#### **UDC: 316**

https://doi.org/10.59849/2409-4838.2024.3.82

### THE ROLES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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This study examines the role of non-governmental organizations in key issues such as sustainable society and social change in the context of the concept of sustainable development, analyzing their societal contribution socio-philosophically. Taking into account the historical and theoretical framework of civil society, the research aims to understand the structure of the relationship between sustainable development goals and NGOs and how these relationships manifest themselves in practice.

The article uses different methodological approaches to understand the roles of NGOs in contributing to sustainable development goals. Previous studies on sustainable development and the role of NGOs through various literatures have been analyzed in depth. In addition, the contributions of project activities of NGOs to the goals of sustainable development have been shown through field research and observation.

NGOs support sustainable development goals by organizing awareness-raising events and promoting social justice. At the same time, they promote the active participation of local communities in development processes by increasing social participation and promoting the sustainable management of natural resources through environmental protection efforts. These organizations contribute directly to the sustainable development goals by lobbying for policy changes and implementing their projects. This multifaceted approach emphasizes that NGOs play an effective role in the field of sustainable development and pave the way for positive changes in society.

Keywords: NGO, sustainable development, UN, social change.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of sustainable development includes universal goals that emerge against the backdrop of growing environmental problems, economic inequalities, and social injustices around the world. This concept aims to achieve a balance in which people can meet their own needs, while at the same time using natural resources efficiently to meet the needs of future generations. Sustainable development aims to ensure the long-term well-being of societies and find collective solutions to global problems by bringing together environmental, economic, and social dimensions.

In the context of this universal goal, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role. NGOs carry out various projects with the ideal of sustainable development and perform tasks such as raising public awareness, education, and leadership in social change processes. Effective participation and leadership of civil society in this process are vital to successfully achieve sustainable development. Therefore, this study aims to examine the interaction of NGOs and their contribution to social change from a socio-philosophical point of view.

In this context, the main goal of the research is to understand how civil society organizations contribute to sustainable development processes and to analyze this contribution from a socio-philo-sophical perspective. The goal of the article is to determine how environmental sustainability, economic development, and social justice, which are the main principles of sustainable development,

JOURNAL OF YOUNG RESEARCHER, 2024, № 3, ISSN 2409-4838

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come together, what is the influence of civil society on these areas, and the degree of influence of this influence. The importance of the study is to contribute to the scientific literature in the field by shedding light on future policy-making processes.

The research examines the activities, strategies and multidirectional effects of NGOs through the analysis of scientific literature and statistics, questionnaires in this field. This methodological approach aims to provide a comprehensive analysis by addressing the social and philosophical dimensions of civil society.

## MAIN PART

# 1. Basic concepts

The beginning of the concept of sustainable development is related to the nature protection activities of the UN. In 1984, the International Commission on "Environment and Development" was established under the leadership of the Secretary General of the United Nations. Under the leadership of the United Nations, this commission was headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the former prime minister of Norway. The main goal of the commission was to develop a long-term strategic program in the fields of environment and development. This strategy envisaged the continuous development of various countries of the world, especially in the year 2000 and later. Since 1984, Gro Harlem Brundtland has collected the recommendations of world scientists on the environment and development, and with the contributions of experts from 23 different countries, prepared the main report entitled "Our Common Future", which was presented to the UN General Assembly in 1987 [1, p. 20].

The report "Our Common Future" is an important document that brings the concept of sustainable development to the world agenda. This report, led by Gro Harlem Brundtland, provides a framework for addressing environmental and economic challenges in an integrated manner. The report discusses key elements of sustainable development across a wide range of topics, including environmental issues, poverty, population growth, health, and education. It also emphasizes that economic growth must be compatible with environmental sustainability. The report presents various recommendations aimed at the fair and balanced distribution of resources worldwide, education and awareness of societies, leadership roles of politicians, global cooperation, and policy implementation at the national level. In short, the report "Our Common Future" offers a holistic approach that combines environmental and economic dimensions, calling for global action to achieve sustainable development goals [17].

In September 2000, the UN General Assembly held a special session to discuss the organization's goals (MDGs). Delegates attending the General Assembly agreed to achieve a significant improvement in the economic, environmental and social conditions of the world's poor by 2015. Until that day, there was no such consensus among the decisions taken by the international community. Although the performance in meeting the targets during that period was uncertain, the need for urgent action against poverty was unanimously accepted. At the same time, the problem of poverty became a priority item of the global development agenda [5, p. 267].

Sustainable development is a concept that combines ecological balance and economic growth, emphasizes the quality of the environment, and promotes the efficient use of natural resources. This concept offers a model by which the needs of today's generations can be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to this concession, achieving sustainable development in a country can be achieved by ensuring environmental, economic sustainability and social sustainability. The phenomenon of sustainable development with efficient use of intergenerational resources is ecologically sustainable economic development that takes into account the needs of future generations, maintains the balance between the economy and the ecosystem, without depleting natural resources. In the sustainable development approach, four main issues are taken into account: social and economic policy, natural resource management, environmental pro-

JOURNAL OF YOUNG RESEARCHER, 2024, № 3, ISSN 2409-4838

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tection, and the needs of future generations [1, p. 7]. The engaged in research on sustainable development and climate change, revealed that achieving sustainable development requires a multidisciplinary approach, and for this purpose, a new framework called "sustainomics" is needed. Figure 1 shows the main elements of sustainable development and the relationships between these elements in Munasinghe's proposed approach. Each area at the corners of the triangle has its driving forces and goals. While the economy is primarily focused on improving human well-being by increasing the consumption of goods and services, the environmental field aims to preserve the integrity and sustainability of ecosystems. The social field, in addition to strengthening human relations , emphasizes ensuring that individuals and groups achieve their goals [15, p. 34, 35].

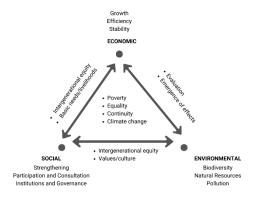


Fig. 1. Integrity and sustainability of ecosystems

The sustainable development triangle was first introduced in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil [2, p. 11]. This triangle is presented to emphasize that its interior and edges are as important as its corners. For example, issues such as poverty or climate change are at the center of the triangle because it is important to address problems in all three dimensions. Although the "Sustainomics" framework avoids the hegemony of any one discipline and aims to attract attention to sustainable development impartially and clearly, this idea has been strongly resisted due to multidisciplinary contradictions [13, p. 201].

Understanding the different dimensions of sustainable development implies balanced development both economically and environmentally. However, the philosophical dimensions underlying this complex approach create a deeper meaning of sustainable development. These philosophical foundations include various systems of thought such as natural philosophy, environmental ethics, and utilitarianism. Aiming to ensure sustainable development so that not only current generations but also future generations have a suitable environment for living, these philosophical dimensions emphasize that development should be formed not only with material gains but also based on ethics and social responsibility. In this context, understanding the philosophical underpinnings of sustainable development also requires embracing the interplay of values and ethical principles. In short, the philosophy of sustainable development is based on the sociological-philosophical study of providing materially and socially quality life to the present generations without harming the right of future generations to live decently. At the same time, it should be noted that the development of human capital is an integral part of this process. Therefore, economic, social, cultural, legal, technological, psychological, gender, and other similar aspects of human development in any society are the main indicators of sustainable development [1, p. 25]. Another of the main concepts is the concept of civil society. Civil society is emerging as a crucial factor in understanding the complexities of sustainable development and shaping its role in this process. The term civil society, first used by Locke in 1690, remained on the agenda until Tocqueville solved the democratization process. This concept regained importance in the 1970s after a long period of silence in the campaigns for the democrati-

