

Greetings!

In this edition of our newsletter, we're sharing with you, our faithful supporters, a snapshot of our exciting Global Women's Water Initiative work in Ghana earlier this year. We are also describing new ways our work is being funded that will hopefully inspire you to think about how you can continue to be involved with us. The sewage treatment work in Varanasi, India continues to gain momentum - perhaps some day Ganga will truly be clean. We're helping reach out to women in Eastern Europe again through support of the Victory Day Project. Lastly, former Crabgrass Board member Abby Reyes shares her thoughts on the Gulf oil spill, and our role in it. Note our new website and mailing addresses.

Creative Funding

By Jan Hartsough

Woman to Woman Support

We want to tell all our supporters about a recent donation to Crabgrass. At the Ghana African Women and Water training in February we committed to providing US\$1500 seed grants for each team to launch a water project when they returned home. A group of local women recently asked me to come and talk to their group about the training in Africa, and afterwards they decided to raise the money amongst themselves to support one team. After showing them the video of this year's conference and explaining what happened at our training, they were matched up with a team

continued on page 2

West African Women and Water Training Program Unfolds in Ghana

By Jan Hartsough

Following the African Women and Water Conference in Kenya in 2008, Crabgrass joined with our two partner NGOs, - A Single Drop and Women's Earth Alliance - to form the **Global Women's Water Initiative (GWWI)**. GWWI is responding to the fact that over 1.2 billion people, over 60 percent of them women, lack access to safe water.



Three key organizers, left to right: Melinda Kramer of Women's Earth Alliance, Gemma Bulos of A Single Drop, and Jan Hartsough, Crabgrass. Top, Each woman poured water from their home place into a common vessel - an African calabash bowl symbolizing our desire to work together.

Today, more people die from polluted water than from violence (including war). GWWI launched our second African Women and Water year-long program by convening thirty amazing West African women in Ghana earlier this year to address the serious issues of water and sanitation. As many Crabgrass supporters know, this week-long training was held at the Kokrobitey Institute outside Accra, Ghana from February 24 to March 3, 2010, and brought together women from Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Liberia, and Cameroon as well as some Americans and our solar trainer from Kenya.

An amazing group of women

The attendees came from diverse backgrounds and had varying expertise at the grassroots and policy levels in their respective countries. These thirty dynamic women came in teams of two, usually a community worker and an NGO staff person. The group was multi-generational, and worked hard to acquire practical skills as well as leadership and program-planning skills. While the women chose to be trained in specific water technologies such as constructing rain water harvesting systems and building composting toilets and household biosand water filters, they

continued on page 3

from Nigeria. They are now corresponding directly by email, and have sent them their seed grant already!

Here is part of their letter introducing themselves: “We six women have been friends for more than twenty years. We first met when we worked together to develop a place in Santa Rosa, California where elders could live in comfort and safety. Three of us are nurses – Donne, Kate and Mary. Lynn is an artist, Beverly is a social worker, and Elizabeth is a manager and a writer. Jan explained to us that you two – Elizabeth (a mid-wife) and Ndudi (a NGO manager) have designed a water program for your local area in Nigeria (introducing composting toilets and teaching about the links between safe water and safe sanitation practices) and that we could be involved by helping to provide the funding. It would please us so much to work with you in this way! ...The women of this world are a great force for good. Wherever we find ourselves, all we need to do is work together to move our children, our men, and our governments in the right direction.” Crabgrass is very excited to have helped to forge this new partnership.

Flow Fund Circles

Flow Funding is another new approach to fund-raising that is directly helping fund our African women and water work. Look up www.flowfunding.org on the web. Flow funding is a relationship-based form of philanthropy full of inspiration and surprises. It allows giving money away to be

an adventure as opposed to a duty or burden. In flow funding, donors entrust their money to others to give away.

Marion Rockefeller Weber started a Flow Fund Circle in northern California in 1991 after taking a one-year sabbatical from her family philanthropy responsibilities. She was very clear she did not want to go back to the old way of working with money where people sent her proposals, or visited to express a request. Surely there was a better way to brighten the work and include the wisdom and creativity of others. She decided to create a foundation without walls, paperwork or bureaucracy and named it the Flow Fund Circle.

Each participant in the Flow Fund Circle receives \$20,000 a year for three years to give away. None of the participants has been a philanthropist before and each is chosen because of his or her outstanding creative and visionary work. Jan Hartsough, Co-Director of Crabgrass, has the privilege of being a current Flow Fund Circle member, and is using Crabgrass as the conduit organization from which to distribute the funds. Marion heard about Crabgrass’ African Women and Water work, and contacted Jan to learn more. Jan used some of these Flow Funds for seed grants to the 2008 Kenyan conference, and again this year is funding follow up support for participants who were part of the Ghana training. What a wonderful gift to be the channel for funds that mean so much to grassroots women and their communities in Africa.

Advocacy For Eastern European Women Continues With The Victory Day Project

Many of you will remember our involvement with Adjakits, a Women’s Center in Armenia, where Crabgrass helped in creating the very first Armenian shelter for battered women and children back in 2002. Sean Ramsay, son of former Board Member Beverley Ramsay who initiated this work in Armenia, assisted Crabgrass in holding two fund-raising dinners for the shelter in Gyumri, and in visiting Armenia with Jan back in 2004.

Crabgrass is involved with Sean Ramsay again in support of his current work, the Victory Day Project. Sean has created a 99 minute feature film “VICTORY DAY” that deals with the destabilization of Russia and the subsequent impact on ordinary people. It focuses specifically on the problem of trafficking of young women into prostitution for sexual exploitation.

“VICTORY DAY” is a mission-based, social benefit film wrapped in a feature film. The purpose of the film is to show a broad audience the problems with trafficking for sexual exploitation in a genre that is easy to follow and resonates with movie-going audiences. The film premiered in Los Angeles and San Francisco earlier this year. Originally in English, the film has been translated into Russian and Ukrainian. This summer it is being shown at the International Film Festival in Moscow.

After its release, the plan is to take the film and show it to the people who live in “trafficking ground zero” - the territories in Russia, Eastern Europe, Moldova, and the Ukraine where traffickers have been recruiting for years. The Victory Day

“May the rivers of wealth be undammed and flow freely over the earth. May the gifts move through increased hands until all people experience the abundance of life.”

—Marion Rockefeller Weber, initiator of the Flow Fund Circle

also learned how to make a simple solar cooker that can be used for both water pasteurization and for cooking. All the women also became skilled in using a portable water testing kit developed by Dr. Robert Metcalf, microbiologist from Sacramento, California. This year's participants were breaking stereotypes they themselves held as they became masons, carpenters and lab technicians. In addition to learning hands-on technologies related to safe water access, all the women were coached in writing action plans and project proposals, and everyone attended sessions about WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) strategies to complement their new technology skills. As Maame, one of the Global Peers and originally from Ghana herself, put it: "As women are equipped, inspired and liberated to enter into non-traditional spaces, they serve as trailblazers and model the way for the next generation of women leaders."

African Trainers shared their wisdom

We had five African women conducting the training program this year, including an amazing trainer from Kenya, "Mama Solar" Faustine Odaba, who was such an inspiration to the women who gathered in Kenya for the first conference that we invited her to join us again this time. We wanted to have Faustine's enthusiasm, conveyed through stories, jokes, and dancing, to set the tone for this year's week of learning. Every day we were also treated to her solar-cooked foods that complimented the Kokrobitey kitchen fare – items both familiar and new to the participants. Everyone was amazed to learn what they could do back home with the solar CooKit that each had made out of cardboard and reflective paper on the first afternoon of the training. Young



Every day included singing, dancing and clapping as well as serious learning!



Women are finishing up the cement base they made for the composting toilet.

trainers from the north of Ghana taught the rainwater harvesting sessions (Monica Ayoma) and the eco-san toilet (Nasiba Sibaweh), which was a new offering this year. Both Monica and Nasiba are scheduled to offer refresher trainings in their respective technologies as requested. Joyce Appiah worked together with Ade Odunsi to cover the morning sessions on WASH strategies (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), climate change impact, and action planning. The final technology trainer was Mariah Maggio, who taught the biosand filter technology in Kenya as well as Ghana, and did all the follow-up work with the East African teams.

