



# Seeds of Change

A Proposal on Education  
For a Sustainable Future



# The Earth Charter

- Values and principles for a sustainable future
- A tool for education on sustainable development

## Preamble

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 recognize 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, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed.

## Principles

### 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.

### ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

- 5 Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
- 6 Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.

- 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 and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

### 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.

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, Biologist



Okinawa, Japan

## Table of Contents

**4** **The Challenge of Global Empowerment:**  
Education for a Sustainable Future  
by Daisaku Ikeda

**10** **“Dialogue with Nature”**  
Photographs

**12** **Case studies from “A Quiet Revolution” educational video**

**16** **Working with the Earth Charter**

**18** **SGI and Human Values**

**19** **SGI and the Earth Charter at the WSSD**

**20** **What You Can Do**

# The Challenge of Global Empowerment:

## Education for a Sustainable Future



Daisaku Ikeda

President  
Soka Gakkai International

### The Need for Change

More than ten years have passed since the holding of the Earth Summit in Brazil, an event that sparked sharply increased awareness of the need to protect the global environment. Since then, the term “sustainable development” has become an integral part of our vocabulary, and on certain fronts progress has been made. Overall, however, the agreements reached in Rio have not been kept and the progress that has been made is not keeping pace with the degradation of Earth’s life systems. It is clear that we cannot permit this situation to continue further into the 21st century.

Resolving this crisis will require the commitment of more knowledge, technology and funds. But what is even more fundamentally lacking in my view are such intangible elements as **a sense of solidarity and common purpose with our fellow inhabitants of Earth, and a real sense of responsibility toward future generations.**

In June of 2002, I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Tommy E. Remengesau Jr., president of the Republic of Palau, an island nation often described as a jewel set in the Pacific Ocean. At that time we discussed the environmental crisis and President Remengesau shared his deep concerns. “Global warming,” he said, “is an extremely serious issue for the people of Palau. Ocean levels have risen and salt water is invading the aquifers. The natural beauty of our islands is threatened. El Niño has caused the rains to fail and the destruction of our coral reefs is progressing. Greatly increased water temperature has caused the coral to turn white and die....” The president also mentioned that Palau is actively engaged in researching and introducing alternative energy sources that reduce greenhouse gases. The times demand this kind of active response—this refusal to be a passive observer or victim of circumstances—not only at the governmental level, but also at the grass-roots level of civil society.

In the film “A Quiet Revolution” which was produced by the Earth Council specifically for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), inspiring examples of such action are presented. These include people’s responses to the problem of

“...education should encourage understanding of the ways that environmental problems intimately connect to our daily lives.”

water resources in Nimi Village in India and to the threat of persistent organic pollutants in Zemplinska Sirava lake in Slovakia, as well as the example of women who have stood up to protect the forests of Kenya. Our organization, Soka Gakkai International (SGI), supporting the objectives of this film, cooperated in its production. This is because we believe that the theme running through the film—that a single person can change the world—is the message of courage and hope most needed in these difficult times.

One of the goals of the WSSD was to adopt a plan of implementation that will serve as the basis for making the 21st century an era of creative coexistence between humans and nature. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had emphasized that the summit would serve as a litmus test for countries' resolve to act.

As part of our efforts to support the WSSD, I offered, in a proposal written earlier in 2002, three suggestions for possible reform of the international system relating to protection of the environment. The first was the appointment of a UN high commissioner for the environment to exercise clear leadership and initiative on global environmental problems. The second was the phased consolidation of the secretariats overseeing the implementation of various environmental treaties, linked to the establishment of a global green fund. The third was the adoption of a convention for the promotion of renewable energy resources.

At the same time, I stressed the need to raise consciousness and change our basic ways of thinking

about the environment. In addition to “top-down” reforms, such as the legal and institutional measures outlined above, any lasting solution will require commensurate “bottom-up” reforms that build and strengthen solidarity at the people's level. These are the two interlinked prerequisites of change on a global scale. In this proposal, I would like to focus on the question of how to forge global popular solidarity toward resolution of the global environmental crisis.

### International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

If people are to take environmental issues as their personal concern, and to harmonize their efforts for our common future, education is vital. Only education can provide the driving force for such a renewal of awareness. For this reason, the SGI put forward the idea of an international decade of education for sustainable development to follow the UN Decade for Human Rights Education from the year 2005. This proposal was included in the plan of implementation adopted in Johannesburg and, in December 2002, it was approved at the UN General Assembly, with UNESCO named as the coordinating agency. The objectives of the decade will be to promote education as the basis for a sustainable human society and to strengthen international cooperation toward the dissemination of environmental information.

