

2015-16 Topics

Treatment of Animals

PP1

Farmers, pet and animal owners, and scientific researchers have many different ways of treating animals in their care. Fewer than 30% of countries have animal welfare laws, and existing laws are not always enforced. Researchers assert that it is important to be able to use animals in research to test drugs and new medical procedures that can help both people and animals. Sometimes endangered animals are kept in captivity at a high cost in order to protect their limited populations. Animal shelters are often filled with feral animals or those that have been abandoned by their owners. Wild animals in many parts of the world come into conflict with human activity.

In the future, how might research impact human understanding and treatment of animals? Are zoos useful educational tools or unethical exhibitions? Are certain animals entitled to more rights than others based on cultural or intelligence differences? How can humans be better stewards in the treatment of animals? Who decides the appropriate treatment of animals and their role in society?

Disappearing Languages

PP2

Language is the soul of a culture. The survival of a culture may depend on the language used for rituals and to describe cultural ideas, beliefs, and understandings. What is the impact on culture when its language disappears? By some estimates, of the six thousand languages left on Earth, 90% are expected to disappear or be endangered before the end of this century. In New Zealand, government and community initiatives are trying to revive the language of indigenous people, but even so it is in a precarious state. Many indigenous peoples around the globe don't have support to prevent their language from disappearing. Will anyone be able to read the rich literature embodied in the disappearing languages in the years to come? What oral traditions will be lost? What responsibilities, if any, do governments, institutions, and communities have towards preserving endangered languages?

Recovering from Natural Disaster

QP

Earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and other natural disasters are big news when they occur. Front-page news and internet feeds bring us the details of staggering statistics and images of loss of life and property. Recovery work such as rebuilding homes, infrastructure, and businesses go on even when the news moves on to the next big story. The human factor such as recovery from emotional, mental, and physical stress is a painful and difficult journey for survivors of natural disasters, often taking many years after the disaster strikes. A disaster recovery plan (DRP) often proves inadequate especially since it is often developed only after a disaster. Government agencies, insurance companies, charitable organizations, celebrities, and individual volunteers respond with immediate help, but long-term support can be difficult to sustain. How can relief efforts be best utilized, coordinated, and sustained to assist survivors? How can the people, communities, and countries that are affected by a disaster begin to recover from their losses and cope with their changed lives? How will the impact on psychological and physical health be managed?

The Global Workplace

AB

The world today is increasingly interdependent with the advent of interconnectedness. The internet brings individuals living in diverse places together for innovative opportunities in global collaboration. Physical space may no longer define a workplace. Many local and international corporations are able to employ people without them having to step out of their homes or countries. Developed countries outsource jobs to other countries where labor may be cheaper and labor laws less regulated. How might a more global workplace affect local and national economies? Some firms downsize their workforce in favor of automated systems that require less human input. These changes create a pool of workers who, besides being out of work, are often unprepared for other jobs. How might employers develop innovative ways to work globally? Is the growing trend of working globally online benefiting current workplace trends? How might this affect the world economy? What economic or educational changes might better prepare governments, businesses, and workers for a global workplace?