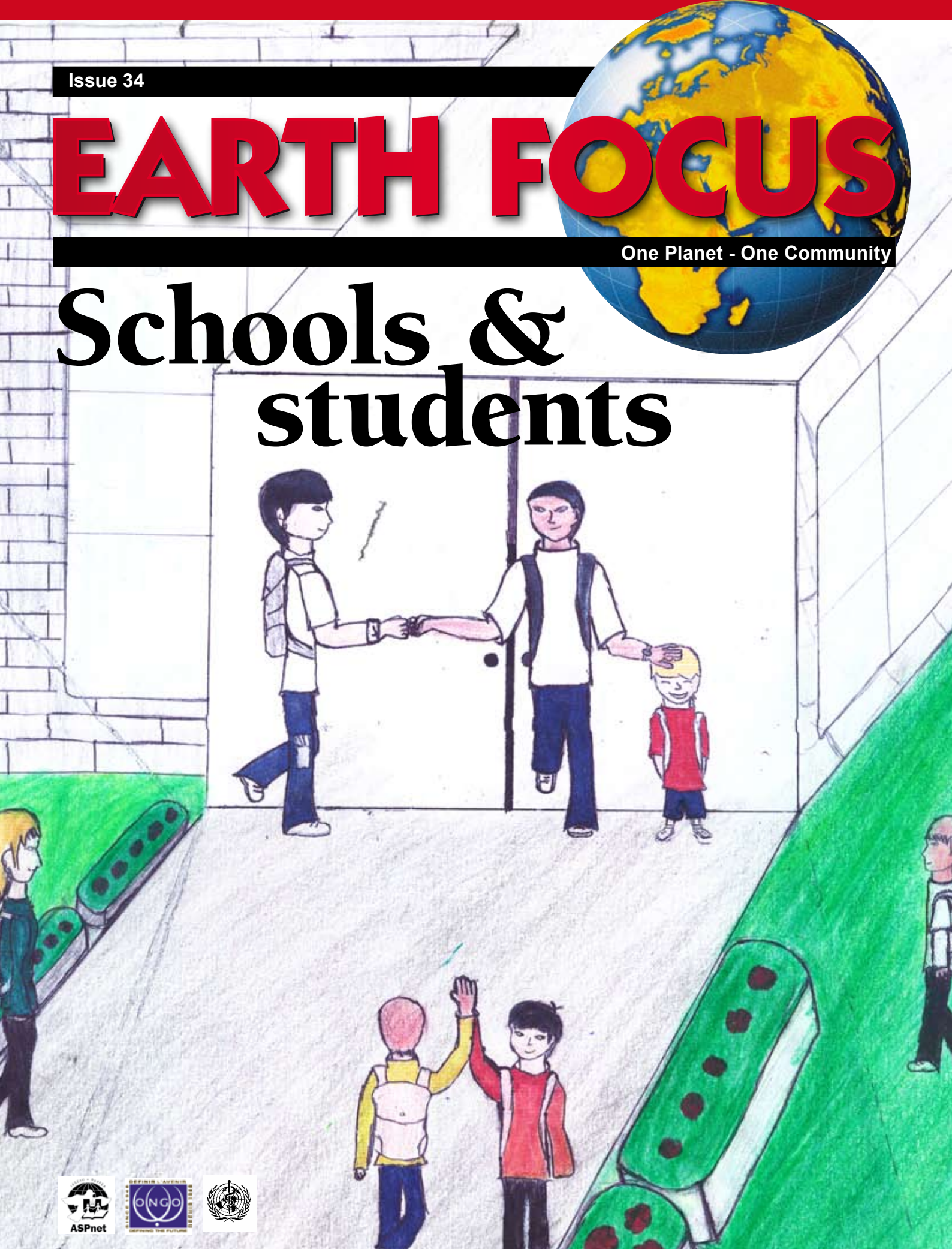


Issue 34

EARTH FOCUS

One Planet - One Community

Schools & students



Produced by Young People for Young People of All Ages

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To students, teaching staff and readers of Earth Focus far and wide,

I'd like to introduce myself. My name is

Kate Brown and I am the new editor of the Earth Focus Magazine. I'm a Citizenship teacher – a new subject in the British curriculum which aims to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to make a difference in their communities and the wider world. I've taught in schools in the UK and Geneva and written educational material for a range of different NGOs and international organisations. I'm thrilled to have been asked to work with the team at Earth Focus.



This new beginning is a great opportunity to take stock and reflect on how we, at Earth Focus, can best meet your needs and incorporate your ideas. I'd love to hear your suggestions and comments, and of course receive your contributions: do contact me at editor@earthfocus.org. It is only through the insightful, emotive and passionate voices of students, and the rich experiences of school staff, that Earth Focus exists, and this edition, 'Schools and Students', is a case in point.

Earth Focus is honoured to welcome Peter McMurray, Head of the Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa, as our Guest Editor (see page 3). We are grateful that he has taken the time to share his thoughts on the International Baccalaureate's Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) component, despite the difficult situation in Kenya. Two of his students, who visited the Earth Focus headquarters before Christmas, share their experiences of the trip and their CAS on page 6 and 7.

Peter speaks of the importance of the CAS in showing young people how they can make a difference. A large section of this magazine (pages 14-32) has been dedicated to the ways that you've made a difference (from setting up an ecology club, to learning about different cultures, to shooting hoops).

I have been hugely impressed by the range and scope of the activities reported here, and the passion with which you have written about them. I hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as we've enjoyed putting it together and that it inspires you to keep making a difference, and to keep telling us about it!

Kate Brown

This issue has been produced thanks to the kind support of Credit Suisse Private Banking, Bank Julius Baer & Co. Ltd and other generous anonymous donors. International School of Geneva and Old City Publishing, Inc..



Earth Focus is a forum for discussion and a catalyst for action for young people. We deal with issues concerning the environment, community, and culture at all levels.

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Printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks. Published quarterly and distributed worldwide by International School of Geneva in association with Old City Publishing, Inc.. Publication management is provided by Old City Publishing, Inc..

CODEN CODE: EAFOFG

ISSN: 1029-1784

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Editor

Creativity, Action, Service

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme Diploma programme has a number of unique ingredients that mark it apart from other college preparatory programmes. In the climate of the ever-changing world in which we live, one of the most interesting of these is the "Creativity, Action, Service" (CAS) component.

With over 2000 IB schools all over the world there is a great deal of difference in both how these CAS programmes are run and in the kinds of activities students participate in. In many ways the more fortunate schools are those based in the most challenging of communities, as the opportunities to make meaningful social impact are all the more available.

The CAS programme in Mombasa's Aga Khan Academy is rich and brings students into close contact with communities where poverty lives. Helping at de-worming clinics in the townships, inviting children suffering from AIDS to its campus for sport and recreation, and even arranging and playing soccer with the local juvenile prison team are all activities which the students at the Academy have been heavily engaged in. The meaningful difference that they make through their CAS sits well with the Academy's goal to develop its students as ethical thinkers who may well be the leaders of the future.

The recent strife in what was thought to be one of the most stable countries in Africa highlights the complex and unstable world in which we live. It is therefore all the more important that young people around the world learn to focus on those less fortunate than themselves. Teaching selfishness and hedonism is the antithesis of what the IB stands for. It is programmes such as the CAS programme in Mombasa that enable students to realize the difference they can make to others' lives with a little bit of guidance and a great deal of good will.

Earth Focus magazine can help raise the profile of these programmes. It would be wonderful if more students round the world could learn from a strong CAS, and be

able to assess how they too can make a difference and create that climate of selflessness which the world of today needs so much. If there was any doubt of that, recent events in Kenya have dispelled them. The world needs all the good its young people can engage in. CAS is a vehicle to make that happen.

Peter J. McMurray is Head of the Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa. He can be contacted on: info@akam.ac.ke
Aga Khan Academy - P.O.Box 9006 - Mombasa, Kenya



The Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa

The Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa opened in 2003. It is the first in a network of eighteen academies which will be built around the world over the next decade.

His Highness the Aga Khan founded this network with the aim of creating centres of educational excellence, not only in terms of technical ability but also creativity, intellectual curiosity and honest inquiry. He believes that developing talented young people into intellectual leaders is the best way to help countries develop their future.

The Aga Khan Academies, which will be located in countries in Africa, South and Central Asia and the Middle East will offer girls and boys an education of the highest quality from pre-primary to secondary levels, and will select students on their academic and leadership potential, not their ability to pay.

