Life is a whole. Increasingly, we realize that everything is interconnected, including those forces that “destroy the circle.” In this issue of Perspectives, we focus on links — ways in which marginalized peoples are particularly affected by the structures of the global economy and environmental degradation. And we address solutions — from global efforts like the Millennium Development Goals to local, grassroots actions aimed at social change. We begin by exploring how women and girls, especially those in the developing world, are especially touched by growing water scarcity and insecurity.

WATER: WOMEN’S WORK, WOMEN’S WORRY

by Mary Turgi, CSC

The right to water . . . is the very essence of the right to life

— U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water

Water degradation and scarcity increasingly affect everyone.

* Nearly one out of every five people on Earth lacks access to potable water.
* Over 40 percent of the world’s people lack adequate sanitation services.
* By 2025, roughly two-thirds of the world’s population will experience moderate to severe water stress.

Water shortages hit the poor and most vulnerable first and obviously touch both men and women. But women have unique connections to water; whenever water is scarce or unsafe, women are affected differently and usually more severely.

Walking to the moon

Women conduct 80 percent of water-related work in the world. In most societies, women and girls still collect every liter of water used for cooking, bathing, cleaning, maintaining health and hygiene, raising small animals and growing food. Most walk great distances in search of clean water, burdened with heavy containers.

On average, in developing societies, women and girls spend eight or more hours per day fetching water, traveling 10 to 15 kilometers, carrying...
Many women’s groups have taken the lead in initiating ecologically friendly projects to ensure potable water supplies. Sisters of the Holy Cross in Ghana have begun a rainwater-harvesting project to make clean water more accessible and provide a model for others in the area. Sister Helene Sharp, one of the initiators, describes the project in the following interview.

**REAPING THE RAINS**

An interview with Helene Sharp, CSC

**Perspectives:** What prompted you to think about doing a water collection project?

**Helene:** Water in Ghana is a real challenge! In some locations, potable water is not accessible naturally and people have to rely on water tankers for their supply. When the rainy season comes, it’s nearly impossible for tankers to get through muddy roads. Once they get stuck, they’re reluctant to service the area. This happens to us in here in Kasoa.

As we were preparing to build at Nyame N’Adom, we realized that getting water there would be even more difficult. Driving distances for tankers would be greater and the roads were poor. We also knew that connecting to piped water wouldn’t be possible for some time. All of this prompted us to look for natural alternatives.

**P:** What gave you the idea of doing rainwater harvesting — and how did you get started?

**H:** As we spent time on our new property and saw how rain was eroding the soil, we began talking about how we could conserve water and stop the erosion. Through a Rotary Club contact in the United States, a hydrology professor from the University of Nevada and two Notre Dame students came to Ghana to help us decide what to do. After surveying the land, testing soil and water samples, researching both geologic and meteorological statistics for our area, they suggested rainwater harvesting and designed a system that would work for us. Based on the average rainfalls of the last 10 years, we should be able to harvest about 190,000 gallons of water annually!
P: How will the system work?

H: Rainwater will be harvested from the roof of our convent. After filtering through a pipe system, it will flow into a large underground tank for storage. Eventually, it will be pumped up to an overhead tank so it can flow naturally into the house. We are investigating both wind and solar power — both of which are abundant — for pumping.

There will also be a second tank for overflow during the rainy season so we can save as much as possible. After settling, that water will be pumped into the overhead tank too.

P: How will you and others benefit when the system is up and running?

H: One obvious benefit for us will be buying fewer tankers of water! However, there are others too. First of all, we hope that this project will serve as a model for neighbors. There are no successful drilled wells in the area and despite the danger of disease, people still use water from two nearby ponds.

This project will demonstrate that there are other options.

The additional water will also help with our erosion reduction projects. The practice of sand winning in Ghana has led to extensive land degradation. To curb further erosion on our property, we’ve begun planting fruit trees on one section of the land. This is a very labor-intensive project since every tree and plant has to be hand watered. We’ve purchased a poly-tank and I am currently working on a drip irrigation system that will help, once we have sufficient water.

We also have a small farm with hot peppers, corn, plantain and other vegetables. These plants help anchor the soil too. If we can get the water systems going and care for the soil well, the land will produce good crops — proving that farming is still a very viable alternative in this part of Ghana.

