

November 6, 2006

Dear Friends:

Welcome! – to another brilliant and exciting Peace Child International Book Project! For those of you who have not taken part in one of these before, these are projects where we take long and rather dull international reports on incredibly important global issues, tease out the key points in them, and then ask young people around the world to write stories and first-hand reports, paint pictures, take photographs and write poems – on how these issues appear to them.

The result is a beautiful and fascinating book entirely written and illustrated, designed and edited by young people(see: <http://www.grida.no/geo2000/pacha/contents.htm> - for an idea of the kind of book we produce.) The design and editing is done by the young people from around the world who live and work at the Peace Child International centre – but any one who contributes can be a part of that process by watching the book come together, page by page, on the website. You can suggest a different story, or another design element, via the website just as though you were sitting at the Editorial Meeting table.

The ‘incredibly important global issue’ this project is about is WATER! Water is the theme of this year’s Human Development Report(HDR) – probably the most famous, and most widely read of all the documents that come out of the United Nations every year. But the reports are not very widely read by young people. Which is why the UN is inviting the young people of the Peace Child International network to create a short summary of it.

What are the Key Points the HDR makes about Water?

1. **Water is a human right:** unclean water and poor sanitation have claimed more lives in the past century than all the wars and terrorist crimes; more even than HIV-AIDS. It causes 1.8 million child deaths (4,900 a day – over 3 children a minute!)
2. **The world is not running out of water:** “There is more than enough water in the world for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes. The crisis is rooted in power, poverty and the inequality which systematically excludes the poor...”
3. **The poor pay more for clean water than the rich!** In some countries, the rich pay nothing for water: so no wonder there’s a shortage. “If markets delivered Porsche cars at give-away prices, they too would be in short supply.” Governments need to price and regulate this precious resource to ensure that the children of today have sufficient water to care for their children of tomorrow.

4. **Historical Context**: what needs to be done now in developing countries is what our ancestors did in Europe and North America a little over a hundred years ago. The prosperity of the Roman Empire was sourced in safe water.
5. **Water – the best investment**: every \$1 invested in improving water and sanitation generates \$8 in improved productivity and health care costs averted. Access to water and sanitation equips people to get themselves out of poverty and contribute to national prosperity.
6. **The Millennium Development Goal**: UN Member states have set a goal to ‘halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation.’ This would cost about \$10 billion – but would generate \$38 billion in economic benefit.
7. **The UN Proposes a 4-point plan**:
 - Make water a human right – and mean it!
 - Draw up national plans for universal access to water and sanitation
 - Support national plans with international aid
 - Develop a global action plan
8. **Global warming** - makes the need to address the politics of water even more urgent: global warming will cause droughts in many areas and cause crop yields to drop putting an addition 100 million people under the threat of hunger;
9. **Cooperation is needed to prevent cross-border water wars**: rivers respect no political boundaries; already there are cross-border disputes, sometimes violence, over water. The report recommends new institutions to manage water fairly.
10. **Beyond Scarcity**: dried up river beds, sinking water tables, depleted underground water reserves – the images of water scarcity are everywhere and frightening. This report offers different images – caring political leadership subsidizing access to water for the poor and especially women; micro-water harvesting; massively increasing water storage capacity in the world’s poorest countries. (The USA stores 6000 cubic meters of water per person; Ethiopia 43!)

Water = IMPORTANT!! To summarise, we should conclude from this report that water and sanitation are pretty important! And yet – you probably never talk about it: washing and going to the toilet are not the most fun things to talk about. They’re even a bit rude! Which is why governments – who respond to voters’ priorities – never put water at the top of their priority list. Faced with global warming and increased population pressure on water supply, this report suggests that “the challenge effectively to govern water supply in the 21st Century may prove to be among the most daunting faced in human history.”

So – will you help us explain this ‘daunting challenge’ to a wider public?

Here’s how you can help:

We want you to contribute stories, paintings and poems about water to a full colour, illustrated 24-page booklet summarizing the above key points. It will

be released in English, French and Spanish on World Water Day March 22nd 2007. Not only will the best contributions be printed up in this booklet that will be distributed around the world: the best contributors will be offered an all-expenses paid trip to the United Kingdom to work with a talented team of young people at the world-famous Peace Child International Centre to edit the final booklet. But hurry: if you want to be considered for a place at this meeting, you have to get your contribution in by December 31st 2006. Other contributions may be received right up to January 31st 2007.

How exactly should we contribute?

Here is the **Contents / Page Plan** we have in mind – and under each, we show the kind of contributions we are looking for: (Shopping list!)

