

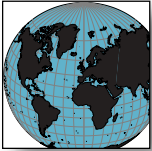


# ONE COUNTRY

"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens" – Bahá'u'lláh

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International Community  
October-December 2002  
Volume 14, Issue 3



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*Marine scientist Austin Bowden-Kerby, inspired by Bahá'í principles on the relationship between humanity and nature, heads the innovative and successful Coral Gardens Initiative, which promotes a high level of community participation in the management of natural resources.*



*At a recent Coral Gardens workshop, participants discovered an octopus, a sign of reef recovery.*

**C**UVU, Fiji — Walking out onto the reef with a dozen or so village women at low tide, Austin Bowden-Kerby spotted a trail of crushed shells — signs of a new predator in the area.

"It's probably an octopus," said Dr. Bowden-Kerby, a US-born marine biologist who has made the restoration of coral reefs his specialty. "Octopuses are primary predators on clams and shellfish."

Sure enough, a few dozen meters farther out one of the women found one, munching on a baby moray eel. After a short struggle she succeeded in prying the tentacled mollusk from its lair. But rather than bagging it for dinner or sale she soon let it go, obedient to the no-fishing zone that has been declared for this section of reef.

"It's actually a good sign, a sign of recovery, that the predators are moving in," said Dr. Bowden-Kerby, watching the creature swim off in a cloud of black ink. "But because they are killing too many other recovering animals, I think I will recommend that they open octopus season for one week."

In that comment, and in fact the entire scene, are reflected key elements of Dr. Bowden-Kerby's approach to restoring coral reefs — an approach that is winning significant recognition for its innovation, effectiveness, and potential for widespread application.

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# Terrorism and the end of an old order

**B**ombs planted in parked cars explode near crowded market places. Trucks loaded with explosives, driven by suicide bombers, crash through barriers into embassies and wreak devastation. Nerve gas is released in a subway station of a huge city, resulting in agonizing deaths and widespread casualties. Airplanes are hijacked and passengers are threatened with violence or death if demands are not met — or they are deliberately crashed into buildings...

The increase in the power and reach of terrorist threats in recent years surely ranks as one of the most unsettling developments of our time, a multidimensional phenomenon with global ramifications.

Evolving over the last century, terrorism has left almost no area of the world untouched. It has been used as a tool by both left- and right-wing causes and by groups of every conceivable stripe — anarchists, fascists, nationalists seeking independence, communists, extreme right-wing militias, and eco-terrorists — in places ranging from Europe to Asia, from South America to the Middle East, from the US to Africa. Indeed, depending on particular political affiliations and aspirations, one nation's "terrorist" may be another's "freedom fighter" and the terrorist's actions, rather than regarded as reprehensible, are justified as part of the heroic struggle for a noble cause.

Yet as new forms of terrorism generate wider destruction — and as our increasingly interdependent and global society creates ever greater opportunities for disruption and destruction — the need to address the issue is becoming increasingly urgent.

One especially alarming recent development is the evolution of "a new form of decentralized, religion-motivated terrorism." According to terrorism specialist Bruce Hoffman, there were no identifiable religious terrorist groups in 1968, but by the early 1990s almost one quarter of the world's active terrorist groups were motivated by their religious beliefs. The number of terrorist acts committed by such groups has risen sharply since 1988; they are estimated to be responsible for more than half of the 64,319 recorded incidents that occurred between 1970 and 1995.

Yet whether the roots of terrorist acts lie in economics, ideology, or sheer aggression, the question remains: What effective mechanisms can be developed to combat this transnational problem, to which modern states are extremely vulnerable?

One starting point for their formulation could be international agreement on strategic principles for states seeking to reduce terrorism. Such principles might include refusal to surrender to terrorists' demands; resolve to use law and the democratic process to defeat terrorism; refusal to make deals or concessions, even when intimidated and blackmailed; persistent efforts to bring terrorists to justice through the legal process; penalization of state sponsors of terrorism; and refusal to allow terrorists' activities to block international diplomatic efforts to resolve political conflicts.

Embrace of such principles would allow the mechanisms for combating terrorism a chance to evolve, including the formulation of a universally applied standard by which to punish perpetrators — the basis of a rule of law adhered to by all nations.

While the adoption of such measures is important, it will not, however, be sufficient to bring an end to conflict, whether traditional or "asymmetrical," as terrorism is sometimes defined.

In 1985, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, the Universal House of Justice, wrote about the prerequisites for universal and lasting peace.

"Banning nuclear weapons, prohibiting the use of poison gases, or outlawing germ warfare will not remove the root causes of war," said the Universal House of Justice. "However important such practical measures obviously are as elements of the peace process, they are in themselves too superficial to exert enduring influence. Peoples are ingenious enough to invent yet other forms of warfare, and to use food, raw materials, finance, industrial power, ideology, and terrorism to subvert one another in an endless quest for supremacy and dominion. Nor can the present massive dislocation in the affairs of humanity be resolved through the settlement of specific conflicts or disagreements

among nations. A genuine universal framework must be adopted.”

In other words, addressing problems such as terrorism in isolation from the many other issues that disrupt and destabilize society will ultimately prove a futile exercise. Nations must look beyond simply responding separately to disparate problems and move towards the building of a comprehensive international order based on social justice and collective security, in which all can live in dignity.

In the Bahá’í view, such a universal framework would encompass not only an institutional component, such as found in the ever-evolving United Nations system, but also a global sense of shared moral values. These values would include religious tolerance, economic justice, recognition of the need for universal education, elimination of all forms of racism, and recognition of the full equality between women and men.

However, the acceptance of such a framework — one that can bring real, enduring stability — must spring from a new mindset, the overarching principle of which must be the oneness of humanity.

Recognition of the inherent nobility of each human being, the conviction that all people have a role to play in developing an “ever advancing civilization,” and unswerving commitment to spiritual principles as the basis of that civilization are likewise essential components of the only stable foundation upon which a universal framework can be built.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote, “Material civilization is like the body. No matter how infinitely graceful, elegant and beautiful it may be, it is dead. Divine civilization is like the spirit, and the body gets its life from the spirit....”

The leaders of religion have a special role to play in the building of a new global civilization. In a letter to the world’s religious leaders issued in April 2002, the Universal House of Justice called on religious leaders to act decisively to eradicate religious intolerance and fanaticism. “With every day that passes, danger grows that the rising fires of religious prejudice will ignite a worldwide conflagration the consequences of which are unthinkable,” states the letter.