Helene Sharp, a Sister of the Holy Cross, served as an educator and pastoral associate in the United States until 1998 when she was missioned to Ghana. Currently she teaches at the Holy Cross Family Center and Institute for Continuing Formation and is project manager for the new construction at Nyame N’Adom near Kasoa.
We are the children of the forest. We were born here and grew up here. We have been living here for hundreds of years.... We will not leave this forest. We cannot survive if we are evicted from the forest in the name of this Eco-Park.

— Anil Young Eyung, Khasi Headman

DEFENDING ANCESTRAL LANDS:
KHASIS, GAROS AND HOLY CROSS RESIST ECO-PARKS

by Minoti Rozario, CSC

Eco-parks on indigenous lands are a “hot issue” in Bangladesh. Allegedly recreational areas that protect biodiversity and natural habitats and promote conservation, Bangladesh eco-parks are very controversial because of their impact on the lives of tribal peoples.

The Bangladesh government has plans to establish eco-parks in several areas, including the Muraichara and Madhabkundo areas of Moulvi Bazar District where Khasi and Garo peoples live. In 2000, even after strong tribal resistance, the government established an eco-park in the Madhabkundo punjee (village) area. Now every day, 50 tribal families have to contend with loss of privacy and disruption of their way of life. Tourists litter the land and pollute the waterfalls with plastic bottles and bags and pick the pan leaves for their own use, destroying the tribal gardens. Picnickers with loudspeakers disrupt the quiet of the forest. The constant incursion of outsiders prevents tribals from using the waterfalls for bathing, washing clothes, and other household purposes. And with no guides in the park, the tourists themselves are unsafe. Many accidents, even deaths, have occurred on the waterfalls.

In spite of these problems, the Ministry of Environment and Forests began working on another eco-park in nearby Muraichara in April 2001. Due to intense resistance, development was suspended in November 2001, but has yet to be cancelled. The indigenous peoples live with terrible insecurity, not knowing if or when the government might resume the project. They are in constant fear of being evicted from their ancestral lands.

The Khasis and Garos make their living by cultivating betel nuts and pan leaves as well as valuable, seasonable fruits. They especially depend on large trees that support the pan leaf vines. In the Muraichara area, even without the eco-park intrusion, people’s livelihood is endangered by tree thieves. According to the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum (BIPF), when indigenous complain to the police and other local authorities, they are ignored or their rights otherwise denied.

Throughout Bangladesh, government eco-park plans are being resisted. The BIPF and other indigenous organizations, university professors and students, clergy, journalists, politicians, and...
The Khasis and Garos make their living by cultivating betel nuts and pan leaves as well as valuable, seasonable fruits. They especially depend on large trees that support the pan leaf vines.

Cultural activists, are all protesting eco-parks by rallies, press conferences, hunger strikes and fasts, marches and prayer services. Brothers, priests, and sisters of the Holy Cross Congregations are also involved — educating and animating the people, developing leadership and providing support.

At one eco-park protest, two other Sisters of the Holy Cross and I stood chanting with the people, “Stop the Eco-Park on Khasi and Garo ancestral land!”

A Khasi woman asked me, “Sister, why do you come with us?” (I am a Bengali). “You may die in this rally.” I answered her, “We love you and we know you are protesting for your own land.”

Some indigenous peoples in Bangladesh are not opposed to the notion of eco-parks in principle. What they protest is giving up their own ancestral lands for the parks when other land is readily available. Currently, the government has thousands of acres of reserve forestland in the hills of Patharia and Longla next to the Khasi-Garo lands where the eco-park is planned.

So why pursue Khasi-Garo forestlands? A statement of the Bangladesh Landless Association raises deeper questions about the rationale for eco-parks and the connections between true environmental protection and human rights.

The real objectives of the misnamed ‘eco-parks’ are to evict minority ethnic groups — which goes hand in hand with environmental destruction... The latest policy of establishing ‘eco-parks’ flies in the face of the most basic tenets of human rights, ecological protection, and sustainable development... The already marginalized inhabitants of the land earmarked for ‘development’ and ‘preservation’ will bear the cost of this pointless exercise... The fight to save the forests is also the fight for the rights of the minority inhabitants.

