

Issue 36

EARTH FOCUS

One Planet - One Community

Stolen Childhood



Produced by Young People for Young People of All Ages

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Editor's corner

As you may have noticed, we've been experimenting with the layout of Earth Focus over the last couple of editions. We want to make sure each magazine is easy for you to find your way around, and includes a good balance of different articles, poems and more. This edition, we'd like to introduce what we think is an ideal new format.

On page 3 you will find our guest editorial: this time we are honoured to welcome Margie Peden, Coordinator of the Unintentional Injury Prevention programme at the World Health Organisation, to Earth Focus. The following pages are dedicated to whatever you want to write about: in this edition you will find writing on an amazing breadth of topics, from the protection of wolves to dangerous toys. From page 12 we turn to this edition's feature topic: 'Stolen Childhood'. Professor Kirk Boyd talks about the future of human rights and introduces Project 2048. Pages x to x give you an opportunity to voice your opinions and give your perspective on 'Stolen Childhood'. Next you will find a section called 'Taking action' – learn how readers are making a difference. The final pages are focused on the three strands of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental.

As ever, I would love to hear your views, on our new layout or any other issues. Please email me, and keep sending your contributions to editor@earthfocus.org.

Kate Brown
Editor



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Ecole Internationale de Genève
International School of Geneva

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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THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN EARTH FOCUS ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE EDITORS OR PUBLISHER OR SUPPORTERS.

guest editorial
**HAVE FUN,
BE SAFE!**

Every year around the world more than 830,000 children and teenager die from injuries. That is almost two deaths every minute of every day. And this is only the tip of the ‘injury iceberg’. For every child or teenager who dies, many others are injured. Road traffic crashes, drowning, burns from fire and hot liquids, falls and poisoning are the most common causes of injury to children.

Injuries are not accidents that just happen. There are reasons why they happen, and every injury has a chain of events that ends in the person getting hurt. You have a right to be safe, and there are lots of changes that can be made to break the chain and prevent you from getting hurt. Some are actions your parents need to take. They can keep an eye on you, make sure your home is a safe place and teach you about the dangers you may meet. Your teachers can help with that too.

The companies that make toys and build cars can make sure that they make them as safe as they can be. The people in charge of the country, the government or ruler, can pass laws to keep us safe, for example laws that say we must wear cycle helmets and laws

You have a
right to be safe!

that say cars cannot be driven at unsafe speeds. And they can make sure that there are hospitals, doctors and nurses to help us if we do get hurt.

ave a
be safe!

But however safe your country and your family keep you, there are some actions that are YOUR job. You need to learn to be safe, so that you can avoid being injured. The joint WHO and UNICEF World Report on Child Injury Prevention 2008, brings together information and ideas from all over the world to improve child safety. Have Fun, Be Safe! is the companion to this report, aimed young people like you. It is a great way to start learning more about injuries and how to stop them from happening. You can download a copy of Have Fun, Be Safe! at

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/child/injury/world_report/child_friendly/en/index.html



Margie Peden is the Coordinator of the Unintentional Injury Prevention programme, Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, World Health Organisation, Geneva.



Guest editorial p.3



Dr. Martin Beniston is a Professor at the University of Geneva, former vice-chair and current member of the IPCC.

Letters p.6



Renewable energies p.8



Isabelle Turney

This edition of Earth Focus is dedicated to renewable energies, and over the following pages are words and pictures illustrating the importance of a range of renewable energy technologies, and the problems of non-renewable energies.

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Send your articles to :

editor@earthfocus.org



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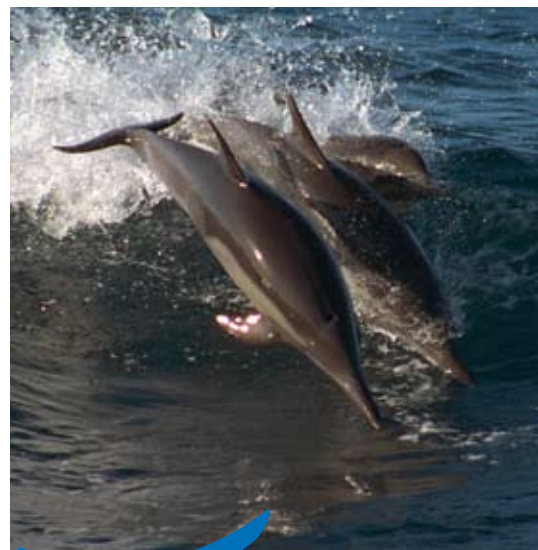
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The Global Issues Network aims to help students realize that they can make a difference. The Network's global issues conference, held in March 2008 in Düsseldorf saw young people from around the world meeting together to discuss and develop solutions to global problems. Students from the International School of Geneva and the American International School of Bucharest report.

Dear Earth Focus,

Racism is treating somebody differently or unfairly simply because they are a different mix of colours or cultures. We are not born racist, we get racist by living with or being friends with racist people.

Racism can be expressed in many different ways. These can include: being called names; being teased, insulted or threatened; having your property damaged; being hit, pulled, pinched or kicked. Children who are bullied can become lonely, angry or depressed. They might become frightened to go to school, or to go out alone. This might have a negative impact on their self confidence and grades in school.

There are anti-racist groups who hate people who are racist. This is not the way to prevent racism! Maybe if you show love, peace and harmony to the people who have difficulties to accept different races, they will maybe learn to accept!

Maybe I am just a dreamer, but I think that if we all dream of something it can become reality. All it needs is people who want it to happen and are determined.



Christelle and her friends

Christelle Ugbajas, Nigerian/Swiss, 12,
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland.

Ban Bombs

Where the world loses peace,
These horrible things come to tease.
They destroy things and kills lives,
Innocent lives.

Forever, your favorite people will be gone,
Forever, your favorite thing will disappear.

Accidents cannot happen when using this,
They are things that attempt to destroy and kill.
Lucky,
If one survives.

That's where the world loses peace.
Things blow,
Death all around,
Blood everywhere,
Died, but then things will look more real.

Don't let these in sight,
The whole world will go on a big fight,
Or not, but it may happen one night.

Don't think they aren't real,
Don't think innocent dead bodies aren't real.
Believe that they are real,
Think that all the people who died are real.

Think and ban them from the rest of the world.

Faisal Paktian, Afghanistan, 14,
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva.

A Poem about Peace

*Oh, A wonderful world!
To find peace is work.
I wish I could walk
anywhere to stop war.*

*My fellow people,
work hard to look for peace.
If you decide to unite together,
then peace will be there.*

*It is better to have peace in you
rather than to be rich for nothing.
Any family with peace and unity,
it's like a flutter of hope*

*Birds fly to collect nectar.
Lions walk to look for flesh.
Tourists travel to forgotten islands.
Why don't we walk to look for peace?*

*Applying democracy is a principle of peace.
Uniting together is a principle of love.
Helping each other builds strong cooperation.
Formation of organizations is a way
to make good connections.*

*When parents provide all basic needs,
the family may be peaceful and wonderful.
Children's faces will be happy and beautiful
because there is no quarrelling and no fighting*

*My recommendation as a peacemaker
is to form unity among the nations
We should not want to be provided everything
by the Government.
Working hard is a good source of income.*

*Take care of others
in the way you take care of yourself.
Don't be jealous of someone's richness.
Pray and work and your Mighty Father will
provide for you.*

*There is no peace without unity.
When someone wants to be peaceful,
we should unite to form peace
and take care before the care takes us.*

*John Ziporah Mwindi 14,
Royal Junior School Njia-Panda, Tanzania*

This is just one of hundreds of poems written by young peacemakers around the world that you can find at www.poemsforpeace.org. Poems for Peace is a poetry exchange between youth worldwide which provides an opportunity to transcend racial, religious, socioeconomic, physical and intellectual differences and connect on a deeper and more meaningful level. Each connection is an important thread in an ever-changing, strong and colourful tapestry of peace.

Poems for Peace, visions of hope through the hearts and minds of our youth

STOP deforestation!

Please stop deforestation!
It causes harm to our nation!
All the little children cry in pain and fear,
Not able to see trees and animals in the next year.
How to save them from their fate?
Stop killing trees before it's too late.
We have to choose...
We have to reuse and reduce
Or

Watch our green planet turn to grey.
Help the trees that give us fresh air!
Before the animals lose their homes and cry "it's not fair!"
And end up the way dinosaurs depart
So have a heart and do your part!

Ecclesia Chang, 12,
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva.

endangered species

WILL THE WOLVES WIN?

In Europe, the Gray Wolf (Canis lupus) is listed in the Annex II to the Bern Convention which list of «strictly protected species whose exploitation and disturbing and endangering of their habitats are banned».



The wolf is an endangered species in many of the countries where it has its natural habitat. One way that people have tried to save the wolf is by making laws to ban hunting of wolves. These laws are sometimes unpopular. This article is about how a hunting ban in the Rocky Mountains of America has saved the wolf population and what lessons Switzerland can learn from it about wolf conservation.

Wolves used to be found everywhere in the western parts of America, but settlers and ranchers hunted them near to extinction. The last one went from the Yellowstone region in 1926. In 1973, the endangered species act became a law to protect the wolves. After a long debate the government re-introduced the wolves back into Yellowstone in 1995. The greater Yellowstone area now contains 1,500 wolves. Mr Bangs, the government's chief wolf recovery coordinator, says that the grey wolf has now reached a sustainable level.

Of course American farmers say they are worried about the wolves killing their livestock. However, research has shown that wolves are responsible for less than 2.5% of sheep deaths, and, in fact, coyotes kill 20 times more cattle than wolves do.

Wolves are misunderstood greatly all over the world, but especially by farmers whose livestock are in danger. Wolves don't kill for the sake of it, they kill livestock because they are opportunist hunters which means they will eat whenever possible because, in the wild, they will not know when their next meal will come. Unfortunately, sheep and other livestock do not run at first sight of a wolf and when they do run they are not as swift and agile as the wolves' normal prey. Many wolf attack reports are false and are actually a dog's doing.

Years ago the wolves could roam freely in the alpine areas, but the human population grew and we needed room for new houses, industrialization and also space for agriculture. We chopped down trees for timber. All these needs

for the human population have destroyed the wolves' habitat and their natural prey started to disappear. Wolves are an important part of the ecosystem, because they kill some of the deer, wild boar and chamois which destroy the forest and trees. Trees are avalanche protectors and taking them away can be dangerous for the lands below the mountain or hillside. We all know that we need a lot of room to live, but is it fair that we destroy wolves' homes to save ours? In the end the wolves have almost disappeared completely from Switzerland. Now there are only three or four living just inside the border of Italy and Switzerland.

However, two years in a row, the Swiss authorities have asked for the wolf to be moved down from 'strictly protected' to 'protected'. If this happened, the hunting of wolves would be allowed, and maybe there would never be wild wolves in Switzerland again! Earlier this year, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and others did a big campaign to keep the wolves 'strictly protected' in Switzerland. They were successful and the law will not be changed for at least one year. However, there is another chance to change the law next year, so wolf lovers will have to campaign again to keep wolves safe. WWF will keep up the pressure over the next few years to keep the wolves a 'strictly protected' animal throughout Europe.

Back in America, now that the wolf numbers are high and sustainable, hunting will be allowed again. However, the wildlife service will be monitoring the population of wolves closely for the next five years. It has a set minimum of 300 wolves, and 30 breeding pairs, split equally around the Yellowstone area. Mr Bangs says if wolf numbers drop too far, then hunting will be banned again. This shows that wolf numbers can be kept at a good level if hunting is banned and allowed at the right times. Hopefully, this can also happen in Switzerland, and humans and wolves can live together.

Sources:

"Fair Game Now." *The Economist* 29 Mar. 2008: 52.
www.wwf.org

Kezia Saunders, 11, British,
 International School of Geneva, Switzerland.



© Stockphoto / Jim Kruger

danger!

TOXIC TOYS!

My parents have friends who date from well before my birth. Some are actually making a difference in the next generation's quality of life. One of them is like an intellectual god-father of sorts. His name is Mark Schapiro and he's based in San Francisco. He has written a book that will make a BIG difference. It is entitled: "Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products and What's at Stake for American Power" (Chelsea Green, White River Junction, VT, 2007).

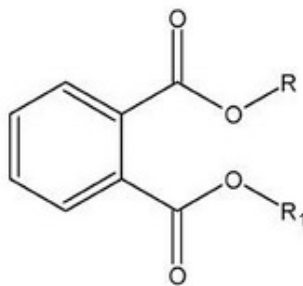
Mark is a muckraker and we are proud of the fact that he dares to expose the industries and government policies that are allowing toxic toys to be sold and then innocently placed with in babies' cribs. Less than a decade or two ago, those toys could have been in our cribs, and, as the saying goes, any available orifice. Danger!

Mark also has a blog at the Center for Investigative Reporting based in Berkeley. He is editorial director and tells us that we should not worry as much when we buy a "Made in China" toy here in Europe versus the US. He writes, "the Europeans responded to a growing body of evidence suggesting that a plastic additive called phthalates may contribute to decreased production of testosterone in infant boys by banning the substance from use in products aimed at children under the age of three. Much of the evidence used by the Europeans to make that decision came from American scientists, some of whom have been supported in their research by our own Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). But there has been no one in the US government willing to listen. The result: toys are manufactured in China without phthalates for export to the European Union, and with phthalates for export to the United States. European manufacturers have found far less toxic alternatives and European kids have as many plastic animals and other goofy playthings as their American counterparts."

Mark has opened up this important environmental time-bomb. So the question arises: Why is the US lagging so far behind Europe?

According to Mark, illegal substances like lead are integrated into toys and shipped to the United States from China. He notes that, "they slip into the country past the eviscerated Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), whose sole toy inspector spends most of his time making sure toys don't break in children's hands, rather than assessing the toxic substances that enter into their body. In fact, the CPSC's budget has dropped almost in parallel with the rising reliance of U.S. toy manufacturers on production in China."

Mark points out "it's not just illegal substances like lead that are being integrated into an array of consumer products. A host of substances suspected of causing cancer, mutating genes and disrupting the reproductive system are permitted in the US..."



General chemical structure of phthalates.



T - Toxique



N - Dangereux pour l'environnement

The good news is that Europe (and Switzerland), are banning toxins from use. We, Swiss-based families, may be standing on the shoulders of the giant European Union, which now includes 480 million people spreading across 27 countries – but people and businesses here are more aware than in the

US of public health risks triggered by exposure to toxic chemicals. We can always do more in Switzerland.

More good news is that people are opting to act, while the United States, as Mark confides, "remains complacent with the status quo." So those parents with second thoughts about raising kids in America versus Europe can be comforted that ageing European politicians worry about removing toys with phthalates from babies' cribs...and ultimately their mouths.

