WATER: A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!

No single measure would do more to reduce disease and save lives in the developing world than bringing safe water and adequate sanitation to all."

-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Access to safe drinking water is one of the major problems the world faces today. There are more than one billion people who lack a steady supply of clean water and there are about 2.4 billion people, more than a third of the world’s population, who do not have access to proper sanitation. Some 6,000 children die every day from diseases associated with unsafe water and poor sanitation and hygiene. These same factors cause an estimated 80 per cent of all diseases in the developing world. Women and girls tend to suffer the most (http://www.un.org/events/water/factsheet.pdf). If this trend persists, about two-thirds of the world population will be without safe drinking water by 2025.

The crisis and importance of freshwater was recognized by the Rio Summit in 1992. In September 2000, the world leaders pledged at the UN Millennium Summit to cut in half, by 2015, the proportion of people unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water. The World Summit on Children, in May 2002, stressed the high relationship between water and health and the education of children. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, September 2002), agreed that water and sanitation need to go together.

The issue got a boost on December 4, 2002, when the United Nations Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights formally declared for the first time that safe and secure drinking water is a human right: “Water is fundamental for life and health. The human right to water is indispensable for leading a healthy life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite to the realization of all other human rights” (http://www.unesco.org/water).

2003 International Year of Freshwater

The “International Year of Freshwater, 2003” was launched on December 12, 2002 at the UN in New York. VIVAT International was among the organizations, agencies, etc., that participated in the launching program. Ms. Louise Frechette, Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Nitin Desai, Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and others spoke about the intensity of the problem and what the UN plans to do. The initiative to declare 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater came from the President of Tajikistan.

“Water is probably the only natural resource to touch all aspects of human civilization—from agricultural and industrial development to the cultural and religious values embedded in society.” — Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General, UNESCO.

This year is a great opportunity for each one of us to realize that fact and address the problem by joining hands with others at the local level and by participating in various initiatives, especially those initiated and guided by UN agencies. If everyone is conscious of the gravity of the problem and is willing to cooperate with others to solve it for the benefit of all, half of the problem is already solved!
The year will be spent in raising consciousness about the problem and working towards solutions together with Governments, NGOs, the private sector and the people of the respective localities. Among other factors, intensive irrigation and deforestation are thought to be contributing to the scarcity of water.

The UN, in general, believes that there is a need to promote participation at all levels, from school children and rural communities to heads of States and NGOs.

Water is a free commodity, though its service may involve a certain fee affordable to the people of the locality. Efforts will be made to identify factors that need to be addressed in order that subsidized municipal or town water reaches the poor sections of society. The private sector needs to be involved not to hand over the management of water for profit, but to find equitable and sound solutions. Government must oversee and control the process. Nations and States will have to cooperate to find solutions at the global level.

There is a need to recognize traditional technologies. Though improved/high technology is crucial, the local community is the key.

There is a high relationship between water and education. Many girls in rural areas would be able to attend school if water was easily accessible to the family.

**Working towards Solutions**

Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) was initiated in Geneva with the blessings of the UN Department of Sustainable Development, mainly to bring together the expertise, money and efforts of Governments, NGOs and the private sector in an effort to address the problems related to availability of freshwater and sanitation. It has introduced a campaign called "WASH" (water, sanitation and hygiene) to address these problems and to give an opportunity to every one to be part of the campaign (www.wsscc.org). WSSCC has proposed some steps: 1. Speak up. 2. Be informed. 3. Monitor progress. 4. Reach out. 5. Research and identify. 6. Promote hygiene. 7. Promote resources. 8. Document and disseminate. 9. Scale up by building the institutional capacity that will put known solutions into action.

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**UN Agencies Addressing the Issue of Freshwater:**


VIVAT International congratulates Father Marian Zelazek, SVD for having been nominated for NOBEL PEACE PRIZE 2002

We share his joy and the joy of all the leprosy patients and their families of Karunalaya with whom he shares the Good Shepherd’s compassion and care. We wish him more grace and strength to carry on his special personal vocation to love the most unwanted and uncared for.

VINY received a report from Fr. Marian Zelazek describing the long-term project he started in 1975, the Karunalaya Leprosy Care Center. The restoration of the dignity of men and women living with leprosy has been his inner motivating force. Besides medical help, the Care Center offers work employment to 90 lepers through rehabilitation activities, such as rope manufacture, spinning, tailoring, and gardening. It also provides education for the children of the leprosy patients. At present, 192 children whose parents are lepers attend the SVD Beatrix School. Some reach the college level. Fr. Marian’s greatest hope is to provide decent employment for the growing number of youth in the leper colony. He is determined to stay in the Center "as long the leprosy problem exists". He considers the fact that the "once cursed colony is becoming a normal settlement" as one of the greatest accomplishments that the Care Center has achieved.
VINY received the following VINY F-1 Reports from VI Members on the Ground