Minoti Rozario, a Sister of the Holy Cross, has worked with tribal peoples and Bengali women in cooperatives in Jalchatra parish. After receiving an MA in philosophy in 1999, she served as aspirant director for five years while administering/supervising schools in Kulaura. Currently, she is a lecturer at Holy Cross College in Dhaka.
On the outskirts of the city of São Paulo, Brazil, sits Saint John the Baptist parish. The population of this area has grown exponentially over the last decade and there are large sections of the parish where only precarious shelters house the poor.

Sister Anne Veronica Horner Hoe, vice principal of Colégio Santa Maria, has been active in the parish for years, training and animating lay ministers and involving Colégio students in tutoring and recreational programs for neighborhood children. Recently she formed a team of Colégio teachers and students to investigate environmental conditions in the area. Together, they interviewed families living on the banks of a narrow stream flowing through the area to determine its impact on people’s lives.

Here are a few examples of what the team heard — a sampling of how polluted water systems affect the lives of the urban poor.

“My son and other children in the area have skin rashes that are alike. The doctor says the rashes are caused by the water. And children often complain of stomach pain. We think it’s because of parasites in the water they drink.”

“There are frequent heavy rains and the stream constantly overflows. A lot of debris blocks the flow and our house and land are often flooded. Conditions are worse then. I know of many people who are ill because of the rats that infest the area after the rain.”

“This stream is little more than an open sewer carrying trash and garbage. There is no sewage system out here or any kind of waste removal. This is what we must use, but we know it is polluted and unhealthy for our children.”

“We know of many cases of people who have suffered from severe diarrhea or vomiting. We suspect that these symptoms are caused by the drinking water.”
But the Colégio team was not interested in simply gathering information. After taking samples of the stream for chemical analysis, they engaged the community. First they held meetings to share results of the chemical tests and promote the health benefits of cleaning the stream. Next they helped residents make and post signs reminding everyone not to throw trash in the water. Then the team contacted the district mayor to call attention to community efforts and request help from city services. In June 2005, the district mayor and sanitation and public health officials and employees came to the area to drag the stream and collect trash items too large for ordinary pickup. Vegetation along the stream was cut, rat traps set and the entire area sprayed for dengue mosquitoes, all of which was carried by local television stations and newspapers.

The immediate result was a cleaner, healthier environment for people living in the slum. But the project’s impact went beyond this. Residents learned they are not powerless — they can instigate change. Students realized that keeping water safe requires concerted, coordinated efforts of ordinary people, health professionals, teachers and educational institutions and public officials. It also demands behavioral change for everyone and constant vigilance to make sure the government provides the services people deserve.


Diane Cundiff, also a Sister of the Holy Cross, has ministered in São Paulo, Brazil, for 30 years. She is presently the principal of Colégio Santa Maria, which serves 2,700 students — children and adults from preschool through secondary levels.
We recognize that we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality, and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty to all the world’s people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.

*United Nations Millennium Declaration*

**THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS:**
**A GLOBAL COMPACT TO END POVERTY**

In September 2000, leaders of 189 countries—gathered at the United Nations Millennium Summit—made extraordinary commitments to eradicate extreme poverty and ensure the most basic human rights for all people. Their pledges—articulated in the *Millennium Declaration*—gave rise to the *Millennium Development Goals*: eight goals together with 18 measurable, time-bound targets and 48 indicators designed to direct the world’s collective efforts toward greater security and peace.

Among U.N. documents, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are unique in their ambition, specificity, and scope. They are also unusual in their explicit recognition that eradicating poverty and guaranteeing the most fundamental human rights can only be achieved through strong, effective partnerships and increased action by rich countries—including debt relief, fairer trade rules, technology transfer, and increased aid.

In September 2005, world leaders came together again in summit to review implementation of the Millennium Declaration. They found that, in some respects, the world has made significant progress toward meeting many of the MDGs. For example, between 1990 and 2002:

- the number of people in extreme poverty declined by 130 million;
- more than a billion people still live on less than a dollar a day;
- 3 million people die from HIV/AIDS and 11 million

**Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**
- Halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day by 2015.
- Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015.

**Achieve Universal Primary Education**
- By 2015, ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.

**Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**
- Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

**Reduce Child Mortality**
- By 2015, reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under 5.

**Improve Maternal Health**
- By 2015, reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality rate.

**Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases**
- By 2015, halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
child mortality rates fell from 103 deaths per 1,000 live births a year to 88; an additional 8 percent of the developing world’s people received access to clean water, and an additional 15 percent acquired access to improved sanitation.