In addition, the Academies will exist to enhance the quality of teaching in the societies where they will be situated through extensive outreach programmes offered by the Academies' Professional Development Centres on each Academy campus.

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Guest editorial

Peter J. McMurray
Head of the Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa



Letters

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Education : views from the inside

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“Many children hate school. However, others do not have the privilege of being educated. School is out of reach for many in poor countries and many must leave school before completing primary education...”

SCHOOLS & STUDENTS



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#36 Stolen Childhood

#37 Health, Wealth and Wisdom

Send your articles to :

editor@earthfocus.org



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“The Global Issues Network aims to help students realise that they can make a difference. The Network’s second global issues conference, held in March 2007 in Luxembourg, saw young people from around the world meeting together to discuss and develop solutions to global problems. Students from the American School of Doha and the International School of Luxembourg report on their experiences.

To find out more about the Global Issues Network, see www.global-issues-network.org”



“click” the difference !

In my community, a suburb situated 45 minutes away from Cape Town, with a small population of 30,000 inhabitants, people, especially the youth, have not comprehended the value, the worth and the numerous benefits of being part of and having access to ICTs *. For most of them, owning a computer and having Internet access is still considered a luxury, and not a need. Let me give you two prime examples of the challenges these young people face. Only three computers are available at the public library. Per day, each student is allowed 45 minutes of Internet usage, but 10 minutes alone are spent waiting for the page to open. The result: students rather use books to research projects. What concerns students attending the Community Primary School, is that they have no computer at all. No computer studies are taught, and if they are lucky, they have probably seen a computer in their life, but never had the opportunity to use it. Now the question is: what will happen to these young people once they reach the University? Less exposed to ICTs and less connected to the global village, surely they will be less productive than their connected fellow students and they inevitably fall short of a world of infinite possibilities.

Chantal Daniels

ICVolunteers, South Africa

* International Communication Technology

SOUL TIPPING IN THE WATER

Last breath of air
Last life to spare
Spending our time pulling pins
Losing our lives making love dim.
Forgetting our values when it comes to the end.
Men—fire over water
You inspire me
You give me life.

Samy Ryan Pickens, Ireland and USA,
La Châtaigneraie, Geneva, Switzerland

Bula from Fiji !

Thank you for the terrific work you are doing, we look forward very eagerly to each issue of Earth Focus. We are preparing an article which we will be submitting shortly. **All the very best for a successful and very worthwhile 2008!**



Janet Arone

Class 7/8. Environmental Studies

Visiting the headquarters of the International Baccalaureate

As students who are studying for the International Baccalaureate, we were eager to visit the IBO headquarters in Geneva. Through the Earth Focus Foundation, we were given the chance to meet the Deputy Director General, Dr. Ian Hill. Meeting Dr. Hill not only gave us the opportunity to learn more about IB schools around the world, but also allowed us to share our experiences of the ‘Creativity, Action, Service’ (CAS) component.

Dr. Hill seemed very impressed with some of the activities and services at the Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa. He was especially pleased to know that the school works with orphanages and less fortunate people of society, in order to assist them with basic necessities as well as socializing with them.

Hamdi Tartarini

17, Kenya
The Aga Khan
Academy, Mombasa



Earth Focus Ambassadors: our experiences in Geneva

Even though some relationships are not blood related, they can be dearer than the ones that are. Ten days of adrenaline pumping experiences in Geneva and I have friends dearer than relatives...

Being the first Earth Focus Ambassadors from The Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa, I attended a student-led conference on "Fuels for the Future" and Prince Hussein Aga Khan's photograph exhibition.

After having gone through a competitive student selection process, accessible to both financially-privileged and under-privileged students, I, and another IB student, were lucky to be selected.

The student-led debate took place on our second day of arrival and had a successful turnout of high school students from Geneva and prominent personalities including representatives from the United Nations, Earth Focus Foundation and the Director General of The International School of Geneva. As students took on roles as advisors on the best fuel for the future, it was evident that they were already empowered to make a positive change to the deteriorating environment of our world.

Our following days in Geneva were equally interesting. Geneva is colourful, cosmopolitan and simply beautiful. As the heart of many internationally recognized organisations, it is almost impossible not to find a person that speaks the same dialect as you and shares the same nationality. Geneva is truly international!

As fast as the lifestyle appears to be, it is truly amazing how people make time to enjoy themselves even after working till so late in the evening. Within the first few days, I too had become acclimatized not only to the climate but also to the pace of life. We would begin the day by going to the Earth Focus Foundation office and then hit the busy streets of Geneva, layered in our pullovers and sweaters.

We visited Lausanne and Nyon, and were lucky enough to be welcomed by a loving family for a weekend in Basel. The Christmas-lit Basel mimicked a fantasy.

A week in Switzerland seemed to have passed in a fraction of a second with experiences that have become a part of me. Having never walked in snow, we walked for four kilometres to eat fondue (melted cheese with bread), which has taught me endurance and how to enjoy even in times of fatigue. The hilarious pantomime to which I was invited by a close friend, who was actually acting in it, portrayed how some communities allowed their traditions and cultures to blossom in such an international community. It was amazing to see people from different communities eager to watch this drama, and it allowed me to appreciate my culture more as I realized it was my identity.

The last three days in Geneva were spent preparing for the 'Green Map' press conference and Prince Hussein Aga Khan's photo exhibition. The Green Map initiative was so appealing to me that I am keen to start a similar initiative in my school, to allow great minds to make great differences.

As much as I had refused to eat cheese in the first few days of my stay in Geneva and searched for spicy food, as I sat on the plane on the way back to Kenya, I not only took every second to re-experience my stay, but also found myself craving for cheese! A truly memorable experience!

Hannah Malik

17, Kenya

The Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa





Global warming is definitely not a myth!

One of the most common misconceptions about Polar seas is the idea that if ice shelves or icebergs melt, the sea level will automatically rise. This is not true, and I will soon explain why. If you are already seething at this point and crying out, well then just let me justify this point first. When I first read about this, even I did not believe a word of it. So I did the experiment and to my surprise it proved the theory correct.

Here is the theory, which might be a little hard to understand if you have not studied this topic in science:

1. Put three ice cubes in a glass or a container of water and mark the level of the water on the side, but make sure you mark the level of water after you put the ice cubes in (you can use sticky tape if you do not want to mark the glass with a pen.)
2. Allow the ice-cubes to melt and see what happens to the level. It should not move at all!

Of course, this does not mean that there is not a serious problem to deal with. If global warming causes large areas of Antarctic ice-shelf to break off and melt, the sea level will not be affected but what could happen is that the ice and snow covering the land-based continent will no longer have something to hold them place. Therefore, if they slide



1. Water expands when it freezes, making it less dense. In fact its volume is a little over 9% greater (or density ~ 9% lower) than in the liquid state.
2. Therefore both ice shelves and icebergs float on the sea surface.
3. As they float they displace the same volume of water they contain.
4. If they were to melt, the sea level would stay exactly the same.

into the ocean and melt, the sea level will rise. It has been estimated that the sea level could rise by an amazing 65 to 70 metres if the Antarctic sheets were to melt! So it is still very important that the ice-shelves stay cold, as well as icebergs, which remain homes and resting points for many animals in the Poles.

Save our planet! Stop global warming!

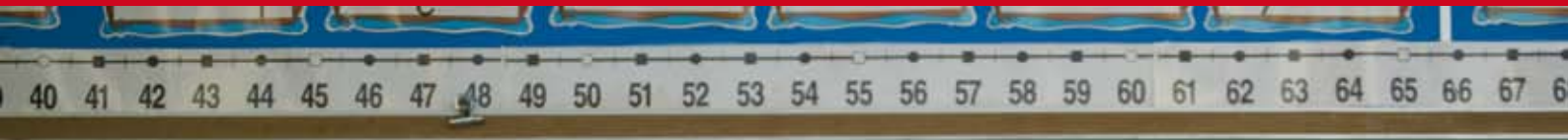
If you do not believe these facts here is an experiment you can do:

1. Put three ice cubes in a glass or a container of water and mark the level of the water on the side, but make sure you mark the level of water after you put the ice

Emma Reitbergen

12, Netherlands and UK

Institut International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland



SCHOOLS & STUDENTS



© stockphoto/ Damaris Jacobs



School :

liking it and needing it!