Yet, it continues, “the greater part of organized religion stands paralyzed at the threshold of the future, gripped in those very dogmas and claims of privileged access to truth that have been responsible for creating some of the most bitter conflicts divid-

ing the earth’s inhabitants.”

In keeping with the realization by growing numbers of people that “the truth underlying all religions is in its essence one,” the letter calls on religious leaders to “break with the past” and firmly renounce those actions and teachings that lend “credibility to fanaticism.”

Indeed, as long as religious or political leaders hide behind any type of rhetoric, religious or otherwise, that accepts terrorism in any form, effective international response will remain beyond reach.

Ultimately, Bahá’ís understand that the world is currently undergoing “simultaneous processes of rise and fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos,” as humanity outgrows old social structures, institutions, and traditions. In their place, the Bahá’í writings say, will emerge new structures and institutions based on the principle of the oneness of humanity.

That principle “calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world — a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units,” according to the Bahá’í writings.

From a Bahá’í perspective, then, the rise in terrorism, fundamentalism, and violence in the world today is simply part of the death throes of an old world order that continues to resist the principle of human oneness and the global institutions that are sure to blossom from its widespread acceptance.

Yet Bahá’ís earnestly believe that “world peace is not only possible but inevitable” and that “the current world confusion and calamitous condition in human affairs [are] a natural phase in an organic process leading ultimately and irresistibly to the unification of the human race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet.”

Whether that stage of unity and peace “is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity’s stubborn clinging to old patterns of behavior, or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth,” said the Universal House of Justice. Likewise, the choice before humanity in how to deal with terrorism hinges on whether the nations of the world can rise to a new level of unity in their approaches and actions.\*

*The rise in terrorism, fundamentalism, and violence in the world today is simply part of the death throes of an old world order that continues to resist the principle of human oneness and the global institutions that are sure to blossom from its widespread acceptance.*



## In India, a program for rural women emphasizes training as the key to effective use of solar cookers

Rukmani Solanki, left, cooking food on her SK14 parabolic solar cooker; outside her home in Temla, Jhabua District. A former trainee of the Barli Development Institute for Rural Women, Ms. Solanki is one of some 32 young women to receive SK14 cookers in 2002 in the latest phase of the Institute's solar energy program. Posing with Ms. Solanki are family members.



***A program of the Barli Development Institute for Rural Women to provide household-sized solar cookers has become a model for how to introduce new technologies into rural areas.***

**J**HABUA DISTRICT, Madhya Pradesh, India — Ask women about the benefits of using solar energy for cooking in the remote districts of this central Indian state, and “saving the environment” is not necessarily the first response that comes to mind.

Rather, the advantages of using solar cooking have more to do with saving time, money, and “personal” energy. Solar cooking, they say, means no longer doing things like scrubbing fire-blackened pots, searching for firewood, or worrying about children getting burned by the traditional cook fire.

“At first I thought it would not be easy to use,” said Gokhari Solanki, a young woman in Temla village in Jhabua District, referring to a household-sized parabolic cooker she recently obtained for her family. “But then when I started to cook in it, I realized it works better than I thought.

“It does not need a lot of care, like a firewood stove,” said Ms. Solanki. “It cooks by itself, so there is no fear of any fire accident.

And there is no need of firewood. And our cooking pots do not become black.”

Ms. Solanki is among some 30 women in a half-dozen western districts of Madhya Pradesh state here who have so far received household-sized SK14 cookers through a program run by the Barli Development Institute for Rural Women (BDIRW), which is based in Indore.

The program has become something of a showcase for introducing new technologies into rural areas, drawing notice from state-level government and education officials.

“I think people have a lot to learn from the Barli Institute,” said Rameshwar Lal Sawhney, head of the School of Energy and Environment Studies at Devi Ahilya University in Indore, which has worked closely with the Institute. “Many people from different parts of the country are visiting my department, and I take them to Barli. They are a model that can be repeated.”

What makes the program distinctive is

its emphasis on extended training and motivation, and its focus on a specific population group: young rural women.

Indeed, the SK14 distribution program is the latest in a series of efforts by the Institute to promote not only solar energy but environmental consciousness in general. And it sees young women as the key to promoting underlying social change, not only in terms of environmental practice, but also in the areas of health, nutrition, education, and moral development.

"Fundamental to the rationale of the Institute is the concept that the education of women is paramount to their empowerment and consequently to community development," said Janak Palta McGilligan, director of the Institute. "Women are the first educators of their children and this education affects the thought and behavior of a new generation of people, both men and women."

Originally established in 1985 as the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women, the Institute became an independent entity with its own board of directors in September 2001, taking the name Barli Development Institute for Rural Women.

The objective of the Institute is that, empowered by training in literacy, hygiene, nutrition, income-generation, and conservation, the young women can return to their home villages and become "pillars" of their families and communities — agents for changing the social and physical environments. The word "barli" is the local word for the central pillar of the house; hence the name of the Institute.

Despite the name change, the Institute's program is still very much inspired by Bahá'í principles, which emphasize the equality of women and men and quite specifically advocate vigorous measures to educate girls and women.

Over the last 17 years, the Institute has trained more than 1,500 young women and girls. Its programs are entirely free, and the Institute's trainees come mainly from indigenous or "tribal" areas in the western districts of Madhya Pradesh surrounding Indore.

Much of the region is marked by chronic poverty and malnutrition, due in part to low crop yields, frequent droughts, a shortage of drinking water, and poor soil. Many of these problems have been compounded by extensive deforestation and erosion, partly as a consequence of the search for firewood.

## Solar project lessons

The effort to promote solar energy is instructive of the approach taken by the Institute, which brings women from the western districts of Madhya Pradesh for training on its 5-acre campus in Indore and also has an extensive outreach program into the surrounding districts.

In the mid-1980s, the Institute began using solar box cookers for some of its cooking and promoting their use in the villages it served.

In May 1998, a large 7.5 square-meter parabolic solar cooker was installed at the Institute; another was installed in 2000. These two large reflectors, designed by German solar energy specialist Wolfgang Scheffler, became a test-bed for working out practical aspects of solar cooking for the Institute and its trainees.

This effort, in and of itself, has been innovative. For example, the second Scheffler reflector has been combined with a novel solar storage system. The reflector is used to heat up a well-insulated 400 kilogram steel core; stored heat can then be used for cooking around the clock. The system was designed by Gadhia Solar Energy Systems of Valsad, Gujarat.

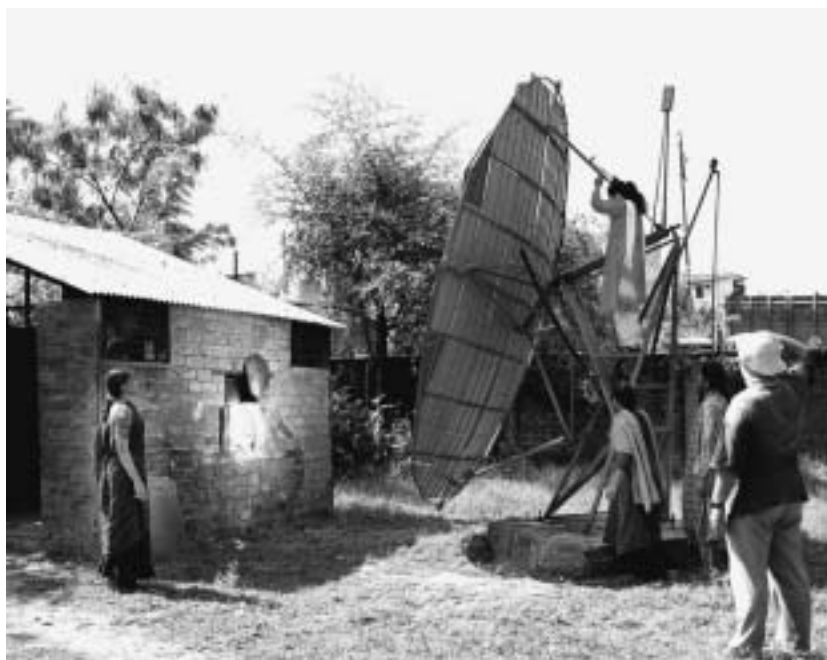
With this system, the Institute is able to cook entirely with solar energy for 300 days a year.

The most recent phase of the Institute's solar program entails placing the household-sized SK14 cookers in villages throughout the Institute's service area. As of this writ-

*"Women are the first educators of their children and this education affects the thought and behavior of a new generation of people, both men and women."*

– Janak Palta McGilligan, director

*One of two large Scheffler parabolic reflectors installed at the Institute itself. Using the two reflectors, along with an innovative heat storage system, the Institute is able to cook 100 percent of its food with solar energy 300 days a year.*





*Parabolic solar cookers manufactured by the Institute were the center of attention at a recent solar energy fair in Indore, drawing notice from numerous visitors, including Digvijay Singh, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh state, shown at center right sampling food from the cooker.*

***“The training provided at the Institute is a very big part of the program’s success. The girls know how to operate solar cookers ... and if there are some problems with the operation, they know ways to solve them.”***

**– Professor  
Rameshwar Lal  
Sawhney, Devi  
Ahilya University**

ing, 32 women have received them. The women pay 10 percent of the approximately US\$100 cost, with the rest funded by two Austrian non-governmental organizations. Another 18 SK14s are scheduled to be distributed in 2003.

Designed by Dieter Seifert and promoted by EG-Solar, a foreign aid initiative of the State Technical College of Altoetting, Germany, the SK14 is a 1.5 meter diameter reflective parabolic bowl that concentrates sunlight onto the black cooking vessel supported in its focal point. The design has been widely licensed to non-governmental organizations and companies in the developing world. Indeed, the Institute itself manufactures the SK14 cookers.

However, the Institute does more than merely make and place the cookers in rural Indian villages. The cookers are sold only to women who have been through the Institute’s training program, a program that includes not only practical training in the use of solar cookers but also general instruction designed to promote an overall consciousness of environmental conservation.

“One of the significant components of our curriculum is theory and practical training in the use of renewable energy,” said James McGilligan, manager of the Institute, who has been largely responsible for the Institute’s solar program. “We could easily give the cookers away to anyone, but our experience is that they wouldn’t be used. So we require the people to have training — and that they pay 10 percent of the cost.”

Such training is an important factor in successfully introducing new technologies into rural areas, said Prof. Sawhney and others. Too often, new technologies go unused if they are simply dropped in without ad-

equate education.

“The training provided at the Institute is a very big part of the program’s success,” said Prof. Sawhney. “The girls get used to using solar over a period of four or five months. So they know how to operate solar cookers, they know their advantages and disadvantages, and if there are some problems with the operation, they know ways to solve them.”

Another distinctive aspect of the project is its focus on young girls and women, said Sneha Lata Kumar, managing director of the Madhya Pradesh Energy Development Corporation, a state-level public sector alternative energy promotion agency, which works with a number of NGOs in the state.

“Women, and especially young girls, do most of the household work in their families,” said Ms. Kumar. “The Institute is already working on the training and upliftment of girls and women, through literacy and vocational training, and now they are showing how the use of non-conventional energy in their daily life can lessen their drudgery.”

The process of training in sustainable development begins when students come to the Institute and see how the Institute itself grows most of its own vegetables and cooks much of its food on the large Scheffler reflectors installed there.

“At the Institute I noticed that almost daily, food for 150 persons was cooked on the solar cookers,” said Chanda Nikhare, a 35-year-old woman and former Institute trainee, who recently bought a smaller SK14 cooker for her home in Indore. “It inspired me to purchase one for myself. It is working well and I have saved a lot of hassle. It saves gas and energy.”

Sagri Bai, a former Institute trainee from Dhar and now a cook at the Institute, has likewise purchased an SK14 for her home. “The solar cooker is much better than fire,” said Ms. Bai. “After spending money once then there is no need to spend money for wood, as is the case with a wood stove.”

Her husband, Sakha Dawar, who also works at the Institute, is hopeful that solar cooking can help stop the deforestation that has plagued their home district.

“Now people have cut down all the forests and it is very difficult to find wood,” said Mr. Dawar. “If we cook on fire, we need wood for fuel and if we cut the trees for the sake of getting fuel, it will affect the rains and our future will be darkened. We will get less trees, less



rain, less water, and less food.”

## Other environmental lessons

Solar energy use is not the only element of environmental conservation that is taught at the Institute. Trainees learn that caring for the environment is a spiritual responsibility, as well as an important service to the community. Students are taught about planting and maintaining trees, finding local sources for seeds, and the use of environmental and energy conservation techniques such as composting, vermiculture, the use of biodegradable products, and proper waste management.