But progress has been far from uniform across the world — or across the goals. More than a billion people still live on less than a dollar a day. Each year, 3 million people die from HIV/AIDS and 11 million children die before reaching their fifth birthday.

There are also huge disparities within and among countries/regions. Sub-Saharan Africa has a widespread shortfall for most of the MDGs: continuing food insecurity, increases in extreme poverty, dramatically high child and maternal mortality rates, and large numbers of people living in slums. Asia is the region progressing most rapidly, but even there hundreds of millions of people remain in extreme poverty and even fast-growing countries are failing to meet some of the non-income goals.

Other regions — Latin America, the transition economies, the Middle East and North Africa — have mixed records: slow or no progress on some of the goals and persistent inequalities undermining progress on others.

In his report to the September 2005 World Summit In Larger Freedom, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan notes that today’s generation is the first with the resources and technology to free the whole human race from want. The MDGs can be met by 2015, he asserts, but only if all involved break with business as usual and dramatically accelerate and scale up action now:

Now is the time to act. Enough words and good intentions…. The business of the Summit must be to ensure that, from now on, promises made are promises kept.

To make the right choice, leaders will need… the courage to fulfill their responsibilities...and the wisdom to transcend their differences. I am confident that they can. I am also certain that they must. What is called for is possible. It is within reach. That is our opportunity and our challenge.

### GOALS AND TARGETS

**Ensure Environmental Sustainability**
- Ensure the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources.
- By 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water.
- By 2020, achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

**Develop a Global Partnership for Development**
- Develop an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and nondiscriminatory, and includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction — nationally and internationally.
- Address the special needs of least-developed countries and of landlocked and small-island developing states.
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries’ debt problems.
- Develop decent and productive work for youth.
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies — especially information and communications technologies.
Sousas, a town of 15,000, is a sub-district of the city of Campinas, a large metropolis with more than a million inhabitants in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. As in other densely populated areas in our country, many residents live in extreme poverty surrounded by wealth and sophistication.

CECOIA: “SOCIAL EDUCATION” FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

by Robert Weinmann, CSC

All the families we serve are large with very low incomes and extremely poor quality of life. They are deprived of the most fundamental requirements to be fully human — decent housing, education, clean water and adequate sanitation, not to mention cultural and political participation.

Hygiene among them is especially tenuous because sanitation facilities are poor, showers are inadequate and there are not enough beds. Families sleep together on mattresses on the floor of tiny rooms. A nine-person family might be found living in a house of two two-by-three-meter rooms. Some tenant farmers in the region actually live in houses built when Brazil was a colony!

Some of our children live in wood huts on the banks of the Atibaia River. Every year, their families endure floods, lose what little they have acquired, and are forced to start over again. The contaminated river water spreads diseases like leptospirosis and dengue throughout the community.

Obviously, children raised in such circumstances are at very high-risk. Daily they are exposed to violence and other abuse, drugs, hunger, and lack of nurturing or any type of family support. Recognizing this, in 1985 a group of parents from the Association of Parents and Teachers of Colégio Notre Dame established CECOIA (Centro Comunitário Irmão André) to complement the formal education of youth in the area. Today CECOIA works with at-risk children 7 to 17 years of age — meeting basic needs, but also building self-esteem, teaching skills for responsible citizenship, and helping students discover and express themselves through the arts.

The CECOIA program provides children with what we call a social education: education grounded in the educational philosophy of Holy Cross and organized around four key learnings: learning to be, to live together, to acquire knowledge, and to act on that knowledge so as to impact social reality. At the core of the curriculum is the development and assimilation of ethical values not part of children’s home life or other experience.

In its 20-year history, CECOIA has grown from a small center serving 40 children to a comprehensive program assisting 150 children and their families. At present, our biggest challenge is construction of a second unit to serve the hundreds of at-risk children still desperately in need of our help.

