

Seeds of change

The Earth Charter & Human Potential

What's going on?

A few people enjoy lives of relative comfort. Most people in our world struggle to survive in impoverished conditions.

And we are destroying the Earth on which we live, polluting the air, poisoning our rivers, driving other species to extinction.

Things cannot continue as they are...

No matter how complex global problems may seem, it is we ourselves who have given rise to them. They cannot be beyond our power to resolve.

We can change our future...

See how individuals are making a difference when they empower themselves and others through taking action.

Learn what you can do to empower yourself and become part of the solution.



**An exhibition created
by Soka Gakkai
International (SGI)
and The Earth
Charter Initiative,
first shown at the
World Summit on
Sustainable
Development (WSSD),
Johannesburg 2002.**





“We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history...”

Nearly 850 million people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger.

Africa

African forests are the most depleted of all the tropical regions; only 30% of historical forests remain.

Nineteen of the 25 countries with the highest percentage of populations without access to drinking water are in Africa.



Polar Regions

In September 2000, the ozone hole over Antarctica extended to more than 28 million square kilometers.

Melting of the Greenland ice sheet is contributing to rising sea levels.

The forecasted rise in sea-levels of 65cm by 2100 would put millions of people and millions of square kilometers of land at risk.

The five wealthiest countries

have a greater gross national product than the next

50 nations combined.



2.2 million people, most of them children, die each year from

diseases associated with lack of access to safe

drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.

North America

Home to less than 5% of the world's population, the United States consumes 25% of the world's petroleum and 30% of the world's paper products.

In 1996 in the United States, 728 species were endangered or threatened.

Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Europe is responsible for 36% of the world's CFC emissions, 30% of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25% of sulphur dioxide emissions.

52% of Europe's fish, 45% of its reptiles, and 42% of its mammals are under threat.



The annual cost of meeting the basic needs of all people in developing countries is only one-tenth of what the world's governments spend on armaments each year.



“...a time when
humanity must
choose its
future...”



30,000 children die of starvation each day.

Every year, approximately 20,000 people die
as a result of direct pesticide poisoning.

Middle East

Virtually every country in this region suffers from water scarcity; yet demand for water is increasing.
The region's coastal zone is one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems in the world.
Some 1.2 million barrels of oil spill into the Persian Gulf annually.

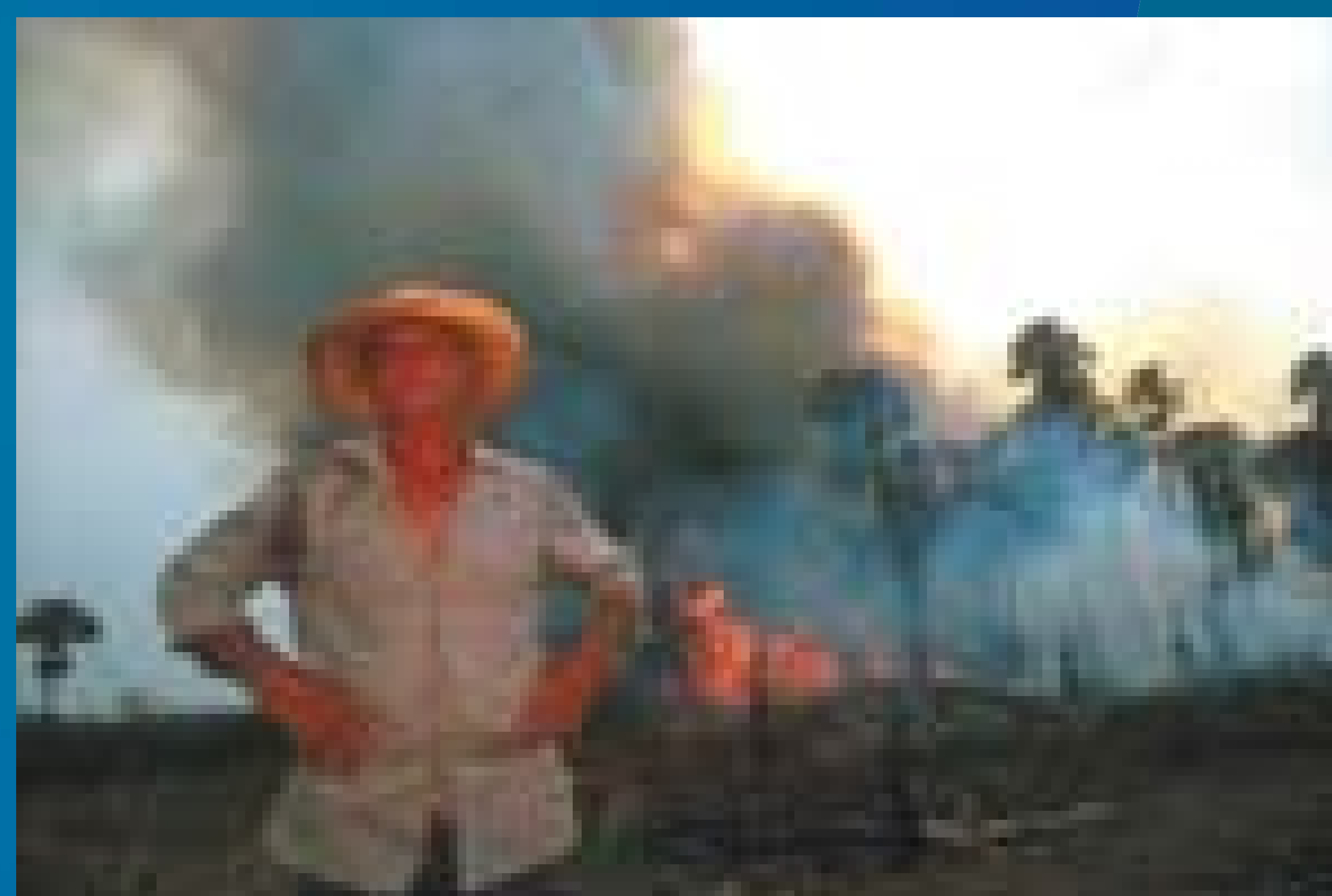
If present trends continue, two out of three people on Earth will
face a freshwater shortage by the year 2025.