The importance of education for sustainable development was clearly stated in the Agenda 21 plan of action adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. At the heart of this

concept—as stressed in the 1997 Thessaloniki Declaration of the International Conference on Environment and Society—is sustainability. In the words of the Declaration: **“The concept of sustainability encompasses not only environment but also poverty, population, health, food security, democracy, human rights and peace.”** Because environmental issues are so deeply interlinked with these other global issues, their resolution requires a fundamental rethinking of our way of life—as individuals, as societies and in terms of human civilization itself.



Save the Children/Dario Minderi

Laxmi Devi, prime minister of a “children's parliament” in Rajasthan, India

In this sense, I believe the decade of education for sustainable development should be promoted with the following three goals in mind:

- To **learn** and deepen awareness of environmental issues and realities.
- To **reflect** on our modes of living, renewing these toward sustainability.
- To **empower** people to take concrete action to resolve the challenges we face.

## To Learn

It is essential to deepen understanding and awareness. Everything starts from grasping basic facts: the amount of the world's forests that have been lost, for example, the degree of pollution of the air, water and soil, and the overall impact on the global ecosystem.



Schoolchildren in Laguna Hule, Costa Rica, enjoy learning about their natural environment.

We also need to understand the causes and social structures driving environmental destruction. And beyond that, **we need to learn to empathetically understand the realities of those who suffer, embracing their pain as our own and conscious of our interconnectedness. Such an effort will give birth to renewed awareness and determination to act.**

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

It is vital to incorporate such efforts particularly into the early years of the school curriculum, the stage of growth when children are most rich in their sensitivity, imagination and creativity, when their desire to learn and absorb is at its height. A number of countries already promote environmental education as an integral part of their school curriculum. To cultivate in children's hearts the desire to treasure nature and protect the Earth is a vital step toward protecting their future.

At the Kansai Soka Junior High School in Japan, students have been participating in experiential learning, filming the Earth from the space shuttle and international space station as part of NASA's "EarthKAM" program. As founder of the school, I have been moved and impressed by the educational impact of the children visually confirming evidence of the global environmental crisis through this process.

For some years, I have called for a World Summit of Educators that would bring together not only those responsible for educational policy in each country, but also those engaged on the front lines of education. The start of the decade of education for sustainable development (2005) would, I feel, be an appropriate time to hold an international conference where educators from throughout the world could exchange ideas, experiences and best practice in this area.

At the same time, it is also important that grassroots movements develop opportunities that encourage a deeper understanding of the global environmental crisis. It was to this end that the SGI organized the exhibition "Toward a Century of Hope: Environment and Development" as an official side event of the Rio Earth Summit. In the United States, SGI-USA has created a traveling exhibition entitled "Ecology and Human Life" and the Soka Gakkai in Japan has developed the "EcoAid" exhibition. These efforts, held in cooperation with other NGOs, seek to contribute to public education and enhance awareness at the grassroots.

## To Reflect

**Together with the provision of accurate information, it is crucial that the ethical values we share are clarified.** This is particularly important in the case of environmental issues, which can be so vast and complex that information and knowledge alone can leave people wondering what this all means to them, and without a clear sense of what concrete steps they can take. To counter such feelings of powerlessness and disconnection, education should encourage understanding of the ways that environmental problems intimately connect to our daily lives. Education must also inspire the faith that each of us has both the power and the responsibility to effect positive change on a global scale.

The Thessaloniki Declaration states: "Sustainability is, in the final analysis, a moral and ethical imperative in which cultural diversity and traditional knowledge need to be respected." We can learn from the rich spiritual heritage and diverse cultural traditions humanity has fostered over history. From these we can gain precious

“The Earth Charter offers a comprehensive overview of the values and principles needed for a sustainable future and as such is an invaluable educational resource.”

lessons and philosophical insights into how best to live as human beings.

The Earth Charter, whose drafting was initiated by the secretary-general of the Rio Earth Summit, Maurice Strong, and Green Cross International President Mikhail Gorbachev, compiles and melds together these many different sources of wisdom. Its four pillars are: 1) respect for all life, 2) ecological integrity, 3) social and economic justice and 4) democracy, nonviolence and peace. The Earth Charter offers a comprehensive overview of the values and principles needed for a sustainable future and as such it is an invaluable educational resource.

In addition to its content, the manner in which this “people’s charter” was drafted is significant. In the drafting process, efforts were made to incorporate the essential wisdom of cultures and traditions from all regions of Earth. The language of the drafts was patiently deliberated by experts as well as by many people at the grassroots. To date, the SGI has held workshops and symposiums around the world in an effort to promote and introduce the Earth Charter principles at the grassroots level. I would hope that many efforts would be made to learn from the Earth Charter, in programs that link its principles to the specific issues of different communities and their schools.