Robert Weinmann, a Brother of Holy Cross, is an artist and one of the founders of CECOIA. Missioned in Brazil since 1966, he currently works full-time at CECOIA, which he helps support through sale of his paintings in the United States.
As mission educator for the Archdiocese of New Orleans, I am constantly challenged to cross borders — and draw others with me. In an effort to sensitize diocesan residents to poverty and social exclusion in nearby countries, our office frequently sponsors “immersions” for young adults, seminarians, medical personnel, families, catechists and youth ministers. I’ve noticed that whether individuals participate in a border experience in Mexico, a catechetical “Vacation Bible School” in Belize, or a medical outreach in Nicaragua, the dynamics of these immersions are remarkably the same.

CROSSING BORDERS
by Judith Gomila, MSC

Typically, our “missionaries” arrive on-site and are overwhelmed by poverty and people’s stories — the chasm between their lives and ours as U.S. citizens. Gradually, as they come to know the people they came to “help,” they find they are the ones being evangelized. Struck by the deep faith and spirit of community among the indigenous people, they realize the locals are rich in ways far more valuable than material wealth. Distances between the “missionaries” and the “others” diminish as friendships develop and they recognize similarities. The groundwork for real solidarity is laid.

These short-term mission experiences abroad are certainly important because they bridge gaps. They teach U.S. citizens to care genuinely about countries and peoples other than ourselves. But recently, I’ve been pushed beyond this in prayer.

Lately, I’ve begun to realize that borders of nations are not the only boundaries to be crossed. In many ways it’s much easier to feel solidarity with those at a distance. It’s not quite so simple with excluded peoples close at hand. In my “hometown” I sometimes find myself fearful, confused, angry and — yes — prejudiced when confronted with the needs and demands of the marginalized. In response to “third-world peoples” on my own turf, I resort to the old “pull-yourself-up-by-your-boot-strap” adage.

The Gospel call to communion and solidarity is neither easy nor simple. We are challenged to address complex issues and situations — globally and in our own backyards. Everywhere there are networks of privilege, prejudice and power so enmeshed in our systems and structures they are almost impossible to grasp.

Father Moreau espoused an inclusive, global vision long before most had a sense of the “global.” Today Moreau’s vision calls us in Holy Cross to a global spirituality — one based in universal communion and solidarity. This global spirituality requires us to

- embrace our interconnectedness with marginalized peoples, wherever they are;
- defend the human rights of all our sisters and brothers;
- uncover common ground with peoples of all cultures and faiths; and
- revere all of creation.

In this “Year of the Eucharist,” sacrament of solidarity, I am challenged — and perhaps you are too — to keep crossing borders of all sorts, to recognize and receive the Holy in people and places likely and unlikely.

This is the call to be catholic — to be universally inclusive, to enfold our belief that all of us form one body and are truly part of one another (Romans 12:5). This is the challenge to open our doors and make everyone welcome — at the table of Eucharist and the multiple public and private tables of our lives.

Judith Gomila, a Marianite of Holy Cross, is mission educator with the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. In this position, Judith coordinates short-term mission experiences in Mexico and Central America to promote “conversion, communion and solidarity” in the spirit of Ecclesia in America and Redemptoris Missio.
20 kilos/15 liters per trip. Kenyan women collectively spend 9 million hours each day in search of water. In South Africa alone, women collectively walk the equivalent of 16 times to the moon and back per day to find clean water. Even in urban areas, women and girls spend hours fetching water — waiting in line to collect intermittent supplies at standpipes.

The inordinate amount of time and energy spent obtaining water has serious repercussions for women and girls. So much time is invested in water retrieval that little, if any, is left for other activities, such as education, income generation, or cultural and political involvement, not to mention rest and recreation.

**Women, water and health**

For many women, both rural and urban, the only alternative to spending most of the day in search of water is using contaminated water unfit for consumption. This is a frightening option since the World Health Organization estimates that 80 percent of all sickness in the world is attributable to unsafe water and sanitation. Water-borne diseases kill 3.4 million people annually — most of them children. Millions more are sickened with diseases that could be prevented by access to clean water and health-care information.

Since women are more likely to be in contact with poor-quality water, they face a higher exposure to water-borne diseases and pollution, as is the case with arsenic-infused well water in Bangladesh. Even when water-borne illnesses do not affect women personally, they remain the primary caretakers of those who are ill. This again restricts other activities, such as education and income-generation. In addition, medical costs from family illness increase household debt and deepen poverty.