Asia and the Pacific

Almost 1,000 lakes have disappeared in China's Hebei Province alone.
One third of the coral reefs in Southeast Asia are severely threatened. 27% of all the world's coral reefs have already been lost.
Half the arable land in this region is moderately to severely degraded.

Nearly half the people on
Earth subsist on less than \$2 a day.





The human footprint

“the future at once holds great peril and great promise”

Our human footprint is large and our impact on the Earth has been devastating.

“Our present course is unsustainable – postponing action is no longer an option” GEO 2000

Our models of growth and progress have been out of balance, focusing on industrial and economic progress to the damage of our environment, our societies and cultural and biological diversity.

What should our relationship with the rest of life be?



A baby black rhinoceros, orphaned by poachers.



Ivory is carved for sale on the tourist market.



Three orphaned baby chimps find human company.



A captive bear performing in a circus.

“I think we are challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves.”

Rachel Carson



Sewage flowing into the North Sea.



Trees shade agricultural plots in an arid region of Mali.



A coal-fired power plant.



Wind energy is clean, cheap and abundant.

“Unless we change direction, we are likely to end up where we are going.”
Chinese proverb

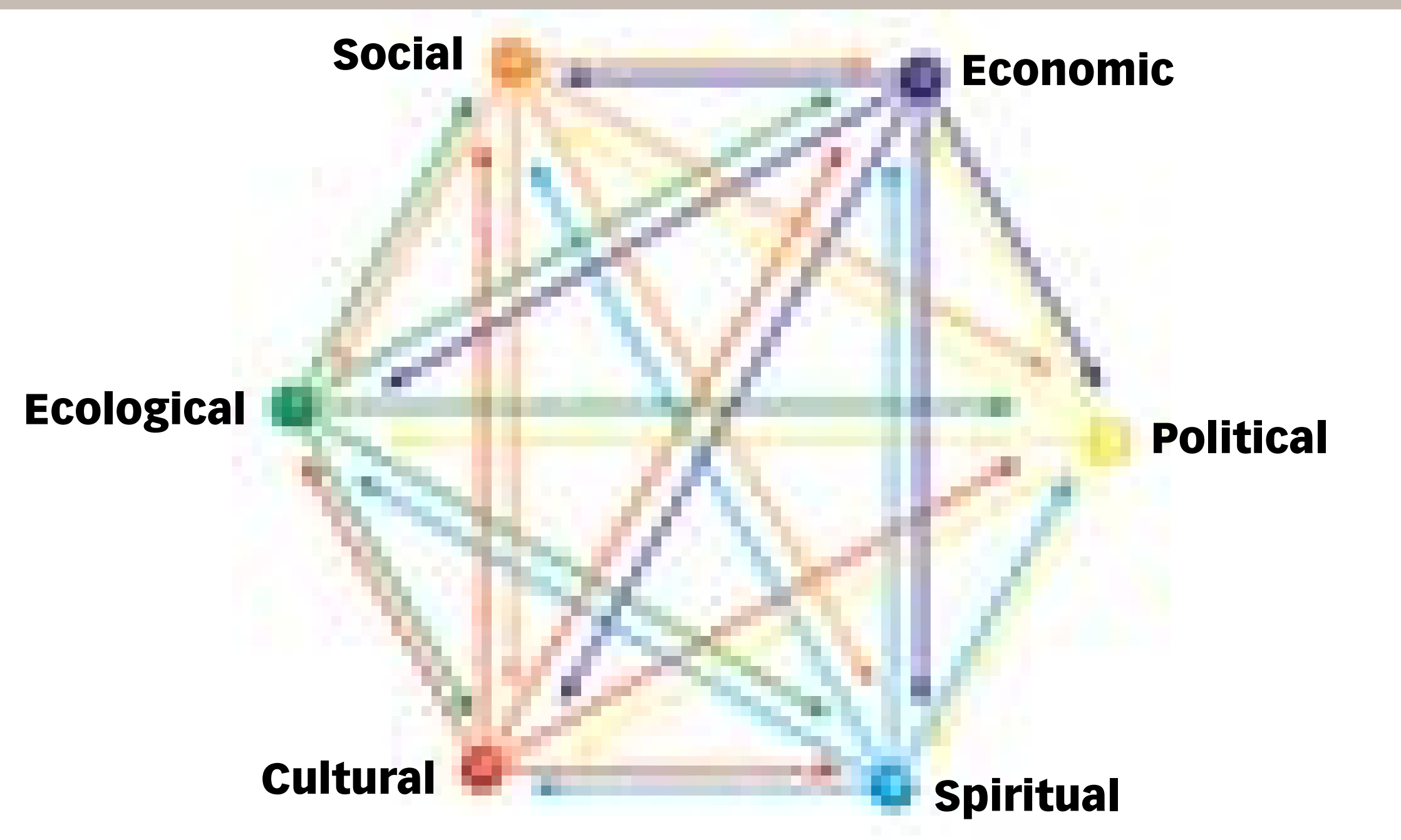


An oil-covered bird.



A Loggerhead turtle with a satellite radio transmitter to track its movements is released into the ocean.

It’s time to examine our priorities, our values and beliefs about ourselves and our views on growth, progress and development.



The new alternative is the vision of sustainable development
Sustainable development is a balanced process in which all aspects of our lives as individuals and societies are developed in harmony.



Washing under a public water tap in Bangladesh.

What is sustainable development?
“Addressing the needs of the present without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

“Integrate
into formal education
and life-long learning
the knowledge, values,
and skills needed for a
sustainable way of life.”

The Earth Charter, Principle 14.



The United Nations has designated the years 2005 to 2014 as the “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.”

Only education can provide the driving force for change. How do we begin?

Learn

We need to deepen our awareness of environmental issues and realities as well as to understand the causes

“The powerful will that drives the dynamic process of change is the concern and compassion we muster for others.”

driving environmental destruction. We need to learn to understand the realities of those who suffer, embracing their pain as our own.

Reflect

Shared ethical values are crucial. We need to reflect on our modes of living. Education should encourage understanding of the way environmental problems connect to our daily lives.