One of the themes of the Kenyan Green Belt Movement is that the desert does not come from the Sahara—it begins in our backyards. Based on a sense of responsibility toward the future, mothers and children involved in the movement have planted and cared for some 20 million trees. I understand that children who have planted trees often enjoy friendly competition, pouring

their love and concern onto the saplings, vying to see whose will grow fastest. Efforts such as this are very significant because it is through such experiences that people—and young people in particular—come to grasp the concrete realities of their community and sharpen their awareness of the global environment.

The founder of the Soka Gakkai, the Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), described the local community as the world in miniature. He stressed the importance of opening children’s eyes to the world through learning rooted in the local community—the place where history, nature and society intersect.

I believe that this kind of cyclical movement—viewing the world from the perspective of the local community, looking at the community through the lens of the world—is vital if we are to develop an ethical understanding and appreciation of nature that is truly rooted in the felt realities of daily life.

### To Empower

Thirdly, people must be empowered with courage and hope if they are to take those first concrete steps. Even if we establish agreed-upon ethics and paradigms of behavior, unless an increasing number of people embody and practice these in their lives, the severe realities we face will not change. In other words, if ethics bear little connection to our individual lives or will, but

are seen as merely a set of guidelines to be passively followed, an obligation imposed from without, they will not enable us to respond robustly to changing circumstances. They will be abandoned in the first crisis.

**It is for this reason that environmental ethics must be felt as a deeply personal vow and pledge, the fulfillment of which provides us with an inexhaustible sense of purpose and joy.**



Thippanum Kerkhant U/NEP/Sill Pictures

I recently engaged in a dialogue, through meetings and correspondence, with the environmental economist and futurist Dr. Hazel Henderson. She has spoken of her own inspiration to act, drawn from her efforts to protect her daughter from the hazards of air pollution. “Most of us who started to work on the ‘Citizens for Clean Air’ campaign were mothers,” she says. “Since we knew what a big

“Nothing is more crucially important today than the kind of humanistic education that enables people to sense the reality of interconnectedness, to appreciate the infinite potential in each person’s life, and to cultivate that dormant human potential to the fullest.”

task bringing children up is, we were anxious for our children to have the best futures possible. Thinking back, I realize that’s what gave us the strength to endure all kinds of persecution and see the fight through to the end.”

To be effective, ethics must be charged with this kind of natural and spontaneous sentiment—the irresistible impulse to act that moves us when we see the people and the world we love exposed to danger. Living ethics such as these are truly integrated into the very fiber of our humanity.

What, then, are the values that can serve to truly unite humanity, to link ordinary citizens in genuine solidarity?



Japanese schoolchildren with the fruits of their school garden.

**At the very heart of the values we seek must be a profound reverence for life itself.** Such a sense of respect and reverence can awaken people to a sense of connection with all the forms of life with whom we presently share this Earth, as well as a sense of oneness with future generations.

This appreciation of the unity and connectedness of life has been a part of many cultural traditions since ancient times; it has been passed on and continues today in many indigenous cultures. It is vital that humanity as a whole humbly attend to this living wisdom. For example the Desana people of the Amazon say that human beings cannot live in isolation and they can only thrive in harmonious coexistence with their environment. The Iroquois people of North America exhort us to make all decisions keeping in view “not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground—the unborn of the future.” In this worldview, all animals and plants are seen as siblings.

### A Contributive Way of Life

This reverence for life is also stressed in many religious traditions. In the Buddhist tradition that inspires the activities of the SGI, we find these words: “May all beings, those who can be seen and those who cannot be seen, those who live far away and

those who live nearby, those who have been born and those still desiring to be born, may all living beings enjoy happiness!”

These words are rooted in the view that all life is interconnected and mutually supporting—a relationship described as “dependent origination” in Buddhism. What is key here is the understanding that the desire for happiness lies at the very heart of our interconnection. It is for this reason the teachings of Buddhism stress our role as the protagonists of positive change. While recognizing the influence that our surroundings have on us, the focus is more on our active and conscious engagement with our environment and with other forms of life. The powerful will that drives this dynamic process of change is the concern and compassion we muster for others.

Through dialogue and engagement, we draw forth and inspire in ourselves and in the lives of others a profound sense of purpose and joy. We begin a process of fundamental change that awakens a vastly expanded sense of identity—our “greater self.” The ultimate objective of SGI’s activities is to bring about—starting with a reformation or “human revolution” in our individual lives—a universal flowering of the philosophy of reverence for life.

In his 1930 book, *The Pedagogy of Value-Creating Education*, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi called for a fundamental transformation in the way people live their lives. He decried a passive, dependent way of life, and declared that even an active, independent way of life is insufficient. Instead he called for a consciously *interactive, interdependent* mode of existence, a life of committed contribution.



A passive and dependent way of life lacks a clearly defined sense of self; we live at the mercy of changing circumstance. An independent mode of living may manifest a clear sense of individual self but lack awareness of the realities and needs of others. **In contrast, a contributive way of life is based on an awareness of the interdependent nature of our lives—of the relationships that link us to others and our environment.** It is a way of life in which we actively strive to realize happiness both for ourselves and for others.

Such a way of life is centered on what we now call empowerment, in particular through the kind of dialogue that unleashes our vast inner potential, inspiring people to work together for the peace and happiness of the entire global community.

Here I am reminded of the words of Aurelio Peccei, cofounder of the Club of Rome, whose report *The Limits to Growth* awakened the world to the environmental crisis. In a dialogue we shared, Dr. Peccei stated: “The gamut of still dormant capacities available in each individual is so great that we can make of them the greatest human resource. It is by grooming and developing these capacities in a way consistent with our new condition in this changed world—and only in this way—that we can again put a modicum of order and harmony in our affairs, including our relations with Nature, and thus move safely ahead.”

Nothing is more crucially important today than the kind of humanistic education that enables people to sense the reality of interconnectedness, to appreciate the

infinite potential in each person's life, and to cultivate that dormant human potential to the fullest.

No matter how complex global challenges may seem, we must remember that it is we ourselves who have given rise to them. It is therefore impossible that they are beyond our power as human beings to resolve. Refocusing on humanity, reforming and opening up the inner capacities of our lives—this kind of individual human revolution can enable effective reform and empowerment on a global scale.

To express my heartfelt wishes for the successful implementation of all the plans agreed at the WSSD, I would like to share these words of my dear late friend, poet laureate of Denmark, Dame Esther Gress.

*If you want to change the world  
you must change man.  
If you want to change man  
you must make him want to change.*

— Esther Gress (1921-2002)

And I would like to offer these words of the renowned Nigerian writer, Ben Okri, from his poem dedicated to the new century.

*You can't remake the world  
Without remaking yourself.  
Each new era begins within.  
It is an inward event,  
With unsuspected possibilities  
For inner liberation.*

— Ben Okri (1959- )



Daisaku Ikeda is a Buddhist philosopher, author and peace builder. Since 1975, he has been President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), an NGO and lay Buddhist association with more than twelve million members in 185 countries and territories. He founded the Soka education system which includes kindergartens in Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Brazil, and universities in Japan and the U.S.A., as well as creating the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century and the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. Mr. Ikeda, a consistent supporter of the Earth Charter, authors annual proposals in which he explores paths to sustainable world peace.



Nepal

The earth-mother had many children  
other than men:  
the stem of the long wild grass  
that developed into a stalk  
of maize, the lofty spruce,  
all the birds of the air, the beasts  
of the plain and forest, the insect and the ant.  
They too had equal rights to life.

— Hopi Legend

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night  
and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of  
the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves  
of leaves and flowers.... I feel my limbs are made glorious

by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is  
from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

—Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941)



Niigata, Japan

# Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement



**“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.”**

In the mid-1970’s biologist Wangari Maathai became concerned about deforestation in her native Kenya.

In Kenya, as in many developing countries, poverty and high population growth have been placing a severe strain on the natural environment. Poor people cut down trees for fuel and clear land to plant crops. As the trees disappear, so do the plant and animal species that depend on them. With no ground cover to hold it,

rainwater runs off and erodes the soil, depleting it of its nutrients. This degradation of the natural environment deepens the cycle of poverty. The consequences are malnutrition, water scarcity, and an increase in contagious diseases.

In 1977, working through her local civil society organization, the National Council of Women in Kenya (NCWK), Wangari Maathai began encouraging rural women to plant trees. The initiative soon developed into a broad-based grassroots movement. Through this Green Belt Movement women are taught to raise and nurture tree seedlings, which they redistribute for planting where they are most needed and for which the Green Belt Movement compensates them. The income earned by the women is used to meet their immediate domestic needs such as their children’s education or is invested in other income-generating ventures.

The organization teaches people about the link between a healthy natural environment and healthy communities, and farmers and villagers also learn about land management practices such as composting, soil conservation and the use of indigenous crops.

