



WATER IS SACRED

Local Control and Local Self-Sufficiency

This past summer, my wife Maria-Elena and I had the privilege and honour of representing Change for Children as monitors for the community water project with the Christian Base Communities of El Bloque in Northern Nicaragua.

Northern Chinandega/Leon has been plagued by drought over the last several years, especially since the ravages of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. This region was home to some of the best Valencia orange groves in the Americas until cotton took over as the major cash crop in the 1960s. Heavy use of pesticides and herbicides, coupled with massive deforestation, caused soil depletion, climatic changes and significant reduction of rainfall in the area.

Farming communities in the region desperately need water. Women and children are forced to walk for miles to secure water for the daily needs of their family. Irrigation for crops and cattle rarely functions. The Community Water Project that Change for Children is financing will provide yearround access to clean water and complementary health and hygiene programs to 8,424 people in 20 communities. The project involves the construction of wells and water systems and the participation of



“The wars of the next century will be about water”

– Ismail Serageldin, Vice President of the World Bank

“If you privatize water, you will suffocate the poor, who are the majority” – Clemente Martinez

project beneficiaries, including women, in the design, management and maintenance of these systems. The project also provides for administrative, technical and managerial capacity building for the local NGO El Bloque in the delivery of community development programming to project beneficiaries.

In our travels throughout the region, we came across many interesting characters and community “movers and shakers.” In the town of Wikilli, we met Don Thomas who has been responsible for keeping the

well in his community going for two years after the rubber seals in the hand pump wore out. Thomas was able to fabricate his own replacement seals from used bus tires and was known as the local handyman for keeping everybody in his community in water during the dry season. During our visit to the region, Thomas even offered to train others in the neighboring community of Los Caracos in the maintenance and upkeep of their community well. During the dry season, the women of this community are forced to carry their laundry a mile to the river to wash it and then carry it back wet in heavy 5-gallon pails, in addition to ferrying water from the river for household use.

...continued on page 4

Ed Carson is a teacher at St. Angela's Catholic School in Edmonton. He has been involved with Change for Children for over 18 years. Ed has led 9 youth and adult delegations to Nicaragua and inspired many to join Change for Children in solidarity with the peoples of Central America.



Change for Children Association (CFCA) is an Edmonton-based non-profit, non-governmental organization with a 27-year history of working for sustainable, grassroots community development in Latin America and the Philippines.

Our development projects, their cost and priority, are determined by our Southern partners according to the current needs of their communities.

In Canada, our education program engages the public in a process of awareness raising, analysis and action on issues of global justice.

While CFCA highly values its partnerships with communities of various religious and political persuasions, we are a non-sectarian, non-partisan society.



is published three times annually by Change for Children as part of our education program. The views expressed by the publication are not necessarily those of Change for Children Association.

**CFCA, #221 9624 108 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 1A4
Fax: 780-448-1507
www.changeforchildren.org
cfca@www.changeforchildren.org**

Registered Charitable Organization No.
11884 9496 RR0001

WE ARE ALL CONNECTED

Water is the theme for this issue of *Bridges*. Working on this edition of the newsletter, I have thought profoundly about how water connects communities through rivers, streams, oceans, and lakes that flow into one another. I realize now with greater clarity how important this idea is in our work for local and global justice. It is crucial to remember that by our actions and choices we affect each other. The amount of water we withdraw from a river and the quality of water we return to it, affect those downstream positively and negatively. As I absorb information and statistics on the state of water on our planet, I realize how important water is to each one of us and how we need to protect this vital resource. This issue with its water stories that take us from watersheds in Central Alberta to wells in Central America gives new meaning to the words of John Thorson: **“Water links us to our neighbors in a way more profound and complex than any other.”**



This year has been alive with change and transformation at Change for Children with new staff joining the organization and others leaving to work on new projects. I have been working with Change for Children since May of this year and I am inspired by the stories, the commitment and the energy that is alive in this organization. As water constantly metamorphosing, so is our organization. Laura Roberts our intern is now in Eritrea as she works at building new partnerships for Change for Children in Africa. She is very excited about her work with the National Union of Eritrean women and their grassroots education initiatives. This past year we also began a new project, Rural Roots and it has been an amazing experience thus far with visits to rural communities across the province, learning more about the communities and issues close to home. Water is a particularly relevant topic for rural areas both locally and globally. Drought, contamination, and privatization of water are issues affecting the Alberta and the global community.