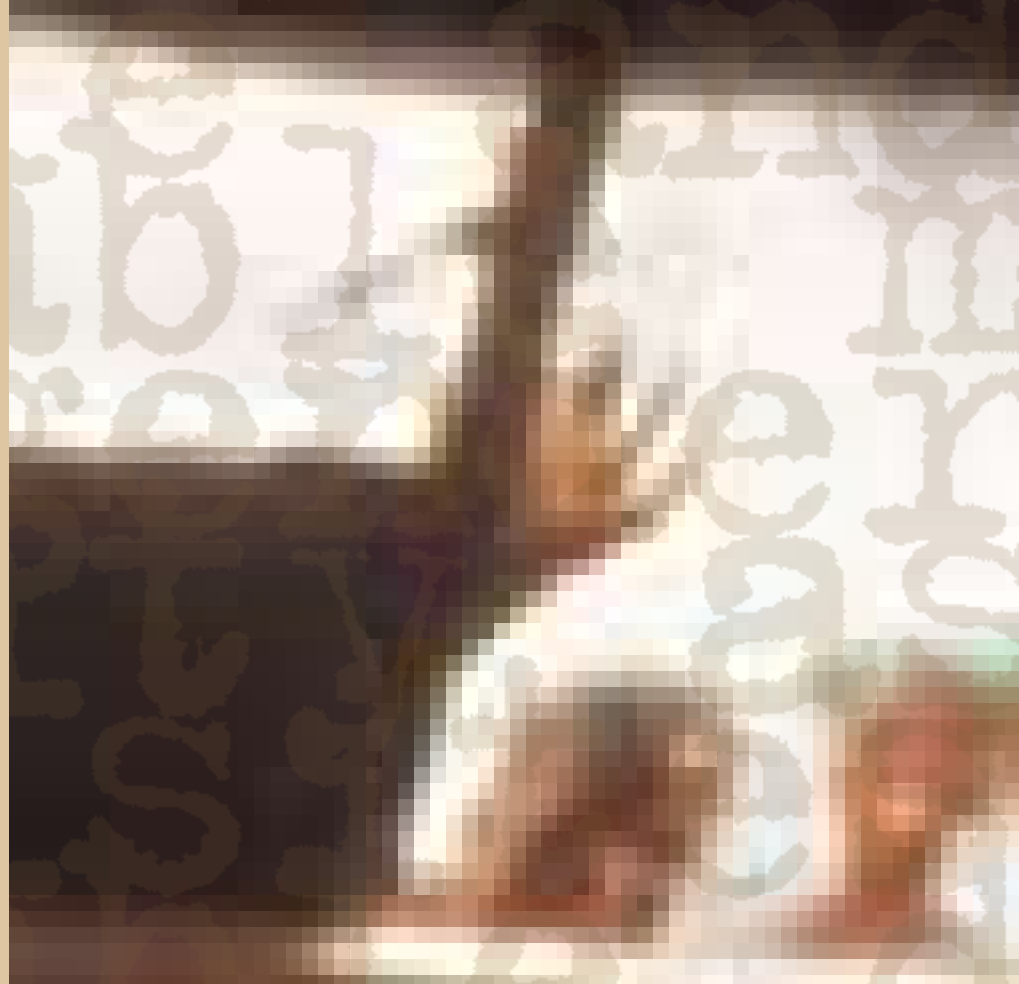
Empower

Education is more than just providing information; people must be empowered with the courage and hope to take concrete steps.

Education must inspire the faith that each of us has both the power and the responsibility to effect positive change on a global scale.

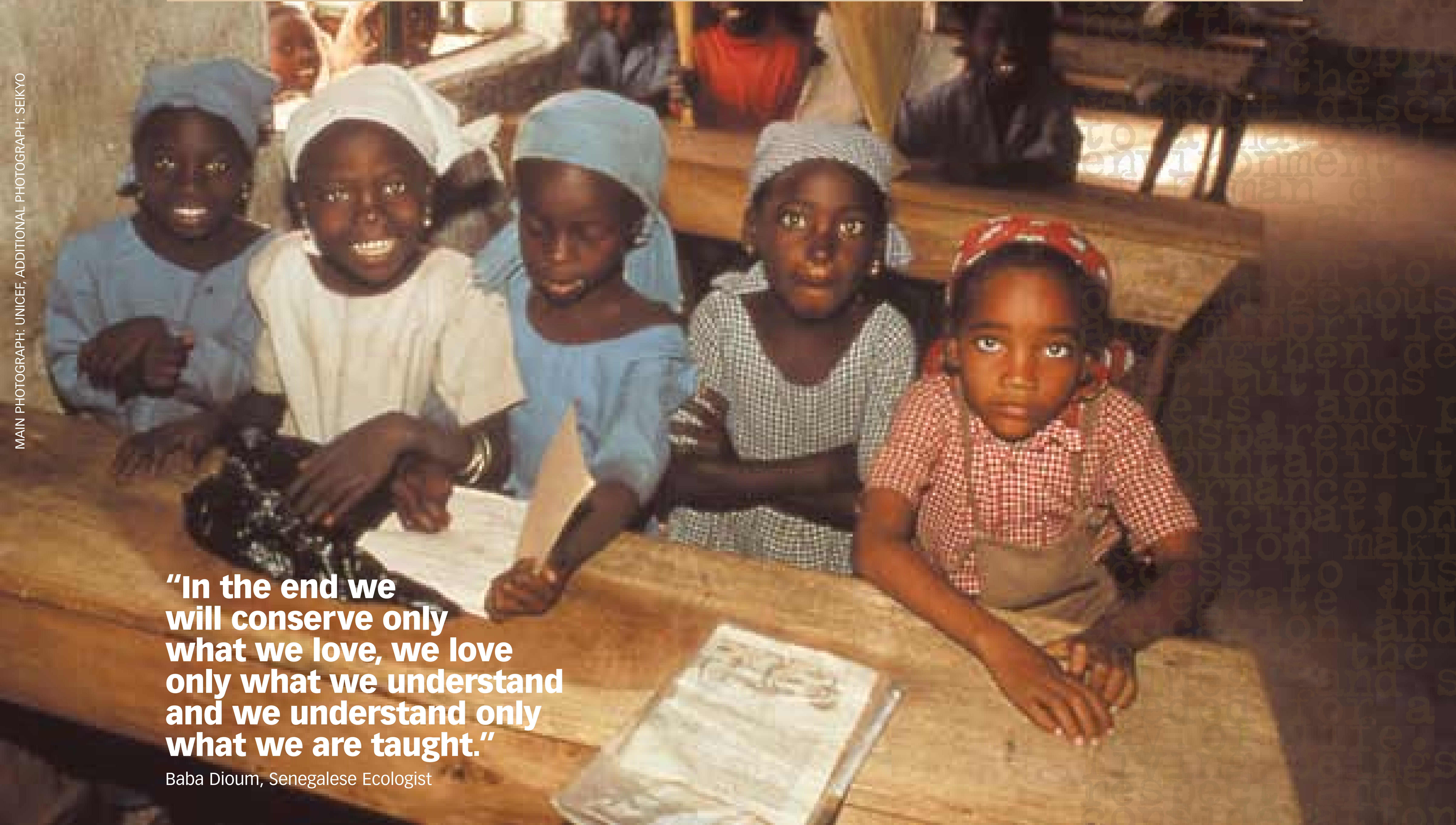
Environmental ethics must be felt as a deeply personal vow.

