

**SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL
IN PURSUIT OF PEACE
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2000**

The Soka Gakkai International, which celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary on January 26, 2000, engaged in wide-ranging activities last year in pursuit of peace and the promotion of respect for the dignity of life.

The SGI maintains that efforts centering on the United Nations represent the best prospect for creating an equitable and lasting peace for the world's people. It is for this reason that the organization has undertaken initiatives to promote peace, human rights awareness, humanitarian action, the environment and intercultural understanding with an aim to supporting the United Nations, which designated the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

With a presence in 163 countries and regions, the SGI is a global association of grass-roots organizations that seek to promote the values of peace and respect for all people. At the heart of the SGI's movement for peace is the ideal of education for global citizenship. Through a wide range of activities, the SGI seeks to foster awareness of the social and environmental responsibilities we all share for the future of our planet.

On an organizational level, the SGI — a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with ties to the United Nations — sponsors numerous activities, including exhibitions, educational workshops and humanitarian relief worldwide.

The following is a report on the SGI's principal activities during the year 2000.

A. PEACE AND HARMONY

1. SGI Promotes the Earth Charter in Asia

In January, the SGI cosponsored a series of events to promote the Earth Charter in six countries in Asia in cooperation with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and institutions already actively involved in the Earth Charter campaign. More than 3,000 people joined activities ranging from public lectures and forums (Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Malaysia), small group discussions on how the Earth Charter relates to youth, civil society and spirituality (Singapore), an environmental exhibition "Before It's Too Late" and an academic forum (Thailand) to a seminar for SGI leaders (Philippines).

The Earth Charter is a document that outlines the ethical values needed to guide humankind toward a sustainable future. Its principles cover environmental protection, human rights, poverty alleviation, gender equality and building a culture of peace. Responding to a concern that participation in the Earth Charter process was less active in Asia than in other places, the SGI and the Earth Council planned a speaking tour in order to reach a large number of people in a short time. The aim of the tour was to build on the SGI's initial support of the Earth Charter in the United States and Uruguay.

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2. First Pacific Islands New Millennium Peace Conference

To commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the SGI's founding, the first Pacific Islands New Millennium Peace Conference was held in Guam in January, where the SGI was founded, with representatives of the governments of Guam, Tonga, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Northern Mariana Islands attending. Participants, renewing their pledge for peaceful coexistence, unanimously adopted the New Pacific Peace Resolution.

3. SGI Day Peace Proposal Issued

Soka Gakkai International President Daisaku Ikeda released his annual peace proposal—a cornerstone of SGI's commitment to peace through dialogue—on January 26, 2000, coinciding with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the SGI. In “Peace Through Dialogue: A Time to Talk—Thoughts on a Culture of Peace,” Mr. Ikeda proposes the immediate establishment of an international conflict resolution committee within the United Nations system to help assure the application of international human rights and humanitarian law in conflict-plagued areas.

To prevent regional and internal conflicts from escalating into large-scale, protracted violence, the committee would seek to facilitate the early initiation of dialogue and negotiation by holding public hearings so that all concerned parties could meet each other face-to-face in an open, neutral setting.

Noting that conflict is often rooted in the illusion that superficial differences are insurmountable and permanent, the SGI president asserts that human beings are capable of overcoming their discriminatory tendencies, and that such inner change in individuals is the key to creating a solid global culture of peace.

In March, an SGI delegation paid a call to U.N. Security Council President Anwarul Karim Chowdhury at the U.N. Headquarters in New York to present him with the proposal.

4. Conflict and Peace Forums at SGI-UK's Taplow Court

The year 2000 was very busy for the Conflict and Peace Forums, which are hosted by the SGI-United Kingdom (SGI-UK) at Taplow Court in Buckinghamshire. March saw a collaboration with the 21st Century Trust called “Between the Wars,” which questioned the role of journalists in the post- or pre-violence phase of a conflict. May saw a major conference on “Corporate Citizenship in the 21 Century: What Can Business Do For Peace?” Speakers included Hazel Henderson, