas involve long-term planning, conservation and a deep commitment to preserving the natural world. Without a healthy natural environment, there will be few or no healthy humans.

Human action destroys plants and replaces healthy ecosystems with concrete and asphalt. The task for humans is to stop destroying the environments that sustain us. If we fail, the planet will do just fine without us.

## Friendly or Lethal?

Cars have two opposite personalities. One is friendly and attractive the other is destructive and can be lethal. The friendly and attractive aspect is related to the design, comfort, speed and style whilst the destructive aspect is related to fuel consumption, sound pollution and exhaust generation.

Car exhaust is toxic at ground level

Exhaust from all car engines combine to produce local adverse effects on the health of car users and all innocent bystanders. Cars are noisy, ugly, often dangerous and dominate the experience of modern living.

Solutions: Reduce Air Pollution by changing the design and use of motor vehicles

The use of cars must be re-defined. Car use has to be considered a privilege, not a right. Reduce number of Vehicles - issue permits to limit the number of vehicles to control regional traffic congestion and air pollution.

Governments can encourage the reduction of vehicular use by:

- Increase Public Transit - diversify options and limit access to existing roads.
- Separate commercial and private traffic to increase efficient use of roads
- Stop building car-oriented roads and highways
- In cities, build more walking paths, bicycle routes and roads for small electric vehicles
- Reward car-pools and car-sharing plans
- Road Tolls and increased gasoline and vehicle registration taxes

Governments can use a combination of

- Voluntary and Reward Schemes
- Compulsory and Penalty Schemes
- Incentives for New Technology and Changes in Industrial Fuel Consumption

Long term solutions require that vehicles use less polluting energy sources such as bio fuels.

Electric Cars are on the road, under development and promise to become vehicles of choice for urban transportation. The new cars represent advances in technology that link computers, electric motors and batteries into systems that drive well, self-regulate, and require little maintenance. Before more people plug in electric vehicles, a new infrastructure of non-polluting, affordable electricity production will have to be built.

In the immediate future reduced car use is the best solution. No solution is better than fewer vehicles and reduced vehicle use.

A science fiction fantasy might include a novel way of splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen with less energy consumed but no-one knows how to do this in 2010.



**An Electric Car**



**The project team**

From the right. Front: Gillanne Saliba with Tilly the dog, Shannon Dimech, Nicole Vassallo and Paula Borg. Back row: Lorella Castillo and Martina Vassallo

St Monica, Gzira