One common connection we all have to water is that it is a non-renewable resource, thus it is extremely important to renew and continue our efforts to work on projects such as the community wells project that Ed Carson writes about. As we enter the second UN decade of action for water; water for life, we remember how important our projects are in that they are projects for life and justice. Thank you to everyone who has contributed in many diverse ways this year to Change for Children. Have a joyous holiday season and New Year and let us remember as Don Ruzicka says in his article, “we are all downstream from one another.”

– **Fiona Cavanagh**, Education Coordinator

IN THIS ISSUE

**ordinary people
can do
extraordinary
things**

– Hank Zyp, CFCA Founder

Local Control and Self-Sufficiency
Water is a Human Right
Contaminated Waters
Water is Life
Iron Creek Watershed Alliance
Youth Engagement at CFCA

Eduardo Carson	1, 4
Cecily Mills	3-4
Delmy Garcia-Hoyt	5
Compilation	6-7
Don Ruzicka	8
Fiona Cavanagh	9

FEATURES: Food for Thought 8 Educator’s Corner 9 Projects 10-11

Editors: Fiona Cavanagh, Cecily Mills Compilation: Fiona Cavanagh Layout: Chris Peters

PRINCIPLES OF WATER JUSTICE

Water is essential for the entire biosphere, not just humans.

Water is nature's gift and cannot be owned and turned into a commodity.

Water is exhaustible. It is our duty to conserve and use it sustainably. No-one has a right to pollute it.

Water is a human right. We need to work to guarantee a free basic provision of safe water for all.

Efficient water management starts from the point of view of the most disadvantaged-impooverished women in particular, who bear the burden of fetching water

Democratic local community participation can ensure sustainable use and equitable distribution.



Source:
New Internationalist 2003

ISN'T ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER A HUMAN RIGHT?

Apparently not! Canada was the only country of the 53 countries on The Human Rights Commission that voted no to recognizing this essential right. Challenged about the decision, Bill Graham, then Foreign Affairs Minister, replied, I...as for everyone have a right to water, we must acknowledge that we are neighbors with a country that has its own ideas about access to water. So, Canada voted against recognizing water as an essential human right because the U.S.A. might not agree!

While we take household and drinking water for granted in Canada, a large proportion of the world's population does not have access to water. In the city of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, I watched long lineups of people waiting to fill their buckets when the occasional water truck made it to their neighborhood. Even when they reached the head of the line before the water gave up, there wasn't

enough water to wash clothes. Women walked kilometers in search of contaminated ponds.

At the regional hospital, red thumbtacks on a city map traced the demographics of the cholera outbreak. Almost all the cases of this deadly disease occurred along the polluted trickle of the once majestic Rio Grande as it snaked its way through the city.

Hurricane Mitch swelled that river to unprecedented levels taking lives, homes and bridges. A long-time missionary in Honduras, working with the victims of another swollen river, blamed greed and poverty for the widespread damage of Mitch. **Pirating of precious woods, slash-and-burn techniques to clear land for cattle ranching and for pesticide-greedy export crops, land-poor campesinos reduced to farming rocky slopes and selling firewood, have**

severely damaged the watersheds of Latin Americans rivers.

Ranching and farming in rainforest soils means chemical and organic contamination of the rivers used by communities for drinking and washing. At the clinic in Mulukuk, a small community in what used to be rain forest, I was shocked to see a toddler with a huge, ugly pustule on his cheek. Dorothy Granada, the nurse, told me that these were common among children washed in the river but rarely seen among those with access to well water

In Chahal, Guatemala, where I lived for three years, the water from the tap, as in most places in Latin America, was not safe to drink. During the rainy season, the tap water was a chocolate colour. Even after filtration, the boiled water had a barnyard taste, colour and odour that made it undrinkable. Very few could afford bottled water. The result was the prevalence of intestinal parasites and diseases, high child mortality and kidney disease in adults.