The Institute also uses an innovative water management program, again in an effort to show trainees what is possible. In that program, rainwater is harvested and used to recharge the underground aquifer. Wash-water is reused for irrigation of the Institute's gardens, which provide most of its food.

Trainees also receive courses in literacy, tailoring, agriculture, artisan crafts work, human rights, environmental awareness, self-esteem and personality development, social commitment, nutrition and health, and income-generating skills. Art, music, and dance are also incorporated into the curriculum.

Institute graduates have had a measurable impact on their communities. Although more than half of the trainees are illiterate when they arrive, 99% leave fully able to read and write Hindi. Studies show that 96% of them use their income generation and related skills upon their return home and that 46% have established small businesses of sewing clothes and have started generating income, while some 9% are employed in various jobs. Some 97% of graduates are using safe drinking water practices; some 70% now include leafy vegetables in their diet; and 41% are growing and selling vegetables. In addition, women in five villages have planted some 2,500 trees.

Other studies have shown that the women have assisted in creating a new atmosphere of mutual respect and unity in their communities, helping to displace caste prejudices in tribal communities once notorious for their high crime rate and alcohol abuse. The Institute collaborates actively with government officials and non-governmental organizations, exchanging information, methodologies, and research information.

The Institute's training programs typically run either six months or one year, although short-term workshops and training sessions are occasionally offered on select

topics. Graduates receive a certificate through the National Open Schools program. The Institute obtains funding from a range of sources, including the Bahá'í community of India, the Swedish International Development Agency, and the Two Wings Foundation.

The Institute has received numerous awards and citations for its work on the environment and development. In 1992, it was made a member of the United Nations Environment Programme's Global 500 Roll of Honor for Outstanding Environmental Achievement. In 1994, the Institute was listed in UNESCO's INNOV database as one of 81 successful basic education projects in developing countries.

On 13 November 2002, the Institute was presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as a “sacred gift” from the Bahá'í International Community, as part of an Alliance of Religion and Conservation celebration of her Golden Jubilee. [See page 8]

But perhaps the best testimony of the Institute's solar program comes from the graduates themselves, who are using the new SK14 cookers.

“We cook pulse, rice, vegetables, and roti of maize, and tea,” said Sarbai Solanki, a 19-year-old former Institute trainee, who purchased an SK14 in June 2002 for use in her family home in Temla village in Jhabua District. “It has made our life better because it is much easier to cook on. We do not have to keep checking it again and again. It is smokeless. And we don't have to go into the forest to collect firewood.”\*

*“We do not have to keep checking it again and again. It is smokeless. And we don't have to go into the forest to collect firewood.”*

*– Sarbai Solanki,  
19-year-old former  
Institute trainee*

*Trainees learn that caring for the environment is a spiritual responsibility, as well as an important service to the community. The Institute grows most of its own food, and students are involved in all aspects of planting, harvesting, and conservation techniques like composting and vermiculture.*



## Bahá'ís participate in interfaith celebration honoring Queen Elizabeth II

*Organized by the Alliance on Religion and Conservation (ARC), the event sought to explore religions' understanding of the place of humanity in creation.*

**L**ONDON — At a special high-level interfaith gathering held in honor of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, Bahá'í representatives joined with the leaders of nine other major world religions to celebrate the significant role that religions can play in caring for the environment.

Held 13 November 2002 in London's historic Banqueting House in Whitehall and titled "Our Place in Creation," the event featured the presentation of a series of environmental projects to Her Majesty the Queen and her husband HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, as well as a program of sacred artistic, musical, and dance performances by representatives of each religion.

Organized by the Alliance on Religion and Conservation (ARC), the event sought to explore religions' understanding of the place of humanity in nature. The Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism,

and Zoroastrianism were all represented.

The Duke of Edinburgh, who has played a key role in bringing religions into the environmental movement at the international level, explained the purpose of the gathering in a short talk.

"We desperately need the conviction of religious belief to guide us in the way we live on, and use, the planet," said Prince Philip. "We have got to learn to balance the economic and scientific realities against the religious demands for responsibility and consideration for the created world. It is not going to be easy, but I am sure that belief and conviction are very powerful motives to care for our planet with all its diversity."

Among the religious leaders in attendance were: His All-Holiness Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, representing Orthodox Christianity; the Rt. Rev. Michael Turnbull, Lord Bishop of Durham, representing Protestant Christianity; Sri Kushok Bakula, representing Buddhism; Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chief Rabbi of Israel, representing Judaism, and Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Parvez Karanjia, a leading writer on Zoroastrian affairs.

Ms. Guilda Navidi Walker represented the Bahá'í International Community. The Bahá'í Community of the United Kingdom was represented by its secretary, Barney Leith.

"The event was significant, not only because of the presence of the Queen and Prince Philip, but because of the very senior leadership represented among the faith communities," said Mr. Leith. "And, despite all of the religious hatred and intolerance that sometimes unfortunately seems so prevalent in our world, the event also served to demonstrate that religious communities can work together on important global issues, such as the environment."

For its project, the Bahá'í International Community presented the Barli Development Institute for Rural Women. Based in Indore, India, the Institute gives indigenous



ARC/John Smith Photo

*As the Bahá'í contribution to the program of sacred performances for the Queen, Shiva Ashrafi Cooper chanted one of The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh. Born in Iran, Ms. Ashrafi Cooper is now a resident of the United Kingdom.*



women training in literacy, agriculture, health, income-generation, and environmental conservation. [See page 4.]

Conservation-oriented projects announced by other religions included: a recycling project in all 47 existing Zoroastrian Fire Temples in Mumbai, India; the founding of a Centre for Islam and Ecology at the University of Wales, Lampeter, UK; the planting of some 27,000 tree seedlings in temple and community forests surrounding 14 Buddhist pagodas in Cambodia; and the creation of a major new environmental program by the Batak Church of Sumatra, Indonesia. These are in addition to a series of environmental projects announced in 2000 by ARC, in association with WWF International, in an initiative called Sacred Gifts for a Living Planet.

As the Bahá'í contribution to the program of sacred performances, Shiva Ashrafi Cooper chanted one of *The Hidden Words* of Bahá'u'lláh. Born in Iran, Ms. Ashrafi Cooper is now a resident of the United Kingdom.