ILLUSTRATED FRONT COVER	1
<i>This is a challenger for a great young artist or illustrator: we are looking for a really striking image that reflects the issues outlined above; check the images on the website – and allow your imagination to run wild on an image that will attract people as a cover for our summary. The person whose painting/cartoon is chosen for the front cover is automatically invited to the editorial meeting.</i>	
1. Introduction & Contents List:	2-3
<i>This is written by the editors;</i>	
2. Why are Water & Sanitation so important?	4-5
<i>A great opportunity for creative writing and images: if you suffer the consequences of unsafe water, or live in an area without sanitation – find ways to communicate your thirst for safe water through words or pictures that express your longing; if you live with safe water from the end of a tap, if you enjoy swimming pools and nice smells in your neighbourhood, communicate why this is important to you;</i>	
3. The Historical context – water & sanitation as the driver of human history	6-7
<i>A hundred to 150 years ago, London, New York, Paris and other major cities suffered the same child death rates from unclean water and the lack of sanitation as many parts of Africa suffer today. Look back into the history of your area – in parts of the developing world, often water and sanitation were dealt with better in the past than they are today.</i>	
4. The Silent Crisis – the many faces of today’s water & sanitation crisis	8-11
<i>Another great opportunity for creative writing and images: we really, really need your input for this section. The HDR is full of statements that reflect the horror of the water crisis – but bald statistics need, in our booklet, to be given a human face: your story, your experience of the lack of water, of the need to consume unsafe water just to survive, is what we need here. Pictures too. And Poems. Go for it!</i>	
5. The outrageous Inequalities	12-13
<i>We learn from the Report that people living in slums have to pay up to 10% of their income to get safe water. In richer parts, it is less than 3% - sometimes nothing! Have you any experience of this?? Please tell us your story – and send us pictures of the water-sellers, or the conditions where you live that force you and your family to pay huge amounts for your water.</i>	
6. The benefits of action	14-15
<i>The statistics are pretty clear: investing now in water, saves money in health-care, improved productivity and a host of other good things later on. And lives are saved. Do you have any personal experience of the benefits of investing in clean water? Tell us about it. Paint a picture!</i>	
7. The costs of inaction	16-17
<i>Again, the report has great information about the consequences of NOT investing in water and sanitation. We shall draw on the statistics of the report, mostly, for this section – but again, it is a great opportunity for those who want to paint the horror and the grime of slums without water or sanitation;</i>	
8. What young people are doing – inspiring stories from around the world	18-19

This is where we really, really need your help: any young activist who has done something amazing to improve the water supply or sanitation facilities in your neighbourhood needs to be featured here. The littlest action is interesting – getting water cleansing tablets; laying a new water pipe; cleaning up a river; building a small rain-water harvesting system, or tank, sorting out leaks etc. Anything!! Stories, reports, poems and paintings + photographs.

9. What more young people can do 20-21

Get your brains in gear for this. Start stretching them!! We need really the most creative, most amazing, most fantastical – yet realistic and plausible – ideas for what you think young people, given a little bit of time and money, could do to improve their water situation. Paintings and print! Both are needed!

10. In Conclusion: Visions of the Future – Virtuous Circle or Vicious Circle 22-23

Remember the title of the Report – “Beyond Scarcity” – give us some great images of what you think this means – the happiness that a world in which everyone has access to fresh, safe water would deliver; and the opposite – the misery of a world in which fewer and fewer people have access to any water at all. One way spirals up to prosperity; the other spirals downward to ever darker despair and poverty.

ILLUSTRATED BACK COVER

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We are thinking of an Eco-Advertisement for the back-cover – “Give youth a chance to end water scarcity!” Water for growth – water for health! Think of a slogan, then do a painting to illustrate it.

Do you see how the key points listed above fit into this framework. And, we hope, you will begin to see where your contributions fit in: what are they doing to save water? What more could they do? What examples can they give of the benefits of action? What facets of today’s water and sanitation crisis do they have personal experience of?

The Timeline:

2006

November: Start thinking about making your contributions;

December: Start getting those contributions in; Peace Child staff will prepare a first draft outline template for the book and put it on the web. Key contributors are chosen to come to the Editorial meeting in the UK from those who get their contributions in by 31st December;

2007

January: Make it a New Year’s Resolution: get your contributions in by 31st Jan. deadline!

February: Peace Child Staff and Key Contributors edit Final Draft of the Booklet; UN staff check booklet for accuracy; 26th February: Deadline to deliver finished booklet to printers;

March: 10th March: ship Booklets to UN and elsewhere;

22nd March: World Water Day 2007: Launch booklet in New York & around the world.

Please register your interest in participating by e-mailing me on:

editor@peacechild.org I will send you monthly updates on our progress – and any special requests for pieces we are missing. I look forward so much to hearing from you and working with you on this fascinating project.

We encourage you – or your teachers – to read the full report: you can download all of it, or the Overview, at: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2006>