Cecily Mills holds a PhD in Microbiology from the University of Alberta. She spent seven years in Central America with Witness for Peace and with the Volunteer Missionary Movement. Cecily is a past board member and committed volunteer at Change for Children Association

...continued on page 04



CFC Founders Hank & Tillie Zyp Honoured

This past summer, Change for Children purchased a **bench in Mother Teresa Community Park in honor of Hank and Tillie Zyp**, founders of Change for Children. The bench is situated on the former site of St. Michael's school where CFC's office was located for over 18 years. The dedication reads as follows:

This bench commemorates the work of Hank and Tillie Zyp with **Change for Children Association** and their incredible contribution to this community, the inner city and the people of the global south.

Hank and Tillie have been selected to receive the **2004 Stars of the Millennium Volunteer Award** that will be presented by the Wild Rose Foundation on December 3rd at NOON. Out of the many nominations received by the foundation, only 6 awards will be given. Hank and Tillie were both selected in the Senior's category. The selection committee felt that their volunteer accomplishments over the years have made a significant difference in the lives of people in the community and therefore would like to recognize and congratulate them.

Water as a Human Right ...continued from page 3

Globally, over a billion people use unsafe sources of drinking water. Two billion lack basic sanitation. Six thousand children die each day from lack of clean water. To solve the problem, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund require that poor countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America turn over the management of public water to multinational corporations, who in turn receive loans to build and maintain water systems. Water becomes a privatized commodity distributed on the basis of the ability to pay, not as a human right. Wherever water supplies have been privatized, the poor are suffering, because the main goal of the water companies is to make profits. This has led to sharp increases in the cost of water. In Ghana, where the majority earn \$30 a month, the monthly cost of water spiralled to \$20. Ten million people in the southern townships of South Africa have had their water cut off. They simply cannot pay the rising cost of water. **Meanwhile, the revenues of the ten largest multinational water companies rose to U.S.\$30 billion.** Water contracts are usually granted for 15 to 30 years, giving a guaranteed income to giant corporations.

How do we respond to the challenge? On a global scale, this resource is so scarce that it prompted Ismail Serageldin, vice-president of the World Bank, to speculate that the wars of the 21st century would be fought over it. This includes us, Canadians, who possess 20% of the planet's water. Ana Ella Gomez of El Salvador's Consumer Protection Centre warned us:

Canadians must realize that what is happening in the South is also going to happen here. No country in the world is safe from the privatization of its Common wealth. Already, the waters of the Great Lakes may not be able to withstand challenge from NAFTA. We must petition our government to declare access to safe water a basic human right and to work to make this a reality for ourselves and for the world's poor. Change for Children and its sister organization Rainbow of Hope for Children have worked to provide water for drinking and for irrigation in the South.

Protecting the water we have is essential in Canada and in the South. It is especially important to restore watersheds and promote agricultural methods that do not contribute to soil erosion and water contamination. I met in the three years I spent in Nicaragua, farmers who maximized their crops and reduced costs of inputs by composting, terracing and planting fruit trees for shade and water retention. In the space of a few years, one farmer had increased the capacity of his water source tenfold. A number of NGOs, including Habitat for Humanity, are using dry latrines which not only prevent contamination of ground water and wells but also create rich and safe fertilizer.

Water is synonymous to life, to sacredness. To privatize life is incomprehensible. Let us heed these words of Ndumanene Silungwe of Malawi and work together to protect this vital element essential to survival for all.

Water is Sacred ...continued from page 1

In the community of El Cerro in the municipality of San Pedro de del Norte, we met "Las Chisperas de la comunidad" - The Sparks of the Community - a group of women very vocal about the need for a well in their community. They are tired of carrying heavy buckets of water uphill from neighboring villages. However, the women vehemently opposed the installation of an electric pump in their proposed well. Already suffering from increased charges in their electric bills since the privatization of electric energy in Nicaragua, the women refused to enslave themselves

in the downward spiral of economic dependency. If they had to pay for electricity to pump the water from the well, they argued, the resource would never truly be theirs.