Ms. Walker said the quality of Ms. Ashrafi Cooper's singing was intensely stirring. "When Shiva arrived and started singing, there was such a profound silence that you could have heard a pin drop," she said. "It was a moving spiritual experience."



ARC/John Smith Photo

In addition to the chanting by Ms. Ashrafi Cooper, the event featured performances by members of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, the Mongolian National Song and Dance Ensemble, the London Adventist Chorale, and others.

The Bahá'í International Community has been a member of the Alliance on Religion and Conservation since it was founded in 1995 at a summit meeting at Windsor Castle hosted by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.\*

*Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, with religious representatives on 13 November 2002 in London's historic Banqueting House in Whitehall for an event, "Our Place in Creation," in honor of the Queen's Golden Jubilee.*

## In Italy, the University of Bari establishes a course on ethics and economics based on Bahá'í principles

**B**ARI, Italy, 4 December 2002 (BWNS) — Officials at the University of Bari have established a permanent course on ethics and economics that is based on Bahá'í principles and have appointed a well-known Bahá'í businessman as its coordinator.

Titled "Ethics and Economy: Towards a New World Order," the course consists of ten seminars focused on essential Bahá'í values such as consultation, justice and ethics, equality, universal education, and the unity of science and religion as they relate to the world of business and economics.

The University has appointed Giuseppe Robiati as the coordinator of the course. A member of the Bahá'í community of Italy, Mr. Robiati is a businessman with extensive experience in engineering and business management, and in the fields of human resources and economics.

Currently president of SCAC, a leading industrial company in Italy, Mr. Robiati has also written a number of books, including

*Faith and World Economy, a Joint Venture: A Bahá'í Perspective; God and Economy, a Possible Partnership; and Economy for a New World Order.* Mr. Robiati is also a member of the European Bahá'í Business Forum (EBBF), which played a key role in helping to establish the course.

The University of Bari is the second largest university in Italy, with an enrollment of 50,000 students and a faculty of 2,200 professors. The "Ethics and Economics" course, which was approved by the academic senate and the rector of the University of Bari in July, is scheduled to begin in March 2003.

The initiative evolved from a series of workshops and presentations by Mr. Robiati at the University in the 1990s, which emerged from a request by Giovanni Girone, then dean of the Faculty of Economics at the University. In 1990, Prof. Girone, who is currently rector of the University, asked the EBBF to facilitate a one-day workshop on "ethics and economy" for the economics department.\*

## In Fiji, a new approach to the restoration of coral reefs draws notice

Marine biologist Austin Bowden-Kerby, on the reef in Cuvu, Fiji, one of the main sites of the Coral Gardens Initiative.



*Coral, continued from page one*

***“If you dynamite a coral reef, it cannot repair itself... So what we have to do is learn to work with nature to help it recover.”***

– Dr. Austin Bowden-Kerby

Developed over many years of research, Dr. Bowden-Kerby’s method is based on the increasingly accepted idea that the best way to save endangered reefs is not necessarily by eliminating human impact but rather by carefully managing it, with a special emphasis on working closely with the local people who know the reef best — and who still depend on it for their livelihood.

More specifically, Dr. Bowden-Kerby’s methods go beyond simple management and seek actively to “cultivate” the reef by weeding out overabundant predators such as the octopus and the coral-eating Crown of Thorns starfish while at the same time “planting” missing or low-count species that are friendly to the reef, such as the giant clam, and then encouraging their regeneration in special protected areas.

To some environmentalists, such interventionist tactics are an extension of the human meddling that has sent major portions of coral reefs worldwide into decline. But Dr. Bowden-Kerby firmly believes that in many cases the

reefs are so far gone that only activist approaches can save them.

“If you dynamite a coral reef, it cannot repair itself,” explained Dr. Bowden-Kerby, taking the most extreme case of reef damage. “The coral larvae can’t settle on the rubble. But my research has found that if you mimic a hurricane by scattering broken branches of live corals onto the rubble, the corals often attach to the rubble and begin reestablishing themselves. So what we have to do is learn to work with nature to help it recover.”

Dr. Bowden-Kerby’s ideas are winning acceptance, as evidenced by a number of recent grants and awards for his Coral Gardens Initiative, as the project here is formally known. In 2002, for example, the project was chosen as a reef conservation “demonstration site” by the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN). In 1999, it won the prestigious Henry Award for Partnerships in Coral Reef Conservation, which carried a cash prize of \$25,000. The project has also received significant grants from the MacArthur Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the

Government of New Zealand, and, most recently, the European Union.

Equally significant, perhaps, is the on-the-ground acceptance of the project by people in the eight villages in the Cuvu and Tuva Districts, who say enthusiastically that they have seen a dramatic increase in the number and size of fish and shellfish along their shoreline since the project came to their area three years ago.

"Plenty of fish are coming back," said Anare Mudunavere, chief of Navuevu Village, one of the villages that is actively involved in the project. "You could not find them here a few years ago. But they are coming back now, every kind of fish."

### A love for the sea

Born in 1954, Dr. Bowden-Kerby grew up in coastal North Carolina and Virginia — and he has loved the sea and sea creatures since childhood. "I grew up in the ocean," he said, describing how he became interested in marine biology. "We lived barefoot all summer long and would go swimming several times a day. We would go fishing and crabbing at high tide and clam digging at low tide, eating what we caught and feeling very much a part of the natural environment."

His father, an economist, was posted to the Mariana Islands when Dr. Bowden-Kerby was an adolescent, and his experience there gave him a lifelong love for Pacific Islanders and their culture — and for coral reefs.

Another important factor in his development was his faith in a higher power and belief in a purpose to the universe. "I always had my own relationship with God," said Dr. Bowden-Kerby, who was raised as a Protestant Christian. "I would pray each night, asking God to help the sick and poor and make world peace. I began figuring out early that much of what people believed about God was based on tradition or limited human imagination, and simply not true. Rather than a man in the sky, God was all-seeing, all-knowing, everywhere, and He loves us all."

In 1972, at the age of 17, Dr. Bowden-Kerby found his beliefs confirmed in the Bahá'í teachings, which stress the importance of service to humanity and the agreement of scientific and religious truths. Over time, his practice of the Bahá'í Faith also spurred his interest in transforming human/nature interactions, and provided the inspiration for his innovative approach to coral reef management.

While working and studying in Micronesia and Fiji in the mid-1970s and

early 1980s, Dr. Bowden-Kerby began to consider the problems facing communities dependent on coral reefs.