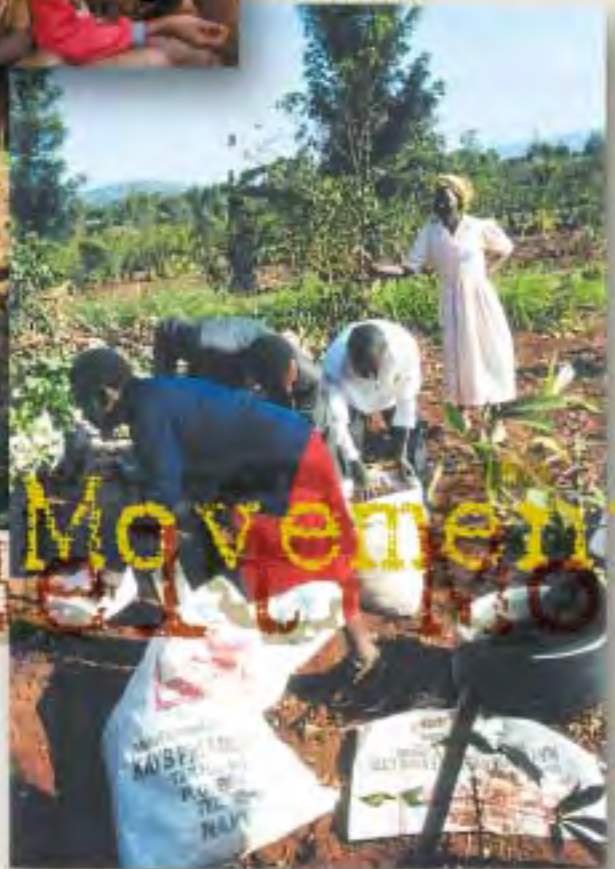
Through this movement, thousands of grassroots women’s groups have been created which promote sustainable development and also take up other social issues. **These women have now planted more than 20 million trees throughout Kenya and established over 6,000 tree nurseries.** More than half-a-million schoolchildren have been taught the values of sustainable living.

The Green Belt Movement is thus 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 have also been replicated by organizations in other countries.

**“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.... Sometimes I tell myself, I may only be 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.”**

**“What began... in Wangari Maathai’s backyard has now spread around the globe...”**



# the Green Belt Movement



"Imagine the power of what we can do"

# Rajendra Singh and the Wisdom of Water Conservation

**“Water is not an ordinary issue. The next world war is not going to be because of your terrorists; you’ll be able to handle them. But the water issue is going to take on catastrophic proportions in the next 10 to 20 years.”**

Seventeen years ago many of the villages in the drought-afflicted state of Rajasthan in India were dying. The wells were dry and crops failed repeatedly. The rain that did fall merely washed away the parched topsoil, doing more harm than good.

With the ecological degradation came social disintegration. Most of the able-bodied villagers migrated to urban centers to look for work. In many villages only women remained. Illiteracy rates in the region were over 80 percent, school attendance was as low as two or three percent.



Rajendra Singh, a representative of the non-governmental organization Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS), came to Rajasthan wanting to do

whatever he could to help the people of this afflicted region. After a period of trying to carry out various types of aid projects, one of the elderly villagers handed him a shovel and some stern advice: “We don’t necessarily want what you want to give us. What we need is water. Stop your talk and build johads!”

Realizing that the wisdom to solve the problems of the village lay with the villagers themselves, Rajendra began to listen more closely to them. Johads are small earthen dams, part of a traditional store of wisdom on resource conservation that had been all but lost under the colonial administration. These dams capture and retain rainwater runoff, allowing it to percolate into the ground and replenish the water table.

Rajendra toiled with his shovel for months to build a johad near the village. After some time, the villagers found that wells that had been dry for years now had water in them. Together with the villagers, Rajendra and the TBS organized an information campaign about this success, and word spread quickly through the region.

To date, villagers in different parts of Rajasthan have built over 4,500 water-harvesting structures. Five of the region’s rivers now flow perennially and the once

parched and barren landscape is green with vegetation, even when the droughts return. Bird and animal life is returning to the area.

The water has brought economic prosperity. **The village of Nimi, for example, could once barely feed itself. Today it is known for the quality of its vegetables, which it exports to India’s large cities.**

Water is also helping to weave the social fabric of the villages back together again. In each village, when a johad is planned, democratic structures are formed to ensure the entire village’s involvement in the sustainable management of natural resources—not only water, but the forests and grazing lands too. Women’s participation in decision-making is ensured and the conservation methods being used are traditional ones that the villagers have revived. The young people are no longer migrating to the cities. Many of those who left have begun returning to their villages. There has also been a dramatic increase in school attendance.

Self-reliance is a key emphasis of this movement. “The most important work is to get rid of the insult that the rural people have been subject to right from the times of the British.” Says Singh, “The minute they respect themselves, they’ll do things on their own.”