From the proposal on Education for a Sustainable Future by Soka Gakkai International President Daisaku Ikeda.



“In the end we will conserve only what we love, we love only what we understand and we understand only what we are taught.”

Baba Dioum, Senegalese Ecologist



MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: UNICEF; ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPH: SEIKYO



The Earth Charter as a tool

“The Earth Charter is like a map...”

The Earth Charter is a declaration of ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century.

This ‘People’s charter’ was created through a decade-long process of dialogue involving thousands of individuals and hundreds of groups in all regions of the globe. It is an expression of hope that amidst humanity’s diverse cultures and

peoples, we all dream the same dream of a harmonious world.

The Earth Charter recognises that environmental protection, human rights, equitable human development and peace are interdependent and indivisible.

“The Earth Charter was built through a process of consensus and collaboration. It is this process of people coming together which must continue if we are to build the kind of world the Earth Charter envisions.”

*Prof. Daniella Tilbury,
Macquarie University,
Australia*

“The Earth Charter is the clearest blueprint for sustainable development I’ve seen.”

Neth Vorleak, Cambodia

In today’s world, every individual, family, institution, business, and government faces the challenge of living sustainably. The Earth Charter can serve as a positive vision to inspire people at all levels, from teachers and local government staff to scientists and artists.

Nobody has a copyright on the Earth Charter. It is a public document and people can use it as they wish...as a tool for education, for dialogue or for individual reflection and change.

“What we should do is instead of just reading through it, reflect on what these words really mean so that we can be moved to action.”

Wangari Maathai,

Earth Charter Commissioner



...it shows us where we are, where we want to get to, and how to get there.”

Canberra schoolboy

Values and principles for a sustainable future

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognise that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

We urgently need a shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. Therefore, together in hope we affirm the following interdependent principles for a sustainable way of life as a common standard by which the conduct of all individuals, organisations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed.

The choice is ours...

RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

In order to fulfil these four broad commitments, it is necessary to:

ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems.
6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection.
7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.
8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.
10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.
12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

DEMOCRACY, NONVIOLENCE, AND PEACE

13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.
14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.
15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
16. Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.

see the complete Charter and endorse it at: www.earthcharter.org

The Earth Charter

"Why is the Earth Charter important? Because people live on the Earth."

Augustine Haile, age 4,
Florida Earth Charter
Community Summit

"After I read the Earth Charter, I realised that it was everything I had wanted to focus on. I would be honoured to be a part of this brilliant movement."

Nidhi, India

Drawn by a child
from Bangladesh.



The Earth Charter is an ideal tool for education on sustainability at different levels and it is already being incorporated into school curricula in Brazil, Mexico, Italy and Spain. In the U.S.A., Michigan State University offers a whole course on the Charter. At the WSSD in Johannesburg, a new partnership entitled "Educating for Sustainable Living with the Earth Charter" was launched. This partnership links UNESCO, key governments and major NGOs.

Children and young people everywhere quickly grasp the importance of the Earth Charter. They respond to its message in creative ways, through drawings, paintings and music. Many youth organisations promoting sustainable development now support the Earth Charter.



Letter from the Earth

June 5th, 2002.

Hello boys and girls, I am the planet Earth. Am I not beautiful? Do you know much about nature? I am very happy. On Earth live many people, animals and plants too. But I am sad because there are people who are not careful and who destroy me and make lots of pollution. They don't take care of the animals or the plants and, even worse, they make war and kill each other. I am writing this letter to ask you to help me. Do you want to help? I am waiting for your rapid response. Goodbye, my inhabitants,

The Earth

(By children at Miquel Porcel Public School, Palma, Mallorca, Spain, after working with the Earth Charter.)

Youth & The Earth Charter

"As young people, we should be in the forefront of the Earth Charter movement because we have this great vitality."

Singapore Earth Charter Forum

Drawn by a child from Moldova.





“Every one of us can make a contribution.

And quite often we are looking for the big things and forget that, wherever we are, we can make a contribution.”

Green Belt

Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement

Disappearing forests:

By the mid-1970's less than two percent of Kenya's original forests were left. Biologist Wangari Maathai was concerned.

In Kenya, as in many developing countries, poverty and high population growth place severe strain on the natural environment. People cut down trees for fuel and clear forests to plant crops. As the trees disappear, so do animals and other plant species.

From the grassroots:

In 1977, Wangari Maathai began encouraging rural women to plant trees, working through her local civil society organisation.

This grassroots initiative soon developed into the Green Belt Movement. Through this movement women are taught to raise

and nurture tree seedlings, these are distributed for planting where they are most needed and the women receive compensation for them. They also learn about land management practices such as composting, soil conservation and the use of indigenous crops.

20 million trees:

Through this movement, thousands of local women's groups have been created. These women have now planted more than 20 million trees throughout Kenya and established over 6,000 tree nurseries. They also tackle social issues, often using the Earth Charter as a framework. And more than half a million schoolchildren have been taught the values of sustainable living.

