

# Report From the Field

**Crabgrass**

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## Greetings!

Here we are again. In this newsletter, now an annual issue, you will read about the work of Crabgrass this year. You will learn about two bicyclists connecting with the Ajakits Shelter in Armenia, and about a conference that Jan and women from the India 2005 Women and Water Conference attended in Mexico City. We will share with you news of women from Kosovo/ a and women from Serbia working together and, of course, we will share news of our India work. Fran has been reflecting on the times we live in, and challenges us all once again with her thoughts.

For longer than they like to remember, this year Fran, with Jan's help, struggled against a debilitating disease, Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS) sometimes referred to as French polio. This is a somewhat rare auto-immune disease which paralyzes the body, sometimes even the heart and lungs. Fortunately for Fran, it only paralyzed about 85% of her muscles. With hard work these muscles can be brought back into functioning, and so at this writing Fran is fully back, living at home and working at almost the same level as before. Her journey into the "nation of the wounded," as Richard Rodrigues calls it, was instructive in many ways. It meant a lot to Fran that when she needed help it was there. People came to visit, brought food, and took care of her dog and house. She returned home in August, everlastingly grateful to the universe and her friends - for life and for movement. Fran feels more vulnerable than before, so she is postponing her India trip until February.

## Good news from the Balkans

We recently received an email from the Women in Black in Serbia. To understand why it gave us such delight you need to know a little bit about the history of the Crabgrass connection with the Belgrade Women in Black, and women in Pristina, Kosovo.

In the mid-1990's Fran felt that it would be important, and within the mandate of peaceful activities, for Crabgrass to offer some money to the Belgrade Women in Black to start developing relationships in Kosovo. "But we don't know any women in Kosovo," was the reply from Women in Black. "We have never been there and don't know anyone organizationally. Serbs feel toward Albanians the way white people view black people in your country."

When Crabgrassers Tova Green and Fran visited Serbia in 1995, they agreed that Crabgrass could afford to put a little bit of money toward bus fare and lodging to encourage women from Belgrade to visit women in Pristina. Five hundred dollars for each of two years was agreed upon and the visits began. Eventually women from Pristina attended Women in Black conferences, and later women from Belgrade started teaching women's studies in Pristina.

When the war started between Kosovo and Serbia, and with the United States bombing of Kosovo and Serbia, these relationships were put to a severe test. Medicines were moved in and out of Pristina; and children were moved out of

harm's way, using the connections that we encouraged before the war. Crabgrass is proud to have been a part in that peacemaking activity.

So now, please read the email excerpts below and share our pride in having been able to facilitate these relationships.

### Statement of The Women's Peace Coalition, Struga, Macedonia September 2, 2006

The Kosovo Women's Network (Women from Priština, Djakovica, Prizren, Srbica, Orahovac, Lipljan, Podujevo, Priluzje, Vucitrn, and Pec) The Women in Black Network Serbia (Women from Velika Plana, Leskovac, Vranje, Pirot, Vlasotince, Zajecar, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Vrbas, Belgrade and Novi Pazar)

"In late August the Women's Peace Coalition, joining the Kosovo Women's Network and the Women in Black Network Serbia, held a three-day conference on "Women, Peace and Security" in Struga, Macedonia. The aim was to bring visibility to the work of peace movement activists in creating a stable and just peace in the region. In the conference, which occurred at the same time as negotiations between representatives from Belgrade and Pristina about the status of Kosovo in Vienna, 60 Kosovar and Serbian peace activists concluded that peace in the region is not possible without the active participation of women. Additionally, the Women's Peace Coalition supports the inde-

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## Balkan continued from p.1

pendence and territorial integrity of Kosovo as a civil state with a functional legal system. In opposition to official politics that create divisions and conflict, the Women's Peace Coalition continues to build trust, women's solidarity and mutual support. Our activities together contribute to the creation of a lasting and just peace in the region."

*The following quotes are taken from the blog of Jasmina Tesanovic about the conference:*

MACEDONIA-August 31, 2006

The first meeting of our network women from Kosovo and women from Serbia is over, we are sobbing...60 of us, a catharsis.

Why do we cry so much, the heat, the guilt, for heaven's sake, Jasmina, you are just a scribe, your view is blurred, words are flowing ahead of your brain.

"Even though my brother was

killed in that war, now I can talk it with you here," says an Albanian activist from Kosovo women's network at the opening session.

The pregnant woman, an Albanian blonde, wails "My girl will be born in a better world."

"I never believed I would cry in front of Serbs," says the activist who works with Albanian victims of war.