So having a long-time friend is a valuable asset. Having a really smart one, who is making a difference in shaping the next generation and keeping it a healthier and safer world for our kids, is the cherry on the cake.

Andrew Pickens, 16,
International School of Geneva, Switzerland.



Our study trip to....DUBLIN



Ireland: a beautiful, clean and welcoming country

Paper bags replace plastic bags...





STOLEN CHILDHOOD





2048

HUMANITY'S AGREEMENT TO LIVE TOGETHER

Professor Kirk Boyd is the Executive Director for an international project, the 2048 Project, at the University of California, Berkeley. The 2048 Project is drafting a framework for human rights that can be enforced in the courts of all countries. Here Professor Boyd talks to Earth Focus about how, through taking part in the 2048 Project, young people can contribute to the crafting of a future in which fewer children have 'stolen childhoods'; a future in which we live in prosperity and peace with protection from our environment.

"Of course, there are many reasons why reaching an agreement to live together may be difficult for humans. There are many wars that can be pointed to as evidence that we cannot live without war. The same is true for environmental destruction. Examples abound of humanity's tendency to destroy the environment rather than live in harmony with it. The depletion of our ocean fisheries and global warming are two of our most recent examples.

These problems, however, are mostly due to our shortsightedness. Confucius told us that "He who does not look at what is distant will find sorrow near at hand." This is why we find ourselves facing sorrow today. With our fisheries, for example, we have continued to take and take and take as if there is no end to the fish in the sea -- taking for today regardless of tomorrow.

But we need not continue this way. We can achieve sustainability if we plan for our future. 2008 marked the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was approved unanimously by all countries in 1948. The Universal Declaration is the foremost agreement by humanity so far about how we will live together based upon fundamental human rights. The 2048 Project celebrates the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration by looking ahead to imagine how the human rights in the Declaration can be fully realized by the year 2048, its 100th anniversary.

The 2048 Project does not claim to know exactly what a perfect written agreement for humanity would be, but it does provide a framework for individuals, organizations



and government representatives to focus, think, write and decide together about such an agreement. By thinking and writing together we can actually fix many of our major social ills rather than just patch them up.

These are not just inspirational goals or wishful thinking. We can see how well a written list of rights, with courts to enforce it, is working in Europe. After centuries of fighting, Europeans have agreed upon the European Convention on Human Rights, a transnational document that applies in the courts of 46 countries and is enforced by the European Court of Human Rights, which has judges from all countries. As Rene Cassin said when he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work drafting the European Convention, "it works."

And the European Convention works on the paths of everyday life as well as in courtrooms. Today there is a bridge near the city of Strasbourg, France, the home of the European Court of Human Rights. On one side of the bridge you are in France, on the other, Germany. There is no border checkpoint. You can walk across. But to take those steps, first millions of people had to give their lives to defeat fascism and tyranny. Next, millions more had to take the mental step of choosing to create a new social order based on the rule of law instead of the rule of force. An international movement is now afoot to follow these courageous souls and take further steps to build similar bridges among all nations.

A key part of this movement is education. There are more than 900 million students around the world between

the ages of 15-25. Every one of them needs to learn about the history of human rights documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The text of the Universal Declaration specifically obligates the states who have signed it to teach about the document. The 2048 Project helps teachers meet this educational requirement through an existing curriculum. The curriculum is available to high school and university teachers on the 2048 website, www.2048.berkeley.edu, and is prepared as part of an annual, ongoing, international celebration of human rights on December 10 each year for International Human Rights Day.

The Human Rights Day curriculum not only teaches about the evolution of the Universal Declaration and the European Convention, but will also provide an opportunity

for students contribute comments to human rights documents on the 2048 Project website. Every comment submitted by a student at the website goes through the exact same evaluation process as comments by scholars or experts in the field of human rights. Students are drafters of documents in a genuine way.

On the 10th December last year Earth Focus signed a memorandum of understanding with the 2048 Project, with the aim of promoting our work. Through Earth Focus, and the 2048 Project, students can learn to focus together so that they can reach an agreement to live together in peace and prosperity, and with a healthy environment.”

Professeur Kirk Boyd

Stolen Childhood IN GHANA

Do you ever think that your life is unfair? That you wish you could have more?

Well, let me tell you that even though you think that your parents are unfair and that you hate your life, people around the world have it worse. For example, in Ghana little boys are sold from their families to fishermen on Lake Volta. Their families do love the children, but they need money to live on.

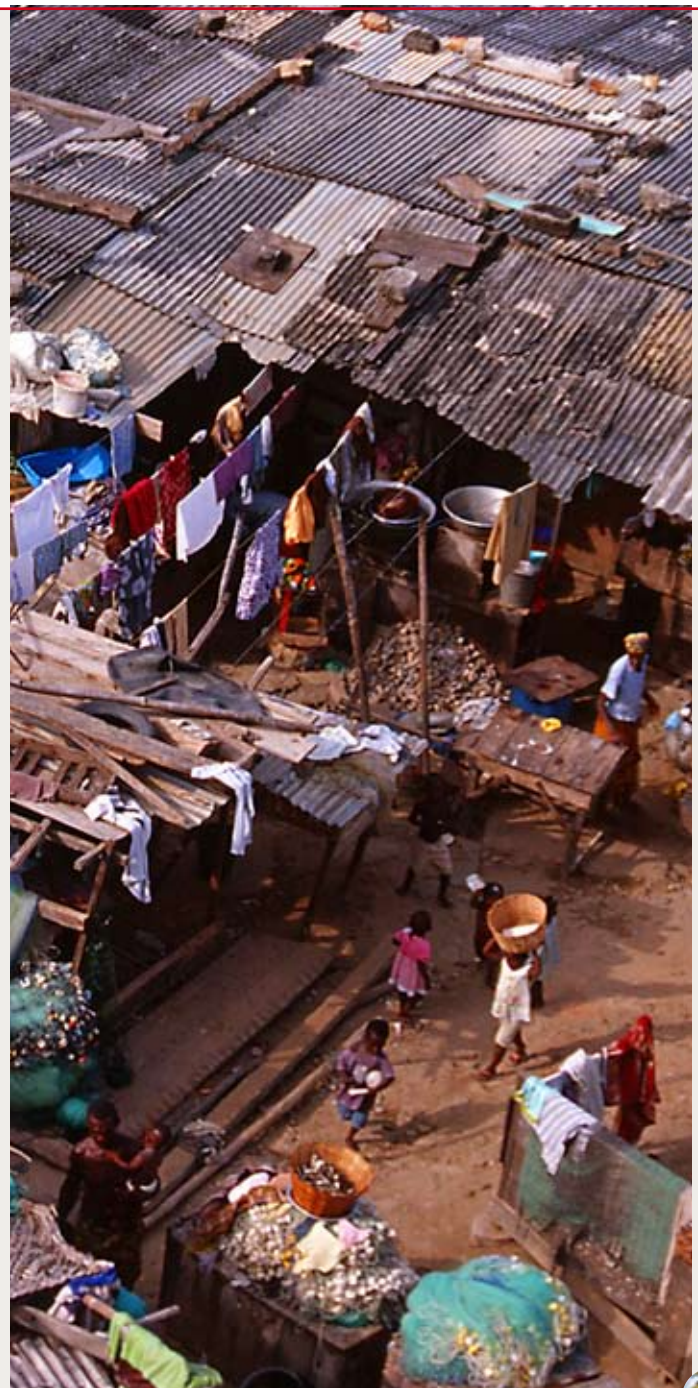
The young boys go to sleep around 11pm. They do not have food and do not get money. They wake at 5am and go fishing. Once they catch a fish, they are rewarded, but if they don't they are beaten with fishing paddles.