The community water project that Change for Children is financing in conjunction with CIDA and generous donations collected by Bishop Denis Croteau of the Northwest Territories, will allow community members to take control of their resources and ensure a sustainable future for themselves and their children.

CONTAMINATED WATERS: The Story of Mexico and El Salvador

“So it has been, so it is, so it shall be: time and again it is said that nature is a heartless mother, cursing us with catastrophe since time immemorial.” But we must ask, “Just how natural are the natural catastrophes lashing the world?”

As if these manufactured catastrophes that condemn millions to hunger and flight weren't enough, there are many natural catastrophes that would be better called social catastrophes. Natural phenomena affect those who are most vulnerable, especially the poor. It follows then that addressing natural disasters must mean somehow addressing poverty.

Water, a sacred, liquid resource has been used for centuries in its many different forms. For many it is a scarce resource that must be fought over. Soon its scarcity will become an excuse to go to war. We have the possibility to manage water in positive and negative ways. For decades development of our communities has not taken into account environmental, population, cultural or social pressures that wealth creation has on our precious water.

Small acts of carelessness in building our homes have large effects down river. In countries like El Salvador and Mexico we can see that the extraction of sand for use as a building-material has seriously damaged riverbeds and channels. Add to this the discharge of household and industrial pollutants have rendered rivers into foul, lifeless sewers. In many poor Latin American countries people are driven from their rural homes to live as in cities as squatters, clinging to life along the banks of rivers, exposed to toxic wastes and tropical floods.

In Cuernavaca, Mexico the struggle for water takes another form. Thousands of Campesinos fleeing poverty in the southern states of Mexico have squatted for fifty years along tracks in the abandoned city railway yard. The city has refused to develop proper water or sewage services to these families and workers. Successive city councils have reasoned that as the railway ran on federal land the city has no

obligation to help these people. A pharmaceutical company beside their community gave these people water until last year. When the company closed these people had no choice but to buy commercial water that has impoverished them while others make profit.



We are convinced that disasters are not natural. They are the product of decisions that place profit above the welfare of people.

The effort to create wealth has many costs to our precious water supplies. In El Salvador between 90,000 to 120,000 hectares of mangrove forest have been cut down in recent years to grow cotton for export. The loss of these forests have destroyed marine habitat that supported the fisheries of El Salvador, along with other vital aspects of El Salvador's biodiversity.

The agro export industry has created further damage to the ecology of El Salvador. El Salvador is a major producer of sugar cane. With more than 68,482 hectares of sugar cane fields in production the country produces 500,000 tons annually. Half of this produce is consumed locally and the rest is sold on the international market. El Salvador is not the world's biggest producer of sugar cane. But by the end of 1960s El Salvador had gained the world record for insecticide use. To illustrate: in 1964 the entire Salvadoran coastline was

sprayed with DDT and other chemicals.

The effects of these chemicals are clearly seen in the coastal regions where CFCA has been active in El Salvador. People began moving back to this region after the civil war about fifteen years ago. In the last five years, people of all ages have been diagnosed with kidney failure because of contaminants in their drinking water, including high levels of DDT. Experts calculate that some 500 years will be needed to reverse the damage that has been done by this insecticide to the local underground water supply.

In the mountainous state of Guerrero, Mexico is situated Tlamacazapa, an indigenous town. Their drinking water is situated in small cisterns carved into the rocky hillside of their town. A sickening brew of cholera, typhoid, and heavy metals from nearby mines contaminates the water. The local council fights over who has rights to build a modern water system, while pigs, dogs and humans use the only place available to defecate and relieve themselves, the rocky hillside.

Waterborne contaminants are a fact of life in most of El Salvador, Mexico, and any other third world country. There every available ounce of water is used for daily living. In many places people gather near rivers to wash clothes and bathe while others carry the water from nearby to drink and cook.