Many children hate school. However, others do not have the privilege of being educated. Many people want to help poor children but they do not take action. As children, we think that this is unfair. School is out of reach for many in poor countries and many must leave school before completing primary education. The ones who do attend school often receive an insufficient education because of underpaid and badly trained teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of basic educational tools such as textbooks, blackboards, pens and paper. Poor children are grateful for what they have, while we are often just wasting our privileges!

Yasmeen Mu'allem, 12, Croatia, Lebanon, Switzerland
Radhika Van Der Helm, 12,
Netherlands, Switzerland, India
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland



A Poor Child Wanted an Education

A poor child wanted an education
But there was a complication.
He was too poor,
He wanted more.

A poor child wanted an education
But he was from a poor nation.
He finally went to school,
But all he found there was a stool.

A poor child wanted an education
And he had a lot of imagination
But he couldn't go,
His caste was too low.

A poor child wanted an education
But he didn't have inspiration
So he didn't know where:
There wasn't any school there

Radhika Van Der Helm, 12, Netherlands, Switzerland, India
Yasmeen Mu'allem, 12, Croatia, Lebanon, Switzerland
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland



STOP

Everyone is allowed to have their own opinion, but when it comes to expressing your feelings it can sometimes affect people in a negative way. It is best either to keep it to yourself or talk only to those who feel the same way as you, on that particular topic.

Some people feel strongly that white coloured skin is superior, and some make racist comments and judgements. This can cause people to have low self-esteem. A few are stronger and may just shrug off the comments, but they should not have to deal with such remarks! However, not everyone can deal with this situation or take derogatory terms so lightly. Just a few remarks are enough to jeopardize their future. They are scared that their skin colour will stop them from making the best of their life and sometimes they do not bother to achieve high goals.

Here is a story about a confrontation between a black man and a racist white man. This is how it goes:

A black man walked into a café early one morning and noticed he was the only person there. As he sat down he noticed a white man had sat behind him. The white man said:

“Coloured people are not allowed in here!”

The black man replied, “When I was born I was black, when I am sick I am black, when I go to the sun I am black, when I am cold I am black and when I die I am black! But you, Sir, when you were born you were pink, when you are sick you are green, when you stay in the sun you are red, when you are cold you turn blue and when you die you turn purple... and yet you have the nerve to call me coloured!”

The black man turned around and the white man walked away!

By Sophie Bellin, 14, England and France
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland



Nicknames and prejudices

One thing that really annoys me is the nicknames students give each other. These names barely tell you anything at all about a person's TRUE character. Usually, they are picked up because someone was just making a joke. First, everyone understands they are kidding, but after a while some may take it seriously. This can make the person being made-fun-of very upset.

Occasionally, others give nicknames to people they don't know or spread rumours about events they know nothing about! For example, if you see a person studying hard, it does not necessarily mean he or she is a nerd*! If you hear a person ask a question, it does not make them stupid!

Also, there are people who still think blondes are automatically stupid and that brunettes are amazingly smart. You cannot judge someone by his or her hair colour! It is actually discrimination! It is just like saying that you are good at maths because you are from an Asian country like Japan, Korea, or China.

I think we should stop all this stereotyping and base our "thoughts" on TRUE positive things. Get to know the person first and then decide!

*Nerd: slang name used for a studious person, although in the dictionary it is used for someone who is dull and stupid!

Moona Rasijeff

15, Finland,
Collège du Léman, Versoix,
Geneva, Switzerland

In the USA...

Every week, an average of 88 children are expelled from American schools for bringing a gun to class.

Shocking, right? Imagine the impact on those who witness these weapons being used on fellow schoolmates. The call for tougher gun control is universal but not much seems to be changing.

A survey by the United States National Institute of Child Health and Human Development revealed that nearly a quarter of boys had carried a weapon, be it a gun, knife or club, in the past month and nearly two million students had taken one to school. Another study reported that almost half of high school students said that they could get a gun if they wanted to, just by looking around their own homes. Nearly one in three American households with children has a gun in them. But why do so many people keep guns? Who knows, but many gun owners believe that owning a gun is virtually a fundamental human right, as the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees that every citizen shall have the right to keep and bear arms.

The consequences of leaving guns within reach of children are devastating. The firearm related death rate in the U.S. is nearly twelve times higher than the average of twenty-five other industrialized countries.

Who's to blame? We can point to violent images in movies, video games, television, or aggressive lyrics. We can blame lenient gun laws and point at parents who irresponsibly keep guns in their homes without taking proper safety measures. But what good does pointing fingers do?

Worldwide, violence due to arms is reaching alarming heights and the enormous increase in arms sales can be attributed to the so-called 'war on terror'. Developing countries spend an average of \$22 billion a year on arms – an amount which would allow those countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education and reducing infant and maternal mortality. Is it worth it?

We need to encourage people to resolve their problems non-violently. We could start by tightening gun laws, for



Weapons ⁱⁿ school



instance by creating laws that prohibit the sale of arms to anyone under 21, otherwise who knows what could happen...

Statistics based upon surveys taken in 2003

Ritika Sood

17, India,
International School of Geneva,
La Grande Boissière, Switzerland

.... and the United Kingdom

In England, as well as in other countries, weapons in schools are a big problem. Almost once every couple of weeks an incident occurs involving violence in a school. Children create gangs, and injure and murder individuals, making headline news. These children can sometimes get their weapons at the school itself (compasses, scissors, rulers, etc). In many cases, when one child brings in a weapon, others feel threatened and bring a weapon of their own. This can carry on until the situation becomes uncontrollable.

Governments, along with the school authorities, have taken some measures to prevent these incidents but it is not enough! In order to prevent violence from entering the school environment, here are some measures I would personally suggest:

Place metal detectors in school entrances

Have additional surveillance during
lunch breaks and playtime

Have governments take care of these
issues before the tragedies happen.

Joe Webborn

14, UK
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland

© istockphoto / Mark Coffey / 2007



Global Issues Network

Report from the American School of Doha

DO SOMETHING! These two simple words were spoken countless times throughout the 2007 Global Issues Conference in Luxembourg. Over 300 students, teachers, and community members spent the three days exploring some of today's most crucial topics through interactive presentations, discussions, debates, and networking with schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from across the globe.

The focus of this year's conference was poverty, and participants persuasively argued for and against the following statement:

Simulation, they illustrated the distribution of population, resources, land, and food on the planet. By the end of the conference, the students had created an action plan to respond to the speakers' calls to do something. The American School of Doha plans to approach the issue of poverty through education. The first step will be educating the school and community about the importance of the issue and the need for action. In addition, they plan to work side-by-side with A-CET. This is an NGO in Ethiopia which supports vulnerable children's access to education through scholarships and upgrading rural schools. The school is also linking its Global Issues programme to the elementary C.A.R.E. club, and hoping to expand into the high school.



"More economically developed countries do not want to get rid of poverty".

Speakers from all walks of life impassioned the middle school and high school students and left the audience with the encouragement to DO SOMETHING! Students walked away from the conference with an awareness of the world's primary needs and a commitment to make a difference. Mathew Emshey, grade 7, was struck by the message that it is not good enough to simply SAY you'll do something. Reflecting on the most influential part of the conference Emshey stated, "I like how Mark Cook said 'Prove it!'"

The American School of Doha represented the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA) region for the first time, with twelve middle school students and two teachers attending. Although they were some of the youngest participants, these students jumped right in and made the most of the experience. Through a Global Spaces

The Global Issues Network has fundamentally altered the global perspective and daily actions of the participants, and they are ready to DO SOMETHING!

American School of Doha, Qatar.





Conference, Luxembourg 2007



As I exited the doors of the Chamber of Commerce

on the last day of the conference, I felt a heart-warming feeling. The enthusiasm and dedication I had witnessed in the past three days still felt tangible.

To have met with similarly-minded students, all with the drive to make our world a better one, gives an awkward sense of belonging. It was not simply the inspiration the speakers provoked, but rather the atmosphere which the conference created. Together, we were able to discuss the world's most difficult issues. We were able to assess their positives and drawbacks, analyzing foreign policy and the world's interconnection and dependence, through the debate motion: 'more economically developed countries do not want to get rid of poverty'.

The participation and engagement surprised me in a pleasant way. It seemed that everyone had something to say, a point to emphasize. I finally realized the pertinence of the saying 'two heads are better than one'. I tried to picture what all of our individual knowledge and separate dedications could create if we pooled them together to voice our concerns for our planet, as one. I believe we have the ability to do this, because even if it was for just three days, I felt the power and the positive energy that we, as a network had. I hope that this time our school will be able to sustain that initial energy to channel it into concrete action. In the upcoming months, I hope that we will be able to generate a greater sense of awareness of global issues in our school and community.

A special thanks to Ms. Isbecque (who greatly helped with the organisation of the conference), to Mr. Lewis who has dedicated so much of his energy and time into the development of the Global Issues Network, and to all those who made contributions

Ines Gramegna

18, International School of Luxembourg

Reports from the International School of Luxembourg

I just want to start by saying I think this conference was a great success and that I really hope next year's conference will be just as interesting. My favourite Keynote Speaker this year was Casey Parks, presenting her experiences in Africa. I went to her follow-up presentation afterwards and learnt a lot about her feelings on poverty.

As I went on my school's CAS Tanzania trip, I had already seen, to some degree, what she was referring to. When she explained the situation of a woman dying in a hospital just because the doctor was ready to go home, I understood her experience with far greater impact. She had also had a gun pointed to her face on multiple occasions. I found her story very moving, and her experiences very realistic.

Chris Ruud, 11, International School of Luxembourg

«HOOPS OF HOPE...»

Keep Doing Something

Speech presented on the 22nd of March 2007 at the Global Issues Network Conference held in Luxembourg, by Austin Gutwein, Founder, Hoops of Hope



“There is hope...poverty is not a lost cause! Three years ago, I saw a video on AIDS orphans for the first time. I don't know how you would have reacted, but it moved me. It inspired me to do something. It inspired me to do more than just take up space on this earth. It inspired me to get in the “game”.

The kids I saw in the videos are not any different from me except that they are living without their parents. They are living without a person to tuck them in bed at night. They are just like me except that there is no one to fill the hole of loneliness, no one to provide them hope. They wake up and walk miles just to bring home water for the day. Many kids my age spend their days taking care of younger brothers and sisters. Many nights, they only eat roots, not for nourishment, but to help get through the hunger pains and to get them through the cold and lonely night. I would like to see all of us live in a world where kids do not go to bed hungry. Maybe I'm too young to know any different. But if that's the case, I hope to never grow up too old and see that we could have made a difference. I would love to see my generation rise up and see the world's problems as something we can solve. After watching the video on AIDS orphans, I begged my dad to let me do something for these kids. My dad didn't know what I could do, so he put me in touch with an organization

called World Vision. After talking with World Vision, I decided to just do what I loved. I enjoy basketball, so on World AIDS Day 2004, I skipped school and spent my day shooting 2057 free throws to honour the 2057 children who would be orphaned by HIV/AIDS during my school day. People sponsored me and I was able to raise around \$3,000. The money was used to provide hope for eight orphaned kids. Eight orphan's lives were changed, just by shooting hoops! In December 2005, around a thousand kids joined me in an event we called Hoops of Hope. That year, we raised almost \$35,000 and provided hope to over a hundred orphans. This past December, Hoops of Hope events throughout the United States raised \$85,000. Next month, construction will begin in a school in Zambia. Over four hundred and fifty children will now have a school of their own. Over four hundred and fifty orphans will be able to learn and become who they were intended to be. They'll realize that they can become doctors, teachers, and community leaders. All because we shot some hoops. I know most of you are already involved in some sort of global issue. And if so, I am sure you have stories like this you could share. If you're involved in doing good, reaching out and making a difference, I'm sure every day life is not easy. I'm sure your cause becomes overwhelming sometime and you don't feel like pushing forward! But we won't stop. We must keep on doing something. We must keep trying to provide hope. And if we are to make a difference it is not only how we start but surely how we finish! I would like to look at four aspects that might keep us from burning out before we finish what we started. I believe that they can sometimes keep us from continuing what we started:

We think the world's problems are too big
We do not feel like we are making a difference
We lose site of who to help
We just lose our energy and want to quit

Number One: The problem is just too big.

The world's issues are big. If you are well informed about children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, I'm sure you'll agree that the number of orphans is big. There are over fifteen million children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. This number is huge. To put this number into perspective, know that if three hundred people were to link hands together and stretch out in a single line, they would cover about one third of a mile or maybe less. Did you know that if every child orphaned by HIV/AIDS were to link hands, they would stretch from Luxembourg to my home in Arizona



and back again with a thousand and seven hundred miles to spare? Yes, the problem is big. If we focus on the size of the problem, it therefore seems too big for us. However if we analyse and break the problem into smaller parts, there is something we can do.

Let me show you an example. If I focus on trying to make a difference for all fifteen million children, I probably won't help even one of them. But if I focus on making a difference for just five of them, I can start making an impact, even on a smaller scale. In fact that's how Hoops of Hope got started. The first year we helped eight kids. If one-third of you agree that these orphans need your help and want to make a difference, let's say that only one third of you agree to join Hoops of Hope in the fight to help these kids. And if each of you agrees to help just one orphan, we've now helped over a hundred orphans. Let's say that each of you in the next month agree to tell ten of your friends about Hoops of Hope and half of them of them want to help. Let me show you the impact. In less than ten months, we can have a huge impact on this problem!

The problem really is not that big. We can bring hope to a continent devastated by this disease. Do you know what it takes to provide food, water, clothing, medical care, shelter and education to one of these orphans? It takes a dollar a day. It takes a little less than a euro. Will you join me in helping solve this issue of poverty? Will a hundred of you agree to make Hoops of Hope this year with us? Will a hundred of you commit to telling ten of your friends? Will all of you agree to do Hoops of Hope this year? Will all of you agree to tell ten of your friends?

To keep yourself going remember, when the problem looks just too big, keep it small.

Number two: What do you do when you feel like you're really not making a difference?

How would you feel if you only helped one orphan? Are you really making a difference?

Early one morning, a boy was walking along a beach. The boy noticed that hundreds of starfish had washed along the shore, likely from the storm the night before. As the boy walked along the beach, he realized the starfish were dying and he started frantically picking up the starfish and throwing them back into the ocean, one after another. Not long after the boy began, a man came upon the boy, and asked, "What are you doing?" The boy answered, "I'm trying to save these starfish." The man replied, "You're wasting your time. You can't possibly make a difference for all these starfish." The boy then bent down, picked up another starfish, threw it back into the ocean and replied, "I just made a difference for that one."





When you feel like you are not really making a difference, remember, you are making a difference for that one. When the problem is too big, keep it small.

Number Three: What do you do when you don't know who to help?

Just look around you. Who do you feel needs your heart? Doing something for someone can be very simple. You can do it here or somewhere else. The very first man to start an orphanage started it because he wanted to do something for someone. You can do something as simple as helping a homeless man down the street. Put him back on his feet. I'm not speaking literally, but help him get a job. Maybe the homeless man is not your passion either. You could do something for the little boy down the street who just needs a friend. Find a cause, look where you are and find who you can help.

There is a story about two men, both seriously ill, who occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours and hours. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their vacations, everything. Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one-hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the world outside. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Flowers of every colour and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene. One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man couldn't hear the band – he could see it in his mind's eye as his friend by the window portrayed it with descriptive words. Days and weeks passed.

One morning, the nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away. As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch. Slowly, painfully, the man propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained and slowly

turned to look out of the window beside the bed. But as the man looked out, he saw the window only faced a blank wall. The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate to describe such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to make a difference for you."

When you don't know who to help, help those who are closest to you.

Number one, when the problems seem too big, keep them small.

Number two, when you feel like you're not making a difference, keep making a difference for that one.

Number three, when you lose sight of who to help, help those closest to your heart.

The fourth issue that can keep us from continuing to do something is you just feel like giving up. What do you do when you feel like this? When you feel like quitting?

First of all, there isn't time to quit. If you remember our virtual chain where these children would stretch out and reach across the United States from Luxembourg to Arizona and back, well, if we do nothing, by 2011, they will circle all the way around the globe.

What about if you have tried something and failed? What if you messed up in a big way? Well, let's say I have a hundred euro bill... it's new, and crisp, and it's worth a hundred euros. Would anyone like this? How about though, if it's wrinkled? It's not crisp? It's not perfect? Would you still want it? How about if I found it on the ground and it was dirty? Would you still want it? Of course you would, because it is still worth a hundred euros. It's not lost its value. And, when you get crumpled, stomped on, a bit dirty, you're still worth the exact same thing. When you do good things, when you try to help someone or a cause, you'll get wrinkled. You'll get tired. You'll get dirty. But you have not lost your value, so don't quit!!