A little girl, two or three years old, was sold to the fishermen. She was too young to catch any fish and so the fisherman tried to drown her. She escaped into the water and swam home.

So you see, you are not as unlucky as you think you are. I hope that next time you say you are unlucky, you think twice.

Daisy Danzinger, 13, Burundian, Belgian, English, American, International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland.

Slums next to the ocean at Cape Coast, Ghana.



slavery

STOLEN CHILDHOODS IN GUATEMALA...

There are more and more boys and girls in the world who do not have a happy childhood; sharing with their friends, playing in the streets or simply going to school has not been part of their lives. Their parents put them to work as they need money to maintain the family or because they do not wish to give up their vices.

In my country, when one walks through certain streets you see children poorly dressed juggling at the traffic lights, polishing shoes, selling sweets or doing other types of work.

Below are some of the most common cases of child labour:



'Guajeros' children, who live and work on the dump of Guatemala City with their families. Since birth these children live amongst the animals and organic waste and later they help their parents sorting garbage in the municipal dump. The children live between broken bottles, knife blades or other sharp objects that could cause them harm and illness. Despite the fact that the Municipality of the City of Guatemala has decreed that no young people can pass the door of the area, the parents do not obey and they continue to work in this place.



'Picapiedras' children, who work breaking stones. From five years old they begin to work, breaking stones on the roadsides, there you see them working from dawn until dusk. These children's hands are all damaged, full of dust, dirt and usually with irritated skin. They also have no opportunity to go and study.

In Guatemala there are institutions whose job it is to work against child labour. But still today there is much to be done. We must get together to try and stop this kind of exploitation; join forces to give these children an opportunity to develop normally. Stop the exploitation of children!

Luis Pedro Hernandez, 12, Guatemala



Luis is part of the first global GenevaWorld project

GenevaWorld: Empowering children to help children; encourage children to become active citizens by making them think about the world around them



writing serving justice

GIKOR'S STOLEN CHILDHOOD

“There were no schools, no lessons, no education, we were fully free and were playing as much as we wanted”, these are the words of Hovhannes Toumanyan, the greatest Armenian writer of the 19th century.

When we read these words we feel what a happy and carefree childhood this great writer had. However, he recognized pain and suffering. Many of his friends didn't have such a childhood because of hard social situations, illiteracy and, in fact, backwardness.

Trying to describe this situation, the writer created the story “Gikor”. It is a characteristic description of stolen childhood. Gikor was twelve years old when his father took him to the city from his home village and placed the child in a rich family as a servant. Gikor had to serve without getting any money for the first five years, in the hope that he would learn something. But, we can't speak about learning as the poor child was not able to endure torture as well as brutal and inhuman treatment and soon he died.

Such sad stories really happened in little Armenia at the end of the 19th century. But now, in 21st century, the word “stolen childhood” is alien to Armenians. A huge contribution towards this was made by Hovhannes Toumanyan, who, through creating the character Gikor, brought a special attitude and new respect to Armenian children.

We no longer fully appreciate what we have: we are free and we can do what we want, we don't listen to our parents

and actually we feel us the owners of Armenia's beautiful streets and avenues, parks and fountains, cinemas and theatres.



Hovhannes Toumanyan

Zack Demirchyan, Armenia, 17 ans,
Secondary school #21, Yerevan, Armenia

Zack Demirchyan is part of the first global GenevaWorld project

abused children

CHILD SOLDIERS

Earlier this year Jo Becker from Human Rights Watch, an independent organization dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world, spoke to students at the International School of Geneva. Below, some of those students reflect on what they heard.



Currently around 300,000 children are forced to serve in armies and rebel groups around the world.

Jo Becker's talk opened our eyes fully to the suffering that occurs, and has occurred for many years, to people the same age as us and younger (from 8-16 years). We learnt that currently around 300,000 children are kidnapped and forced to serve in armies and rebel groups around the world. We have written this article to express our opinions on child soldiers in the world; we have chosen to use Sri Lanka as a case study.

In 1983 civil war broke out in Sri Lanka between the Tamil Tiger Rebels and the government. Since 2001 5794 children have been recruited by the Tamil Tigers. In 2003 the Tamil Tigers agreed to no longer use child soldiers, but despite this, many organizations such as UNICEF and Human Rights Watch believe they still do so. A major reason for this is the need to rebuild forces after the 2004 tsunami. Most of the children are forcefully taken. Jo Becker told us of a girl who was visited by soldiers and whose family was told that either her or her younger sister had to join the rebels. If they had refused the family may have been beaten, had their home burnt or destroyed or even been killed.

According to Human Rights Watch 40-60% of Rebels killed in the 1990s were children. We consider this to be a huge outrage as this conflict has been going on for 25 years. The Sri Lankan government is obviously unable to take action against the rebels and end this atrocity. The international community should take action. Most notably, the UN Security Council should use their influence as the five most powerful countries in the world to impose arm embargoes on the rebels. If that is not successful, a peacekeeping force should be sent to a place where it is really needed, instead of countries such as the UK and the US sending huge numbers of troops to Iraq. We also think that it is up to individuals to bring about awareness of this atrocity, and many others like it, to raise awareness of this huge problem and push their governments into taking action.

The aim of this article is to do just that, and we hope that all who read it will help raise awareness of this most terrible and disturbing matter.

Jeanot Dawson (England) and Jeffrey Totah (America), both 15,
International School of Geneva, Switzerland

following p. 19

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I had the opportunity to hear Jo Becker from Human Rights Watch explain all about child soldiers. I was shocked. How could people treat children like that? It was horrifying. It was very important to hear about that subject. I knew it was a horrible subject but I didn't know it was that terrible! I felt a bit guilty. It's so unfair for them. It's always in those moments when I realise how lucky I am.

Jo Becker made it clear that children don't want to be soldiers, but she also explained that some of them had to. They had to because they had to help their families.

"My parents refused to give me to the LTTE so about fifteen of them came to my house—it was both men and women, in uniforms, with rifles, and guns in holsters.... I was fast asleep when they came to get me at one in the morning... These people dragged me out of the house. My father shouted at them, saying, 'What is going on?' but some of the LTTE soldiers took my father away towards the woods and beat him.... They also pushed my mother onto the ground when she tried to stop them."

-girl recruited by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka at age sixteen.

It's when I read things like this that I really realise how horrible it is. Her parents didn't want the LTTE to take their daughter, and they came at night to take her. It's something that I hope will never happen again. I really hope that there will be a change after people understand how important this subject is. We should make a difference and fight for those poor children who are forced to fight from the age of 13.

"I was captured in Lofa County by government forces. The forces beat me. They held me and kept me in the bush. I was tied with my arms kept still and was raped there. I was fourteen years old. . . . After the rape, I was taken to a military base. . . I was used in the fighting to carry medicine. During the fighting I would carry medicine on my head and was not allowed to talk. I had to stand very still. I had to do a lot of work for the soldiers, sweeping, washing, cleaning. During this time, I felt really bad. I was afraid. I wanted to go home, but was made to stay with the soldiers."

- Evelyn, recruited in Liberia by government forces at age fourteen

This poor girl, at 14 got raped. She is used as a medicine carrier. I cannot understand how a little girl could be used like that. There is no word to describe how disgusting those people are. Use a little girl in a war. I really think we should do something about that atrocity. We should all stand up and fight for those little children who get their lives and soul taken.

