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COCHABAMBA, Bolivia — Dr. William Baker scanned the barren hills and parched valley floor that surround the environmental research institute he has founded here on the eastern incline of the Andes Mountains and declared that some day this landscape will be wet and green again.

"It's a desolate countryside now," said the 66-year-old former biochemist. "But according to folklore it used to rain here from September to April. I think you could get back to that with a little planning. It might take two or three generations, but a desert can be recovered."

Hiking on up the gully behind his small research station here, Dr. Baker pointed to a series of small dirt and rock catchment dams.

"They really cost nothing — just a day's work to make," he said. "But if you build enough of them, you can slow down the runoff when it does rain, and force it into the soil. Over time, I believe, you could raise the water table, and bring back the forests that once stood here. If you did that over enough of Bolivia, you could literally transform the climate."

Such a vast transformation is certainly not something Dr. Baker expects to see in his lifetime. But that kind of long range vision is integral to the philosophy and approach of the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center, of which Dr. Baker is founder and director.

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In the village of Cori Pata, high on the Bolivian altiplano, a group of Aymara Indians pose for a photo in a solar-heated greenhouse that they built with assistance from the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center.



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# Toward a New World Order

With a swiftness that only our modern communications can engender, the expression "new world order" has suddenly entered into the world's popular lexicon.

World leaders, journalists, and academics have embraced the phrase, and, although its meaning has yet to be fully defined, it is clear that the term has come to frame the discussion over how the next stage of our planet's collective political life might be organized.

The need for such a discussion is clear. Changes in Eastern Europe, turmoil in the Soviet Union, the crisis in the Middle East, and wide-ranging struggles and reforms elsewhere have made it clear that the "old world order" is crumbling.

For Bahá'ís, the term "new world order" has a special and clear-cut meaning. More than 100 years ago, Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith used the phrase to describe a coming series of momentous changes and developments in the political, social and religious life of the world. These changes, He said, would ultimately transform the world into a unified and peaceful global commonwealth.

"The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective," wrote Bahá'u'lláh. "Soon will the present day Order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead."

The "new world order" envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh would rely on collective security among the nations as the chief means for establishing world peace. More than a prescription for the world's political reorganization, however, Bahá'u'lláh's vision encompassed the full range of humanity's social, economic, and spiritual needs. Its foundation, He said, would be built on the principles of unity and justice.

In 1936, this vision was summarized by Shoghi Effendi, who led the Bahá'í Faith from 1921 to 1957 and laid the foundations for the election of the international council, designed by Bahá'u'lláh, that now

guides the Bahá'í world. As the current discussion over the shape and form of a new world order unfolds, his summary of Bahá'u'lláh's vision gains new relevance.

"The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded.

"This world commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all

## Perspective

**"The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded."**

races and peoples.

"A world executive, backed by an international force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and  
(Continued next page)



any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system...."

Shoghi Effendi said such a new world order called for the creation of a "mechanism of world inter-communication." An international language, an international currency and a world system of measurement would also need to be adopted to "simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind."

"In such a world society," Shoghi Effendi continued, "science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will cooperate, and will harmoniously develop. The press will, under such a system, while giving full scope to the expression of the diversified views and convictions of mankind, cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests, whether private or public, and will be liberated from the influence of contending governments and peoples."

"The economic resources of the world will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated."

The Bahá'í view of a new world order calls for the end of prejudice and a firm commitment to economic justice. Shoghi Effendi described it this way:

"National rivalries, hatreds, and intrigues will cease, and racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity,

understanding and cooperation. The causes of religious strife will be permanently removed, economic barriers and restrictions will be completely abolished, and the inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated. Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear.

"The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race."

In the Bahá'í writings, this vision is outlined not only as a hope or an appeal; rather, it is seen in terms of an inevitable process of history, part of a divinely ordained plan.

Whatever the outcome of the conflicts and revolutions that currently rage across the globe, Bahá'ís are confident that humanity will ultimately create the kind of new world order described by Bahá'u'lláh. With every passing day it becomes more obvious that there is no other choice.☪



In Apia, Western Samoa, the Bahá'í community participated in the national Women's Day parade on 17 November 1990. The sign on the float read: "The Equality of Men and Women."



S.C. Khanna, principal of the Rabbání School near Gwalior, India, stands before the school's main administration building, which was once a hunting lodge for a local prince, the Maharaja Scindia.



## Rabbání School: offering quality educational opportunities for rural youth

**“We believe that a school should be much more than four walls and some buildings. The school is part of the larger society and it must respond to the needs of that society.”— Major S.C. Khanna**

SUSERA, Madhya Pradesh, India—In 1969, local bandits kidnapped two students from the Rabbání School, a Bahá’í-operated boarding school located in this small village 15 kilometers north of Gwalior, a major north-central Indian city. The bandits, known in this region as dacoits, demanded a ransom for the safe return of the children.

Within a short time, however, the dacoits returned the students to the school without a payment.

“They had thought that because we are a boarding school, we had only rich students, and that they could get a good ransom,” said Major S. C. Khanna, the principal of the school. “But when they learned that the school was mostly for poor villagers, they released the children without money.”

The incident reflects an important distinction between Rabbání and other boarding schools in Madhya Pradesh State: it was then and still is the only such school in the region dedicated to giving impoverished young boys the opportunity to receive the kind of education normally available only to India’s middle and upper classes.

Through a novel outreach and scholarship program, about 75 percent of Rabbání’s

students come from poor rural villages within a 30 km radius of the school. Most would otherwise have no chance for a boarding school education.

“Our courses start with the sixth grade, but most of the children who come here have barely passed the third grade,” said Major Khanna, who headed the Indian Military Academy’s department of languages before coming to Rabbání in 1986. “These children would not be admitted to any other boarding school.”

Despite the poor start that many of Rabbání’s students had before admission, its students last year received the best overall score on the government-run final exams for 10th graders in all of Madhya Pradesh State. “One hundred percent of our 10th graders passed,” said Major Khanna. “On the average, only 45 percent of students at other schools in Madhya Pradesh State passed.”

“Rabbání is one of the best schools in Madhya Pradesh,” said Mr. J.S. Giakwad, who is the assistant inspector of schools for the state district that encompasses Rabbání and other schools in the Gwalior area. “What is also impressive is that the students at



Rabbáni come from the rural area, and the students at some of our other top private schools are from upper class families."

### Community Involvement

The school's effectiveness, said Major Khanna and others, stems in part from its philosophy of community involvement, which brings home to students the practical side of their class work.

"We believe that a school should be much more than four walls and some buildings," said Major Khanna. "The school is part of the larger society and it must respond to the needs of that society. That calls for a very close interaction between the school and the community. As Bahá'ís, we believe that service to society is the highest goal. At Rabbáni, we believe that children must come to understand the importance of service when they are young so that they grow up as caring human beings who put service to their fellow man as the highest priority in life."

This philosophy is manifested by the school's development outreach program. Some 20 nearby villages have been "adopted" by the school, and students are expected to spend part of their time doing development work in those villages. These development efforts include tree-planting projects, the promotion of fuel-efficient, smokeless stoves, and participation in a range of health and hygiene programs. The school also serves as a training and administrative support center for a series of locally run village tutorial schools in the area. It also offers technical training in soil reclamation and agriculture for area farmers.

"When it is time for forestry work, which is during the monsoon season, the children take seedlings from the school tree nursery and go out to help villagers plant trees," said Mr. O.P. Chaurasia, head of Rabbáni's Department of Social and Economic Development. "When the government health department begins a program of inoculations, we have our students go out to the villages and identify children who need inoculations. Their names and addresses are then organized for the government health people."

Mr. Giakwad, the local assistant school inspector, said it is quite unusual for a school to be so involved in community development. "Certainly in the Gwalior District, Rabbáni is the only school doing

social and economic development projects."

### National Environment Award

For its work in tree-planting and land reclamation, the Rabbáni School received an award from the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1986. Established in memory of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the Indira Priyadarshin Vrikshamitra Award was shared that year with 20 other organizations and individuals who had contributed significantly to the conservation of India's environment. The award citation called Rabbáni School's tree-planting program a "heart-warming example of a school contributing to social forestry."

"Led by teachers, students march in groups, armed with saplings, to nearby villages every Saturday in season and undertake tree plantation," the award citation reads. "The children have been instrumental in persuading parents and village elders to plant trees on their private land. Thousands of trees have already been planted through the catalytic action of the school...." Since 1985, students have planted 250,000 trees.

In a related project, Rabbáni's students have been responsible for promoting the construction of smokeless stoves among the 20 adopted villages. Special stovepipes are obtained from a local energy corporation that is subsidized by the Indian government. The pipes are then distributed by Rabbáni students to villagers at a fraction of their cost. Students also show the villagers



Rabbáni's poultry manager, Santosh Kumar Skdixit, and three students examine a chicken. Shown, left to right, are: Yogesh Barot, Ved Narayan, Mr. Skdixit, and Ram Kumar Chandhry.





***"Rabbání is one of the leading non-governmental organizations in the distribution of smokeless stoves here."***  
**— Sanjeev Madan**

how to incorporate the pipes in the construction of an improved cooking stove, which is about 30 percent more efficient than traditional designs.

Mr. Sanjeev Madan, executive engineer for the Madhya Pradesh Energy Development Corporation, which distributes the stove pipes at the state level, said Rabbání had been a major contributor to the program's success in Gwalior, distributing more than 1000 stoves. "Rabbání is one of the leading non-governmental organizations in the distribution of smokeless stoves here," said Mr. Madan.

The participation of students in local development projects is only one component of the Rabbání School's curriculum. The academic program is rigorous, as the state test scores indicate. Another distinctive aspect of Rabbání's program is its emphasis on moral education.

"One-fourth of our students come from the lowest castes — the so-called 'untouchables,'" said Major Khanna. "At first, some of the students from higher castes refused to sit with the low-caste students. But we are very firm about the importance of everyone treating each other equally. And once they have spent some time in school here, because of our atmosphere of acceptance and the moral curriculum, their prejudices fade."

Students confirmed that observation. "Some students here are from an untouchable background, but we are all friends and

everyone treats them well," said Ued Narayan Gachhadav, a 12th grade student from Nepal.

About 20 percent of the students are Bahá'ís—reflecting a similar percentage of Bahá'ís in area villages.

"But we do not make a distinction between students who are Bahá'ís and those of other faiths," said Major Khanna. "Our moral curriculum draws much from the Bahá'í teachings, but it also covers the history and teachings of all religions."

Last year, the school had 275 students. Although most Bahá'í schools place a strong emphasis on educating both sexes, Rabbání is open only to boys. "In India, the people in the villages will not accept the idea of a boarding school with both boys and girls," said Major Khanna.

The school's curriculum also emphasizes vocational education. Every student receives training in agriculture and animal husbandry. As with the development outreach, the stress is on learning by doing. Students spend a certain amount of time in the fields and with the animals. Much of the school's 72 acres is under tillage; two buildings are devoted to poultry and egg production, and a cattle barn is planned.

The result is not only a degree of practical understanding, but a measure of self-sufficiency for the school itself. The school's annual operating budget is about 1.7 million rupees — about US\$100,000. Of that, Mr. Major Khanna said, about 110,000 rupees, or US\$6500, comes from the sale of the school's agricultural surplus.

"In rice and mustard oil, we are not only self-supporting, but we have a surplus," said Major Khanna. "We are producing 40 percent of our own requirements for wheat. We are also self-sufficient in vegetables. Between what we grow and sell, and tuition fees, we are almost self-supporting."

Officially, the tuition is 4500 rupees per year per student — which is still below the average tuition for other boarding schools in the region.

"Sometimes we waive the tuition fee entirely," said Major Khanna. "But for the most part, we insist that students' parents pay something — and maybe with a little bit of a pinch—because we believe that there must be an element of sacrifice on the part of the families who send their children here for this education to be meaningful." ☉

Rabbání School has three new dormitory buildings.







Tej P.S. Kusewah, a former Rabbání graduate himself, runs a private tutorial school for primary age children in a the village of Radrapura, near the Rabbání School. The classes are held in a borrowed workshop.

## Rabbání's development outreach program touches nearby villages

RUDRAPURA VILLAGE, Madhya Pradesh, India—The impact of the Rabbání School's social and economic development outreach program can be seen throughout this and other small communities that have been "adopted" by the school.

In this village, two kilometers south of the Rabbání campus, Tej P.S. Kusewah, a former Rabbání graduate himself, runs a private tutorial school for primary age children. Although Mr. Kusewah must borrow space in a small workshop for a classroom, it's still an improvement over the village's government-run school.

Located a hundred meters away, the government school is simply three walls and a roof. It appears to double as an animal stall; its floor is littered with straw and detritus, and flies swarm about the unwhite-washed walls.

"It is not a good place to study," said Mr. Kusewah. "People are not satisfied with it. That is why they pay the extra money to send the children to this school."

Mr. Kusewah charges 10 rupees per student per month for three and a half hours of daily instruction—about 60 cents a month in US dollars.

"I was very pleased with what I learned at Rabbání School, so I'm giving it to the children here, so that they will be very happy," said Mr. Kusewah.

Mr. Kusewah's school is one of 14 self-

sufficient tutorial schools now operating in nearby villages. Although most are now run by local Bahá'í administrative school committees, the impetus for their establishment—and the training for their teachers—was a project of Rabbání's social and economic development program.

Nearby to Mr. Kusewah's workshop-classroom, Siyaran Kushwah and his wife, Ram Ratiwai, run another tutorial school—and a small tree nursery. Both were established with technical training and assistance from Rabbání School.

Mrs. Ratiwai, for example, received teacher training at Rabbání three years ago and now has about 40 students. Her classroom is her front yard, under a large tree.

Mr. Kushwah used to work as a farm laborer and wood-seller, but he now finds that the income from his nursery, plus his wife's earnings from teaching, is adequate.

"Previously, I was working very hard, but not making very much money," said Mr. Kushwah. "But nowadays, the physical labor is less and the work more satisfying."

In Naryan Colony, another nearby village, the results of Rabbání's tree-planting and fuel efficient stove program can be seen. Most of the village's 100 or so modest thatched roof homes now have five or six trees surrounding them, providing a measure of cooling shade. Many of the homes

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# Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center focuses on problems of the Bolivian altiplano

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The Center is devoted to exploring the ways that appropriate technologies — and appropriate education — can be applied to improve the lives of the native Aymara and Quechua peoples who eke out a living on the harsh Bolivian altiplano.

Currently, for example, the Center has adapted the design for a solar-heated greenhouse to grow vegetables and fruits inexpensively at high altitudes. About 30 communities are using the design and more than 120 have been built.

Other efforts of the Center focus on developing and promoting reforestation and soil conservation techniques suitable for the altiplano, and on designing an inexpensive biogas generator that will work despite the region's temperature extremes.

The Center is more than simply a research station, however. Through a program of outreach and education, it brings these technologies directly to those communities it attempts to serve. For example, the Center sponsors a program of rural environmental study classes for adults and pre-school classes for children. These classes have been important in helping communities adopt new technologies.

"In our classes, we ask people to search out the truth on their own, and then to impose it themselves," Dr. Baker added. "We don't believe in trying to impose the truth on them. In this way, the individual develops. And when the individuals in a community develop, the community can

determine its own development path."

## Challenges of the Altiplano

The climate and conditions of the altiplano pose distinct challenges. Bolivia is the poorest country in Latin America, in part because of its geography and climate. The altitude of the Andean high plateau varies from 3000 to 4000 meters. The region receives little rainfall, and is subject to a wide range of temperature extremes, dropping to near freezing at night but climbing to 20°C during the day. In effect, the altiplano is a desert in the mountains.

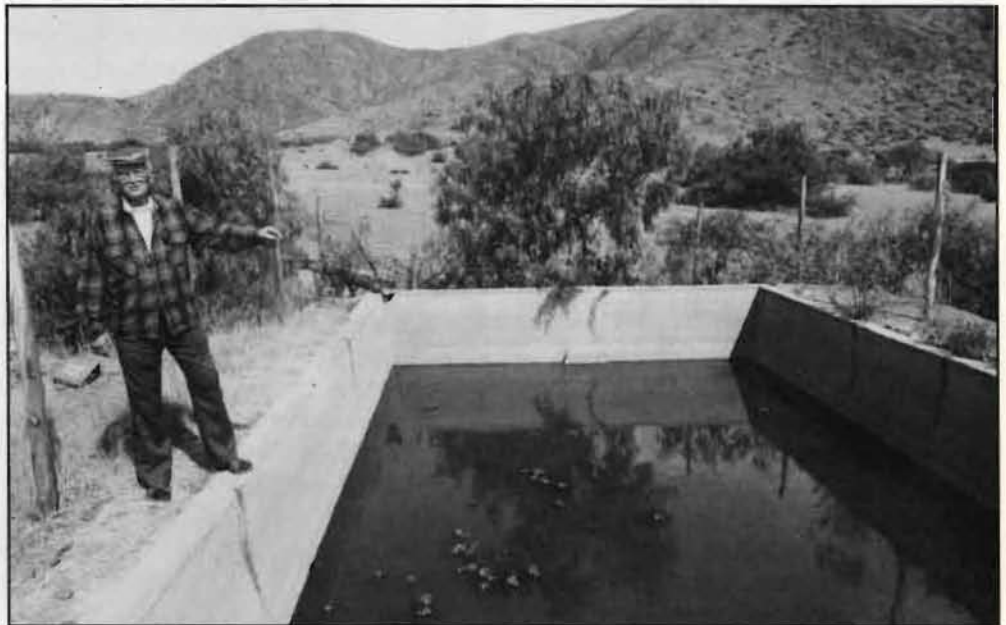
Yet the majority of Bolivia's population lives on this high, dry plain, many subsisting primarily on a diet of potatoes and indigenous grains, like *cañawi* and quinoa. Sheep and llamas are among the few animals that can subsist on the sparse grasses that grow on the altiplano, and they provide some meat, wool, and milk.

Some 70 percent of the population is indigenous, primarily of the Aymara and Quechua peoples. Although literacy is about 75 percent, many people are nevertheless functionally illiterate — able to read Spanish words but often without understanding their meaning.

It is these conditions that the Center specifically attempts to address. The solar greenhouses, Dr. Baker said, were designed to improve the diet of the people living in remote, high altitude communities.

"It is virtually impossible to grow vegetables and fruits in the open on the altiplano," said Dr. Baker. "So, of course, the

Dr. William Baker, founder and director of the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center, stands over an experimental fish pond at the Center's main research lot on the outskirts of Cochabamba, Bolivia. Among other projects, the Center is exploring the feasibility of growing carp in ponds on the altiplano to improve the available dietary protein. Extending up the hill behind Dr. Baker is a system of small dams that divert water into the pond, serving as a demonstration of erosion-control methods.







This illustration appears in instructional materials created by the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center. It depicts a solar-heated greenhouse and, in the caption below, gives the recipe for a successful soil mixture. The cartoon figure at left says: "...the soil is ready in our greenhouse."

predominant diet there is poor in the vitamins, minerals and oils that vegetables and fruits can provide."

### Greenhouse Design is Simple

The Center developed an inexpensive design that can be easily constructed and maintained by a single family, the basic social unit on the altiplano. On a foundation of adobe bricks, plastic piping is used to create a simple framework on which clear polyethylene plastic can be draped.

Within these greenhouses, it becomes hot and humid enough to grow a wide range of vegetables, including tomatoes, squash, onions, radishes and lettuce.

The Center provides training in constructing the greenhouses, and provides the materials. Individual families are asked to pay 75 percent of the cost of the plastic tubing and sheeting.

"The average annual income for a family in this area is about US\$150," said Dr. Baker. "We estimate that the value of the production of a solar greenhouse for one year represents about US\$125, although only a small part of this production is sold — most is consumed by the family. The actual cost of the materials, however, is only about US\$25. So the economic benefits of this program can be significant for a family."

In the same way, the center is researching techniques of afforestation, water management and biogas that are appropriate to the altiplano. The soil conditions and climate are especially hard on tree seedlings. One recent attempt by another organization to plant 7000 eucalyptus

and queshuara trees failed — only 10 trees survived the first year because the soil was not properly prepared.

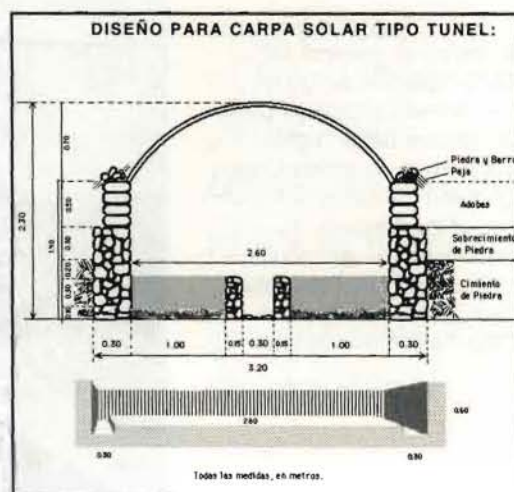
Dr. Baker believes the survival rate for trees can be much higher. Currently, the Center works with 12 communities to start and maintain small-scale forestation projects. In the community of Cori Pata, for example, about 3000 queshuara trees have been planted over the last two years. Queshuara, good for windbreaks and firewood, grow well at high altitudes.

### A Regional Training Center

At first glance, the Center's main research station is not much to behold. Headquartered on a 3/4 acre lot on the outskirts of Cochabamba, it consists of several roughly finished adobe buildings with galvanized iron roofs, a fish pond and cistern, and a number of small demonstration plots.

But the site and its infrastructure are entirely adequate for exploring the kind of appropriate technologies that the Center aims to develop and promote.

"A lot of other organizations promote solar greenhouses that are more efficient and productive than ours, but they tend to cost a lot more — in the range of US\$3000 to US\$4000 — and they require the involvement of an entire community," Dr. Baker said. "Unfortunately, families here have only US\$50 or



A schematic diagram of the solar greenhouse design used by the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center.



US\$60 that they can invest in such a project. So we're trying to develop designs and technologies that cost about that much.

George Scharffenberger, president of the U.S.-based Food Industry Crusade Against Hunger (FICAH), an organization which has provided a \$25,000 grant to the Baker Center each year for the last three years, said the Center's willingness to let communities experiment and take charge for themselves was genuine.

"Other organizations are building greenhouses which are a little sturdier and more productive," said Scharffenberger, who visited the Baker Center and four other similar organizations in Bolivia and Peru last year. "But I don't think there is the same sense of ownership on the part of the communities

themselves. In some Baker Center greenhouses, there is an absolute explosion of creativity in terms of what is being grown.

"In one greenhouse, it was snowing outside and they were growing bananas inside. My guess is that they were producing less because of that, but it was clearly their greenhouse. In terms of basic community development, I was very impressed."

Dr. Baker believes community involvement is key to successfully introducing new ideas on the altiplano. Equally important, he said, is to show the potential for results.

At the Cochabamba site, for example, a number of small demonstration plots show the advantage of using composting and mulches in agriculture. A fish pond, designed to show how carp can be grown in a closed system that relies on animal manure for its nutrient input, has also been built.

Of several solar greenhouses, one has been built as part of a traditional two-room adobe home. With this design, Dr. Baker said, he hopes to show how such greenhouses can provide not only vegetables, but a modest amount of solar heating in the family living space.

As noted, a water management and erosion control system of small dams extends up a gully behind the research lot. This system funnels water into the fish pond and into a cistern, demonstrating how the sparse rainfall in the region can be easily collected and used.

"These are pretty obvious erosion-control ideas," Dr. Baker said of the system of dams. "But people on the altiplano aren't willing to put the time into something unless they have a pretty good idea that it is going to work. And I don't blame them. Up here they scratch out a living from nothing. To put a major investment of time into something, they have to see a result in advance."

Dr. Baker believes that when communities on the altiplano are given both the technological and organizational tools to take control of their own development, the transformation of Bolivia is possible.

*(Continued on page 14)*



At the main research lot for the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center, Dr. William Baker, right, stands with caretaker Gregoir Cruz and his family in front of one of the Center's demonstration greenhouses. Left to right are: Mrs. Julia Cruz, baby Midi, Santosa, Mr. Cruz, Gavino and Dr. Baker.







Primo Pacsi, center, stands behind the children of his pre-school class in Laku Lakuni.

LAKU LAKUNI, Bolivia — Life is hard in this small community of Aymara people on the Bolivian altiplano, where the climate supports only the hardiest of crops and the soil is so poor that the farmland must be rotated on a 12-year schedule.

"My life makes me sad because every year we cultivate a little higher and higher on the mountain," said Primo Pacsi, a 34-year-old farmer. "We plant higher and higher, and it is colder and colder. And only two things grow — potatoes and cañawi." Cañawi is an indigenous seed crop.

Mr. Pacsi says he now has more hope for the future — especially for his children.

With the help of the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center, he has built a solar-heated greenhouse near their two-room adobe home. Mr. Pacsi has also received teacher training from the Baker Center, and he now conducts daily pre-school classes for the children here.

Both developments have brought changes for his family and his community. About 20 families have built greenhouses.

"We really like the greenhouse," Mr. Pacsi said. "Without it, we could not have vegetables — we don't have the money to buy them. But with the greenhouse we can have vegetables. Now we can have omelets with tomatoes and onions."

"My little boy didn't even know vegetables existed," Mr. Pacsi added. "Now he picks the tomatoes off the plant and eats them right in the greenhouse. Now he

knows you have to plant seed and nurture it and the fruit comes up that we like."

The pre-school program, Mr. Pacsi said, offers a different kind of sustenance. He has taught for three years now. About 20 children attend regularly.

#### Children Learn Faster

"There is a difference between the students who have been to pre-school and those who start the government primary school directly," Mr. Pacsi said. "The ones who have gone to pre-school can immediately understand the teacher. The teacher has noticed that the ones who have been to pre-school initially learn much faster."

"At first, the children were afraid," he said. "They didn't want to be in a group. But now they love to come and sing together."

Mr. Pacsi attributes the changes in part to the Bahá'í Faith. Of the 500 people in Laku Lakuni, about 10 are Bahá'ís — including himself. In recent decades, the Bahá'í Faith has grown rapidly in Bolivia. Now about 100,000 Bolivians are Bahá'ís; most live on the altiplano.

"The Bahá'í Faith teaches that we must educate our children and that we must cooperate and work together," he said.

"I don't want the same things to happen to my children as happened in my life," he added. "I think with more education than I have had, they can live a more fruitful life. They will produce more and will have more comfort and more understanding. They will be more alert and more awake." ☉

High in the Andes, greenhouses and pre-schools bring important changes

***"My little boy didn't even know vegetables existed. Now he picks the tomatoes off the plant and eats them right in the greenhouse." — Primo Pacsi***



# Bahá'í educational activities up sharply worldwide

## Overall education projects increase by 26 percent since 1988

**"The increase in educational activities can be attributed in part to the response of Bahá'í communities to the declaration by the United Nations of 1990 as International Literacy Year."**

BONN, Germany — The involvement of Bahá'í communities in educational activities has risen dramatically around the world over the last two years, according to a report presented in February at a meeting of the International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL) here.

Overall, the number of on-going Bahá'í educational efforts, both formal and non-formal, increased by 26 percent since 1988, from 602 to 759. These activities cover a wide range of projects and programs, from village-level tutorial schools and literacy classes to full-fledged boarding schools and vocational programs.

"The increase in educational activities can be attributed in part to the response of Bahá'í communities to the declaration by the United Nations of 1990 as International Literacy Year," said Daniel Wegener, the Bahá'í International Community representative to the ITFL "But, for the most part, the increase simply reflects the influence

on a very rapidly expanding Bahá'í community of the Faith's emphasis on the importance of education."

According to the report, there are now 62 formal Bahá'í educational institutions — which encompass established primary, secondary and tertiary schools. These institutions range from the New Era High School in Panchgani, India, an international boarding school established in 1947 with more than 900 students and a curriculum from primary through grade 12, to El Nuevo Jardin, a primary school in Barahona, Dominican Republic, with 300 students that was started in the mid-1980s.

Non-formal educational projects and programs, which include tutorial schools, literacy learning centers, and pre-schools increased by 22 percent, from 573 to 697, between 1988 and 1990.

### Stirrings at the Grassroots

"These kinds of non-formal projects emanate primarily from the natural stirrings of communities at the grassroots level," said Mr. Wegener, who presented the report to the ITFL, of which the Bahá'í International Community is a member.

"Pre-schools, kindergartens, tutorial

The Charles Wolcott Tutorial School in Ferme Takira, Chad, is one of a number of informal village schools organized by the Bahá'í Regional Social Development Committee of Sarh. Such non-formal educational activities by Bahá'í communities were up by 22 percent between 1988 and 1990.







Left: United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, left, receives a book of letters and messages from newly literate people around the world in a "Book Voyage" ceremony at the U.N. headquarters in New York on 10 December 1990. With him are Daniel Wegener, center, a representative of the Bahá'í International Community, and Magdalene Gathoni of Kenya, right, who represented literacy learners worldwide at the event. Mr. Wegener was chairman of the "Book Voyage" planning committee. The project sent a symbolic "book" around the world to collect messages from the newly literate about their experiences with reading and writing. The Book Voyage was a project of the International Task Force on Literacy, of which the Bahá'í International Community is a member.

schools, and moral education classes have been created in a large number of communities in response to local needs and concerns," Mr. Wegener said. "Teachers in these programs are often volunteers or paid with in-kind contributions. Yet these projects nevertheless reflect a substantial commitment to the concept of education for all."

The report gave several specific examples of such projects.