**Activity/Program**

**Focus: Poverty Eradication**
- Nutrition Program for orphans and malnourished children.
- Young Professional Association; School Fees Sponsorship (Both for students in Ghana, Africa).
- Administration of the National Catholic AIDS Office, HIV/AIDS Counseling and Home Care.
- Networking with local organizations to support Africa and projects related to water and debt cancellation.
- Service for alcoholics and drug addicts.
- Training of Indigenous Leaders among the AETAS.
- Care of people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Computer Literacy.
- Community Socio-economic development for the Oromo People in Alemtana.
- Networking with religious and civic organizations towards integral development.
- Migrant Center.
- Refugee Aid "Mobiles Notquartier".
- Language Courses for Refugees.
- ProLife Center.
- "Project Buddy" for HIV/AIDS patients.
- Karunakaya Leprosy Care Center.
- "Solidarity".
- "Learning to Serve".
- Nutrition Center, Promotion of Women and care of children in Lipo, in Moquinca Nampula.
- Food Program for Children and Elderly.
- ALFA Project (literacy program for youth and adults in the city periphery of Barra Mansa).
- Project "De Oloho na Realidade", socio-economic-cultural program for the low-income groups in Barra Mansa.
- Soup Kitchen for Children and Elderly.
- Community Welfare Society, promotion of quality of life among slum dwellers in Rourkela.
- Networking with local and diocesan organizations to support poverty eradication.
- Integrated Community Development among the fisher folk of Maghaway, Talisay City, Cebu.
- Refugees and Migrants Center, doing advocacy for refugees to authorities.
- "Gente de la Tierra"-People of the Earth: strengthens the identity, recuperates the cultural history and promotes human rights of the Mapuches.

**Focus: WOMEN**

- Promotion of Women, literacy program.
- WINGS (Women Inter-acting for New Growth and Services) to stop violence against women and children.
- "Mujeres, nos reunimos para ayudarnos", (Women, we unite to help ourselves).

**VIVAT Member reporting and country**

- Rozalia Jadhiga Palixzka SSpS, Mozambique
- Norbert Mushoff SVD, Germany
- Tarcisia Hunhoff SSpS, Papua New Guinea
- Imaria Niessen SSpS and Herman Wijten, SVD, Netherlands
- Margret Theresa Driessen SSpS, Netherlands
- Marian Herrera SSpS, Philippines
- Celina Rohr SSpS, Botswana
- Thomas James SVD, USA
- Edita Vera SSpS, Ethiopia
- Arnoldo Ederle SVD, Argentina
- Eugene Docoy SVD, Rep. of Korea
- Felixine & Maria Kofter SSpS, Austria
- Maria Gisela Pichler SSpS, Austria
- Maria Josefa Vilscheider SSpS, Austria
- Maria Josefa Vilscheider SSpS, Austria
- Marian Zalazek SVD, India
- Maria Cristina Mandali SSpS, Argentina
- Maria Cristina Mandali SSpS, Argentina
- Francisco Javier Vidal SVD, Mozambique
- Maria Imelda Casas SSpS, Argentina
- Norbert Ernst Prittwitz SVD, Brazil
- Sebastien Kiiwonghi SVD, Brazil
- Klaus Kniffki SVD, Moldova
- Karuna Maniyattu SSpS and John Alapatt SVD, India
- Monika Guzmicka SSpS, Slovakia
- Margaret Anne Norris SSpS, USA
- Max Abalos SVD, Philippines
- Toon Van Bijnen SVD, Belgium
- Luis Antonio Rodriguez SVD, Argentina
- Alice Lafuente SSpS, Mozambique
- Estela Parmisano SSpS, Philippines
- Teresa Catalina Roskopf SSpS, Argentina
"Mujeres en Pie" (Women on their Feet). Women Empowerment through literacy, training of trainers.
Promotion of Women and Family, formation of leaders.
Empowerment and promotion of women. "Ayuda y Fortalecimiento del rol de la Mujer" (support and strengthening the role of women).
Promotion of Women.
"Swashakti" Project, empowerment of rural women in Seva Ashram Pipili, Block-Bagili, DT. Dewas, MP.
Self-employment, Greeting Card Making Center, St. Mary's Convent, Khandwa.
Rehabilitation of HIV affected and infected women and girl children.

**Focus: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

"Escuela Agroecologia" (agro-ecological School) among indigenous of Mba'e Katu.
Organic Farming, Manobo Tribe Farm Assistance, in Langasian, La Paz, Agusan.
Integrity of Creation and Human Rights (saving farmland from erosive farming).

Beatris Irene Baran SSpS, Paraguay
Estela Parmisano SSpS, Philippines
Zacharias Lusi SVD, Madagascar

**Focus: CULTURE OF PEACE**

Education Program for Pastoral Ministry of Justice and Peace.
Cultural Dialogue for Peace, in the refugee camps of Atambua.
Attention to Asylum Seekers, promoting peace between Vanimo, PNG and West Papua (Indonesia).
Encounter with Asylum Seekers, to give "a human face to an austere and desperate situation" and promote relationship among different peoples.
Promoting sustained peace and disarmament.
"Gurises Punto Sol" care of children at risk of drug-adiction, and promotion of the culture of peace.
"Just Stories Conference" time and space among teachers and community leaders to tell stories about ethnic identity and racial justice to bridge the racial divide, enabling healing and peaceful inter-racial relationships.

Norbert Betan SVD, Indonesia
Irmandis Olo SSpS, Timor Leste
Franco Zocca SVD, Papua New Guinea
Miriam Fromaget SSpS, Switzerland
Danuta Bunko SSpS, Angola
Adelia Gette SSpS, Argentina
Mark Weber SVD, USA
Toon Van Bijnen SVD, Belgium

**News bits from VINY**

17 Oct 2002: VI participated in the “Second International Forum for Social Development” at the UN. The topic was "cooperation for social development: the international dimension."

1 Nov 2002: VI participated in a panel discussion on “Managing Globalization” as part of the debate on the theme "Globalization and Interdependence" held at the UN, NY.


23-28 January 2003: Carmen Castro participated as VI delegate in the upcoming World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

30 January to 1 February 2003: Carmen Castro represented VINY in the JPIC PANAM Zonal meeting also held in Porto Alegre immediately following the World Social Forum.