Aylin Parla, 11th grade,
International School, Geneva, Switzerland.

We were shocked by the stories and videos Jo Becker showed us about children our age who had witnessed and taken part in situations we couldn't bear to imagine. Her presentation has provoked us into trying to make a difference. We want to spread the word to those who dare to stand back and watch. We want the world to realize that the use of children as soldiers is wrong and should be stopped! (There is no question mark in this sentence).

However before we talk about what should be done to stop this disgusting practice, we will give some background to what being a child soldier really means. Child soldiers can be found in about 36 countries all around the world including Sri Lanka, Colombia, Turkey, Chad and many more. Child soldiers, from 8 to 17 years old, are usually snatched from their homes during raids, or forced into being soldiers because they feel they have no other option. Children who have been recruited are often forced to march for extremely long distances, carrying heavy loads, with little or no food or rest (regardless of how young they are). If they cannot keep up they are either beaten or killed. Often the children try to escape and if they are caught they are either severely beaten or killed. In the worst cases the other children who have been abducted are forced to beat the escapee (usually a friend of theirs or someone they know) to death. One child, interviewed by Human Rights Watch, recalls her experience of this:

"One boy tried to escape, but he was caught. They made him eat a mouthful of red pepper, and five people were beating him. His hands were tied, and then they made us, the other new captives, kill him with a stick. I felt sick. I knew this boy from before. We were from the same village. I refused to kill him and they told me they would shoot me. They pointed a gun at me, so I had to do it. The boy was asking me, 'Why are you doing this?' I said I had no choice. After we killed him, they made us smear his blood on our arms. I felt dizzy. There was another dead body nearby, and I could smell the body. I felt so sick. They said we had to do this so we would not fear death and so we would not try to escape."

I feel so bad about the things that I did . . . It disturbs me so much - that I inflicted death on other people . . . When I go home I must do some traditional rites because I have killed. I must perform these rites and cleanse myself. I still dream about the boy from my village who I killed. I see him in my dreams, and he is talking to me and saying I killed him for nothing, and I am crying."

- Susan, sixteen, abducted by 'The Lord's Resistance Army' in Uganda.

Once the children have reached their destination they usually begin their training. All the children are trained to



fight but some are also trained as nurses and some girls are given away as “wives” to the commanders. The children may be used in suicide missions, as human land mine detectors, as cooks, porters, messengers and spies. Often, Commanders use children as a protective barrier, lining children up in front of them as they go into battle. If the children try to crouch down, avoid bullets, retreat or hide they are beaten by the commanders behind them and forced to continue.

Although battle is where the children are at the highest risk for their lives it is also where they have the highest chance of escape. Many children manage to slip away during the confusion of fighting and, if they find a civilian or someone not directly involved in the conflict, they are usually taken to centres where they can recover, be cared for, in some cases learn a new trade, and be returned to their families or a place of safety as soon as possible.

If the children are captured by the other side of the conflict, sometimes they are kept as prisoners of war rather than being released (violating their rights again), or they are forced to continue fighting, just for the other side.

The most famous and cruellest militant group, which deliberately seeks out and uses children as soldiers, is ‘The Lord’s Resistance Army’ in Uganda. It is a militant group in Uganda which opposes the current government. ‘The Lord’s Resistance Army’ is led by Joseph Kony, an Acholi (one of the Ugandan ethnic groups which occupies the North of Uganda), who claims to communicate with the Holy Spirit. It is Kony’s official mission to overthrow the government and purify the Acholi people, all through violence. In reality ‘The Lord’s Resistance Army’ spends most of its time attacking, mutilating, raping and slaughtering civilians and raiding villages, picking up child soldiers along the way.

‘The Lord’s Resistance Army’ is a well known violator of children’s rights which has existed since around 1987 and yet still goes on today. Why, with powers such as the U.S., Europe, and Russia in the world, is it possible that this has not been stopped? In fact, the international community, far from being ignorant to this terrible violation of child

rights, in many cases actually funds it. For example, it is well known that ‘The Lord’s Resistance Army’ raises money in countries such as Germany, the U.K., the U.S, Sudan and other countries.

Therefore, our first suggestion for the discontinuation of the use of child soldiers is that all organizations which support the use of child soldiers in any way no longer receive any sort of funding, supplies or aid, until they have provided concrete proof that they are no longer using child soldiers.

As well as this, all countries and organizations (such as the UN and Human Rights Watch) which have the power to, should take action to install new laws against the use of child soldiers. They should also take action to help countries without these policies set up an efficient organized system to deal with the use of child soldiers. Keeping child soldiers as prisoners of war, preventing escaped child soldiers from reaching safety and help, and forcing escaped child soldiers to give a testimony in court (which they might not be psychologically prepared for) should all be outlawed. All countries should accept 18 as the minimum age to join the army and should take clear steps to ensuring this is upheld. The fact that these steps have not yet been taken is something that the international community should be ashamed of.

The use of child soldiers is a well-documented, well-publicized crime which has been going on for years and, for some reason, still continues today. The use of child soldiers is one of those things which you can either ignore and pretend isn’t happening, or you can acknowledge it and fight it with everything you’ve got. This is a choice we need to make today. What will your choice be?

Yasmin Abdalla, Ximena Rebollar and Leigh Ix, all 15,
International School of Geneva, Switzerland.

To find out more about the use of child soldiers and the work of Human Rights Watch visit: <http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm>



to act, simply

DROPS OF HOPE



Drops of Hope is an organisation which was founded by four girls in the Institut International de Lancy, Geneva. Later, during their first campaign, Antoinette Duplay joined them. Here she explains what they do.

Drops of Hope basically raises money to save poor, forgotten children and help them regain their rightful childhood. We usually act through other bigger and more important charities, and just raise the money. We do this by selling our t-shirts and notepads, both with our logo on, and cakes with any other items that people would buy.

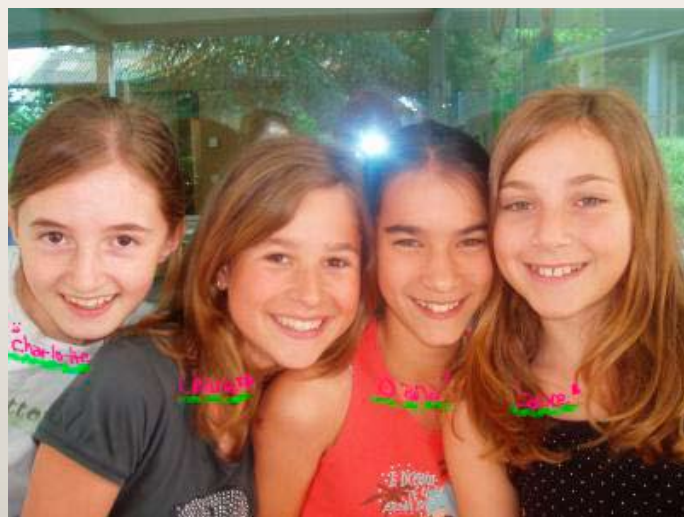
Our latest, and first project, was helping the untouchable children in India. The untouchables are children who don't have any diseases or handicap of any kind, they are just simply neglected. They live in the road, dressed in rags. Most charities forget them, mainly focusing on the children who have an obvious problem, but we decided to help them.

Our money went to build a school for them in Dehli, India. We raised 1375 CHF by selling the t-shirts, notepads and cakes along with pictures and cards made by the children that we were helping. We sold all of this at our end of school fete, and it was a huge success. Some of the money also came from outside donations.