The Green Belt Movement is reducing the effects of deforestation while providing women with an income and empowering them to take on leadership roles within their communities.

What began as a small nursery in Wangari Maathai's backyard has now spread around the globe, as the methods of the Green Belt Movement are replicated in other countries.



“It's very, very important for us to take action at the local level. Because sometimes when we think of global problems, we get disempowered. But when we take action at the local level, we are empowered.”

Wangari Maathai, Earth Charter Commissioner





Community Empowerment

Elizabeth Ramirez and the Earth Charter

Downward spiral:

In many developing countries poverty and environmental degradation are linked in a vicious spiral: poverty leads to environmental degradation, which compounds poverty. With poverty comes the collapse of communities. Women are often especially vulnerable.

Elizabeth Ramirez, an environmental scientist from the National University of Costa Rica, saw this clearly during her research in rural Costa Rica. She realised that many of the people she met felt powerless to change their lives. They also lacked information and ideas on how to improve their situation.

Earth Charter principles:

Realising that the key to their empowerment lay in education, Elizabeth helped set up education centres in rural communities in Laguna Hule and Río Cuarto. These centres focus on environmental protection and promoting women's development. Elizabeth found that the Earth Charter was an ideal educational tool.

Starting from study of principles of the Charter, the community groups

Elizabeth works with have developed projects to protect the environment, as well as promoting cultural, social and ethical values.

"The Earth Charter is an excellent instrument to strengthen education projects, both formal and non-formal."

New vision, traditional values:

The position of women within the communities has been strengthened. A children's movement, the Defensores Verdes or Green Defenders, has been formed to act as guardians of the natural environment within their homes, schools and communities. They have created vegetable gardens and ecological parks and replanted a forest area in Río Cuarto. In Laguna Hule, they have been involved in the struggle to preserve a beautiful lake and prevent it being spoiled by property development.

Elizabeth finds that the Earth Charter reinforces the rural people's own traditional values and brings a positive vision of a better world to people who face many challenges in their daily lives.





Water Harvesting

Rajendra Singh & the Wisdom of Water Conservation

Villages were dying:

Seventeen years ago villages in the drought-afflicted state of Rajasthan in India were dying. Wells were dry and crops failed repeatedly. The rain that did fall only washed away the parched topsoil.

Most of the able-bodied villagers migrated to urban centers to look for work. School attendance was as low as 2 or 3 percent.

Traditional wisdom:

Rajendra Singh, an NGO worker, came to Rajasthan wanting to do what he could to help. One day an elderly villager told him, "We don't necessarily want what you want to give us. What

we need is water. Stop your talk and build johads!"

Johads are small earthen dams, part of a traditional store of wisdom on resource conservation that had been all but lost under colonial rule. These dams capture rainwater runoff, allowing it to percolate into the ground and replenish the water table.

As most villagers were too old or young to work, Rajendra toiled with a shovel for months to build a johad near the village. After the monsoon rains returned, wells that had been dry for years now had water in them. Word spread quickly.



Community revival:

To date, villagers throughout Rajasthan have built over 4,500 water-harvesting structures. Five of the region's rivers now flow perennially and the once barren landscape is green with vegetation, even during droughts. Bird and animal life is returning.

The water has brought economic prosperity. The village of Nimri, for example, could once barely feed itself. Today it exports vegetables to India's large cities.

Water is also helping to weave the social fabric of the villages back together. In each village,

democratic structures are formed to ensure the entire village's involvement in the sustainable management of the natural resources, and women's participation in decision-making is ensured. School attendance has increased dramatically and many of the young migrants have begun returning to their villages.

Self-reliance is a key emphasis of this movement. "The minute [people] respect themselves, they'll do things on their own," says Singh.

"Water is not an ordinary issue... It is going to take on catastrophic proportions in the next 10 to 20 years."

Rajendra Singh





Earth Charter Community Summits

Bringing the People's Charter to the People

Community Networks

Jan Roberts's first encounter with the Earth Charter was a transformative moment.

"I was moved to tears that people all around the world had been working on this document and shared the same hopes and values as I did," she says. Amazed that she had not heard of the Earth Charter before, she decided to share it with as many people as possible. This resolve gave birth to the Earth Charter Community Summits.

The name was chosen to emphasize grounding of the Earth Charter in the community. Jan comments, "Often I had gone to conferences and become excited about the ideas presented there, and then came home with no one to help me implement them."

Chain Effect

Since 2001, annual Community Summits held simultaneously in different locations and linked by webcast have inspired thousands of individuals from every walk of life—teachers, artists, business people, students—to implement the Charter in their own lives and personal spheres of influence. Initially held only in the U.S., by 2003, Summits were held in 33 cities in countries from Senegal to Scotland.