In most societies, the maintenance of family health is still viewed as a female responsibility. As a result, women may determine the domestic use of water, but they are rarely involved in public decision-making on issues related to sanitation and hygiene. In many communities, women must walk long distances to use sanitation facilities, often risking their personal safety. Increased incidence of sexual and physical assault when toilets are in remote locations is well documented. In rural areas, where toilets may not be available, deforestation and loss of vegetation have forced women and girls to rise earlier and walk further in search of privacy. Adequate sanitation facilities are also not available for vast numbers of poor women who live or work in urban centers. Ten percent of school-age African girls do not attend school during menstruation or drop out at puberty because schools lack clean, private sanitation facilities.

**Women, water, and the global economy**

Degradation of ecosystems, freshwater pollution, contamination of aquifers, salinization, waste and misuse — all are contributing to an impending environmental catastrophe in the world’s water supply. In their roles as caretakers and natural resource managers, women are profoundly affected by this global water crisis. But environmental factors are not the only forces undermining water security for women and their families. The free-market push for privatization of public goods and services also undercuts women’s access to water.

“Privatization” is a process in which state-owned/operated enterprises like water and sanitation services are sold/leased to multinational corporations, based on the assumption that private management will be more efficient and cost effective. Privatization policies are part and parcel of free-market economics, which promote deregulation and liberalization of trade and investment. They are also a key component of World Bank/International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programs. In at least eight African countries, opening the water sector to privatization has been a condition for receiving an IMF loan.

Worldwide, women — especially poor women — have been the first to signal problems with
water privatization: astronomical price hikes, water cut-offs due to unpaid bills, lack of corporate accountability, deterioration of water quality, and hygiene problems. None of the supposed benefits of corporate management have materialized up to now, whether the privatization has occurred in Bolivia, South Africa or the United States. On the contrary, the same criticisms of public enterprises apply, including lack of competition, inefficiency and poor quality of service.

For poor women and their households, the results of water privatization are frequently catastrophic. Not only does privatization not improve access or quality, it often leads to women rejecting expensive pipe water and returning to questionable water from unsafe sources.

Women and water: a driving force for change

The governments of the world have pledged to “halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation” by 2015 in the Millennium Development Goals. But, women are not sitting idly by waiting for authorities to take action. Increasingly, they are taking matters into their own hands. In the process, they are developing organizational skills, becoming more self-reliant, increasing opportunities for education, and creating new livelihoods for themselves and others. Women are moving from bare survival to active participation and contribution to the community.

In the past, most women of the Kirinyaga district in Kenya collected water three to four kilometers away from their homes or paid highly for it from water sellers. Determined to get better water access, local women formed the Kugeria Women’s Group and began to research what would be needed to bring water from a river 11 kilometers away. Together, they learned what was needed to build and maintain a water system, then obtained funding and technical assistance from Africa 2000 Network. Today the Kugeria Women’s Group has successfully brought clean, reliable water to 300 families. Sanitation has improved and the time previously spent fetching water is now used for agricultural purposes. The community also uses the new water supply for irrigation so people no longer have to depend on food handouts during drought. (Common Ground, Women’s Environment and Development Organization [WEDO], 2003)

United by their need for reliable, affordable water and the burden of high water prices, women in low-income urban neighborhoods in Honduras began operating their own licensed water vending points. The results have been lower and stable water prices, part-time employment for poor, single women with children, and funds for additional neighborhood projects. Women have also used their own local water supply for income generation through beer brewing, teashops and a laundrette. (Excerpted from Untapped Connections, WEDO 2003).

Luzhivka, Ukraine, housed a railway oil-tank cleaning facility that polluted the local water supply and the city’s inadequate sewage
WHAT CAN WE DO?

* Promote the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as means to ensure basic human rights.

  • Find out what your country is doing to respond to the MDGs. What is your government doing? What is civil society doing?
  • Write to your political representatives telling them you support the MDGs; engage others in your community by organizing letter-writing campaigns and writing letters to local newspapers.
  • United States citizens: Visit the HCIJO web site and send a message to your senators in support of the International Cooperation to Meet the Millennium Development Goals Act 2005 calling for U.S. accountability on its MDG commitments.
  • Join international campaigns like the United Nations Millennium Campaign <www.millenniumcampaign.org> or the Global Call to Action Against Poverty <www.whiteband.org>.