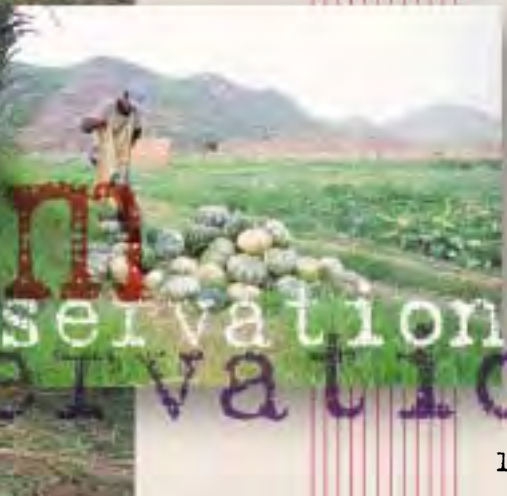
**“... wells that had been dry for years now had water in them.”**



"Water is not an ordinary issue"



the wisdom of water conservation  
water conservation



# The Earth Charter

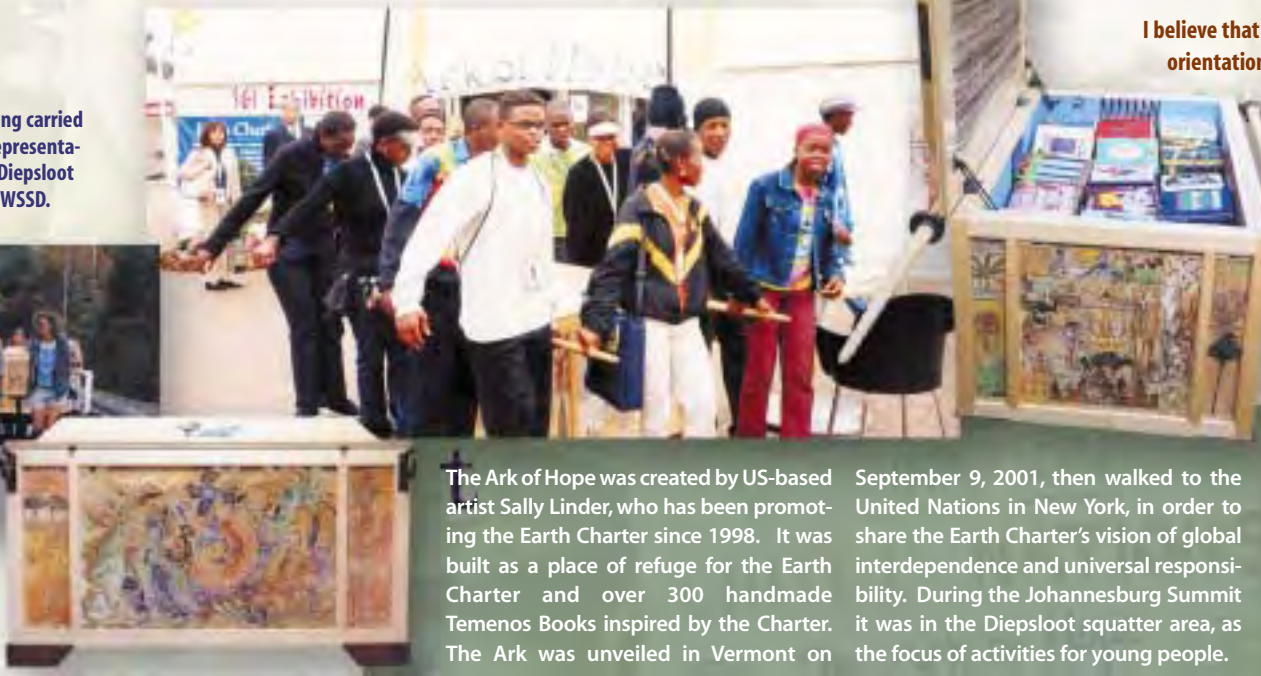
The Earth Charter is a declaration of ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century.

Now translated into over 26 languages, the Earth Charter is gaining widespread support as a tool for education on sustainability, for dialogue and for individual reflection and change.

**I have been an ardent supporter of the Earth Charter since it was launched... Many agree that the Earth Charter is in a way a draft of a world constitution for the future.**

*Dr. Hazel Henderson, environmental economist*

**The Ark being carried by youth representatives from Diepsloot during the WSSD.**



The Ark of Hope was created by US-based artist Sally Linder, who has been promoting the Earth Charter since 1998. It was built as a place of refuge for the Earth Charter and over 300 handmade Temenos Books inspired by the Charter. The Ark was unveiled in Vermont on

September 9, 2001, then walked to the United Nations in New York, in order to share the Earth Charter's vision of global interdependence and universal responsibility. During the Johannesburg Summit it was in the Diepsloot squatter area, as the focus of activities for young people.

**The Earth Charter brings man's ethics into center stage. |**

*Kamla Chowdhry, Earth Charter Commission Co-chair*

It is a "people's document" that was created through a unique, decade-long process of global dialogue and consultation. As such the Charter reflects a new consensus on shared values in the emerging global civil society. So far it has been endorsed by over 6,000 groups and organizations around the world that represent millions of people.

While the Earth Charter is centrally concerned with the environment, it recognizes that environmental protection, human rights, equitable human development and peace are interdependent and indivisible.