In El Salvador, because it is such a small, overpopulated country, the devastation can be seen at glance. More than 12,000 children die from waterborne illnesses, while less than 2% of primary forests that act as natural filtration systems are still standing. More than 70% of the land has suffered erosion and more than 50% is over-utilized by agriculture. Manufacturing companies use water for garbage disposal and contaminate 90% of the country's rivers. Pharmaceutical companies in El Salvador alone produce more than 9000 cubic meters of sewage each day.

We come to understand that the disasters that affect our precious water are not natural; people have a hand in these disasters. Let's join our hands again for a different purpose. We need their strength to bring about change.

Delmy Garcia-Hoyt is a social worker and currently vice-president on the board at Change for Children. She has been a long time volunteer and has been involved with Change for Children for many years.



WATER

1.1 BILLION PEOPLE HAVE NO ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER AND 2.4 BILLION LACK PROPER SANITARY PROVISION. Every 14 seconds someone dies from a disease caused by contaminated water. Of the two million men, women and children affected each year most victims are under the age of five.

In developing countries around the world, about **80 PERCENT OF ILLNESSES** are linked to poor water and sanitation conditions. **70 PERCENT OF WATER-RELATED DISEASES** could be avoided if everyone had access to clean water.

In developing countries, it is common for water collectors, usually women and girls, to have to **WALK SEVERAL KILOMETERS EVERY DAY TO FIND WATER.** Filled pots and jerry cans **WEIGH AS MUCH AS 20 KILOGRAMS.** For women in the global south, water scarcity means having to travel larger distances in search of water. Women and girls do 80 percent of the water work around the world.

ONE IN SIX PEOPLE, MOST OF WHOM LIVE IN ASIA, AFRICA OR LATIN AMERICA HAVE NO ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER. People in the developing world make up 75 percent of those without water and will make up 90 percent of those without access, by the year 2025.

84 PERCENT OF THOSE WHO LACK BASIC SANITATION AND WATER LIVE IN RURAL AREAS. Rural communities have a different relationship to water than do urban dwellers. Water dominates every aspect of their lives. People in the countryside live off the land and depend on water in different ways than those in cities.

BY 2015, AN ADDITIONAL 1.6 BILLION PEOPLE WILL REQUIRE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER SUPPLY AND 2.2 BILLION WILL REQUIRE ACCESS TO SANITATION. These numbers are required to meet international development targets of halving the proportion of people without access to improved water or sanitation.



ER IS

LIFE

If the current demand for water continues as it is now, **BY 2025 THE DEMAND FOR FRESH WATER IS EXPECTED TO RISE 56 PERCENT MORE** than the amount that is currently available. By the year 2025, as much as **two-thirds of the world's population will be living in conditions of serious water shortage** and one-third will be living in conditions of absolute water scarcity.

The reality of water today is that there is a lot of profit to be made through privatization. Currently only **5 PERCENT OF WATER SERVICES ARE IN PRIVATE HANDS**, which means that expansion of private services are **ESTIMATED AT A PROFIT OF ONE TRILLION DOLLARS**. Gérard Mestrallet, CEO of Suez (large water corporation), states summarizes this as, 'Water is an efficient product. It is a product which normally would be free, and our job is to sell it. But it is a **PRODUCT THAT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO LIFE.**'

Between 1992 and 2002, **ONE IN THREE WATER-RELATED LOANS** by the World Bank were conditional on some form of privatization.

Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux and Vivendi SA are the General Motors and Ford Company of the water world. Both are ranked among the 100 largest corporations **WITH OVER 1.5 BILLION IN ANNUAL SALES** in the world. Between the two companies they have controlling interests in water companies in over **120 COUNTRIES ON FIVE CONTINENTS AND DISTRIBUTE WATER TO ALMOST 100 MILLION PEOPLE.**

The number of large dams worldwide has climbed from just over **5,000 IN 1950 TO 38,000 TODAY** and the number of waterways altered for navigation has grown from fewer than **9000 IN 1900 TO ALMOST 500,000.**

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



"The water cycle connects us all, and from water we can learn the path of peace and the way of freedom. We can learn how to transcend water wars created by greed, waste, and injustice, which create scarcity in our water-abundant planet. We can work with the water cycle to reclaim water abundance. We can work together to create water democracies. And if we build democracy, we will build peace."