This project was started because our founder, or president, has an aunt who lives in Dehli. She knows a lady who is part of the charity, called OMIndia, that was planning the school, and who just didn't have enough funds to start it. So we decided to help. We hope it will go on and that we shall find a new project this year.



Quelques enfants qui ont été aidés par l'association.



L'équipe d'origine de « Drops of Hope »: Charlotte, Leana, Oana, et Laure



CAS credits

BETTER SANITATION

In March 2008, just before the Easter holiday, a group of Grade 11 and 12 students from Bandung International School went to Tasikmalaya, a small growing city in southern West Java, to finish renovating a village sanitation facility. The unhygienic sanitation facility was used by around 75 people from two villages. To illustrate, any pedestrian can easily see someone who occupied the toilet and the water closet was still in the state of emergency.



Photos: Handy Hermawan

*before and... after !*

In choosing this project, BIS students worked in cooperation with the local school, SMP Al-Muttaqin, with a similar vision of helping the villagers. Participants from BIS met at least twice a week during lunchtime for planning the process. After several deadlocks, we agreed on this particular project. The site was carefully chosen by both schools. Research and discussion took place in our meetings and the schools corresponded via e-mail.

Apart from CAS credits, we were highly motivated by the poor sanitation conditions there. Working on the site was tiring, yet fun using the Indonesian work ethic of 'gotong royong'. As a result we got to know each other more and also made new friends. It was a great experience for us who rarely use hoe and spade. Every afternoon, the villagers provided us with fresh coconuts, the best beverages for the day.

The project was a great success, as we were able to finish the whole sanitation facility in four days. Apart from the physical success we also learned about the beauty of diversity. During our stay there, we learnt much about their culture, especially the religion of Islam. The limited time did not allow us to give a presentation about the importance of sanitation for the health of the entire village. This

will be our on-going project for next year. Pak Yusep Cuan-dani, CAS Coordinator of BIS, was willing to spend his precious time in finding and coming up with this brilliant idea to help the community in Tasikmalaya. Without his efforts, this project would never have fitted into our tight schedules. We also appreciate the financial support of the Environmental Club which allowed the vision to become reality.

Handy Hermawan, grade 11,
Bandung International School, Indonesia.

The team at work.



poem

HUNGER

My name is world
You have been told
Not to be distant
Instead of being assistant
I'm not proud
In that hunger crowd
Why not every being live a healthy life
I have plenty of food
But I don't feel good
Because you are wasting
Instead of using
No need for starvation
Time to stop poverty with incorporation
800 million people suffer
Because of hunger
Little children die of malnutrition
Needing lots of attention
We should hear their cry
Don't let them die.

Yasmin Doenyas,
prep class, Yüzyıl Isıl High School, Istanbul





innocent victims

CHILD POVERTY

Poverty – a word that we hear and see almost every day. We see it in the headlines of newspapers, and we hear it being talked about in the news. There is one question that we need to ask ourselves. Do we really know what poverty is? Do we know how it is really affecting the people around us?

Poverty is the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support. Half the world – nearly three billion people – live on less than two dollars a day. Although some of us are very fortunate in having food, clothes, shelter and a family, we have to remember that many children around the world are suffering in poverty.

About 25,000 people die of hunger everyday! This is one person every three and a half seconds. The sad part is that most of these people are children. There is plenty of food in the world for everyone, but many people don't have enough money to nourish themselves. This causes malnutrition which gives headaches and severe dizziness. Since the body is not getting the nutrients that it needs, it gets thinner and thinner until it stops working.

AIDS is also a major problem. It is now second only to the Black Death as the largest epidemic in history. More than 2 million people die of AIDS a year, one person every 15 seconds. Mostly adults die from AIDS, but, surprisingly, a lot of children die as well because they can be infected with the HIV virus during pregnancy. Many more children are left orphaned by AIDS.

Andrea Calderon (13) and Gabriella Robins (14), both Hispanic, Institut International de Lancy.

A small child sits on a sidewalk in Rwanda, Africa. This area is rampant with the AIDS virus. This little one showed no emotion, no smiles, nothing. When Jason R Warren, the photographer, asked what was wrong someone told me, «he's sick». Such a sad circumstance.



© Stockphoto/Jason R Warren 2006



Earth Focus Round table and debate

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE BEIJING 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES ON HUMAN RIGHTS ?

On the 10th December 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Earth Focus Foundation held a debate, an opportunity for young people from all over Geneva to learn about and discuss the impact of the Olympic Games on human rights in China. Below, visiting students from the Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa, Kenya, describe their experience.

Today's conference was a great learning experience for us. The views expressed by some present were certainly very enlightening. We arrived at the conference with a somewhat neutral standpoint. Even after hearing different perspectives on this issue, we were still uncomfortable leaning to a particular side of the debate.

The most inspirational speaker, in our opinion, was Zhou Xianfeng from the Chinese Mission. Throughout his time in the debate he held strong to his Chinese principles and didn't allow himself to give in to strong attacking arguments. This gave us a very good insight into China's viewpoint on the current issues. Afterwards, we heard from a speaker from Human Rights Watch, Laurence Lorenzini, who told us the aims and objectives of her organization, ensuring that violations of human rights are kept to a minimum. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) representative, Anton Burgener, started the day's events with a speech presenting to us the difficulty in choosing the right country to host the games and why they eventually chose Beijing. We also heard about the key ideas that the IOC was trying to implement in China using the Olympics.

All these presentations helped us to understand this complex topic from multiple perspectives. They demonstrated that the topic was not one that could be learned about overnight. It is complicated and needs time and increased knowledge to be able to understand. The availability and contradictory nature of some knowledge made exploring this topic difficult. We always had to be conscious of the reliability of our sources of knowledge.

We opened the afternoon's events by giving our presentation to introduce both sides of the argument: 'What impact did the Beijing Olympics have on China'. The rest of the afternoon was spent in an open debate about various aspects of how the Olympics have or could have impacted China. Both sides of the argument had about the same number of students debating in the

room. Some topics were argued better by those proposing the motion and some topics were argued better by those opposing the motion. What we saw was that some groups decided they wanted to lead a very factually-based debate and some other groups were relying more on emotion.

At this debate we definitely practiced and improved our skills in public speaking. We were fortunate to meet students, some like-minded and some of different perspectives, with whom we were able to converse about our findings. Not only did we learn certain things we had not recognized before, but we also learned new ways to look at the same situations.

All in all we feel that our journey to Geneva to participate in this conference was more than worth the while and we thank Earth Focus for inviting us to partake in this beneficial conference.

Sarrah, Saaika & Meekaeel

Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa, Kenya.



légende



World Economic Forum

THE DAVOS EXPERIENCE

In January last year two teachers and ten students from the International School of Geneva attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Once a year, a small traditional town in the middle of the Swiss Alps becomes a hotspot of international debate and discussion. The world economic forum lasts a few days, but during these days the town is dynamic. A myriad of helicopters descend on the valley, bringing an entourage which seems out of 'who's who?', and black suits take over the village.



Davos, a village in the Swiss Alps

tary and other security measures reminded on-lookers of the importance of the people attending and of the danger these leaders face.

Contrary to what could be expected, there was a number of young people both in the open forum and on the streets. Further, let's not forget that Davos is, in fact, a ski resort. This means that in addition to the already

peculiar mixture of people on the streets there was also a large number of skiers trying to relax.