"I am 18, I am from Serbia, crimes in my name were committed before I was born, but I am saying SORRY."

We are hugging now and dressing in fancy black t-shirts designed by the top designer from Serbia as volunteer work. Yes, it went well, and it feels great. Now we will work together and make our men and governments feel stupid and small for not managing to do the same for ages on end. Maybe even ashamed.

One woman says, "Maybe I will have the courage now to read my war diary after I read yours from Serbia about the Kosovo

war back in 1999, and I see you now again writing feverishly."

And the last day in the workshop on state and security, we Serbian Women in Black readily agree that Kosovo should be independent from Serbia, as Albanian Network women wish it. My late mother's words echo in my head: "You have no pants on your asses and you are giving away what you didn't even earn."

Rada, the Serbian activist from Kosovo (a top traitor the nationalists say) states: "They will lynch me there when this gets published."

Good luck Albanian friends, we would like to split from our state too...we women from Serbia will persist: always disloyal to the state of crime while we are belly dancing to Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Croatian turbo. Igo, our Albanian friend, is on the floor with a glass of wine on the top of her head and officially proclaims: "What do we need a revolution for if we cannot dance?"

## Introducing the Women's Global Green Action Network (WGGAN)

by Jan Hartsough

Crabgrass has begun working alongside a sister organization – the Women's Global Green Action Network (WGGAN). They,

like us, are interested in forming partnerships with women around the world working on environmental and social justice issues. I was fortunate to attend, on behalf of Crabgrass, the WGGAN Grassroots Women Environmental Leaders Strategy Session held in Mexico City in March, 2006. The conference brought together an amazing group of dynamic women from around the world – each working on environmental justice issues at home, and each eager to get to know of each other's work and life. The efforts to define what a network could be for us, and how we could stay connected after we left Mexico, were



fulfilled in many different ways.

Last year WGGAN launched a search for visionary advocates, organizers and entrepreneurs around the world working on the frontlines of environmental, social and economic sustainability in their communities. Crabgrass nominated two women who attended our Third International Women and Water Conference in India – Gemma Bulos and Arshinder Kaur. Out of dozens of applications, the WGGAN selection committee invited thirty leaders to come together in Mexico City and help identify WGGAN's long-term priorities and action plans. These women came to Mexico with the understanding that this forum was the initiation of long-range efforts towards enhancing the individual and collective impact of their efforts. And so, over the course of the three-day meeting the group (1) agreed on a set of shared values and principles that will serve as the

basis for all WGGAN designed or supported activities; (2) identified key communication and networking needs to stay in touch across a broad and disparate range of accessibility levels with the hope of reaching way beyond those present in Mexico; (3) committed ourselves to the concept of regional coordinators who will serve as channels of information, resources and training between WGGAN and the grassroots; and (4) drew up a set of tangible action steps. The group designed and agreed upon joint advocacy projects, regional trainings, and a strategy for participating in international policy-making. WGGAN and several technology partners are working to provide resources for online conferencing, a global searchable database, web-based radio, podcasting, and more – literally amplifying the voices of grassroots women and documenting and shar-

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# What Time Is It?

by Fran Peavey

Many of the decisions that we must make as an adult depend on how we answer the question “What time is it?” We must answer this question individually—What time is it in my life? And we must answer collectively—What time is it in our lives? When we find an answer that satisfies us we must then answer the question—Who am I in relationship to what time it is? Increasingly many people think of this as a very dark time; times of war are usually considered very dark. Increasingly people see this time as end time, i.e. the time that we must pass through until life is no longer possible for humans on Earth, with many species of plants and animals already becoming extinct each year due to the expansion of human civilization into the last wild places.

Facts about global warming are increasingly reaching people. Extremes in weather like hurricanes and tornadoes are more the norm now, due to global warming. This naturally raises people’s fear for their own generation, and that of their children and grandchildren. This fear expresses itself in public policy as well as individual actions in response to the fear. I see the tremendous growth in sales of books dealing with the second coming and the rapture as a function of the fear. People are thinking that maybe something good can come from that which they fear. Fundamentalist religion, whether it be Christian, Jewish or Muslim, dislikes ambiguity, complexity, and lack of sureness.

It is regrettable that at this time, we have a government incapable of leading the industrial and business sector of the economy. Just when our business and industrial strength should be making changes that impact the environment, we are distracted by war and our President encourages us to shop.

The concentration on accumu-

lation of wealth, is also, I think, a function of the fear that if trends continue as they are going now, life is difficult to imagine too far into the future for our species. No matter how much wealth we accumulate, it is impossible for us to escape the consequences of global warming and the destruction of species other than our own. Monoculture in agriculture, forestry, or the breeding of animals is not a survival strategy.

When I was at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June of 1992 I asked a number of scientists how long a time span it was before they expected life for our species to be severely impacted. Most scientists said that due to the interlinking of factors, it was impossible to put a date. The few scientists who did answer stated a period of time of around 30 years.

I must confess that I have spent a considerable amount of time looking for signs of hope around the issue of global warming. I read this year about a new invention that can take the waste product of the burn-

## What’s Happening in Darfur is Genocide!

We would be derelict not to insert in these pages words about the genocide which is happening in the Darfur region of Sudan in Africa. According to Amnesty International and UN reports, over 300,000 people have been killed or have died as a result of the conflict there. It grieves us more than we can say. We all need to ask ourselves “What can we do to help the people of Darfur?” A strong UN peacekeeping force and a no-fly zone are both needed immediately. Contact your Senators and Congressional Reps and let them know that you are concerned about the United States’ complicity in this first genocide of the 21st century. You can get more background information at [www.SaveDarfur.org](http://www.SaveDarfur.org).

ing of coal and make it into something that is good for the earth. The rapid growth in sales of hybrid automobiles is also a sign that human beings, if given the choice, will choose an intelligent alternative. While I am concerned about global warming, I am not dismayed. Our species has shown tremendous proclivity for adapting to difficult situations. But the rise of fundamentalist religions does concern me because it does not allow us to choose ambiguity, complexity, and insecurity.

What time is it? Each of us has to answer that question for ourselves. For me it’s time to get to work differently. To face our fears and start working on the changes that will be necessary for survival. There are enough changes needed to keep us all busy for quite a while. Our work with Balkan refugees taught me that human beings can adapt to many difficult situations and learn to make life work anew. The refugees who thrived were those who could work with other people to achieve limited goals. But first they had to tell the truth about how they were feeling and what their real empirical situation was. Fantasy just doesn’t cut it when you’re in trouble.

Evidently there are those who feel that travel to another planet or a space installation is an alternative to life on a planet that is too hot to live on. Only the most powerful will have this option open to them, if in fact it becomes a viable option. For myself, I prefer to think that our task in this time is to learn to live so well and so generously that we take care of each other and the earth rather than leave it. Our own individual lives fit into some pattern which is often difficult to perceive.

These are times of great change. People are sometimes afraid of change. But I notice that when I am changing, I am most awake, most alive. Fear is toxic to good thinking. How can we learn to relish times of change? Clearly, that is the time we are in now.

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ing best practices around the globe.

After our time in Mexico City, a delegation of WGGAN members attended the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development's 14<sup>th</sup> Session on energy in New York City, taking our community generated knowledge and practices to international policy discussions.

WGGAN has also developed an Exchange Program in partnership with the human rights organization, Global Exchange. Their first exchange was a Transformative Advocacy delegation of environmental lawyers and legal professionals who traveled to Bolivia in October to partner with women advocates involved in the GMO (genetically-modified organism) movement in both soy and corn crops there.



*Left to right, WGGAN delegates Gemma Bulos (USA), Martha Isabel Ruiz Corzo (Mexico) and Devorah Brous (Israel) make plans together.*

Fran did a strategic questioning workshop with the Bolivian delegation before they left.

The first WGGAN regional training was held this past June in Palawan, Philippines, teaching women how to implement a household water filtration system called

the Biosand Filter (BSF). The training was organized by Crabgrass nominee to Mexico, Gemma Bulos, together with another WGGAN delegate who came to Mexico from the Philippines, Offie Bernardino. Gemma had learned about the Biosand Filter from another Crabgrass water conference participant, Shaina Curry of CAWST (Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology) in Alberta, Canada. (See Gemma's article for details on the Safe Water for the Philippines Project launched this summer.)

Within a year WGGAN intends to support each of its regional coordinators in designing and hosting special trainings in their regions, through which they will gain credibility as local leaders by offering appropriate and needed information. More information at [www.wggan.org](http://www.wggan.org).

## Women Water Keepers Gather in the Philippines by Gemma Bulos

In June 2006, twelve women from six provinces in the three major island groups of the Philippines were selected to participate in the BioSand Filter (BSF) Training in Puerto Princesa, Palawan to launch the Women WaterKeepers Program (WWP), an initiative of A Single Drop (ASD) in partnership with the Women's Global Green Action Network (WGGAN). This is an ongoing project that empowers women and girls by offering training in simple and environmentally sustainable practices that will provide for their basic water and sanitation needs. These women came from every sector of society; we had a teacher, a municipal health nurse, bookkeepers, community organizers, officers from the Department of Trade, and water and sanitation advisors. But ask these woman what they believe their key role is in their community is, and you will get a resounding "mother", "sister", "grandmother", "daughter", "wife", the one who is responsible for the caretaking of their families and communi-

ties. Among them, they had thirty-one children and one grandchild.

Some of the women took a non-paid leave of absence from work to attend the training because they knew it was an important technology to bring back to their communities. Others traveled for two to three days from their remote regions to attend. One woman had never traveled on her own and took her first flight *ever* to come to the workshop. This dedication is a reflection of the love that these women have for their communities and the concern that they hold for the health and welfare of their family, friends and neighbors.

All the women were chosen based on their proven leadership in their communities and all were asked to commit to starting a BSF project in their community. This training was organized by ASD, and hosted by Palawan NGO Network, INC (PNNI) whose directors are both Founding Members of WGGAN. WGGAN co-sponsored the workshop as well as of-

fered full scholarships to the twelve women. The Center for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST) provided the trainers in support of A Single Drop's goal to become an official trainer in BSF technology. The training lasted four days and the wholistic curriculum consisted of three components: theory, practical and hands-on. In addition to fabricating filters, the women learned basic Microbiology/Epidemiology, other household water treatment options, sanitation and hygiene education, project development and more in a forum for interactive learning exchange. Our goal was to make a clear connection between household water treatment, and proper sanitation and hygiene practices, to build their capacity as stakeholders in local water resources, and to guide them in developing projects that would be beneficial to their communities. This training also facilitates women and girl's entry into water management and supply, and edu-

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## World Water Forum IV in Mexico City March, 2006

Following the WGGAN Strategy Session, the delegation attended the Mexico 2006 Fourth World Water Forum. Although often confused with UN-sponsored meetings, the World Water Forum is organized by collaboration between national authorities of the year's host (Mexico) and an international organization called the World Water Council, an amalgamation of governmental and non-governmental water groups, private corporations and non-profit organizations. The key function of the meetings is to set the global agenda for water resources management. Many of the civil society groups see the Forum as a corporate-sponsored event where big government meets big corporations, and agendas get set that local communities will be forced to follow. They attend in order to know what is being planned, and it provides an opportunity to network

and figure out how to impact the process when they get back home.

This year's theme was "Local Actions for a Global Challenge". Everyone agrees that fresh clean water is an increasingly limited resource in our world. Today 20 percent of the world's population has NO source of safe drinking water, and 40 percent don't even have access to basic sanitation. Nearly 4,000 children per day die of water-related diseases. Armed with these facts, WGGAN representatives worked in concert with an international caucus of women from over 25 countries to draft a declaration affirming the human right to water, and the special role of women in water management. The Forum provides these kinds of opportunities for civil society to remind government and corporations focused on water and sanitation issues of their critical importance to development.

There were several alternative forums paralleling the "official forum" throughout Mexico City, where the emphasis was on including indigenous perspectives for action. Often based on a more holistic approach to water initiatives, most indigenous cultures promote water reverence and water rights for all living beings as their key agenda items. Furthermore, the alternative forums spoke from the perspective of supporting water as a global commons, not a commodity to be bought and sold. Hundreds of water activists attending the alternative forums (representing over 40 countries) signed a joint declaration of the recognition and enforcement of water as a human right, emphasizing the need for publicly managed utilities and exclusion of water from international free trade agreements, which was presented to the official forum at their closing session.

## Bicycling Emissaries to Armenia

For a number of reasons Crabgrass had decided not to do a fundraiser for Armenia in 2006. But good fortune came our way, and we found a way to offer support to Ajakits, the women's shelter in Gyumri, again this summer. We got a phone call in the spring from Jana Zanetto, a professor at City College and avid cyclist who, together with her friend Nikki Ellman, was planning a three-week bike trip around Armenia. They had heard we knew of a women's shelter in Armenia, and wanted to visit it. As arrangements were being made, they asked their friends if they wanted to send money to support the work of Ajakits in Armenia, and many were generous in response. Together with monies donated by the family of Beverly Ramsay, Jana

and Nikki were able to take over \$3000 in donations for the continuing work of Ajakits and the Beverly Shelter in Gyumri, Armenia.