Grassroots Initiatives

Community Summits have spurred new initiatives for putting the Earth Charter into action. Some outcomes include:

- The Northwest Educators' coalition in Seattle using the Charter as a basis for educational reform;
- A city planner in Florida making the Earth Charter a guide for the economic redevelopment of a distressed area;
- Development of the Earth Scouts—a new scouting program for children;
- Use of the Charter by 22 residential homes for the elderly in the U.S. Midwest as a basis for an intergenerational program connecting children with the residents.
- Development of Earth Charter Community Indicators to measure "that which makes life worthwhile" in a community.

Participants and organizers are people who have gathered around a shared sense of excitement about the Charter and the opportunity to make a difference. As Jan Roberts says, "This grassroots effort grows bigger and stronger every day!"

"The Summits provide an opportunity for people of good heart to connect with others in their communities and around the globe so they know they are not alone in wanting a better world."



The Paulo Freire Institute

The Earth Charter and Education for Social Change



Social Justice

Continuing the legacy of Paulo Freire, one of the twentieth century's most influential thinkers on education, the Paulo Freire Institute (PFI), headquartered in Brazil, develops new practices in the fields of education, culture and communication toward a more democratic and just society.

A participant in the development of the Earth Charter since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the PFI recognizes the Charter's potential as a powerful tool to inspire positive change in individuals and communities.

Youth in Peace Project

The PFI's "JOVemPAZ" (Youth in Peace) project trains social educators, both youth and adult, to create activities in schools and communities that contribute to building a culture of peace and sustainability. The Earth Charter forms a key element in the educational process.

Activities encourage participants to reflect on how a change in lifestyle can contribute to social change—demonstrating the values of the Charter in practice. Between 2002 and 2003, over 220 educators were involved in this project in three regions of São Paulo. PFI is also using the Earth Charter in its literacy projects.



An Eco-Pedagogy

In 1999, PFI organized the first international conference on the Earth Charter from the perspective of education. This was the first step in a PFI-coordinated movement to develop a pedagogy based on the principles and values of the Charter—a Pedagogy of the Earth.

The PFI has also developed the Citizen School project which is centered on symbiosis in order to improve relationships between the self and others, and democratization of management, curriculum and evaluation. The project, which involves some 25 schools in São Paulo, promotes democratic participation in the school community and uses the Earth Charter as a guide.



"Our goal is to educate for sustainable living, using the Earth Charter as a guide toward a new curriculum of formal and informal education."





Vivim Plegats – “Living Together”

Multicultural Education for Peace and Cooperation



“All people are equal,
all different!”

Cultural Complexity

Recent immigration to the autonomous Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea has created great racial, cultural and economic diversity. Within this complex society, the Vivim Plegats (“Living Together”) Multicultural Educational Program uses the Earth Charter to promote understanding, tolerance, peace and cooperation within schools and communities.

The program was first organized in 2000 by the local Ministry of Education and Culture under the guidance of Guillem Ramis to promote multiculturalism and help prevent racism and discrimination. It involves over 80 schools, with most activity at the elementary level.

Multilingual Materials

Each school creates its own program based on a children’s rights workbook and the Earth Charter. With support from UNICEF and UNESCO, adaptations of the Earth Charter for children and youth have been produced, in the four languages of Spain and other languages, from Russian to Japanese and Arabic. Students study the Charter together in Catalan at school and then share it with their families in their own language at home.



“The Earth Charter underpins our whole approach, with its beautiful vision of a harmonious world. The children absolutely understand the Earth Charter.”

Learning Together

Students draw, paint or use songs to express the message of the Earth Charter, and children as young as three years old learn about the Charter through simple illustrations showing the Earth as our common home. Older

children enjoy cultural-exchange workshops, planting a herb garden or using photographs of their home environment to bring the Charter to life.

A multicultural team visits the schools and gives performances about their cultures, so children learn about life in different immigrant communities and other countries. They reflect on the challenges that different groups experience on the islands.