Do you feel you're too young or too old? Well, how old would you be if you did not know how old you were? When you feel like you want to quit, keep on doing something. Remember, it's not only how you start, but how you finish!

One day a farmer went out and threw some seed on the ground. The seed landed in three different places. Some in the rocks, some in thorns, and some where corn was already growing. The ones in the rocks grew up but never built a firm foundation so they died just as quickly. The ones in the thorns built a firm foundation but as they grew



were choked by the thorns. The ones in the corn already growing built a firm foundation and grew up with the other corn and grew to be that great crop. So today, are we going to be like the seed in the rock where we want to do something but don't build a firm foundation, so we quit? Or are we going to be like the ones in the thorns who build the firm foundation but get choked by the pressures of the world? Or are we going to be like the ones in the corn who build a foundation and grow up with others and become that great crop?

Whatever your passion is, don't quit. Please remember those around you. Can our generation rise up and change the world for better? I believe we can.

This year Hoops of Hope is raising money to build a lab in Zambia. There is a medical centre in Sinazongwe, which currently has ARVS, antiretroviral drugs to administer to people with AIDS. These people, children's parents, aren't able to receive the ARVS because the clinic has no way to test them. As a result, they don't know how much of the drugs to administer. With the lab we're going to help build the clinic will be able to administer the ARVS. They'll be able to help these kids from becoming orphans. They'll be able to help the next Maggie, from losing their parents.

Will you join us? Will you commit to doing something this year? Before I leave I want to share with you why I'm involved and why I won't quit. I'm involved because the problem is big and these kids are not any different from me. I won't quit because I want to see kids like me not going to bed hungry. I really cannot just stand around and watch. The fact that this chain will keep on growing bothers me. I might not be able to find the cure for AIDS but I can help those who are left behind.

What ever you do don't lose your passion and don't quit just **KEEP DOING SOMETHING**

Austin Gutwein
www.hoopsofhope.org



“The Exhibition”

Problems within our community

The Exhibition is the final project in Year 6 before graduating from the Primary Years Programme (PYP) to the Middle Years Programme (MYP). This is the most important project in the PYP and we spend eight weeks on it. The Exhibition is about researching a problem within a community that we are a part of, coming up with a creative and practical solution and then taking action to solve the problem. The Exhibition is also a chance to demonstrate the skills, profile attributes and attitudes we have learned to use during our time in the PYP. We take lessons from school and apply them to social needs.

Central Idea: Working together we can make a difference within our communities.

Step 1: Subject

We started out by brainstorming possible topics for our subject (a problem within a community). First we wanted to study 'littering' in Campus des Nations, then we expanded that idea to any abuse of the school's environment, and finally we decided to inquire into the entire school environment and see how we could improve it.

Step 2: Concept Questions

We came up with the concept questions as a group, with the help of our mentor, Mrs Epps. Her job was to guide us and give us ideas to think about. We met with her once a week to discuss our progress and plans. These were the

questions we came up with:

1. What is our school environment like?
2. What problems exist within our school environment?
3. Why is our school environment the way it is?
4. How is the school environment connected to learning?
5. How has our school environment changed since last year?
6. What are the perspectives on these questions?
7. How do we know that people are happy with the eventual changes?

Step 3: Research

We began to find answers to our concept questions. We used the internet (looking at other international schools), surveys of students and teachers from our school and others, and interviews with the following people:

1. Dr Tate, Director & Founder of the International School of Geneva.
2. Mrs Lopez, head of the PYP.
3. John Breckenridge, parent representative on the school Board of Directors.
4. Julio Viela, a 12th grader who did his MYP personal project on our campus's sports facilities last year.
5. Donna Mychajlowycz, president of the Nations Parent Teachers Association.

We arranged these interviews by contacting the people through e-mails and letters.

Step 4: What we learned about

1. Problems in our school environment
2. Why those problems exist
3. If those problems were there last year
4. How those problems affect us
5. How our school environment is good/bad
6. How different people see our school environment
7. How we can make a difference to our school environment

After we had found and gathered our information, we took our notes and typed them up into final copies. They were later edited by other group members, and any mistakes were hopefully corrected before the final copy was considered finished.

Step 5: Solutions and action

Once we knew more about the problems in our school environment, we needed to come up with some solutions. Our solutions were:

1. Get more playground equipment like swings and climbing frames
2. Make the classrooms cooler
3. Stop littering

Then we had to come up with ways that we could make a difference. The actions we took were to:

- Perform a skit in the PYP assembly about picking

up litter.

- Put up posters against litter and vandalism.
- Write out a request for a new climbing frame for next year, hopefully to influence the PTA, since they decide what money will be distributed to which projects. We gave this to Donna Mychajlowycz and she has promised to submit it.
- E-mail Mr Cairns, the MYP principal, for information about some newly ordered fans.
- Set up a donation box to get money for more playground equipment. This can be found at the welcome desk.
- Write this article to make people aware of our project.

Step 6: Display Board

The visual display is for showing people our findings and process. We worked on our display as a team. We had to be creative and use a lot of visuals like drawings, photos etc. We came across a few problems in the beginning, but



then it flowed pretty smoothly. We did well and our board is visually attractive. It has drawn many people and they can learn more about the Nations School Environment.

Step 7: Presentation

For our presentation, we decided to change the lyrics of the school song to show our inquiry process, highlights of the eight weeks we spent on this project and the aspects of the student profile, attitudes and skills we used. We wrote the song together, worked out a dance together, and practiced together as a team.

The presentation was great and it made the Exhibition night fun!

What did we learn?

Edward: Playground equipment is very important to the students in our school environment.

Haley: I learned a lot about the school environment. One



thing I learned was that plants are really important to have in a building and you have to work as a team to make something great. Everyone can help improve the school environment in easy ways, like not littering, planting plants or putting up posters.

Hiba: What stands out for me about the Exhibition are the interviews because it was really interesting to see what other people think about our school and their opinions on what should be changed. I really enjoyed the interview with the PTA president because she told us how the purchase of the playground equipment is organized and what we should be aware of when we give the request to the PTA.

Fredrika:

1. It is never impossible to make a difference. All it takes is time and effort.
2. Working together you can accomplish so much more

than you can on your own.

I also learned so much about myself and how I can improve. My perspective on a project like this really changed during the Exhibition and I am a lot better in a group environment now. The Exhibition also taught me so much about our school!

Fredrika Hellgren Class 6i

Group Members: Haley Sadoff, Fredrika Hellgren, Edward McKenzie, Hiba Al-Assaf and Fawaz Al-Husainan
Mentor: Kathy Epps - Class Teacher: Denise Hazen
International School of Geneva, Les Nations, Switzerland



Students from the International School of Geneva exchanged letters with students from the village of Masantigie in Sierra Leone. This article illustrates the different ways of life in the two places: one enjoying the liberty of living in harmony with nature, the other living with the complex demands of a western city. Comparing these points of view shows us that it is important not to compare human values with cultures that are measured by materialism. We hope that this example helps each child to appreciate that which he has, and that the richness of sharing can contribute towards a better understanding of our society.

“Before the Easter holidays, we wrote letters to several children in the village of Masantigie in Sierra Leone. Our

teacher brought back their replies and we have compared their way of life with ours. We all like our schools, our mistresses and teachers. They encourage us to work well and show lots of patience with us.

The students in our school come from different countries, many speak several languages. We learn to speak English, French, German, Spanish, Russian and many other languages. There are 98 mother tongues spoken in our school. In the village of Masantigie, the children speak Temne, English and Loko Suso.

The children adore “ignames” (manioc tubers), mangoes, rice, bananas and sweet potatoes. We eat different things. We love pasta, pizzas, fondue (a typical Swiss cheese



dish made with melted cheese and eaten with bread or potatoes) and raclette (cheese melted onto potatoes).

Our houses are also very different because of the climate. In Geneva the buildings are spacious and solidly built. However, in Masantigie the houses are made with mud. The roofs break easily during the rainy season, several of the children wrote to us about how the insides of their houses get broken. They sleep on straw mats and have to share a very small room with several other children. Here we sleep in a room on a bed with covers.

In the village of Masantigie they play hide and seek and football, often the ball is replaced by another object. They go hunting and fishing during the dry season. When night falls they tell stories of the war that took place a few years ago. There is not very much electricity in that region of Sierra Leone and some villages have none at all.