"I saw a lot of suffering and nutritional deficiencies related to reef decline caused by overfishing and dynamite fishing, particularly in Chuuk, where reefs destroyed in World War II were not recovering," said Dr. Bowden-Kerby. "I began to study what could be done and it was the Bahá'í writings that inspired me with the idea of direct interventions such as replanting corals."

More specifically, said Dr. Bowden-Kerby, the Bahá'í writings led him to see that humanity and nature are tightly interdependent, that health in nature is today dependent on order and health in the world of humanity.

"A lot of conservationists seem to have deified nature, holding it to be perfect, apart from humanity, and viewing humanity as a plague on the planet," he said. "But the Bahá'í teachings speak of man as being 'organic' with the world."

The Bahá'í Faith's emphasis on the importance of consultation, cooperation, and community participation further led Dr. Bowden-Kerby to see the importance of involving the local community in any effort to restore the reefs.

The Coral Gardens Initiative builds on all of these ideas and more. Sponsored by an independent non-governmental organization (NGO), the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific/Fiji, in partnership with Counterpart International (USA), Coral Gardens is nevertheless quite clearly centered around the ideas and research of Dr. Bowden-Kerby, who is the project's scientist.

"What is particularly exciting about what Austin is doing is the way he is getting the

*"A lot of conservationists seem to have deified nature, holding it to be perfect, apart from humanity, and viewing humanity as a plague on the planet. But the Bahá'í teachings speak of man as being 'organic' with the world."*

– Austin Bowden-Kerby

*Dr. Bowden-Kerby talks with Anare Mudunavere, right, chief of Navuevu Village, during a meeting of the Cuvu-Tuva Environment Committee in November 2002. The map in front of them outlines current and proposed no-fishing zones on the reef.*







*Residents of Voua village, in Cuvu district, Fiji, consult during a participatory management planning workshop sponsored by the Coral Gardens Initiative in September 2002. The Coral Gardens methodology seeks to engage the entire community, women and men, young and old, in efforts to understand their historic relationship with the reefs and to plan for its future restoration and use.*

people themselves to manage the reef, rather than scientists doing it or government or international NGOs," said Arthur Lyon Dahl, who was director of the Coral Reef Unit of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) until August 2002 and continues as a consultant.

"Environmentally, the reefs have become one of the world's top priorities, because they represent the first major ecosystem to show signs of global stress," said Dr. Dahl. "Reef systems are collapsing all around the world because of human activity.

"So we see the future of coral reef management in the tropics as dependent on the heavy involvement of the people living next to the reefs. Because many of the problems of the reefs — pollution, dynamite fishing, and so on — are tied to the activities of local people," said Dr. Dahl.

### **Local knowledge emphasized**

Dr. Bowden-Kerby's approach is not merely dependent on getting local people to do the work of reef management, or of simply following rules, like "don't fish here" or "leave the large clams to reproduce." Rather, the Coral Gardens Initiative strives for the active participation of coastal residents by drawing on their own knowledge of the reef and its diverse interactions.

By way of example, Dr. Bowden-Kerby tells of how he was once told by local fishermen that branching corals can actually move, something not realized by academically trained marine biologists. "I didn't believe it at first," he said. "But I tagged some corals and found that they did move during a storm, some over 400 feet." Further study proved that coral branches can break off and roll across the la-

goon floor like tumbleweeds, reestablishing themselves in new places.

"The fisherman knows things that the scientist doesn't know," said Dr. Bowden-Kerby. "Being unschooled and being uneducated are two entirely different things. Island people, in fact, have a knowledge-base dating back thousands of years."

The Coral Gardens Initiative is designed quite specifically to draw on traditional knowledge, by using consultative methods that promote the participation of the entire community.

"At the start of the project, we bring the entire village together — the fishers, both men and women, old and young people — and we go through a series of exercises to detail the history and problems of the reef," said Dr. Bowden-Kerby, adding that the participatory process is based in part on the principles of Bahá'í consultation, a distinctive non-adversarial decision-making system used by Bahá'í communities worldwide.

In the case of the Cuvu-Tuva sites, this type of community-based process has led to the creation of resource maps, some dating back to 1942, showing where the major fish species and coral types used to exist.

"The combination of applied academic knowledge and local knowledge makes for a very creative process," said Irene Novaczek, a marine biologist and seaweed specialist from the Institute of Island Studies in Prince Edward Island, Canada, who has worked with Dr. Bowden-Kerby on the Coral Gardens project. "Austin comes into a place and he asks: 'What used to be here and what is gone? What are the good reef areas for this or that animal?'"

The creation of resource maps has been a very important step in the creation of the special no-fishing areas on the reef, which are a key element of the Coral Gardens restoration strategy. The idea of establishing no-fishing "marine protected areas" is not new. Indeed, chiefs in Fiji traditionally created sacred "taboo" areas, putting certain sections of the reef off limits, a practice that eroded under British rule.

What makes the no-fishing zones in the Coral Gardens project distinctive is the way in which they are being once again defined and managed by local chiefs — and the way in which they are scaled to local needs through active community participation.

The five no-fishing areas in Cuvu and Tuva have been established after following the above described consultative pro-

cess; they have been designed to be consistent with the natural topography and also to ensure that people who are dependent on reef fishing for their livelihood still have some access.

The taboo areas are relatively small, a feature based on the fact that even small no-fishing zones, if managed properly, can create a “spill-over” effect, whereby fish and shellfish in the protected areas grow, reproduce, and eventually migrate into the non-protected areas, thus helping to restore the once bountiful harvest.

“The people are excited — there is a big spill-over,” said Nepote Senikau, secretary of the Cuvu-Tuva Environment Committee, a group of area chiefs appointed to manage the no-fishing zones. “Fish are coming out of the taboo areas. Migrating species, like the mullet, have come back especially.”

Another distinctive element of the project is its emphasis on the involvement of women, who are encouraged to participate in community consultations on the future of the reef.

“This is critically important because the inshore reefs are predominantly women’s fishing areas,” said Dr. Novaczek. “They have the seasonal knowledge, about where things are and where they breed. And they are also the ones that you have to convince [to follow the no-fishing rules] if you are going to restore and manage a shallow area.”

Dr. Novaczek added that it is also much more effective for a woman to talk to another woman than for a man to tell them what to do. “When they see things that are for the good of their children, that is what is convincing to them,” she said.