- In India, a program that established literacy learning centers in villages near Panchgani expanded from 30 centers in 1984 to 100 centers in 60 villages in 1989.

- In Kenya, a series of booklets for mothers to teach health, agriculture, moral and domestic skills has been produced and distributed widely to Bahá'í communities to use in literacy training. The booklets are being translated into 26 languages.

- In Zaire, since 1987, 2500 students have completed literacy courses offered by the Bahá'í community. One aspect of the project served the Bayandas of north-eastern Zaire, a people more commonly known as "Pygmies," and who had previously received little or no formal education.

In addition to ongoing projects, the report listed a number of specific events

and short term projects offered in support of the International Literacy Year. Those projects included:

- In Panama, the Bahá'í community held a two-day seminar on literacy in collaboration with the Panamanian Ministry of Education on 23-24 April 1990.

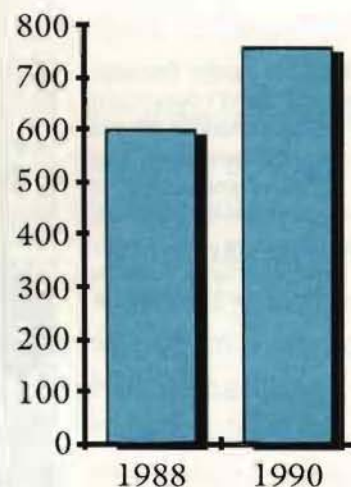
- In Uganda, the Bahá'ís provided an exhibit at the national ILY celebration on September 8 in the Kamuli District.

- In Spain, the annual two-day conference of the Association for Bahá'í Studies in Zaragoza focused on education; presentations included a talk on the role of literacy in the elimination of prejudice.

The ITFL was created in 1987 to support International Literacy Year activities. It was founded by 35 international non-governmental organizations, including the Bahá'í International Community.

*[Editor's note: The two features in this issue of ONE COUNTRY, on the Rabbání School in India and the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center in Bolivia, are other examples of how Bahá'í communities approach education.]* ☺

Bahá'í Education Projects 1988-1990





## Baker Environmental Research Center focuses on the altiplano

*(Continued from page 10)*

The Center has a working relationship with FUNDESIB, the Foundation for the Integral Development of Bolivia, and, like FUNDESIB, draws on the principles of the Bahá'í Faith for its guiding philosophy. Dr. Baker is himself a Bahá'í and he named the Center after his mother, Dorothy Baker, who was a leading figure in the Bahá'í Faith in the 1940s and 1950s.

In its approach, Dr. Baker said, the Center strives to balance development needs with environmental sensitivity in a way that incorporates a spiritual understanding of the relationship between man and nature.

"We are a creation of God," said Dr. Baker. "So is the environment. In this sense, we are part of what's created, and we have to include ourselves as a fundamental part of the environment."

At the same time, Dr. Baker said, he believes that God has given man the unique ability to rationalize and think — an attribute that nature does not possess.

"Humans have become the directing force in the balance between the human world and the natural world," said Dr. Baker. "We can either learn how to make our environment better, or we can destroy it. So we are just going to have to learn how to make the environment better." ☸

## Villages near Rabbání School show effects of development outreach

*(Continued from page 7)*

have also installed smokeless stoves.

Naryan Colony also sends many of its children to a tutorial school that was set up by Rabbání. Said Narayan Singh, the 60-year-old village headman: "Those students who are going to the Bahá'í tutorial school, they live neat and clean, and they obey their parents and they do their studies sincerely. This I have noticed." ☸

In Boca del Monte, Panama, the local Bahá'í community co-sponsored athletic competitions on 23 September 1990 to commemorate International Day of Peace. The event's other sponsors were the Lions Club of East Chiriquí.







Pope John Paul II with David Sunstrum, a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Burundi, during a reception for leaders of religious groups in Burundi on 6 September 1990. The Pope is shown holding a medal made to commemorate his visit to Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania.

## Review: An integrated approach to the environment

(Continued from back page)

wealth of nations, with an international parliament and executive to carry out its will," he writes, this vision is of a new society "based upon principles of economic justice, equality between the races, equal rights for women and men, and universal education."

Spiritual principles also offer a special power to build the kind of consensus necessary to bring such a vision into reality. "The crucial question is one of motivation," Dr. Dahl writes. To meet the challenges before us as a species will require "immense effort, solidarity, and sacrifice," he says. Historically, he says, religion has demonstrated its power to supply that motivation.

All religions, Dr. Dahl writes, are an expression of belief in some higher purpose beyond what can be proved by the rational mind. Religious belief is a commitment to an unknown reality. Fear of the unknown can instinctually paralyze humans and animals, Dr. Dahl says, yet religion teaches us to rely on this force to elevate the quality of our lives.

"It is love for the unknown," he suggests, "that gives religious belief its revolutionary potential and its capacity to transform human motivation and development." Through it, we are encouraged to discover the unknown spiritual potential in ourselves and others, just as science seeks to uncover

the unknown potential of the physical world.