JOURNAL OF YOUNG RESEARCHER, 2024, № 3, ISSN 2409-4838

zation of Soviet-style political systems in Eastern Europe beginning in the 1850s. The new political searches that began after the fall of the Eastern Bloc regimes played an important role in reviving the debates about civil society. This situation shows that the priority of the new democratic systems established by those who left the former Soviet bloc is the reconstruction of the organizational structures that make up civil society. Although civil society was not considered together with democracy in the first discussions at the beginning of modern society, today civil society and democracy are considered inseparable from each other. Today, when talking about civil society, the importance of civil society and global problems, the question "how to make civil society more healthy and functional" is always brought to the agenda concerning democracy. In this regard, civil society is considered the most important means of getting rid of authoritarian or military regimes and transitioning to democracy [11, p. 90]. In the modern sense, civil society is voluntary, self-sustaining, independent from the state, and subject to a legal order consisting of a set of established rules. As a rule, it differs from "society" in that it involves citizens acting collectively in the public sphere to express their interests and ideals, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, fulfill the demands of the state, and hold state institutions accountable. Society, in its most general sense, is the name for organized human communities operating in an environment of institutions and rules. The way people organize themselves changes over time according to different perspectives and is divided into certain classifications in this respect. For example, primitive society, feudal society, modern society, etc. Civil society is, in a certain sense, the general name of the developed and democratic societies of our time. To this extent, civil society is a union of individuals and organizations that are constantly developing, independent from the state, capable of directing their own development, without resorting to any supreme personality and reality, and which include the dynamics necessary for development [3, p. 1300]. Although every organization operating in the field of civil society is considered non-governmental, in modern societies, organizations that do not pursue economic goals and work for collective benefit, and operate on a voluntary basis in order to educate and guide the public, are defined as non-governmental organizations. The main characteristics of NGOs are that they not only serve their own goals and values, they are independent of governments, state bodies and political parties, they act as mediators between the central authority and citizens without seeking commercial interests or profit. By operating within these criteria, those organizations fulfill the requirements of being an NGO in a certain sense. With this, they assume the role of mobilizing the whole society to solve social problems [4, p. 91]. It can be said that the civil society has an autonomous structure in terms of the strengthening of social groups and the direction of the state. However, civil society has a pluralistic feature in terms of interaction between groups and reconciliation. Civil society, which plays a critical role in ensuring political participation, also supports social organization through voluntary associations. As an independent organization, civil society defends the common interests of underrepresented vulnerable individuals, groups, and communities [4, p. 101].

Individuals and communities in society always need solidarity with other individuals to be more effective in their various interests and interests. Based on this need, people come together in non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations also convey their problems, needs, wishes, and demands to society. In this context, NGOs primarily perform the function of "forming public opinion in society" regarding relevant issues.

In addition to conveying people's problems and demands to society, NGOs also oppose the decisions or practices adopted by the political authorities, practices of the market economy that are far from social benefits. Therefore, some negative policies are eliminated or mitigated by the resistance of these organizations. In this context, it can be said that NGOs play the role of a bridge between society and the state. At the same time, they can take on some functions to solve problems in times of crisis [8, p.35].

#### 2. Civil society in the context of sustainable development

Sustainable development is an important concept that aims to find solutions to complex and inseparable problems faced by societies today. In this context, civil society stands out as one of the main driving elements of sustainable development. It takes a holistic approach that incorporates various dimensions such as sustainable development, economic growth, social justice, environmental security, and cultural richness. By actively participating in this development process, civil society supports a participatory and equitable structure that promotes social change through the collaboration of various stakeholders. Under this heading, a broad perspective will be taken to understand and appreciate the role of civil society in the context of sustainable development. Within the framework of challenges and opportunities presented by sustainable development, the unique contributions and potential of civil society in this field will be discussed, thus the function of civil society within this important concept will be examined more closely. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in the context of sustainability by solving environmental and social problems from different perspectives. In this context, NGOs function effectively by carrying out several activities such as public advocacy, social service provision, research, innovation, and partnership. NGOs can be effective in raising awareness of environmental and social issues and supporting sustainable policies and practices. To this end, they use a variety of communication channels, including public awareness campaigns, media relations, and lobbying with governments and businesses. NGOs offer a variety of services to help people and communities lead more sustainable lives. These services include initiatives such as renewable energy installations, and environmental education programs for sustainable agriculture. Today, many NGOs work with landowners to protect forests and other natural areas. Some NGOs provide financial support for research on sustainable forestry practices [16].

One branch of NGOs' contributions to sustainable development goals is the area of environmental protection. Currently, excessive pollution of the environment requires the activities of international organizations, NGOs, and scientists operating in the environmental field. These studies aim to take steps to prevent environmental pollution that has consequences such as the melting of glaciers and depletion of the ozone layer. For this reason, organizations that are sensitive to the environment and take action have gained more importance. Environmental sustainability has become an area actively pursued by NGOs. NGOs have an important role to play in influencing or guiding decision-makers, both in terms of education and environmental policy development. It is also important for NGOs to join forces to communicate environmental sustainability to decision-makers. To protect resources, priority should be given to social responsibility projects and activities aimed at efficient use of renewable energy sources, reducing the environmental impact of production and service activities, and increasing environmental awareness of all employees [10, p. 306]. The most important way to achieve sustainable development is to create a culture where sustainable lifestyles are accepted and rewarded. In addition to the sustainability practices of organizations, individuals in isolation can also influence the dynamics in the formation of a culture of sustainability. Thus, in societies where there is a cultural change in this field, the indirect effect of private and public organizations on sustainability will be higher [14, p. 540].

The most important tool that can guide people on the path of sustainable development is environmental NGOs. In this field, their main target group is society. For this reason, NGOs are structures that can contribute to the cultural change necessary for a culture of sustainability that will ensure development. The social dimension of sustainability expressed in the Brundtland report in 1987 refers to the networks and social institutions that can influence the building of a culture of sustainability. This again emphasizes the importance of NGOs in the implementation of the concept of sustainability. It is known that today, in the context of environmental protection, NGOs have started to work actively and carry out actions that have a voice all over the world. In this context, the most well-known environmental non-governmental organization is "Greenpeace" with its headquarters in

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the Netherlands [9, p. 823-824]. Although this organization is not fully active in Azerbaijan, some NGOs in our country cooperate with this high-level organization.

In societies where the democratization process is going fast, NGOs, which are its indicators, are also starting to have very fast development dynamics. The number of civil society institutions such as foundations, associations, associations and civic initiatives that aim to undertake voluntary social responsibilities is increasing day by day. Their purpose is to help ensure a pluralistic social structure by creating public opinion and enabling individuals to express their wishes. Today, NGOs play an important role in public participation by creating a dialogue between democratic institutions and the population.

Interaction between government, private sector, educational institutions, and NGOs in the field of sustainable development should include a comprehensive understanding of dialogue and cooperation. While the state defines the sustainability policy, the private sector has an important role in the implementation of these policies. By creating knowledge and awareness of sustainability issues, educational institutions can train future generations as conscious leaders. NGOs represent different layers of society, express their concerns about sustainability, and contribute to policy formation processes [12, p. 113]. The interaction between these four key stakeholders has the potential to bring together different perspectives and combine areas of expertise to achieve sustainability goals. Effective dialogue builds trust between all stakeholders, contributing to more effective implementation of sustainability policies. In addition, these dialogues can generate broader support for sustainability goals by encouraging broad public participation. The roles of civil society institutions in the process of sustainable development have undergone significant changes over time. From this point of view, the stages can be grouped as follows:

Stage 1: After World War II, NGOs continued their activities to help people in distress based on social assistance.

Phase 2: NGOs began to focus on helping people start their own businesses and improving their professionalism through micro-projects, along with social assistance.

3rd stage: In our modern era, which is considered the third stage, NGOs, in addition to the tasks assigned to them in the first two stages, approach the issues more deeply and try to make structural changes. For example, they began to contribute to the planning of activities in the direction of poverty eradication, economic, social and cultural development [6, p. 154].