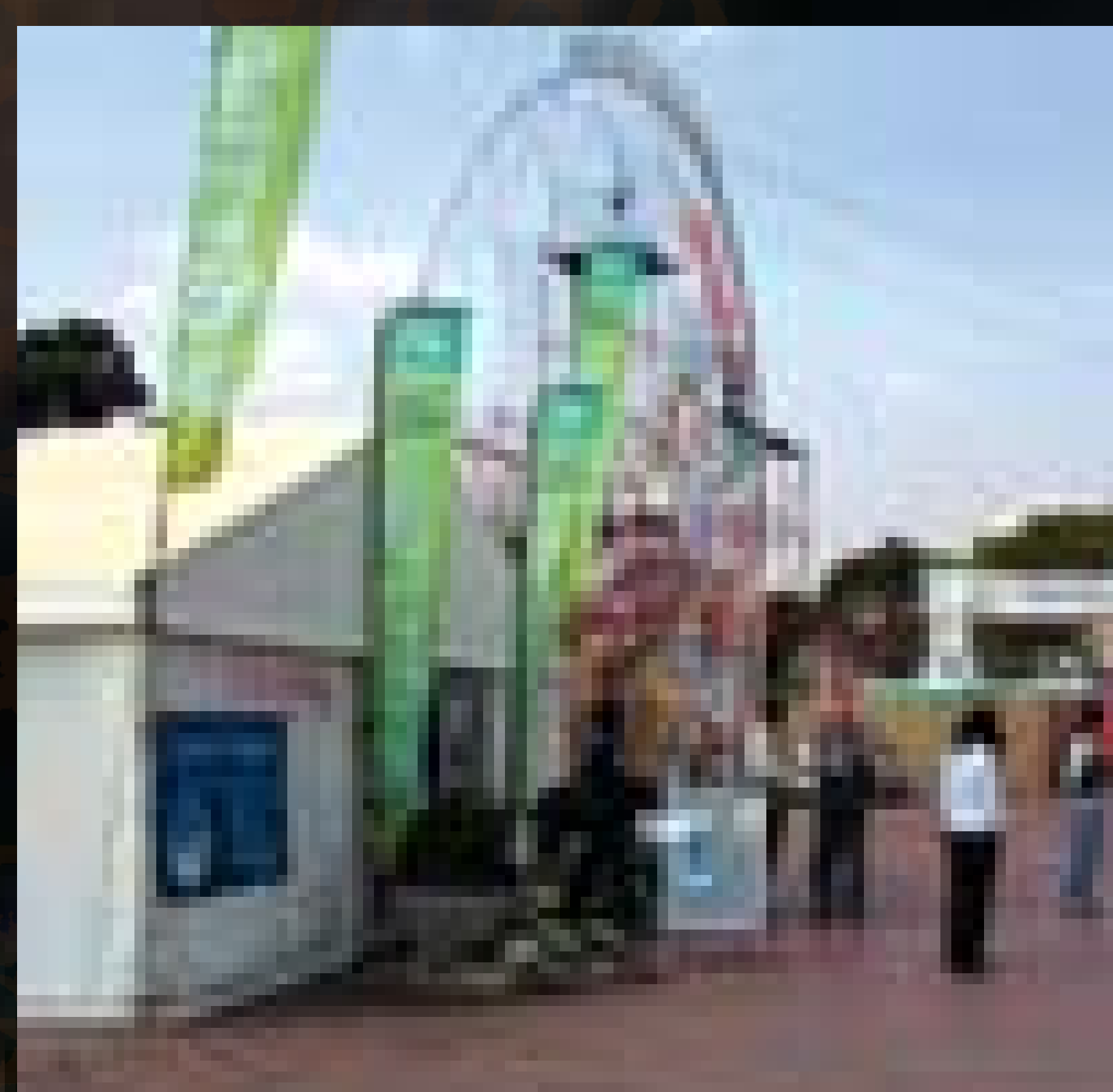
The program encourages inter-school collaboration and exchange with schools in other countries by letter or e-mail. Schools also involve the community, from parent participation to cultural performances, exhibitions and essay competitions.



SGI

& The Earth Charter

"The Earth Charter is actually about values, the kind of values we need to cultivate in order to make our continued existence sustainable."



The SGI exhibition at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg



"At the very heart of the values we seek must be a profound reverence for life itself. This can awaken people to our connection with all forms of life."

Daisaku Ikeda, SGI President

What is SGI?

Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a lay Buddhist association of some 12 million members in 185 countries and territories worldwide.

The ultimate aim of Buddhism and SGI is the establishment of a peaceful world. SGI members pursue this ideal through a philosophy of individual transformation and social engagement and by promoting respect for the dignity of life.



SGI is also active as an NGO promoting peace, culture and education, often working in partnership with other groups.

Human Values

Local SGI groups in over 20 countries have been actively promoting the Earth Charter as a vital statement of human values since 1997.

Ongoing grassroots Earth Charter activities include community-level discussions in New Zealand and the U.S.A. and public youth forums on human rights issues in Italy. The Charter's message resonates deeply with the Buddhist view of the preciousness and interconnectedness of all life and the limitless

potential of each person to make a difference.



U.S.A.



South Africa



Peru



Ivory Coast



Korea

www.sgi.org

Dancers performing at an event cosponsored by SGI at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, 2002.

You can

**start your own
quiet revolution:**

**"Begin where you are
and go forward one step at
a time"** *Buddhist monk, Thailand*

**Express your support
for the Earth Charter**

**Bring it into your workplace
and local community**

**Use it as a basis for discussions about
our common future**

**Bring it to life through
your actions**

Show solidarity with vulnerable people

**Watch what you buy and its impact
on the environment and people's lives**

Learn about nonviolence

**Heal a rift with a friend or
within your family**

Plant a tree

Don't waste resources

**"I may be just planting a tree here,
but just imagine what's happening
if there are billions of people out
there doing something.**

**Just imagine the power
of what we can do"** *Wangari Maathai*

www.earthcharter.org
www.sgi.org