We have enough electricity to have access to computers and televisions. We watch television and play electronic games. We sometimes go to the movies for fun and play sports such as football, basketball and go skiing (sliding down the mountain on snow with skis, which are like pieces of wood on our feet).

We often travel abroad, sometimes taking the car for short



trips, the train or airplane if our destination is far away. In Masantigie, children walk a great deal as transportation is difficult. They walk to get water and to find wood so their mothers can do the cooking. The market and the shops are eight kilometres away. The children have never visited Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, which is only 50 kilometres away from the village.”

The children of class 4,
French Language B, advanced group.
The Marronniers Primary School, La Grande Boissière,
International School of Geneva, Switzerland





Desert School of Ouladnagim



Students from the UNESCO Club of Collège Candolle prepared a series of activities and an exhibition in support of the Ouladnagim Desert School in the North of Mali.

I decided to be part of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Group because I wanted to be part of a charitable project where I could feel useful really helping someone, to know why I was doing so, and to do as much as possible to achieve this aim. In this Group, each of us can express our wishes and impressions about an idea that is common to all of us - building a school in the desert.

Ouladnagim is a Touareg community of 1500 people who live on the far side of Timbuktu, in the Sahel region which separates the Sahara desert from wetter regions to the south. International Conference Volunteers (ICVolunteers) have been accompanying the tribe through its CyberVolunteers Programme since 2003. That is how the www.shindouk.org website was created.

The community's well and its new Desert School are located 120 kilometres from Timbuktu. Until now, the children of the desert did not have the opportunity to go to school and were therefore illiterate. However, there is good news. The very first school year began on 15th October 2006! A retired teacher from Timbuktu's high-school decided to teach in the desert. He speaks Tamasheq and knows the local customs well. He will settle down at the camp where the community will provide him with a tent and food. Thanks to the generosity of Mirjam Brunner, a volunteer teacher who taught at Ouladnagim this summer, the community will now be able to pay him a small salary of CFA 40,000 (\$88.00, CHF 102.00) per month. Shindouk, the community leader, has also been able to supply pencils, notebooks and a small blackboard,

donated by his Ghanaian friend.

The tutor will be able to teach the children the basics of reading, writing and the elementary skills of calculations. Since the community has responsibility for 50 to 60 children, aged between 5 and 15, efforts will be made to ensure that the essential education needed for all is possible.

The community has begun the necessary actions to obtain the acknowledgements of the National Education Board, which could ensure that the teacher's assignments and salaries are paid by the public schooling system. Alas, nothing has been confirmed yet...

The students of the UNESCO Group from the junior high schools of Candolle and Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland, are preparing various fundraising activities for the Desert School of Ouladnagim. The role of ICVolunteers will consist of informing and raising awareness to help the community find new partners. In the context of its CyberVolunteers Programme, ICVolunteers are in charge of keeping the students of Mali and Switzerland in touch.

Lucie von der Weid,
17, Collège Candolle, Geneva,
Switzerland





A Teacher's experience in the Sahara

August 2006, Timbuktu, Mali

Initially, I went to Timbuktu as a tourist with two friends. We had organised a two-day excursion into the desert on camels with Shindouk, who had been recommended to us as a guide.



Shindouk, head of the Ouladnagim community, Timbuktu, Mali.

During our desert excursion, Shindouk told us that he was the chief of a Touareg tribe and that he had built a well and a school for his community. He explained to us that Viola, his Swiss friend, supported him in these initiatives, that the project had developed well and that the only thing missing was a teacher.

I really wanted to see how the Touaregs lived in the middle of the desert and I love to teach! Three years before, I had taught for six months in a primary school in Ghana and gained valuable experience from it. My friends encouraged me to stay in the community and spend the last four weeks of my journey in Mali. Shindouk rented a four wheel drive car and we all left on the 15th of July 2006. I felt excited yet fearful as we followed the tracks that led us further and further into the desert!

Every time we came to the summit of a sand dune, we saw nothing other than a horizon of countless dunes lost in the mist of the desert view. At one moment the track stopped

and I wondered how the driver could ever know his way around.

After several hours of travelling we finally arrived in front of a tent. Shindouk asked where he could find his family. We understood that they had spread out into the desert, looking for food to feed the animals. Only the grandmother and two or three other members of the family had stayed in the tents located near the well.

We were warmly welcomed and greeted with a cup of tea. One of the girls offered me a veil and the grandmother offered me a small chain. Later on, two men went to sacrifice a sheep for supper, while the grandmother cooked the rice. Normally, the Touaregs eat boiled millet in the morning and during the evening. Only for festivities and when receiving guests will they prepare meat and rice. I was served liver, considered the noblest of meat by the Touaregs.

The next day, the women painted my hands with henna and bought Shea butter* mixed with dried herbs. They use it for massages to help stay strong and healthy throughout the year.

These are the ways in which I was greeted into the family. I tried my best to behave accordingly and act like a true member. Yet I could not help myself being astonished by their living conditions. There were no roads, no electricity, no lamps, no telephone and no refrigerator. I could hardly believe how Touaregs could live this way! They do not have chairs or tables, no beds, nor paper, books or any external information. Instead, they have sheep, goats and camels, tents as houses, prayer carpets, a homemade stove, a teapot and a saucepan to cook couscous (crushed wheat). Their only luxuries are a box of jewellery and a mosquito net and covers which they took with them when leaving the camps in the late 1990's, after the rebellion period had ended.

Teaching in these circumstances remains a novelty and cannot be compared to anything that I had previously



experienced. What impressed me the most was their immense desire to learn! The children, the sixteen-year-old mothers, as well as the adult men, have all shown their high capacity for concentration. At the end of the class, we put away pencils and exercise books. After that, even then, they continued writing their A-B-C sitting in the desert sand and repeating, again and again "1-2-3, 1-2-3"!

Of course, I faced some difficulties, such as the fact that no one spoke French in the community. I had to use sign language, which made exchanges confusing and tricky. For example, the drinking gesture is completely different because they do not drink from glasses or bottles, but from their hands or bowls. I also came to the limit of my drawing talents. I could easily draw a house, a fish or a flower, unluckily things they had never seen before. Unfortunately I was unable to draw images such as a nomad's tent, a camel or sand. One cannot just simply draw a hat on the head of a stickman, because they use turbans!

At that time of the year, the families are spread all over the desert to find pasture. I was invited by families to come and teach children living more than three hours away by camel, some even further. Sadly, I decided it was just too far. The rest of the year, when families live in permanent tents, their way to school is much shorter, less than an hour away.

I also realised, that the children must work from the age of five to help the adults look after the animals. One evening, at sunset, a violent sand storm fell upon us unexpectedly. There was no time to gather the animals. The girls come to school the next day but the boys went searching for lost animals. A teacher must have patience with these students, as they get used to the hours spent in class, because no one has watches. A young fifteen-year-old girl with a sick baby who had a bad cough wanted to leave and then work on what was taught once the baby was sleeping.

If the transport costs were not so terribly high I would return to Shindouk's community immediately. The inconvenience of having to rent a car for the day and pay additional gas to come back makes it very complicated. One must fix exact dates to have the driver come and get you. The nearest telephone is a days camel ride away and the money spent on two return trips to Europe could finance a teacher's salary for a year.

I will never forget the weeks I spent with the Touaregs. To see the students enlightened faces and their insatiable thirst for knowledge and to teach in a calm environment, far from the noise of cars and radios, was a truly gratifying experience!

Mirjam Brunner, Geneva, Switzerland



ICVolunteers

ICVolunteers is an international non-profit organization specialized in the field of communications, in particular languages, conference support and cybervolunteerism. They work with volunteers to implement social and educational programmes in order to help populations and local communities to develop.

To find out more about ICVolunteers, see www.icvolunteers.org

* What is Shea Butter

Shea butter is extracted from shea nuts. Shea nuts are primarily grown in West and Central Africa in the semi-arid Sahel, referred to by traders as the «Shea Belt». *Vitellaria paradoxa* and *Vitellaria nilotica* are the main varieties. *Vitellaria paradoxa* is exported in the largest volume and grows throughout the West African region. *Vitellaria nilotica* is produced primarily in northern Uganda and southern Sudan.

Shea nut products, the solid fat (stearin) and the liquid (olien), are ideal for use as raw materials in cooking oil, margarine, cosmetics, soap, detergents and candles, but it has found its primary market niche as a substitute for cocoa butter in the chocolate and confectionery industry.