Ultimately, then, *Unless and Until* is optimistic about the solutions to the environmental crisis. In his analysis, Dr. Dahl explores the phenomena which first produced life on earth and the natural cycles upon which it depends for support. After spelling out the current threats to those cycles, Dr. Dahl presents some initial efforts towards change now being undertaken on an international scale and expresses great faith in the civilization that will emerge from these crises.

For each ecological problem, he presents the most positive prospect for recovery, offering the hope that the foundations for the biological systems of the planet could be restored in a century, once the causes of the problems are removed. Implicit is the assumption that the world community can unite to confront the challenge.

The book's title is drawn from a passage by Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, who wrote in the 1800s: "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable *unless and until* its unity is firmly established."

As humanity slowly wakes to the darkness of its environmental condition, Dr. Dahl presents not just a mirror to reflect the decay, but a window opening on a reconstructed world. ☉

**"The crucial question is one of motivation," Dr. Dahl writes. To meet the challenges before us as a species will require "immense effort, solidarity, and sacrifice," he says. Historically, religion has demonstrated its power to supply that motivation.**



# Taking an integrated approach to the environmental crisis

## *Unless and Until: A Bahá'í Focus on the Environment*

by Arthur Lyon Dahl

Bahá'í  
Publishing  
Trust

London

In *Unless and Until*, Arthur Lyon Dahl illustrates the delicacy of the ecological balance with a short anecdote: A small Asian village tried to solve their fly problem by spraying pesticides. Some of the flies became resistant to the poison. These flies were eaten by little house lizards called geckos. The poisoned geckos were eaten by the village cats. The poisoned cats could no longer run fast enough to catch the rats. So the little village that was once plagued with flies was now overrun with rats.

Worse horror stories of humanity's intervention into the natural order are being played out with chilling familiarity around the globe. Dr. Dahl, the Deputy Director of the Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Center

## Review

for the United Nations Environment Programme in Nairobi, takes a broad survey of such problems in this 96-page book. He first outlines the environmental threats facing humanity, ranging from ocean pollution to the loss of species. He then proposes an integrated, global approach to solving such problems — an approach that draws heavily on the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith.

Turning to religious sources for help with the environmental crisis is becoming increasingly common. In 1986 in Assisi, Italy, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) founded the Network on Conservation and Religion to explore the ways in which different belief systems influence man's relationship with nature. Many religious groups have since embarked on similar examinations.

In easily accessible language, Dr. Dahl's book brings to this search an exploration of how the principles of the Bahá'í Faith can be brought to bear on the environmental crisis—in an analysis that is grounded both in scientific principle and spiritual values.

"The scientific evidence shows clearly," Dr. Dahl writes, "that the long-term trend of evolution at any level, whether biological or social, is towards greater complexity and higher levels of interaction." The Bahá'í Faith offers distinctive principles for smoothing that interaction, he says, offering prerequisites for a human society in harmony with itself and the natural world.

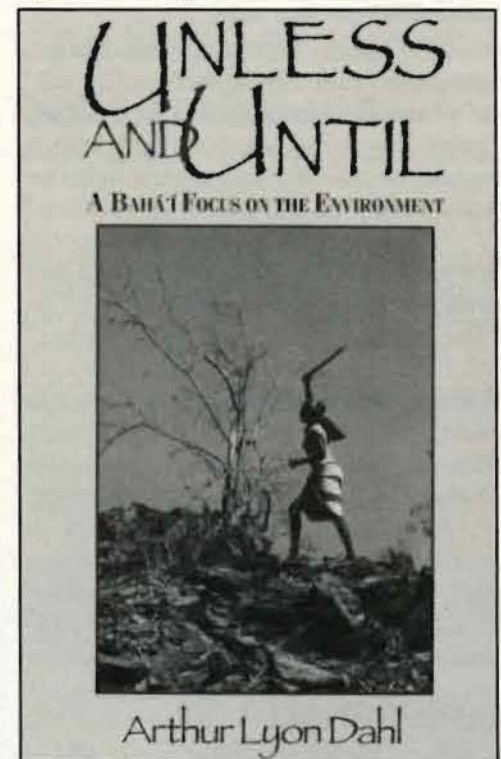
Bahá'ís believe, for example, that eco-

nomie justice is an essential principle. "Any attempt to protect nature must address the fundamental inequities between the world's rich and poor," Dr. Dahl writes, saying that the economic desperation of the poor and the material appetites of the rich are at the root of many environmental excesses.

Recognition of the equality of women and men is important to balancing the equation between environment and development, Dr. Dahl said. In many countries, women are closely involved with food production and other development issues, and full adoption of the principle of equality of the sexes would ensure women's involvement in environmental decision-making.

Perhaps the most important principle in addressing environmental problems, writes Dr. Dahl, is the creation of a unified world commonwealth. For well over 100 years, Bahá'ís have strongly supported the principle of collective security.

"Without structures and values adequate to the global environment as it is



evolving today," Dr. Dahl warns, "trying to resolve the major environmental problems of the world is like treating cancer with a bandaid."

The Bahá'í Faith promotes just such a set of structures and values, Dr. Dahl says. "Built around the idea of a world common-

(Continued on page 15)