

World Water Day 2003

A look at coming battles over this crucial resource

By Amaury Laporte

It is easy for most of us to take water for granted. When all we have to do is turn on a water faucet to quench our thirsts. But take an essential resource, place it in limited supply and what results is a recipe for conflict.

Though it covers over two-thirds of the planet's surface, less than 0.08 percent of water is available for human consumption, the rest being either salty or inaccessible — such as water trapped in icecaps. This small percentage of usable water must cover our drinking needs, and our sanitary, industrial, and, especially, our agricultural needs, which alone account for 70 percent of the water we use. This alarming picture has led several analysts to predict the coming of a great war over access to fresh water.

Water has often been the source of intense tension, domestically and internationally.

Most disagreements over water, such as the bitter 1935 conflict between Arizona and California over access to the Colorado River water, have been resolved peacefully. But as population pressures increase, the potential for violent clashes around the world over usable water resources will increase.

Many InterAction members already deal with these frictions as they seek to promote economic and social development. To better understand the kinds of problems they confront, *Monday Developments* will examine these disputes, in a series of articles in the next several issues, in the context of World Water Day 2003 — March 22.

The theme for World Water Day 2003, Water for the Future, called on each of us to maintain and improve the quality and quantity of fresh water available to future generations. This is essential if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goal to reduce by half by 2015 the number of people living without safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

In South America, we will spotlight the water war in one of Latin America's poorest nations, Bolivia, where in the nation's third largest city Cochabamba, a steep rise in water prices resulting from privatization of the water supply forced citizens to choose between water and food.

Asia, though it experiences many of the world's

(continued on page 9)

effective assistance

Moms Counseled on Breast-Feeding; Babies' Health Improved Dramatically

Ten percent of newborns in Madagascar die before their first birthday, many as a result of poor breast-feeding practices that lead to malnutrition and gastrointestinal problems. While studies have shown that breast milk is the best nutritional source for babies younger than six months, one half of new mothers in Madagascar feed their babies other fluids or foods.

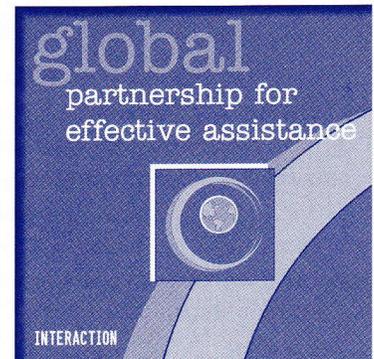
Since 2000, the Academy for Educational Development, an American nonprofit group, has mobilized community groups to teach better approaches for breast-feeding, infant nutrition and reproductive health. The result has been a significant improvement in the overall health of babies in Madagascar.

During the first year of the AED program, which covered a region of Madagascar that included more than 6 million people, the number of mothers feeding their children only breast milk rose from 45 to 68 percent. Starting breast-feeding the first hour after birth — another recommended practice — increased from 34 percent to 73 percent.

Before the program started, 15 percent of infants younger than six months suffered from diarrhea, a serious health risk to babies in developing countries. Two years after AED began counseling on the benefits of breastfeeding, the number of babies suffering from diarrhea had been slashed to only 3 percent.

Working in partnership with government agencies, nongovernmental organizations and the management firm John Snow, Inc., AED uses the mass media and community-based activities to reach mothers in Madagascar.

Giving mothers the tools to take better care of their babies does more than create a stronger, healthier society in Madagascar. It builds bonds of friendship and cooperation with America that contribute to a safer, more peaceful world. ■



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World Water Day 2003

(continued from page 5)

worst floods and monsoons, has still seen its share of water-related disputes. When partition divided the Indus basin between Pakistan and India, it took twelve years of World Bank negotiations to reach an agreement establishing the two nations' water rights.

In Africa, the series will look at Egypt and Ethiopia which have been at loggerheads over the Blue Nile since 1978.

The Middle East, already a very volatile region, has seen the most dangerous disputes over water. Its aridness makes fresh water particularly coveted, and that makes water an important strategic resource. It is not surprising that Yitzhak Rabin once declared that "if we solve every other problem in the Middle East, but do not satisfactorily resolve the water problem, our region will explode."

Unfortunately, the future does not look

encouraging. The World Water Council estimates that, by 2020, our fresh water requirements will exceed available supplies, leading to shortages, and perhaps even wars.

To avoid such a dire outcome several avenues need to be pursued, in particular more efficient use of water in farming, through better techniques and technologies.

World Water Day 2003 was the highlight of the Third World Water Forum held in Osaka, which concluded yesterday. More information on World Water Day is available at www.waterday2003.org. The U.N. launched the *World Water Development Report* at the Forum. The report is part of a U.N. effort toward monitoring progress made in water development and a number of cross cutting issues. ■

Amaury Laporte is a writer for *Monday Developments*.

Study Recommends Changes to Improve InterAction-World Bank Relations

InterAction has produced a study, carried out by an independent researcher and co-managed with the World Bank, on the status of InterAction member-World Bank relations. The study, entitled *Seeing Eye to Eye? InterAction Member Agencies and World Bank Staff Assess their Operational Collaboration and Policy Engagement for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development*, used quantitative and qualitative methods to survey staff of InterAction member organizations as well as of the World Bank.

The report identifies a number of constraints and under-explored opportunities and makes recommendations to strengthen the relations by improving various institutional policies and practices of the World Bank and InterAction member agencies.

Among other things, the report recommends that the World Bank improve policy consultation practices so that civil society perceives them as legitimate processes. This would include considering a range of economic policy alternatives. Regarding operations, the report also recommends that the Bank take measures to reduce and streamline procurement regulations to better fit NGO project realities.

Over the next several weeks, InterAction members will be meeting with World Bank representatives at various levels in order to discuss the study's findings, and to take the next steps to operationalize its recommendations.

Hard copies of the report are being sent by mail to selected InterAction member organization staff. If you would like a copy, please contact emccollim@interaction.org. Alternatively, you may download the PDF file at www.interaction.org/development.

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The Joel L. Fleishman Fellows in Civil Society

Duke University's Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy is proud to offer an exciting program for outstanding civil society practitioners: **The Joel L. Fleishman Fellows in Civil Society**. The program was created through a generous seed grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies (USA) and is named for the Institute's founding Director. The program, designed to provide a unique learning experience at one of the United States' leading public policy institutions:

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- Covers housing and program expenses.
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The first group of Fellows will begin in October 2003. The Fellowship start date is not flexible since all Fellows must begin together as a cohort.

Application deadline: May 1, 2003. Download application: www.pubpol.duke.edu/centersandprograms.html

Contact: Amy Hepburn, Program Director, ffellows@duke.edu