Jana wrote from Armenia: "We arrived on our bikes in the city of Gyumri. Many areas are still devastated from the 1988 earthquake that killed 25,000 there. At Ajakits' office, we met the small staff. Last year they answered 3,000 hotline

calls, 900 women were seen and counseled, and over 30 women have been helped to relocate with their families to outlying villages. These families usually have to go into hiding since their abusers are anxious to locate their victims. In the only shelter-apartment in town, we met one victim who can safely stay unhidden, since her husband has no interest in getting her or their two children back. She showed us some of her wounds: cuts from a knife and cigarette burns. The contributions we brought will keep the office going for the next year, and also pay rent for this family's apartment. We wish you could have been with us to experience as we did the gratitude of that family and all of the staff for our contributions, as much for the gesture of caring as for the money."



## Ganges Update

On March 9, 2006 a bomb exploded inside of the Sankat Mochan Temple in Varanasi, India. This is the Temple where we do our work. Four people were killed. Sonia Gandhi, a leader in the National Parliament, happened to be in town at this time and rushed to the Temple. Another bomb went off at the train station, and others were found unexploded in the city itself. Immediately everyone assumed that these bombings were the work of Muslim terrorists.

It's an odd fact of history that sometimes things that are designed to create fear actually have the opposite effect. Mahantji spoke to the press about how we need to learn to live together with the Moslems. And when Sonia Gandhi came to his side, he said "Yes this is a problem. But I want to talk to you about the problem with the River." Mahantji has a policy never to discuss politics at the Temple. So he waited a proper amount of time and then went to Delhi and met with Mrs. Gandhi. As a result of this lobbying the concern about the river was introduced into Parliament. Someone from the NRCDD (National Rivers Conservation Directorate) was asked to come and explain their plan. The person who came could not answer the questions that Mahantji had left with Mrs. Gandhi, and so the matter was postponed until this fall.

As you may recall, when we first began this campaign, we had no sewage treatment plants. Then three plants were built, one being very large. It was difficult to figure out why these plants were not working. The kind of sewage treatment plant that was employed by the national sewage department requires that the sewage be dirty at the 300BOD level and the sewage produced by Varanasi is only 200BOD. (In other words, Western sewage is dirtier than Varanasi sewage. We speculate that this is because a majority of the citizens of Varanasi are vegetarians, and so do not produce

such dirty sewage.) Since this discovery, the national sewage department has almost given up making that sewage treatment plant work. And that means that the sewage is still flowing into the River untreated. This is very disheartening to us.

We have had to come to grips with: What does it mean in this time to be discouraged and how do we handle those feelings? Do we simply stop working because we are not having success, or do we assume that success is a long-term struggle and that this will be a multigenerational campaign?

Members of the Varanasi City Council have joined with the Foundation to press a law case in the High Court that the city should be able to determine its own criteria for sewage treatment technology. There is a rather new amendment to the Constitution that gives cities the power to own their own sewers and water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants. No city in all of India has yet tried to wrestle this power, and thereby also the money, from the national government in order to determine its own sewage treatment plants. Thus we are now fighting for local self-determination as well as for natural sewage treatment. In the meantime, our laboratory continues to gather statistics about the quality of the River's water. The education campaign continues, and the Foundation continues to alert other cities to the need and the possibility of running their own affairs regarding water quality and sewage treatment.

## Last Chance!

This is the last year we will be selling knitted socks from Serbia (sample at right). Trace your foot and send the outline to us and we will send you adult socks for only \$16 a pair or baby socks for \$10.

Send orders to:

Crabgrass  
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cates on the concepts of fair share participation and-decision making.

ASD and WGGAN are dedicated to nurturing these twelve powerful women and providing them all the tools and the emotional support they need to make their projects a success. ASD has secured funding to support all twelve women to start their projects in their villages. A few of the women will be coming onboard to work in the ASD/SafeWater Philippines office to lead more BSF trainings all around the country. As we say here at ASD, "it takes A Single Drop of water to start a wave" — just one person can initiate social change. These women are the living examples of powerful drops creating waves of change in their communities!

## Thank-yous

Once again Amy Mar helped us get our mailing labels together, and Abby Zimberg helped with the newsletter layout so we could round up our mailing crew and get it on its way to you, our loyal supporters. It's been a whole year since you heard from us. We also want to thank our Board members for their ongoing encouragement and service to Crabgrass: Rita Archibald, Lyn Fine, Jan Hartsough, Rita Maran, Fran Peavey, Marti Roach, and Joan Ryan. Contact us if you'd be interested in serving on our Board.

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in a variety  
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