Walking in Davos one cannot help but notice the ironic contrast between the isolated mountain village and the cosmopolitan businessmen, politicians, and diplomats. Adding to the peculiarity of the situation there's the military. Military trucks, soldiers and police special divisions are a common sight and break the almost continuous succession of black Mercedes-Benz and Audis. The mili-

So, amongst the ministers, presidents and C.E.O.s, amongst the skiers and soldiers with skis and guns on their shoulders, the international school of Geneva students made their way to the open forum where they learned from experts about various fields

What are Russia's geopolitical ambitions?

Following the relative weakness of Russia during the 1990's, President Putin has established a new assertiveness in the region. Russia opposed the integration of the former USSR states into N.A.T.O. and the U.S. anti-missile defence system. This forum, comprised of several prominent panelists, attempted to deal with the question of Russia's geopolitical ambitions.

The panel of three was moderated by Urs Leuthard: Professor Teltschick, chairman of the Munich conference on security policy in Germany; Alexei Pushkov an author, anchor and executive producer in Russia; Charles Grant, the director of the Centre for European reform, from the U.K.

After a quick introduction to the topic by the moderator concerning President Putin's image, Pushkov took advantage of the right to speak by challenging the validity of the question of the forum itself! He expressed strongly that the wording of the question was too reminiscent of the cold war and that it showed a common fault in western thinking which saw Russia as an opponent.

This thinking, Grant argued, was exacerbated by the 'hard man' image Putin portrays to the West; in addition he says that "Russia's image problem is of its own doing". Grant did however, after some protest, admit that the U.S. and the West, as victors of the cold war, expected Russia to do its bidding in the 1990s and that Putin's policy is a reaction against this.



After this, Grant went on to describe the boom in Russian economy in the last five years and mentioned the self-confidence that this growth has created. A consequence of this, he says, is Russia's tendency to exploit the fact that Europe desperately needs their gas. These accusations were dismissed by Pushkov who then took the offensive and mentioned that the West's distrust of Russia makes the country react in a defensive way.

Teltschick then took that opening to make reference to the anti-missile bases the U.S. has created all around and how hypocritical it is of Western countries to expect Russia to have them on friendly terms while they surround the country with anti-missile bases. At the question of the U.S.'s claim that the bases have nothing to do with Russia, the professor 'kindly' asks the public and panellists to: "Look at the map!"

After this 'victim' portrayal of Russia, the moderator asked Grant his opinion on the affair. Grant denounced the treatment foreign investors often receive in Russia, where personal harassment, amongst other methods, was used to pressure people working for foreign oil enterprises such as Shell. He also mentions that this treatment decreases the level of foreign investment that Russia receives and by consequence decreases the rate of growth. This argument is partially refuted by Pushkov who says: "And Shell for example, if it faced all these terrible problems why didn't they leave? No, they decided to stay."

As the debate continued, it was one-sided as Grant provided little resistance to most of the things said by Pushkov and Teltschick. However, Grant did criticize Russia on three points regarding its economy. First of all he mentioned the amount of corruption the Russian government was involved in. He also criticized the lack of strong laws in several matters which affect investors. The lack of laws in these areas discourages foreign investment and deprives Russia of more economic growth. The third point is also related to investment. Grant expressed that if Russia is not open and does not allow for foreign investment then the west has no reason and will not accept a Russian company (of which the Russian government owns a percentage) trying to buy a European company.

Pushkov was quick to respond and reminded Grant that the cold war was over and that Russia was not looking for control. He said we "must separate economic and political disputes". Further, Pushkov refuted claims of restrictions on investment by saying that some key strategic areas of the Russian economy were obviously not open to foreign investment but that the U.S. and Europe do the same. He thus emphasised the hypocritical stance of some people in the West and is, as are Russians, fed up with double standards.

Concluding, the moderator conveyed that Russia's objectives were to become a world power and to be treated as an equal trading partner and not as an opponent.

Federico De la Balze,
International School of Geneva, Switzerland.

Kremlin, former imperial palace, home of the Russian government.



© iStockphoto/ Mikhail Burev



The lungs of the world short of breath!

DEFORESTATION IN BRAZIL

Deforestation is the conversion of forest to arable land, pasture, urban use, logged area, or wasteland. Deforestation results from removal of trees without sufficient reforestation, and results in declines in animal habitat and biodiversity, wood for fuel and industrial use, and quality of human life. On our planet, the highest rate of deforestation is in Brazil.

Nowhere on earth is the threat of biological impoverishment because of deforestation greater than the Amazon jungles of Brazil. The jungle of Brazil supports approximately 300 million hectares of tropical forest, the largest single area of tropical forest communities in the world. Estimates of global biodiversity point to the tropics as the source of 50 to 90% of all species of trees found on earth. The richest forests often support over 300 tree species per hectare, approximately the same number of tree species as found in North America.

Between May 2000 and August 2006, Brazil lost nearly 150,000 square kilometers of forest – an area larger than Greece. In addition, since 1970, over 600,000 square kilometers of Amazon rainforest have been destroyed.

In deforested areas there is no shade during the day, and no insulation during the night. Once the trees and shade are gone, the moist soil soon becomes dry and cracked.

Thus, flooding and soil erosion occur, as there is nothing to absorb the rainfall and no roots to hold the soil in place.

The removal of the forests may seem like it affects only the local surroundings, but it really affects the world as a whole. With fewer trees, there will be less oxygen and an increase in carbon dioxide content, contributing to global warming.

Today, both biodiversity loss and global warming have become such clear dangers to our planet that international treaties have addressed them both. Current rates of loss for rainforests and other ecosystems are over 20 million hectares a year, 40 hectares a minute. In order to reduce deforestation, we have to reduce our consumption of items made out of rainforest timber. Be conscious and aware whenever you purchase any items made out of timber.

Kenny Lim,
American School of Doha, Qatar





one of 270,000

THE SEAL PUP

‘Mother! Where are you?’, the seal pup screeched at the top of its voice. ‘Mother?’, but no reply came.

He flopped his body over the cold ice. He was hungry and shivering. He breathed heavily as he rushed about searching for his mother. But he wasn’t fast enough, compared to the batsman who had beaten his mother to death.

Thousands of miles of Antarctic land stood in front of him. It had already been two hours since his last feeding time. Was he ever going to find her? Suddenly, he stopped in his tracks. Large pools of blood spread out across the ice.

The seal pup turned his head and there, smeared in blood, was his mother. ‘Mother, mother, what happened?’, he cried, ‘Mother, I’ve missed you’. The pup started to cry for his mother, and for himself, knowing that he was going to die tonight, all alone.

Seals are killed everyday for their skin and for sport, 270,000 each year in Canada alone.

Molly Davies, 12, English,
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland.

some links to explore... and take action!

Franz Weber Foundation - www.ffw.ch
www.animal-protection.net

www.wwf.org

The Humane Society of the United States - www.hsus.org
www.respectforanimals.co.uk



global warming victims

WALRUSES

Have you heard about seals being captured and killed for fur? Probably. But another member of the pinniped family, the walrus, is being under-appreciated, in our opinion.

Walrus are not as cute and adorable as fluffy baby seals. Rudyard Kipling, author of *The Jungle Book* described a walrus as a “*big, ugly, bloated, pimpled, fat-necked, long-tusked animal of the North Pacific who has no manners except when he is asleep*”. However, they are actually very interesting creatures and known to be both powerful and very social.