The Rotary Short Youth Exchange Programme

HOME AWAY FROM HOME IN



A snapshot of Andy Pickens's 2007 Rotary Trip, visiting Iris Chang and her family and touring Taiwan with students from around the world.

The Rotary Short Youth Exchange Programme is open to those between the ages of 15 and 23 who would like to experience a new culture and a new way of life during the summer holidays.

With the exception of eating some strange foods like “stinking tofu”, staying with the Chang host family had only pluses and no minuses for Andy Pickens on his trip to Taiwan. He even now calls the variety of tofu an «experience"! Here is a peek into his exciting journey in Hualien, with the calendar of activities kindly prepared by Iris Chang and her sister Yasmine with their parents,

Suling and Alarng. It preceded the tour of the island organized by Rotary International which brings together young people from all corners of the world.

6th of July: Andy arrives in Taiwan to stay with Alarng Chang in his apartment, before leaving for Hualien the next day. Arlang works in Taipei during the week and joins his family on the weekends.

7th of July: Welcome to Hualien! Andy is finally ready to start his adventure and buys a Sony handy cam to film every bit of his experience. Later on he will be having dinner at Iris's Grandpa's house.

8th of July: Taiwan is hot and muggy in the summer, unlike Switzerland. Andy got light heat stroke at the Butterfly garden. He had a hot-pot for dinner and played Wii.





9th of July: After going to the movies to see The Transformers, he went to the Seven Star Bay to have dinner and lie on the beach to watch the stars.

10th of July: Andy visited the Tzu-Chi University and downtown Hualien, where he watched fireworks.

11th July -12th July: Visit to the Aboriginal camp and its night market.

13th of July: Went to visit the Culture Centre of Hualien, a stone museum with an art gallery and library, and enjoyed the aboriginal joint-tribal festival.

14th of July: Having visited the cultural sites, they attended a concert and presented flowers to Evelyn, Iris's best friend, for her excellent performance.

15th of July: After wind surfing on Carp lake, Andy ate the famous dish of stinking tofu, Taiwanese oyster cake and octopus balls.

16th of July: Andy had the exhilarating experience of learning about Taoism and visiting the Tao Temple.

17th of July: Whale watching!

18th of July: Visited the Hualien Ocean Park.

19th of July: Last day in Hualien. Andy left for Taipei to join Rotary group.

In sum, with such warmth from the Chang family and all the wonderful activities they kindly organised for Andy, it was hard to believe that the Rotary could also be so kind as to organize the second half of his trip – a fun-filled three-week bus tour around the Island of Taiwan.

Andy highly recommends the Rotary programme to all families interested in receiving young people into their homes and having their teens experience a new language and culture in a home away from home.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact the Rotary International in your area :

www.rotary.com

The photographs are taken from the web-based photo album kindly prepared by Rotary official, Jeff Liu (South Sea Club).

Andrew Pickens, 16
Grade 11, La Châtaigneraie,
International School of Geneva
Geneva, Switzerland





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GIVING A SHELTER TO HOMELESS PEOPLE

MAKE A DIFFERENCE – Locally!

It was the first «Make a Difference Day» ever, and a lot of people did not know what to expect. We were split up into work teams. One team went and cleaned up an old double-decker bus (a two-storey bus) that is used to serve breakfast to the homeless, and help treat those with drug addictions. A second team stayed at the soup kitchen to paint the dining room, where the food is usually served. Just painting the room made an amazing difference. Whereas it was dull before, now it has a lot more character and positivism.

I was involved in the last group, which was sent down to the homeless shelter. This is where the homeless people of Geneva sleep, a place often kept secret from public knowledge. Our task was to wash the walls because they were extremely grubby and needed to be cleaned before being painted. We started by scrubbing the walls in the communal room that provides tables, meals and television, and then moved on to the floor.

In the bedrooms the bunk beds were randomly spread, looking like no one had slept there for a while. A David Bowie CD found lying on the side was evidence of life! Once the furniture was back in order and the place was tidied up, the difference made by us hardworking students could be seen.

We felt satisfied, not so much for the drastic changes we had made, but for our first step towards being part of making a difference, and bringing students from the International School closer to the local Genevan community.

After a hard day of work, we happily strolled back to the soup kitchen and met up with everyone. The people who worked there had prepared a delicious dinner for us. As we sat down and ate, people shared their experiences with each other. We had a closing discussion about our day and about the problems the homeless face. I feel that it is important for our school to get involved in more community projects. Interaction with the local population is crucial and enables problems to change for the better.

I encourage you to come to **“Make a Difference Day”** or start your own day, once a month, at your school! I was able to share a meaningful experience with a lot of new and interesting people. Before participating in this project, I had no idea where the homeless shelters were based in Geneva. I learned a lot about the community and about the things that can be done for people in need of shelter and food.

Elaine Mayala, 14,
La Grande Boissière,
International School of Geneva, Switzerland



A lesson on creating an

Ecology Club



Starting a club or re-creating a sadly dormant one

can be a daunting and strenuous experience to embark on in the midst of your studies at school. Accountability, trust, innovation and especially awareness need to be built upon within the student and administrative population. A whole new relationship needs to be formed. This is especially important if the club you want to start and promote is awareness and campaign based. I believe a motivated school following is intrinsic to the club's survival.

A few keen students at the International School of Geneva set out to establish a well-informed ecology club to promote the urgency of reduction of consumption patterns, how items can be easily reused and the basics of recycling. We also wanted to promote awareness of current environmental affairs and concerns, through campaigns (theatrical and conventional) and fundraising events. The main focus was to make the school campus a more aware and ecological friendly environment. This article will hopefully give courage to those who want to begin their own ecology clubs at their own school.

During the first year, the club was established with enough members for active promotion and participation. We decided to meet and discuss specific goals for the year. I recommend keeping your goals very precise and manageable as it allows a more reliable and foreseeable result. Our goals for the first year were to:

1. Attract more members from all different grades by talking in assemblies, other groups, and to individuals.
2. Make sure that the entire school populous knew we existed, how we functioned, and what our main campaigns were. For example, through pretending we were street statues that only moved once someone put recyclable material into our buckets, street theatre showing environmental destruction, poster campaigns with shocking facts, and fundraising events that involved students.
3. Establish a relationship with the administration

and get recycling bins to be placed around the school campus (we achieved this, the biggest success being in the cafeteria).

Let me tell you, the first year is the hardest because if a sincerity and commitment does not develop between the club and the school youth, then the club will lose all accountability and authority to make a meaningful difference. Those were the steps we took to promote our club and by the second year we had a firm foot in the door and the basics had already been established. This meant that bigger and more inspiring campaigns and commitments were able to be achieved, for example we got more speakers, had more debates and had quicker responses from the administrative section of the school.

Through the struggles of the Ecology Club, I came across the challenge of implementing our ideas and concepts in the sometimes-dysfunctional school system. Once there was an understanding established between the students and the faculty, we were able to incorporate the solutions into the routine school system.

I hope this article shows the practicalities of starting a club and a few key lessons that I think a new club should take into consideration. I feel it is beneficial for these key lessons to be shared amongst schools, as creating a club is a frightening but satisfying lesson to be learned. Good Luck! It's worth it!

Hanah McClure, 19, New Zealand,
La Grande Boissière,
International School of Geneva, Switzerland

Celebrating Earth Day

Make Every Leaf Count!

The theme for this year's Earth Day Celebration was 'Deforestation in Indonesia'. The slogan we created for this occasion was 'Make Every Leaf Count!'

We celebrated by organizing a variety of activities in order to spread awareness and help our school understand the seriousness of deforestation.

During the day we had many interdisciplinary activities, held an assembly and sold bandanas and badges with an environmental message. The money earned from selling them will be used to provide books for the local Indonesian school. Bandung International School also encouraged car pooling and did not print for the whole day. The electricity was turned off for a good portion of the day. The Earth Day assembly was filled with a variety of skits, poetry, songs and information on deforestation to educate and spread awareness.

The Environmental Club also hosted a Nature Walk for the purpose of getting the students out into nature. There were two walks, one for the high school and middle school, and the other for the elementary school. We then organised environmental games for the elementary students and everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch.

Hopefully Earth Day will encourage our whole school community to make a difference and help make Earth Day an everyday celebration!