* Develop a local version of the MDGs in areas where you minister; help communities create action plans to achieve their local MDGs.

* Use the Perspectives resource section on the HCIJO web site to learn more about how the MDGs impact particular groups of marginalized persons, especially women, children and indigenous peoples.

RESOURCES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MDGS

WEB SITES

* The HCIJO site <www.holycrossjustice.org> has a special section of resources related to topics covered in this issue of Perspectives.

* The Women’s Environment and Development Organization site <www.wedo.org> is an excellent site for resources on women, globalization and sustainable development. The site highlights women’s critical contributions in political, social and economic spheres.

* The UNIFEM site <www.unifem.org> contains resources on women, poverty and economics, violence against women, HIV/AIDS among women and girls, and gender equality in democratic governance.

* The Tebtebba site <www.tebtebba.org> has extensive resources for research and advocacy regarding the world’s indigenous peoples, their worldview, and their issues and concerns.

* The Millennium Development Project site <www.unmillenniumproject.org> contains Investing in Development, a report presenting a practical operational framework that will allow even the poorest countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, as well as other facts and news about progress on the MDGs.

* The official U.N. Millennium Development Goals site <www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> contains basic information on the Millennium Declaration and MDGs as well as progress reports in English, French and Spanish.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of those who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and the needy.

Proverbs 31:8-9
VIDEOS/DVDs

- **Behind the Green** (33 minutes), a documentary produced by the Indigenous Peoples Development Services, depicts the resistance of Khasi and Garo indigenous peoples to government-sponsored Eco-Parks and their struggle to maintain control over their ancestral homelands in Bangladesh (VHS video and DVD).

- **The Millennium Development Goals: Dream or Reality** (27 minutes) is the introductory film to the BBC World Life 4 series on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Sequences from China, Bangladesh, Jamaica, India, Sri Lanka, Zambia and Ethiopia, together with comments from academics and activists, explore the ambition and scope of the MDGs and obstacles to their achievement (DVD). Distributed by Bullfrog Films.

- **Walking for Water** (22 minutes), part of the series *Water Voices* distributed by the Asian Development Bank, describes how women in rural areas of Gujarat, India, are bringing water closer to home by constructing and managing village water systems. The time saved from water-gathering enables the women to earn a living through a handicraft cooperative (DVD). Available free for educational purposes from <www.adb.org>.

BOOKS/REPORTS


- **We the Peoples 2005: The U.N. Millennium Declaration and Beyond Mobilizing for Change: Message from Civil Society** — a progress report on the MDGs from the perspective of civil society, available in English and French at <www.wfuna.org>.

These videos and DVDs may be borrowed free of charge from the HCIJO Resource Library [e-mail: ksmedley@cscsisters.org; fax: 574-284-5596].
system produced frequent overflows of sewage into homes and streets. Authorities maintained there were no funds to address the problems. Then MAMA-86, an environmental organization formed after the Chernobyl nuclear accident, stepped in. Local chapter members met with residents, launched a political campaign and filed suit against the city. As a result, the government “discovered” the resources necessary to complete construction of a sewage pump and to fund several other environmental initiatives, while also closing the hazardous oil-tank cleaning facility. (Excerpted from Untapped Connections, WEDO 2003).

As these stories show, women are in the forefront of sustainable development, but usually they have been forced into back seat roles in decision-making realms. This is finally beginning to change as women’s contributions and expertise are acknowledged in halls of power. Increasingly national and international bodies charged with environmental protection concur with the insight voiced at the Second World Water Forum: “The best approach to protecting the world’s ecosystems is ensuring that women are involved. . . .”

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The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), a trade union of poor rural and urban women, has some 500,000 members in the Indian state of Gujarat. Since 1988, SEWA has been organizing Gujarat women to address both water and livelihood issues. Under SEWA’s tutelage, women have learned management and leadership skills to tackle their villages’ water problems. In Barara, women organized the construction of a watershed, catching the rainwater so it would not drain away. In nearby Bakutra, the women of the water committee had underground cement tanks constructed to hold drinking water brought in by trucks, creating the only reliable source of clean water in the village. Freed from the burden of fetching water, many women have set up artisan groups joined in a marketing cooperative that distributes their crafts to shops around the world. (From the Asian Development Bank)