

## A Traveling Exhibition Featuring the Earth Charter *Soka Gakkai International, JAPAN*

### Background

Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a lay Buddhist association headquartered in Japan with 12 million members in 190 countries and a strong tradition of social engagement. It is also an NGO actively promoting peace, culture, environmental awareness and education. SGI supports the Earth Charter as a people's movement and as a process of dialogue for change and transformation. It acts internationally through its active network to disseminate and implement the principles of the Charter.

In early 2001, SGI and the Earth Charter Initiative identified the need to feature inspirational stories of how the Earth Charter was being used in different parts of the world, in order to bring the document to a larger audience. This led to the development of *The Seeds of Change: The Earth Charter and Human Potential* exhibition, which was initially created by SGI and the Earth Charter Secretariat for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 in Johannesburg.



*SGI exhibition in Italy*

### Aim

The aim of the mobile exhibition is to promote public awareness about the state of the world and the need for sustainable development, and to inspire hope in the possibility that each individual can make a contribution to positive change in the world. The exhibition also seeks to bring the constructive vision of the Earth Charter to people around the world, and to stimulate discussion on the Charter's educational potential.



*An exhibition panel*

## Participants

SIGI chapters around the world have hosted and promoted the Seeds of Change exhibit, often in partnership with other local groups. It has also been shown at conferences related to sustainable development and in university campuses and schools. The target audience is the general public.

## Timeframe

The *Seeds of Change* exhibit was launched in 2002 and continues to be exhibited in different locations around the world when this case was written in 2005.

## Description

Since its inauguration at the WSSD, the exhibition has been updated with new panels of the Earth Charter in action. It has been translated into many languages, so it can be mounted in regional venues where there is the greatest need for grassroots education and information activities. To date, the exhibition has been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, German and Chinese and is being

widely used by SIGI and other organizations.

One of the main themes of the exhibit is highlighting stories of individuals who have tackled problems in their local communities and become forces for global change. One example is Earth Charter Commissioner and 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate, Wangari Maathai, who began a movement in Kenya through which women have planted 30 million trees. Other panels of Earth Charter-inspired activities include the story of the Vivim Plegats (Living Together) programme in Spain, the work of the Paulo Freire Institute in Brazil, the U.S. Community Summits movement, the work of Elizabeth Ramírez of National University with communities in Costa Rica, and many more.

The exhibition is sometimes shown in conjunction with other displays such as recycled materials or nature photographs, or activities such as video screenings or exercises related to the concepts introduced in the exhibition.

## Funding

The funding for the exhibit has generally been provided by SIGI and its national chapters.



*SIGI exhibition tent at the WSSD*

“Ever since it was first shown in Johannesburg, this exhibition has touched the hearts and minds of those who have seen it. The combination of the attractive design, striking graphics, and personal stories draws people in to absorb the message and they leave inspired.”

*SIGI spokesperson Anthony George*

## Results

Roughly 15,000 people attended the exhibition when it was first displayed in 2002

during the Johannesburg Summit. It went on to win third prize in the “Independent Exhibits” category at the Ubuntu Village. Since then, the exhibition has been shown in England, Italy, Scotland, France, Austria, Switzerland, U.S.A, Canada, Australia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Peru, Japan, Taiwan (at over 150 locations) and Hong Kong. While the impact of the exhibition is difficult to quantify beyond numbers, such a

large-scale consciousness-raising activity is a definitive first step towards the more elusive goal of building a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world.



*Introductory SGI panel*



*WSSD exhibit with school children in 2002*

## Conclusion

The fact that the exhibition has been designed to be mobile, allows it to reach a much broader audience. The visually appealing panels capture the minds and hearts of a wide range of age groups. The translation into different languages allows the key messages to be preserved.

The “*Seeds of Change: The Earth Charter and Human Potential*” is truly an example of how the vision of the Earth Charter can be creatively illustrated and then taken around the world.

*This case has been drawn directly from following reports:*

- Earth Charter Annual Report 2002-3
- SGI Activity Report 2004