-Vandana Shiva

WATER FROM A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

THE IRON CREEK WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY was formed in 2001. Iron Creek winds its way through Flagstaff County in east central Alberta. Carol Wilson and her husband farm in the county. Starting a watershed group was largely due to Carol's vision and motivation. **With the growing concern over water in this province**, the group felt that it would be a good idea to be proactive and make positive change. Our members are both urban and rural.

If we all realized that there is always someone downstream from us, we would strive towards adopting better management practices.

The riparian area around creeks, rivers, streams and lakes, is one of the most important areas for wildlife. 80% of Alberta's wildlife species use these areas for all, or part, of their life cycle requirements. We attempt to make farmers aware of the impact that they have on these sensitive areas. We have purchased a solar-powered, portable watering system that we loan out to cattle producers in our county. This system pumps water from the creek to a water tank situated away from the creek. This keeps livestock from entering the creek to drink and also from contaminating the water with manure and urine. The result is cleaner water for users downstream. As a result of using our pumping system, many producers have purchased their own systems and are contributing to keeping clean the water that runs through their farms.

School Partnerships

This spring we did a riparian tree planting with 33 grade five and six students. We had some of our partners, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Cows and Fish, and Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association, help us with the day. By helping plant trees in a riparian area, kids learned about the importance of wetlands, trees and how they work towards keeping our water clean.

The drought and the BSE problem have been major concerns to farmers.

As a result, we have struggled to bring in new members and keep our focus. We decided to take our awareness message to the school system. We were able to access funding from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans through their "Stewardship In Action" initiative.

One of the major functions that we have utilized this funding for took place in Killam on October 26th. With the cooperation of our partners; Alberta Environment, Cows and Fish, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Alberta Pacific, Alberta Agro-Forestry, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, Inside Education, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association and Alberta Fish and Game, we hosted a "Wetlands, Trees and Forest Day" for 139 grade 5 and 6 students from our county. All of the presentations drove home the importance of a healthy watershed. It is our hope that this day will have an impact on these students and make them aware of the importance of a healthy watershed.

Clean water is everyone's responsibility!

For more information please contact Don Ruzicka: 780-385-2474 or ruzickadon@hotmail.com.

Don and his wife Marie farm holistically and organically near Killam AB. In 2003, their farm received the "Excellence in Grazing Management" award from the Inter Mountain Section of "The Society For Range Management." They also received the national "Countryside Canada Habitat Stewardship" award recognizing their farming practices that promote wild life habitat.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT CFCA

RURAL ROOTS

The Rural Roots Project at Change for Children recently finished two tours of rural Alberta and trained nine youth to travel across the province giving an interactive presentation on the root causes of poverty and social injustice. The tours were a huge success and there was incredible support and feedback given for this project from community groups, NGO's, schools and students. The first tour went to Millet, New Sarepta, Tofield, Wainwright and Olds. The second tour visited Lacombe, Olds, Bowden, Pincher Creek, Lundbreck, Crowsnest Pass and Banff.

There were many schools that we could not visit and we look forward to doing tours again next year. The Rural Roots Project created a 32-page guide for taking action in school or community. These are available from Fiona at Change for Children. These guides were distributed to students in schools that we visited. We also created a CD rom for teachers with videos from Change for Children projects and a compilation of global education resources for the classroom.

The final phase of the Rural Roots project will take place in March 2005. Youth from the communities we visited plus youth from around the province are invited to participate in the **Youth Summit 2005**. For more information or to obtain resources from the Rural Roots project please contact Fiona at Change for Children.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to all of the communities we visited, to the youth participants and to CIDA for making this possible. The May issue of *Bridges* will contain an extended article documenting the entire *Rural Roots* project.