Global Peers are added to the mix

A completely new feature at our Women and Water meeting this year was what we called the "Global Peers." There were seven Global Peers with varying degrees of expertise to share. Some were born in Africa and now work in America. Another from the U.S. is currently working in Mali. Each Global Peer was matched up with two African teams, and they are responsible for providing ongoing and follow-up support to their teams for the remainder of the year. They were integral players who supported the training through logistical help and one-on-one subject matter

continued on page 4

reinforcement. They met every day with their teams to problem-solve and offer their moral support. This is another level of partnership that is proving to be very helpful to both participants and organizers.

Marti Roach, a Crabgrass Board member, was part of our team in Ghana this year. She served as a Global Peer, as well as helping with the planning and implementation of the action planning portion of this year's training. Marti writes the following reflection:

"Going to Ghana to work with the West African Women and Water Training was a totally out of the ordinary experience. For me, the most compelling reason I

made the decision to go was to see how the action planning part of the training, which I had worked with the organizers to integrate into the week-long program, unfolded and worked.. The aim was for the whole training to be delivered by African women to African women. It so happens that my work using the Technology of Participation Planning Methods puts me in an international community of practitioners. I was able to find my counterpart in Nigeria - Ade Odunsi – and she was invited to offer this section of the training program. Ade and I had been busily skyping and emailing weeks before the training to coordinate and translate the design of how the women would do an action plan.

Ade and I both arrived at the Kokrobitey Institute a few days before the program began. It was exciting and challenging to work to finalize plans. While we both spoke English, I was still adjusting to West African accents and a little slow on some comprehension. There were many site logistics to resolve and some wrinkles in the training design to smooth out. And I was adjusting to Hot, Hot, Humid, Humid living 24-7. We had no air conditioning and ate and met outside. So my natural energetic rhythm was getting a shake-up as I learned that a slightly slower pace was a necessary survival tactic in high, humid heat!"

continued on page 5

Crabgrass Stays Active In India

by Catherine Porter

Friends of the Ganges/US director Catherine Porter went to Varanasi in February to support our colleagues at the Sankat Mochan Foundation/SMF there. She submits this report:

SMF's founder Dr. V. B. Mishra (we know him as Mahantji) was hosting the annual Drupad Music Festival on my arrival. Music of this ancient classical tradition — earlier than the Indian classical music that we know — went from early eve to 3 and 4 a.m., a magical sound along the banks of the Ganges. It was a terrific welcome.

The Friends of the Ganges from Australia (OzGreen) were on site as well. Together the beloved Sue and Colin Lennox and I met with our stalwart team of SMF friends and family, to go over plans for the construction of the sewage treatment system that will relieve this city of her polluted riverfront.

Recap: The Prime Minister agreed to the Sankat Mochan-designed plan a year ago — an immense victory for a tiny NGO

who's been leading the clean-up effort for 27 years, against substantial opposition from forces that wanted an electricity-based system in a city where electricity is sporadic. SMF's research identified and recommended this system over 15 years ago, and finally won long battles to get it approved at all levels of government.

The World Bank recently approved a one billion dollar loan to India to clean the Ganges from headwaters to the Bay of Bengal. This is both good and complicating news, still unfolding. How will it affect the work that was approved already in Varanasi?

The current challenge is to find the contractors who can manage such a large endeavor. One treatment project is the AIWPS® ponding system from the US (designed by GO2 Water). They were to have submitted a Detailed Project Report to the Indian government by January, and are now rushing to get their list of Indian-based contractors selected and engaged in the work.

The gravity feed tunneling system that will transport sewage to a downstream treatment plant got a boost in two ways:

- 1) it was approved in the Prime Minister's directive from the Ganges River Basin Authority late last year.
- 2) it is now a more acceptable tunneling plan since the new Delhi Metro was completed on time without incident, using the same kinds of tunneling technologies.