Civil society is organized as a third sector and becomes an important area of activity in terms of employment. It has become a source of work and livelihood for many people with various professions and skills. For this reason, non-governmental activities and institutions become functional as employment policies and gain importance for social life. For example, according to 2004 data, approximately 7 million people in the United States work full-time in non-governmental organizations. This rate represents 6.8% of total US employment and 15.4% of service sector workers. In the countries of the European Union, for example, in Germany (1 million), France (0.8 million), and Great Britain, the share of non-governmental organizations in total employment is 4%; If we focus on the service sector, this ratio rises to 10%. In Japan, 1.4 million people work in non-governmental organizations. In the United States and Europe, non-governmental organizations have a total employment of 11.8 million, while the six largest companies in these countries (Daimler-Benz, General Motors, Hitachi, Fiat, Alcatel Alsthom, and Unilever) have a total employment of about 2 million. people (Source: http://www.atonet.org.tr/yeni/index.php?p=236, Access date: April 15, 2014).

NGOs have many advantages in promoting sustainable development. These advantages can be listed as follows:

- They are more innovative, flexible, and socially experienced than governments;

- They are more effective than government agencies in mobilizing poor and marginalized communities;

- They can implement their projects more efficiently with lower costs;

JOURNAL OF YOUNG RESEARCHER, 2024, № 3, ISSN 2409-4838

- They use public participation and small group and community support in project implementation;

- Potentially, NGOs are more organizational and representative in society. They have functions that can provide national and social development by using their advantages in the local/regional development of the region where they operate [7, p. 175].

As mentioned earlier, civil society institutions aim to support the economic and social development of society with their activities. When we look at the development programs implemented in the developing countries of the world, it is obvious that these organizations are an effective force in development. The success of NGOs plays an important role in improving the living conditions of people, especially those living in rural areas, and ensuring their participation in development activities. These organizations fill an important gap with their success in reaching poor groups in regions where the state has failed to reach or reached too late. NGOs, which have become global actors with globalization, are expected to play an important role in the development and implementation of development programs in the future [6, p. 165]. As in the whole world, the cooperation and participation of the third sector, as well as the public and private sectors, is especially emphasized in development programs in our country. It is important to support and protect these organizations financially and morally.

Analysis of the role of NGOs in the context of the concept of sustainable development reveals that these actors can make effective contributions to society in different dimensions. These organizations primarily play an important role in promoting sustainable development. Through projects, campaigns and awareness-raising activities, it can raise public awareness of environmental and social issues, promote the adoption of sustainability principles and support social change. In addition, NGOs can make concrete contributions by focusing on sustainable development goals such as efficient resource management, ensuring justice and protecting disadvantaged groups. In this regard, civil society institutions play an important role in the successful implementation of sustainable development.

#### CONCLUSION

Sustainable development is a concept with a perspective that includes universal goals against global environmental problems, economic inequalities and social injustices. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), on the other hand, have the potential to lead social changes with various projects in accordance with the ideal of the concept of sustainable development.

Non-governmental organizations are organizations that represent different layers of society and operate on various issues. These organizations, which stand out with their social responsibility and sensitive approach to social problems, have an important role in achieving the goal of sustainable development. NGOs primarily ensure understanding and support for the SDGs by raising public awareness of the SDGs and organizing training activities.

They also support the basic principles of sustainable development by advocating social justice and human rights issues. In this sense, NGOs increase social participation, promote the effective participation of local communities in development processes and support the strengthening of social opportunities.

NGOs also work on solutions to environmental problems and promote sustainable and sustainable management of natural resources. Environmental sustainability is considered an important element of sustainable development. In addition, NGOs interact at the political level to support sustainable development goals by lobbying for policy and legislative changes. They directly contribute to the sustainable development goals by implementing their projects and programs, and participate in processes such as monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the goals. This multifaceted approach allows NGOs to play an effective role in achieving sustainable development goals and to contribute to positive changes in various segments of society.

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As a result, non-governmental organizations act as key stakeholders in achieving sustainable development goals. They are active on environmental, economic and social dimensions, raising public awareness, ensuring economic justice and increasing social well-being, while promoting democratic participation from a socio-philosophical perspective. Therefore, active involvement of NGOs in sustainable development efforts will help create a comprehensive and balanced understanding of sustainability.