“ Can you spell INSPIRING? Because that is what the Rural Roots Tour was for me, just seeing wonderful Alberta and all those youth who had all these questions about so many things made realize that I am not alone in this fight against the apathy we tend to portray of youth. I felt that I can stand up and keep going because things can be done to stop Poverty, and especially what causes it. Hopefully others have been left as inspired as I was and together we can create that change we long for.”

– Rural Roots participant Andrea Figueroa

NICARAGUAN YOUTH TOUR:

Change for Children organized several youth tours over the years. These tours have had a great impact on the Change for Children community as many youth participants are now active volunteers with many aspects of the organization. This year Change for Children will be having another youth tour to Nicaragua and the tour dates will be in July, 2005.

The key objectives of the tour are:

- To provide Albertan youth the opportunity to experience Nicaraguan life and culture and to encounter the ways in which young people there face the tremendous challenges of living in the second poorest country of the western hemisphere;
- To increase solidarity between the people of Nicaragua and Alberta;
- To explore how the arts can be tools for youth empowerment both in Nicaragua and in Canada;
- To develop leadership and critical thinking skills to become advocates for social justice within our own communities.

For detailed information and application form please contact the Change for Children Office.

EDUCATOR'S CORNER



March 22 is World Water Day, as declared by the United Nations in 1992. As well, the year 2005 marks the second United Nations International Decade for Action, and the theme is, **“Water for Life”**. Have a discussion with your students on why World Water Day exists and discuss some important facts about water that are given in the LifeCycles resource listed below. Another activity could be to have each student track the amount of water he/she uses in one full day. Visit the site: <http://www.unesco.org/water> for the United Nations resolution declaring World Water Day.

e-sources and plans

LifeCycles www.lifecycleproject.ca
LifeCycles has multiple teachers guides to assist with the delivery of topics such as food security, soil and water. The guide on water is titled, *Water, the sources of life*. This guide is one of the organization's sustainable agriculture series and is available in pdf format, downloadable on their website free of charge.

Canadian Water Education for Teachers (WET) www.cwra.org

The WET Project offers guides and resources for teachers of elementary and secondary students. These excellent resources are described in detail on their website and range from \$5.00-\$30.00. They also have extensive links to many water related sites.

PROJECTS UPDATE



EL SALVADOR: Local Solutions to Local Problems.

Frequent natural disasters, increasing poverty and gang violence plague this country and drive its citizens further apart in the search for solutions. Subsistence farmers face harsh and dry conditions of the rural areas, where the increasing debt-load threatens them with the loss of their land. Here, Change for Children works with the Base Christian Communities on the Monseñor Romero Popular Resource Centre. The project is designed to give children and youth educational and cultural opportunities that will improve their vocational options and give them alternatives to gang violence, drug abuse and general helplessness.

CHILE: Cooperative Spirit

Our Partner in Santiago, CEPPAC (Centre of Professionals for Community Action) has been successful at training 65 women in technical and business management skills. The women have accessed the project's revolving loan fund and non-repayable seed fund to initiate micro-enterprise businesses (both collective and individual) that range from flower shops to bakeries, restaurants to sewing workshops and community gardens. The project has provided women with greater levels of economic independence (personal autonomy) and interdependence (social organization), bettering the income and quality of life of their families.

Change for Children's Projects Promote Local Ownership of Resources and Inspire Actions that Build Healthy Communities

Change for Children's Projects focus on community development and provide training and resources in: alternative health care, basic human needs, sustainable agriculture, cultural education, vocations for women, small business development and early childhood education.

MEXICO: Supporting Small Business Development

Despite recent positive democratic reforms in Mexico, the gap between rich and poor continues to grow. The expansion of large agri-industry and the construction of hydroelectric dams have threatened the livelihoods of small farmers, indigenous peoples and independent workers.



Our agricultural project with Fundacion Comunidad benefits over 500 agricultural producers in Cuernavaca, Morelos. It is expanding their capacity for action through a process of technical training and the creation of micro-enterprise initiatives. Key goals of this project include the improvement of the health and diversity of the local economy by increasing the capacity of local producers via organization, training, technical and financial support; the empowerment of women in the marketplace and community; and community participation in the development of government policies regarding agriculture.