Another distinctive aspect of the project is the partnership it has forged with the private sector. Specifically, Coral Gardens has sought and won much cooperation from the Shangri-La Resort, whose managers have given more than a hundred thousand US dollars in cash and in-kind contributions to the project.

“If the coral reefs die, we’re not going to get anybody as tourists — and the villages aren’t going to have any fish,” said John Rice, manager of the Shangri-La.

Specifically, the resort has helped to fund community workshops and the training of local fish wardens, who will be employed by the resort to help monitor and enforce the no-fishing zones. The resort has also financed the construction of hundreds of small “fish houses,” igloo-shaped structures made of cement and stones, which are planted with cor-

als to help create better habitat for reef-dwelling fish — an idea that is yet another element of Dr. Bowden-Kerby’s approach.

“At the end of the day, our goal is to make this process self-managing, so that it becomes part of every day life,” said Mr. Rice.

Dr. Bowden-Kerby — and others — believe that the Coral Gardens approach can easily be replicated in other areas, not only on Fiji but also throughout the South Pacific.

The project has been featured in the local news media and Mr. Senikau of the Environment Committee said chiefs from other parts of Fiji have already begun asking about the project. “It’s spreading like brushfire,” he said.

Dr. Bowden-Kerby has also begun working to establish the project in the Solomon Islands. On Malaita Island, in partnership with the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) and ICRAN, he has begun working with communities to establish small-scale conservation areas similar to the taboo zones in Cuvu.

“The ultimate goal is to establish a model for community involvement in natural resource management that is self-supporting and adaptive,” said Dr. Bowden-Kerby. “What makes the Coral Gardens Initiative unique is the way it encourages village people to conduct simple trial-and-error restoration experiments and so to learn first-hand how to work with and ‘train’ the coral reef ecosystem to return to its formerly abundant, beautiful and diverse state.

“For the community,” he added, “the project has the potential to restore hope and help the people regain long lost resources, a new road to prosperity.”✱

***“What is particularly exciting about what Austin is doing is the way he is getting the people themselves to manage the reef, rather than scientists doing it or government or international NGOs,”***

**– Arthur Lyon Dahl,  
former director UNEP  
Coral Reef Unit**

*Marine Biologist Austin Bowden-Kerby and Etika Sing, a field officer for the Coral Gardens Initiative, prepare to plant “branches” of coral into a damaged area of the reef.*



## Bahá'í radio station is launched in the Philippines

*The station will feature programs designed to promote social and economic development in the community at large and to invigorate moral, spiritual, and human resource development within the Bahá'í community itself.*

*The Tondod Public High School Dance Troupe performs on 26 November 2002 at the inauguration of a new Bahá'í radio station in the Philippines.*



**B**ULAC, Philippines — In a festive celebration featuring prayers, speeches, music and dance performances, and a “barrio fiesta” atmosphere, the Bahá'í community of the Philippines officially inaugurated its new radio station on 26 November 2002.

Located in a rural district about 30 kilometers from the city of San José on the main island of Luzon, the station will feature programs designed to promote social and economic development in the community at large. It will also serve the Bahá'í community in the region with programming designed to promote moral, spiritual, and human resource development.

“By using such means as interview, radio dramas, and discussion, we hope to stimulate the practice of consultation in the community at large,” said Vahid Mockon, the station’s general manager. “As such, we hope that the station will help in the formulation and implementation of community projects that promote the development of spiritual and moral capabilities in children and youth, provide farmers with access to scientific information about agricultural practices, and help to empower women, especially in the areas of primary health care and education.”

Licensed since 19 March 2002, the station operates at 1584 kHz on the AM band,

broadcasting at a power of 1,000 watts. Due to the flat topography of the region, it reaches a wide area encompassing the entire province of Nueva Ecija and a portion of Tarlac and Pangasinan provinces, with a potential listenership of more than 2.3 million people.

More than 300 people, including local officials and nearby residents, attended the inauguration ceremony. The event featured speeches by visiting Bahá'í dignitaries and local officials, as well as performances by children and youth from nearby schools.

“We had a ‘barrio fiesta’ — a village feast,” said Antonio Toledo, chairman of the board of the Dawnbreakers Foundation, a Bahá'í-sponsored development organization that operates the station. “Bahá'ís from the region cooked and served food for all 300 in attendance. And the atmosphere was definitely festive.”

Local officials said they were pleased to have the station in their region. “We are very proud to have the new Bahá'í radio station in our community,” said Gloria Santiago, chairwoman of the Bulac barangay council. “I encourage everyone to support the station.” (A barangay is the smallest governmental unit in the Philippines.)

Humaida Jumalon, a senior advisor — Counsellor — to Bahá'í communities throughout Asia, explained that a major purpose of the station would be to help in the formation and organization of spiritually based activities. Specifically, she said, the station would help to cultivate and encourage study circles, devotional meetings, and children classes.

“We envision the station to have a very big role in the promotion of these core activities,” said Counsellor Jumalon. “For example, the station will be able to make announcements as to the time and place for children’s classes, and this can help very much in consolidating the Bahá'í communities in the area.”

The station has also entered into a partnership with Phil Rice, a Philippine rice research institute, to provide up-to-date agricultural information to farmers in the broadcast region.✱



# Review: One World

*Review, continued from back page*

comes questionable. For the sink belongs to us all in common, and by using it without restriction now, we are depriving others of their right to use the sink in the same way..."

In the global village, the atmosphere is equivalent to that sink, he suggests. He goes on to analyze the ways that use of the atmosphere might be justly allocated, concluding that some form of emissions trading is not only moral but pragmatic.

In examining the disparities between rich and poor, he asks whether there is an underlying moral basis for preferring our immediate neighbors to others in a distant land — a chain of argument that leads him to call into question humanity's current assumptions about the importance of nationalism.

He asks, for example, why people in the developed world do not feel compelled to spend more on overseas development assistance. Again, he uses an imaginary analogy to make his point. He describes a man named Bob who has sunk his life savings into a fancy antique Bugatti automobile and is then forced to decide whether to throw a switch that will divert a runaway train away from a playing child onto an unused side-track where his car is parked. "Bob decides not to throw the switch," he writes. "The child is killed...."