The Earth Charter is also the inspiration for a growing global movement supported by youth groups, educators, scientists, faith-based groups, cities, local governments and NGOs. Belonging to no one culture or religion, it can resonate with all, and it brings different groups together with a common aim. The Earth Charter International Secretariat in Costa Rica plays a coordinating role.

**I believe that the Earth Charter gives ethical and moral orientations that will help to strengthen the human spirit. The Earth Charter opens a new phase not only in the ecological movement, but also in the world's public life.**

*Mikhail Gorbachev, Earth Charter Commission Co-chair*



**The Earth Charter Monument in Cuiaba, Brazil.**



**The Ark of Hope, containing the Earth Charter and artists' visions of a hopeful future.**



# The Earth Charter and Education

The Earth Charter is an ideal tool for education on sustainability at different levels and it is already being incorporated into curricula, for example in Brazil, Mexico, Italy and Spain. In the U.S.A., Michigan State University offers a whole course on the Charter. At the WSSD (World Summit on Sustainable Development) in Johannesburg, a new partnership entitled "Educating for Sustainable Living with the Earth Charter" was launched as part of the official outcome of the Summit. 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 organizations promoting sustainable development now support the Earth Charter.

**... it will help us start thinking in a different way, to be more conscious of how the world should be.**

*Italy - Earth Charter Forum, 2002*



Learning about the Earth Charter during the WSSD.

## Youth Support for the Earth Charter at the WSSD

Many statements by youth groups at the WSSD promoted the Charter. The Political Declaration by the Youth Caucus at the Summit states, "An integrated ethical framework of shared values, such as the Earth Charter, must be established to guide us toward the common good and effective implementation of

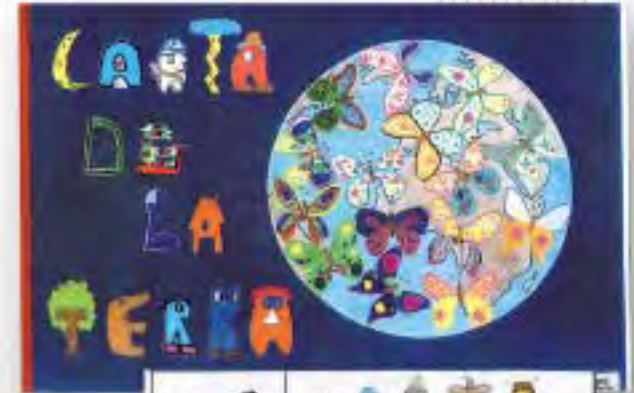
the sustainable development agenda at all levels." The Youth Statement on Governance sent to all Heads of State reads, "We recommend the Earth Charter as a valid ethical framework for this new system of global governance...and demand respect for both cultural and biological diversity."



In Costa Rica, activist and academic Elizabeth Ramirez has been working with rural communities, using the Earth Charter as a tool for education and change. This work has helped strengthen the role of women in the community and resulted in creation of the "Green Defenders," a group of children who are taking action to protect their natural environment. She comments, "When working with single mothers with many children and scarce resources, it is vital to have an ethical support that shows them a new vision of a world in which there are still hopes and ideals."

**... the Earth Charter is a very good idea. Every person on the Earth has great power to change the world.**

*Japan - Soka University seminar, 2001*



Children's artwork inspired by the Earth Charter, from the Balearic Islands, Spain and Toulouse, France.



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

*Singapore - Earth Charter Forum, 2000*

# SGI and Human Values

Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a lay Buddhist association with more than 12 million members in over 185 countries and territories worldwide. The promotion of peace, culture and education is central to SGI's activities. **As a broad-based grassroots movement, SGI's activities typically focus on public education and awareness-raising on issues related to peace, environmental protection and human rights.**

In the field of the environment, local SGI groups in the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and the Philippines have regular reforestation activities and there are smaller SGI tree-planting and litter clean-up projects in many other countries. In 1993, SGI established the Amazon Ecological Research Center in Brazil. As well as reforestation programs, the center carries out research into sustainable development initiatives such as native crop cultivation.



In addition, SGI has supported the Earth Charter Initiative since 1997. Working with other NGOs, SGI groups in 20 countries from Malaysia to Italy are actively promoting the Earth Charter as a vital statement of human values. The Earth Charter's message resonates with the Buddhist view of the preciousness and interconnectedness of all life.

The SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century held consultations on the Earth Charter in late 1997. SGI-USA has held numerous local meetings to discuss and promote the Charter and participated in many of the annual Earth Charter Community Summits held across the USA.

In Asia, SGI and the Earth Council coordinated a seven-country "Earth Charter Asia Tour" to promote the Charter in early 2000, involving seminars, exhibitions, youth forums and practical projects such as recycling.

Conservation and education activities at the Amazon Ecological Research Center, Brazil.