Jessica and Kaitlyn, 14,
Bandung International School, Indonesia



Painting competition results mark Earth Day with UNEP

The European regional office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) marked Earth Day by announcing the regional winner of the 16th International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment. The theme was Climate Change and children from 6 to 14 years of age were invited to express their hopes and fears about climate change through the medium of art.

The jury selected Maria Mykolaivna Oliynyk as first prize winner. Her drawing represents hands from different peoples from all over the world, trying hard to patch the holes in the ozone layer and protect the planet from ourselves. Maria is very proud of her achievement in the

On 22nd of April each year people around the globe celebrate Earth Day, inspiring awareness of and appreciation for the Earth's environment. Here are just two ways in which Earth Focus readers celebrated Earth Day last year. What did you do this year? Let us know!



16th Children's Painting Competition and believes this will be her "small contribution to saving our planet".

This annual painting competition is jointly organized by UNEP, the Japan-based Foundation for Global Peace and Environment (FGPE), Bayer and Nikon. The competition has been held since 1990 and in that time has received over 180,000 entries from children in over 100 countries.

Earth Focus hopes to report on the 2008 winners soon. For more information on next year's competition contact Ms. Kristin Ebbesen, Information assistant, UNEP Regional Office for Europe in Geneva, Tel: +41-22-917-8279
Email: kristin.ebbesen@unep.ch

Earth Day Poetry

*The Willow Tree
Delicate leaves sway
Bending over serene lake
Long, lean, strong brown trunk.*
Izzi Greatorex-Sanderson (Grade 6)

*In the rustling wind
Branches sway with elegance
Shadowing the ground.*
Ryan Brown (Grade 7)

*Under the great tree,
Animals work savagely
Every night and day.*
Nicole Tjakralaksana (Grade 7)

*Rain, glistening leaves
Trickling down its sodden trunk
Beaded radiance.*
Hannah Welsh (Grade 7)

*Snake skin leaves rustle
Growing up towards the sky
Unfinished painting.*
Rachel Holland (Grade 7)

*Rustling in the wind
Saturated leaves, bright green
As quiet as night.*
Bing Li (Grade 7)

*A beautiful tree
With leaves ever so graceful
Nature's masterpiece.*
Kyung In Kim (Grade 7)

*Trees are beautiful
Trees are life and health
They make us happy !*
Chi Wen Wung (Grade 6)

Bandung International School, Indonesia



An Encountered Vision

The Interfaith Encounter Association is dedicated to promoting peace in the Middle East through interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural study. We believe that, rather than being a cause of the problem, religion can and should be a source of the solution for conflicts that exist in the region and beyond.



Joint Choir Participates in International Conference

A joint choir of students from A-Sallam School, in Majd el-Krum, and Kalanit School, in Karmiel, performed and sang songs in both Arabic and Hebrew at an international conference held in Ginosar near Tiberius on 8th of May 2007.

Participants were amazed as the children performed together. Students spoke of how they had initially felt mutual fear, but how they now felt like brothers. The students had dinner together and sat and talked and played. At the end of the day they went back home with a very pleasant experience in mind.

Joint Activity of “Give and Take Market”

The students of the fifth grade in both schools together organized a market under the title “Give and Take”. Each student brought from home items that they no longer

needed, and exchanged them with items the other students had bought.

The goals of this encounter were to :

- Reduce the amount of waste thrown away
- Keep a joint education in order to keep a joint environment
- Develop open and free dialogue between students to bring them closer
- Raise awareness for cooperation and communication to reduce violence.

At the end of the day, students ate cookies and nibbles prepared by their parents. They shook hands and said farewell with smiles on their faces.

Reported by Najeeba Sirhan

Group coordinators: Najeeba Sirhan and Osnat Aram-Daphna. We would like to thank the Embassy of the United States of America to the State of Israel for their support for this programme. To find out more see www.interfaith-encounter.org, or contact yehuda@interfaith-encounter.org





The International Schools Association : an introduction

The International Schools Association is the most senior of such associations. Soon after its foundation in 1951 it was granted, by the United Nations Organisation, the status of a consultative NGO, the first such association to receive this honour. The Association is administered by a Board of 10 Directors from 8 countries, Directors who between them have some 250 years of varied experience in international education. The membership of the Association is also diverse, spanning 42 countries and all continents. It encompasses prestigious and large schools such as The International School of Geneva and the SOS Hermann Gmeiner International School in Ghana, together with smaller but no less important schools in India and Asia. Private for-profit and not-for-profit schools and state-funded schools form significant portions of the membership.

Nearly fifty years ago academic staff at the International School of Geneva laid the foundations of a curriculum and of an organisation which has grown quickly into the globally successful International Baccalaureate Organisation. In the early 1990's this pioneering and innovative approach further created a programme known as the International Schools Association Curriculum (ISAC) which has gone on to become the IBO Middle Years Programme.

Nowadays the ISA is neither a curricular and assessment body, nor an employment search organisation; rather it has grown into an association of schools principally concerned with internationalism in education and with the values inherent in such internationalism. In this sense pioneering has not ceased. Surging globalization, its consequent positive and negative imperatives and challenges, and the ever-increasing growth of interest in and demand for international education have all conspired to lead the ISA into helping schools to understand, embed, measure and develop their international-mindedness and their concern for its associated values.

Schools, teachers and young people are the vehicle to carry forward these concepts and the Association offers a number of opportunities to these audiences to engage with these ideas. The ISA is particularly interested in working

with students through its Youth Leadership Seminars, held annually in different countries and continents. ISA bi-ennial Conferences for teachers are also located in different continents. School administrators are encouraged to explore the ISA publication "Internationalism in Schools – a Self Study Guide" which can lead to ISA Certification; and oral examinations in English are available in areas of the world where this language is less common.

Additionally, and continuing its pioneering heritage, the ISA is now offering to schools a consultancy service particularly centred upon internationalism and its values but extending also into the more practical areas of International School start-up, and the management and administration of such schools.

It is one of the aims of the ISA to have at least one member school in each country of the world. It is some way from achieving this goal but moving steadily in that direction. The greater the spread of schools the wider the international and intercultural network; the wider this network the greater the promotion of the fundamental values which the International Schools Association believes can only lead to a more peaceful and sustainable development of our one world.

Please join us in this endeavour.

To contact the ISA please use info@isaschools.org or telephone, write or fax to:

The International Schools Association
10333 Diego Drive South
Boca Raton
Florida 33428
USA.

Tel: + 1 561 883 3854
Fax: +1 561 483 2004

For more information please see the ISA website :

www.isaschools.org

Calling all teachers !

Earth Focus... the next step !

At Earth Focus we are in the process of gathering articles for the 35th edition of the Earth Focus magazine. We reply on the insightful, emotive and passionate voices of students of all ages, and on the time and energy you give to students to help them develop their ideas. Please continue to provide opportunities for your students to write for us, and keep their contributions coming!

The title of the next edition is 'Renewable Energies' and we are looking for students' perspectives on this topic, in the form of articles, poems, creative writing, and pictures. Future editions include 'Stolen Childhood' and 'Health, Wealth and Wisdom'. We hope students will

find inspiration amongst these titles – though we are always happy to receive articles on any topic students are passionate about.

If possible, please email contributions to **editor@earthfocus.org** in Word format.

Alternatively, you can post them to Earth Focus Foundation, C.P. 3006, 1211 Geneva 3, Switzerland. Pictures and drawings should be high resolution, and if they are included in the text, please send them separately as well. To allow us to properly credit the students, include their names, ages and nationalities, as well as the name of the school. Earth Focus cannot print plagiarised work, so please encourage your students to write in their own words and acknowledge their sources.

We are keen for Earth Focus to be as student-led as possible, and as a result we are building a team of student editors. We are looking for a student representative from each school who would be willing to channel and encourage contributions, as well as offering us advice and suggestions on how we could improve. To put forward a student, please contact the editor at editor@earthfocus.org.

As well as the magazine, Earth Focus Foundation organizes a wide range of activities including debates, exchanges and competitions.

To find out more, email editor@earthfocus.org or visit www.earthfocus.org.



Calling all students !

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We reply on your insightful, emotive and passionate contributions – so please get writing! Not only will your thoughts and ideas be shared with fellow students around the world, but you will also be a published author!



www.educapoles.org

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You will find all kinds of tools (flash animations, pictures, videos, games, fairy tales, competitions...) that deal with polar regions and climate change.