SO — all systems are go, with the ongoing need to support SMF and Mahantji as they tackle this immense project. Their goal is to:

1. find more partners up and down the Ganges,
2. to share what they've learned,
3. to work inside the Government of India river authority as well as outside the government, acting as watchdog and monitor of the plan as it is rolled out.

We are proud to be affiliated with this effort over these many years, and to support the Foundation with funds, love, and ideas.

Victory Day cont. from p 2

Project hopes to use the film as a discussion tool in small towns, community centers and youth centers to talk about the subject of trafficking.

Trafficking is a world-wide problem for vulnerable people on every continent. To reinforce this point, Sean hopes to do a short video film in the US interviewing people here who have personal experiences with prostitution, talking about how they were pulled into

the sex trade themselves. He would then show this video wherever he goes, and have both a woman from the US and a local person from each territory lead a discussion. He hopes to video women in other countries and translate their stories as well.

Sean hopes to build an interactive website with both material from the US, and from Eastern Europe with translation into English, Russian and Ukrainian, which will enable an audio-visual discussion between the two sides of the world.

5

These discussions will serve as a space bridge forum on the trafficking issue for young people. The Victory Day Project hopes to partner with organizations in each country they visit who will provide links so that someone in need of protection or information can be linked with the right people who can provide guidance and help. Crabgrass is very happy to be acting as a fiscal sponsor for the Victory Day Project.

Africa Conference cont. from p 4

“Something I especially enjoyed was the way songs, call and response chants, and special claps energized us throughout the long, hot, humid days (and nights). At any moment anyone might call out “Eh, Womaney” and the group would instantly reply “Womaney!” Another spirited expression was the song that rallied us as we worked: “Hey, Hey we are together, we are ONE!”

All of our work paid off as the action planning was well received and provided a practical structure for the attendees to translate what they would do and how they would work once they returned home and began implementing the water technology they learned.

I take away from this experience immense gratitude and satisfaction at the opportunity to work with so many other women to improve access to clean water and improved sanitation for the high-need African communities that the participants represented. Something truly magical happened at Kokrobitey as participants, trainers, global peers and organizers all found joy and ease in working together throughout the week.”

Our partners in this effort

Kokrobitey Institute was a wonderful setting for this year’s training. It has a rich history of encouraging dynamic learning in a



Each woman tested their home water sample by placing drops on a Petri film and incubating it overnight on their bodies.

community setting – right on the ocean outside of Accra. Its founder, Renee Neblett, was excited to have African women there learning skills that will benefit their home communities – this has been a dream of hers from the time she opened the Institute.

ProNet Accra was our African partner organization this year, represented by Cecelia Mensah. Cecelia works in a very challenging slum community of Accra, building both public toilets and public water taps to serve a population of 10,000. She graciously took time away from her community to help us set up for the tech trainings, and solve problems daily as the training

unfolded. We couldn’t have done it without her, and all the other African staff who make Kokrobitey run smoothly.

A special thank you goes to **Global Fund for Women** who helped us in so many ways. They identified and nominated participants, contributed funding to the effort, and “loaned” us their staff person, Maame Yelbert-Obeng, to be facilitator for the week, serving as an amazing bridge between the American organizers and the African participants and trainers.

Videographers par excellence were Sandra Hayes and Ethan Boehme from Unseen Productions – you can see the wonderful video they made on our website: www.africanwomenandwater.org. You will also find there a blog reporting on the 2008 Kenya conference teams and their projects. And you will be able to follow this year’s participants as they launch their water projects (some have already started!)

A special slogan emerged that captured the importance of looking at water and connecting it fully to sanitation (toileting) and health (freedom from disease spread by lack of clean water and poor sanitation):

**Water is Life
Sanitation is Dignity
Hygiene is Health**

What is our responsibility?

Unequal access to water and oil is leading us in dangerous directions

Former Crabgrass Board Member Abby Reyes is challenging all of us to learn to live a life in harmony with the planet

Kiran puts his face next to my face, eyelash to eyelash, and asks “Mama, why are you crying?” I felt I had no words for my child, but I said, I was crying because some men poked a hole deep in the earth to get us some oil for our car, but they messed up. Now the oil is like the blood of the earth, and is spilling into the ocean, making it “chokey” for the fish and birds who live there.

Years ago, the day after I bought my decades-old Mercedes wagon, I mailed a note to the older gentleman who sold it to me to tell him why I bought his car. He hadn’t been aware that, in certain pockets of the Bay Area, old diesel wagons were fetching double the price of their value. He hadn’t heard of biodiesel, the fuel made from vegetable oil, that can power these cars, much less that Rudolf Diesel himself first made his engine to run on it.

Filling my tank with vegetable oil seemed like a good thing. Of course usually the vegetable oil arrives to us after several incarnations: as matter that grew in fields tilled by machines driven by dino-diesel or as oil processed in factories powered by coal, and transported to consumers in good old American trucks.. My goddaughter used to call it the car that runs on the oil that doesn’t hurt the earth. This simplistic rendition I had conveyed to her young ears didn’t tell the whole story, but at least there was a kernel of wholesomeness in it. This was more than I could say for most stories I told about oil.

I am finding with my own children there are stories that need to be told and others that should wait. I am inclined to tell them about the unmitigated flow from a broken pipeline that is sounding the death knell of entire ecosystems. My prayer is that my sons’ hands grow strong with the experience of

knowing and loving the forest and the sea, and that they climb as many trees and waves as it takes for them to develop an abiding allegiance to protect these natural resources.

As I watch my two boys play, I am left to face the harder questions Kiran and his younger brother Julian will ask us later. What were we thinking driving a car everyday? From whence came the audacity to think we could go on living as nuclear family units, one after another, across city and state; each family not even sharing a washing machine with the family right next door? How could we have lived all those years in California and not have demanded solar panels? Why weren’t we up in arms, or at least up in Sacramento when the electric car got taken away the first time? “You mean you were an activist and then you just quit?”

Kirian’s tenacity at age three suggests he will not be satisfied with my answers. It will not be enough to tell him that we took the bus to work, and only used the car to drive him to nursery school and get groceries. It will not be enough to remind him that we cultivated our backyard so that we grew at least some of our food; or that we bought used, and also re-purposed as much of our stuff as we could. I will have no satisfactory explanation for why we stopped using biodiesel in our old tank of a car for the three years after the kids were born, when we were too exhausted and overwhelmed to set up our lives in a way that would make the biodiesel easier to procure. Or for why I stopped working with communities resisting big oil after law school. Instead, I will have to rely on a compassion I cannot reasonably expect him to have, given that we have knowingly, in full light of day, diminished his future. We should have learned the sky has no borders

with acid rain in Appalachia, or the loss of ozone in Australia. The sky spreads its burden, as does the sea.

In a fanciful moment recently, I was heartened to hear the Coast Guard admiral in charge of cleaning up BP’s mess estimate that even if the flow of oil stops in August, it will likely take all autumn to clean it up. He spoke as if to brace the nation for a prolonged clean up. To my eager ears, I was quietly relieved to imagine, even for that one moment, that the experts anticipate they will actually be able to get it all cleaned up. The spin worked on me, as it was crafted to do. Only later, when sitting in the dark nursing Julian, did I allow the rest of the admiral’s statement to penetrate: he said, it will likely take all autumn, or much, much longer than that. I realized that again I heard what I wanted to hear. I soothed the agitation I was carrying with the reassurance that the efforts to contain our error will somehow, ultimately work. That an expert at the site sees a way forward. I took momentary refuge in the illusion that someone else is going to take care of it.

I think Kiran and his generation will know that of course, no one else is going to take care of it. It is a lesson we would do well to heed now. We have to assume responsibility for our natural resources, our health, our environment and our way of life. Unseating vested interests and revamping legislation to better regulate oil acquisition is imperative. But our more central task is to ensure that the throne of entitlement upon which most of us perch gives way. We cannot afford our car. We cannot afford our bi-coastal families. We cannot afford our organic pears from Chile. Our children cannot afford them. When will we understand this and make more far-reaching changes?