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### DAVAMLI İNKİŞAF KONSEPSİYASINDA QEYRİ-HÖKMƏT TƏŞKİLATLARININ ROLLARI: SOSİO-FƏLSƏFİ TƏHLİL

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### Ç.K. İsmayılbəyli

Bu araşdırmada qeyri-hökumət təşkilatlarının dayanıqlı cəmiyyət və sosial dəyişiklik kimi əsas məsələlərdə rolu dayanıqlı inkişaf konsepsiyası kontekstində araşdırılır, onların cəmiyyətə verdiyi töhfələr sosial-fəlsəfi baxımdan təhlil edilir. Vətəndaş cəmiyyətinin tarixi və nəzəri çərçivəsini nəzərə alaraq, tədqiqat davamlı inkişaf məqsədləri ilə QHT-lər arasındakı əlaqənin strukturunu və bu əlaqələrin praktikada özünü necə göstərdiyini anlamaq məqsədi daşıyır.

Məqalədə davamlı inkişaf məqsədlərinə töhfə verməkdə QHT-lərin rollarını anlamaq üçün müxtəlif metodoloji yanaşmalardan istifadə edilir. Müxtəlif ədəbiyyatlar vasitəsilə davamlı inkişaf və QHT-lərin rolu ilə bağlı əvvəlki araşdırmalar dərindən təhlil edilmişdir. Bundan əlavə, QHT-lərin layihə fəaliyyətlərinin davamlı inkişaf məqsədlərinə töhfələri sahə tədqiqatlar və müşahidələr vasitəsilə göstərilmişdir.

QHT-lər maarifləndirmə tədbirləri təşkil etməklə və sosial ədaləti təşviq etməklə davamlı inkişaf məqsədlərinə dəstək verirlər. Eyni zamanda, onlar ətraf mühitin mühafizəsi səyləri vasitəsilə sosial iştirakçılığı artırmaq və təbii ehtiyatların davamlı idarə olunmasını təşviq etməklə yerli icmaların inkişaf proseslərində fəal iştirakını təşviq edirlər. Bu təşkilatlar siyasət dəyişiklikləri üçün lobbiçilik etməklə və layihələrini həyata keçirməklə davamlı inkişaf məqsədlərinə birbaşa töhfə verirlər. Bu çoxşaxəli yanaşma QHT-lərin davamlı inkişaf sahəsində səmərəli rol oynadığını və cəmiyyətdə müsbət dəyişikliklərə yol açdığını vurğulayır.

Açar sözlər: QHT, davamlı inkişaf, BMT, sosial dəyişiklik.

# РОЛЬ НЕПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННЫХ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЙ В КОНТЕКСТЕ КОНЦЕПЦИИ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ: СОЦИАЛЬНО-ФИЛОСОФСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ

#### Ч.К. Исмаилбейли

В данном исследовании рассматривается роль неправительственных организаций в таких ключевых вопросах, как устойчивое общество и социальные изменения в контексте концепции устойчивого развития, анализируется их общественный вклад с социально-философской точки зрения. Принимая во внимание исторические и теоретические основы гражданского общества, исследование направлено на то, чтобы понять структуру отношений между целями устойчивого развития и НПО и то, как эти отношения проявляются на практике.

В статье используются различные методологические подходы для понимания роли НПО в содействии достижению целей устойчивого развития. В различных литературных источниках был проведен глубокий анализ предыдущих исследований по устойчивому развитию и роли НПО. Кроме того, с помощью полевых исследований и наблюдений был показан вклад проектной деятельности НПО в достижение целей устойчивого развития.

НПО поддерживают цели устойчивого развития, организуя информационнопросветительские мероприятия и содействуя социальной справедливости. В то же время они способствуют активному участию местных сообществ в процессах развития, расширяя социальное участие и содействуя устойчивому управлению природными ресурсами посредством усилий по охране окружающей среды. Эти организации вносят непосредственный вклад в достижение целей устойчивого развития, лоббируя изменения в политике и реализуя свои проекты. Такой многогранный подход подчеркивает, что НПО играют эффективную роль в области устойчивого развития и прокладывают путь к позитивным изменениям в обществе.

Ключевые слова: НПО, устойчивое развитие, ООН, социальные изменения.

90