"Bob's conduct, most of us will immediately respond, was gravely wrong," he continues. But then he reports that for about \$200 a year, the life of one of the millions of poor children in the developing world can be easily saved through immunizations, better nutrition, and so on. So he asks: are not all citizens in the developed world, who could surely sacrifice \$200 a year to save at least one child, as morally reprehensible as Bob if they do not make such a contribution and/or support the political will of their governments to do so?

Ultimately, Prof. Singer writes, these and other points suggest that our "problems are now too intertwined to be well resolved in a system consisting of nation-states, in which citizens give their primary, and near exclusive, loyalty to their own nation-state, rather than to the largely global community."

Failure by rich nations to recognize the importance of the wider community is not only "seriously morally wrong" but "a danger to their security," he writes.

He calls for stronger "institutions of global decision-making," perhaps along the lines of a European Union style world legislature. He also considers the prospects for eliminating the veto power on the UN Security Council and the need for some kind of international force to provide assistance when humanitarian intervention is needed.

While such proposals have been made before, what makes Singer's book significant is his extended discussion of the ethics concerning national sovereignty.

"National sovereignty has no *intrinsic* moral weight," he writes.

What is needed, Prof. Singer writes, is a new global ethic to replace the outmoded concept of sovereignty. Although clearly a secularist in his outlook, Prof. Singer points to religion as one possible source.

"Some aspects of ethics can fairly be claimed to be universal, or nearly so," he writes, pointing specifically to the Golden Rule as found in most world religions.

He notes, however, that the world's religions have had a hard time agreeing on much, and offers that in the end, "it is our capacity to reason that is the universal solvent."

From a Bahá'í view, there is much to agree with in Prof. Singer's analysis. For nearly 160 years, Bahá'ís have advocated stronger international institutions and, specifically, a united world commonwealth with the power of collective security to keep the peace.

Bahá'ís would suggest, however, that religion is the "universal solvent," and that it can and must become the basis for a new global ethic. Bahá'ís believe religion has been the underlying motivation for average men and women to embrace increasingly wider loyalties, whether in creating unity among tribes, city-states, or within nation-states.

Bahá'u'lláh said the principle of human oneness must be the foundation of a new global ethic aimed at promoting a united and ever-advancing global civilization.

"It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world," wrote Bahá'u'lláh more than a century ago. "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

Although much of what Prof. Singer outlines has been said before, *One World* stands as a significant contribution to the ever-enlarging body of work that acknowledges humanity's essential interdependence. His point of view, as a highly respected secular philosopher, offers yet another perspective on the inevitable emergence of a global civilization.\*

*"[P]roblems are now too intertwined to be well resolved in a system consisting of nation-states, in which citizens give their primary, and near exclusive, loyalty to their own nation-state, rather than to the largely global community."*

— Peter Singer

## An appeal to logic on national sovereignty

**One World: The Ethics of Globalization**

*By Peter Singer*

**Yale University Press**

**New Haven and London**

In academic circles, Peter Singer is considered one of the top experts on bioethics. His books on the ethics of the treatment of animals, for example, are best sellers in the scholarly world.

He is also known for his controversial views. His ruminations on euthanasia for severely disabled infants have earned him the enmity of anti-abortion and disabled rights groups. Others laud him for his advocacy of humane treatment for animals.

The Australian-born Singer's reputation as a first-class scholar led Princeton University in 1999 to appoint him to the prestigious DeCamp Professorship of Bioethics at the University Center for Human Values.

In his latest book, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*, Prof. Singer turns his attention to the ethical questions surrounding state sovereignty in an increasingly interdependent world.

His conclusions are not new. Like other thinkers over the last hundred years, Prof. Singer suggests that humanity's long-term prospects, even its very survival, turns on the degree to which men and women begin to see themselves as world citizens and build new institutions of global governance that can effectively respond to the challenges posed by sharing one small planet.

"How well we come through the era of globalization (perhaps whether we come through it at all) will depend on how we respond ethically to the idea that we live in one world," writes Prof. Singer, echoing statements by H. G. Wells, Albert Einstein, various secretaries general of the United Nations, and others.

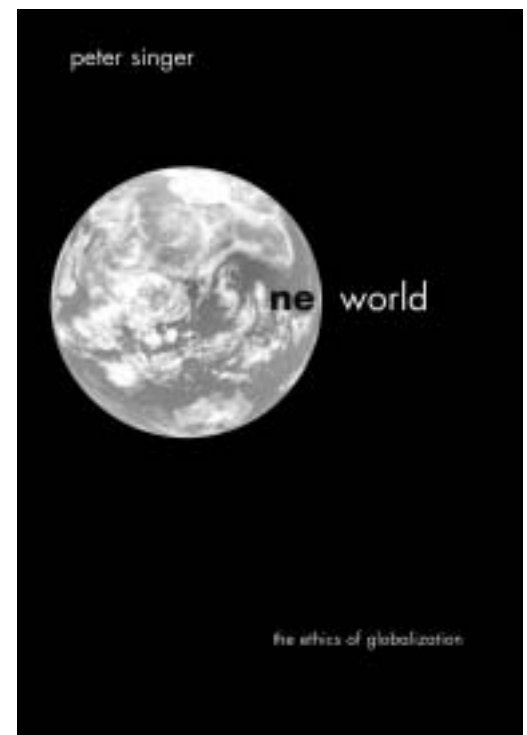
Partly because of Prof. Singer's credentials as a ethicist, and partly because of the utilitarian approach he brings to his analysis, *One World* is a noteworthy book, offering fresh perspectives and insights.

Prof. Singer considers four areas in which the ethical challenges of global interdependence seem especially pressing: concern over atmospheric pollution; issues of world trade; the problem of genocide and humanitarian intervention; and the disparity of wealth among the nations. He orga-

nizes these under short chapter headings — "one atmosphere," "one economy," "one law," and "one community" — that telegraph his conclusion.

Part of what makes the book fresh is Prof. Singer's use of short imaginary analogies to crystallize the ethical issues facing humanity.

For example, writing about the how nation states might equitably share the burden of reducing greenhouses gases — the main issue in the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change Treaty — he asks the reader to imagine "that we live in a village where everyone puts their wastes down a giant sink."



In his analogy, no one knows what happens to the wastes, but since they disappear without impact, no one worries about it, even though some people put lots more down the sink than others.

But then, he writes, "conditions change, so that the sink's capacity to carry away our wastes is used up to the full." There is unpleasant seepage and a bad smell. "[H]ence our right to unchecked waste disposal be-

*Review, continued on page 15*