PERU: Citizen Participation in Local Democracy Guarantees Rights to Health

CFCA's NGO partner CIDEPSA (Centre for Research in Health Development) on the outskirts of Lima, reports that this project has strengthened democracy in their country. It involves health promotion information and outreach in a poor barrio where transmission rates for AIDS and STDs are staggering. The project has been successful at educating men, women and youth about the effects of

AIDS and STDS and methods to avoid their transmission. The project also involves community capacity building in terms of the effective delivery and dissemination of health promotion materials and workshops.

NICARAGUA:

Community Control of Resources

Nicaragua continues to be the third poorest country in the Americas and faces major challenges of inequity and poverty, which affect children and women most severely. Our Community Water Project in Chinandega and Leon provides 20 communities with year-round access to water resources for domestic and agricultural use. Local control of the water resource is managed by the community water committees, which are made up of mostly women in each of the 20 beneficiary communities. Phase II of our Community Medicine Chest Project concentrates on the cultivation and processing of natural herbal medicine for curative and preventative health. Thirty-five Indigenous communities in the BOSAWAS forest reserve with a collective population of over 9000 are benefiting from this important sustainable development initiative.



Building a Culture of Peace & Cooperation

This project began in September and will reach over 2,500 children in Managua and Esteli and involve inner city youth in Edmonton. It endeavors to educate the whole child – implying the understanding that addressing the self-esteem and self-awareness of working children and youth in difficult circumstances will lead to the empowerment necessary for them to take a leadership role in advocating for and protecting their rights. This project brings long-term CFCA NGO partners in Nicaragua (INPRHU and FUNARTE) together in a national Nicaraguan campaign promoting the Rights of the Child. A delegation of Alberta youth will visit this project in July of 2005 to explore issues of art-therapy and activism through the arts.

INTERNSHIP UPDATE

ERITREA: Local Capacity Building and Skills Development

Working with the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), Change for Children is establishing a training centre for over 500 women in Dekemhare, in the province of Akele Guzay, Eritrea. The Centre will provide practical technical training, job skills training, and workshops for women on HIV/AIDS, gender issues, family planning and human rights. Our CIDA Intern for 2004/05 Laura Roberts is currently in Eritrea working to strengthen our partnership with NUEW and increase cooperation between CFCA and our African counterparts.



UPCOMING PROJECTS 2005

BOLIVIA

Mosoj Yan, CFCA's partner NGO on this project, offers adolescent girls workshops in life skills, income generation and occupational therapy. The intent of this prevention project is to ensure that children and adolescents who 'work' in the street do not become a part of the population of children that 'live' in the streets.



HONDURAS

Our partner on the Island of Roatan in Western Honduras is Familias Saludables (Healthy Families). They operate a training program that educates youth about the prevention and early detection of AIDS and STDs as well as a mother to child AIDS transmission reduction program.

BRAZIL

The Unified Group for Black Awareness (GRUCON) is a community based, grass-roots NGO in Salvador, Bahia. GRUCON works with children and youth to organize and mobilize community members to take action for their rights and obtain the resources they need to survive. Change for Children will help build a community centre here that will house GRUCON's programs. Change for Children will also continue to support our long term NGO partner Thalita in their ongoing programming for street girls in Maceio.

MEXICO

In conjunction with the Fundacion Santa Maria, Change for Children will support a small business development program in Tlaquepaque, Jalisco. The project provides women with opportunities to develop small businesses and follows up with marketing support for their organic cotton products.

GUATEMALA

In conjunction with AMMID (the Association for Mayan-Mam Development) Change for Children will support a bilingual education program designed to encourage women and girls to further their education. Female illiteracy rates are alarmingly high in Comitancillo, in Guatemala's western highlands, which is the poorest region in the country.

Change for Children gratefully acknowledges our loyal donors, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Wild Rose Foundation, for their generous support of these projects.