The Soka University Earth Charter Group sets off on a "First Steps" Litter Clean-up, January 1, 2000.



An Earth Charter Youth Forum organized by SGI-Italy.

An SGI-Malaysia Earth Charter exhibition.



Ongoing grassroots activities include community-level Earth Charter seminars in New Zealand, and forums linked with peace education in Belgium and human rights issues in Italy.

SGI President Ikeda has said: "The Earth Charter is not 'just' about the environment. It is broad, encompassing respect for all living beings, the eradication of poverty, the need for justice, and building a culture of peace. The Earth Charter is actually about values, the kind of values we as human beings need to cultivate in order to make our continued existence sustainable. It may be considered a guideline for humanity in the 21st century."

not 'just' about the environment ...

# SGL and the Earth Charter at the WSSD

SGL participated in the WSSD in 2002 to promote education for sustainable development and the Earth Charter.

In Johannesburg, SGL became a founding member of a partnership promoting education for sustainable development entitled "Educating for Sustainable Living with the Earth Charter". This Type II partnership is an official outcome of the Summit. Members include the governments of Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico and Niger, UNESCO, and 18 NGOs including Green Cross International, GEA Japan, and LEAD International.

"Educating for Sustainability with the Earth Charter" was the title of a seminar held during the summit, organized jointly by SGL, the Earth Charter Initiative and the Center for Respect of Life and the Environment (CRLE) which highlighted the Earth Charter as an educational tool and promoted the proposed UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

SGL also cosponsored an exhibition with the Earth Council entitled "A Quiet Revolution: the Earth Charter and Human Potential" which was seen by over 15,000 people.

The documentary film "A Quiet Revolution," produced by the Earth Council and SGL in collaboration with UNEP and UNDP, was given a special launch by the WSSD Jozi Film Festival and shown in rural community centers.

In addition, SGL donated 75 trees to the Soweto Mountain of Hope and joined with Earth Charter representatives to help plant them.

from the visitors' book at the exhibition:

"A TRUE display of a vision for a sustainable world!"



At the exhibition "A Quiet Revolution: the Earth Charter and Human Potential."

Schoolchildren outside the exhibition tent.



Zanele Mbeki, wife of South African President Thabo Mbeki, visits the exhibition.

The seminar on the Earth Charter and education.



## UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development from 2005

Following the WSSD, a resolution was passed at the UN General Assembly in December 2002, designating the ten-year period beginning January 1, 2005 as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. This resolution was put forward by the Japanese Government with support from 46 other countries. UNESCO was named as the lead agency and requested to draw up an implementation plan and guide governments as to how to promote education for sustainable development in their respective national education plans.

The idea for the Decade originated from Soka Gakkai in Japan. It was proposed to a Japanese NGO forum and then taken up by the Japanese Government who put it forward at WSSD preparatory meetings during 2002.

## What You Can Do

### Earth Charter

For further information and resources about the Earth Charter, and different language versions, go to [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org). The Earth Charter Initiative's International Secretariat is at The Earth Council, PO Box 319-6100, San José, Costa Rica.  
Tel: +506-205-1600  
Fax: +506-249-3500  
E mail: [info@earthcharter.org](mailto:info@earthcharter.org)

The International Youth Earth Charter Coalition is a new initiative linking young people who are committed to being local promoters of the Earth Charter. See [www.earthcharter.org/youth/](http://www.earthcharter.org/youth/)

For information about the Earth Charter and education, contact Brendan Mackey, chair of the education advisory committee, via [info@earthcharter.org](mailto:info@earthcharter.org)

### UNESCO

*Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future* is a multimedia

teacher education program published by UNESCO. It consists of 25 modules featuring around 100 hours of highly interactive activities. Copies are available on the Internet at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/> or as a free CD-ROM from UNESCO.

### SGI

To find out more about Soka Gakkai International, and for local contact details, go to [www.sgi.org](http://www.sgi.org) or contact SGI at 15-3 Samon cho, Shinjuku ku, Tokyo 160 0017, Japan.  
Tel: +81-3-5360-9831  
Fax: +81-3-5360-9885.



## A Quiet Revolution


The Earth Council, in collaboration with UNDP, UNEP and SGI, has produced "A Quiet Revolution," an educational video which combines coverage of key environmental challenges facing humanity with inspiring case studies of individuals in Kenya (the Green Belt Movement and Earth Charter Commissioner Wangari Maathai, see pages 12 and 13), India (see pages 14 and 15) and Slovakia who have taken action for change. The 25-minute film, which has received international acclaim, is available on video at a nominal cost from (fax) +1 949 459 1808, e-mail [classcom@earthlink.net](mailto:classcom@earthlink.net)



Soka Gakkai  
International



Earth Charter  
Initiative

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