A walrus (or *Odobenus rosmarus*) is a large flippered



marine mammal. A fully grown walrus can weigh up to 2,041 kg! Walrus can grow up to 40 years old. They have huge tusks (which can grow up to a metre long), whiskers (that form a moustache) and are extremely fat, though what you are actually seeing is blubber. Their skin can be four centimetres thick and the blubber beneath can reach fifteen centimetres in thickness.

Walrus use their tusks to establish dominance, defend themselves and to help them climb out of the water onto the ice. Males tend to have larger tusks than females. Walrus are the only member of the pinniped family to have tusks.

Walrus are quick and nimble swimmers and can reach speeds of up to 35 kilometres per hour, although on average they swim only at speeds of 7 kilometres per hour. They are good divers and hunt at depths of up to 90 metres. When they dive, their ears (small inconspicuous openings which have no external flaps) close tightly. On land their

hind limbs can be rotated underneath their bodies to help them move awkwardly across land, where they spend a good part of their lives.

Walrus live in large herds, sometimes with more than 2000 individuals. Male walrus (bulls) have many ways to attract female walrus (cows) including combat with another bull or singing. Underwater they whistle, click and make other sounds like a bell.

Their main diet consists of snails, mussels, echinoderms (which are starfish, urchins and sea cucumbers) and crabs. Occasionally they will feed on fish, seals and young whales; holding them down on the ice with their flippers and tearing with their strong tusks. To find their prey, they use their sensitive whiskers to feel their way through the sand. Walrus also have a cool way of uncovering their food. They take in a big mouthful of water and squirt it at the sandy ocean floor. This moves the sand out of the way exposing a snack.

You would find a walrus in the shallower waters of the Arctic. They move south in the winter as the ice expands and north in the summer as the ice recedes.

Despite being such interesting and unique animals walrus have always been under threat. They have been harvested by native people for their meat, skin and ivory tusks. Poachers still kill them illegally, but a much greater threat is now posed by global warming and melting ice. Walrus calves are being abandoned by their mothers as they go to the north where ice is more plentiful. There is a lack of food because of the shrinking ice: crabs and clams are not following the walrus north. Ice that walrus need to rest upon is melting, leading to walrus dying of exhaustion.

So as you can see, walrus are not just “*big, ugly, bloated, pimpled, fat-necked, long-tusked*” beasts but very fascinating and extraordinary marine animals. We hope that we have raised awareness about these breathtaking creatures and that their future will improve.

Edna Dualeh, 13, Somalian and German,

Marielle van Helvoort, 14, Dutch and American.

La Châtaigneraie, International School of Geneva, Switzerland.



the king's death

THE LAST TIGER

His bullet wound isn't healing
The crisp snow around him is crimson
Licking his wound, why won't it heal?
His fur coat is ruined, seeping with blood
Nobody hears his cries of pain in the tundra
Nobody comes as he weeps, tears falling
Trickling down his cheeks, wetting his fur
Lord help him as he cries, silently dying
He is the last of his kind

The hunter left him to die, suffering every second
This sport is his purpose; the tiger his prey
Gun smoking, he leaves, no pity or guilt in his eyes
Leaving footprints, he ignores the roaring cries and sobs
No one cares
The tigers are dying

Licking, licking, over and over
His life draining away into another world
As the pain screams inside him, louder
He roars for one last time
Breathes for one last time
Lives for the last few seconds
And dies
Alone
What have we done?

Olivia Broome, 16,
Institut International de Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland.





youth leadership seminar 2008

COSTA RICA

Tomorrow's generation is in the hands of today's youth. From the 12th – 17th of October 2008 about 50 students from different parts of the world gathered at the SEK International School in San Jose, Costa Rica, to discuss and spread knowledge of sustainable development. There were five schools in total, from Switzerland, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Brazil, and the United States. This seminar, named the 'Youth Leadership Seminar', was one that enlightened the students of the International School of Geneva beyond their expectations.

On the first day, each school was expected to make a presentation about what their country did in the sector of sustainability. This first day was of great importance to us because we were given the opportunity to expand our knowledge on the matter of sustainability in countries other than the ones we had studied. Our school performed three presentations: one on sustainability in Switzerland; another on sustainability in Australia focusing on the Great Barrier Reef and the Murray Darling Basin; and a third on sustainable development in Canada, particularly Vancouver. Students from Brazil explained what their school, the Colegio Sidarta, is doing for the environment. The Costa Ricans, who call themselves 'Ticos', made a presentation about their country's natural parks and biodiversity. The school from New York gave a presentation about 'Green Buildings', which acknowledged a series of constructions of environmentally friendly buildings soon to take place in New York. Ecuador made an interesting presentation about their country's sustainability.

The second day found us at the well known INBio (National Biodiversity Institute) Park in Heredia. We were taken around the park, shown the different fauna (including sloths, iguanas, and white-tailed deer) and flora. We were shown different plants used for medicinal purposes, and insects whose bodily chemicals are used in perfumery. In this trip we learnt about the precious biodiversity that the country has in stock. We learnt about the role of the nation's biodiversity and the importance of its preservation. We also shared humorous moments together such as Ms. McKenzie's hilarious facial expression when a baby snake was placed on her hands.

The third day started off with a two hour drive to a Costa Rican university named EARTH (College of Agriculture for the Humid Tropical Region) in Limon. We learnt a lot about recycling and the safe disposal of sewage. The tour-guide, an American woman who had taught at the college for 10 years, gave us a brief summary of the history of the college's foundation as well as the possible ways of getting a scholarship. She explained that it didn't matter whether you were from a small village in Africa without any money

– as long as you were truly interested in sustainability of the environment and were prepared to devote yourself to the topic and research for it.

On Thursday we visited the main water dam and water treatment plant in Tres Ríos. This was followed by an interesting lecture on water management and sustainable development by Dr. Alvaro Araya, representative of the A.A. (Instituto Costarricense de Acueductos y Alcantarillados), Department of National Water Management. We learned that Costa Rica does not have an army but instead funds purification and distribution of water, as well as education. Even the smallest villages in Costa Rica are supplied with clean water through pipelines connected to the water treatment plant.

It is very unfortunate that our flight back to Geneva was on the Friday and therefore we missed the final evaluation of the week's achievements. The trip was indeed a memorable one for all of us. Our host families did not only serve us extremely large and delicious portions of Costa Rican food, but also provided us with the kind of love and caring that our own families did. The incredible beauty of the country and its happy residents, a contrast to the grey-faced residents of our Geneva, was yet another reason why the trip to Costa Rica was an unforgettable experience.

We would like to thank Ms. McKenzie and Mr. Thondoo for their tremendous efforts and time that make this trip happen.

Isabella Mosselmans & Bryson Ddaddah,
International School of Geneva, Switzerland



CALLING ALL TEACHERS! EARTH FOCUS #38

At Earth Focus we are in the process of gathering articles for the next 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 'Whose Right?' and we are looking for students' perspectives on this topic, in the form of articles, poems, creative writing, and pictures. We hope students will find inspiration in this title – 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 sepa-

rately 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.



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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!





“ Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan was a role model to many of us,
and his example will continue to inspire new world citizens
for several generations to come ”

Kofi Annan
UN Secretary-General, 28 October 2003

Our vision:

“ To build and protect a better world, sustainable and more peaceful for our children and grand children ”

Our mission:

Provide a platform and a voice
Promote and share an understanding of the environment and of sustainable development
Encourage the feeling that young people have an important role to play

www.earthfocusfoundation.org
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**Education is the best way to “make the change”
Your support will benefit young people worldwide!**

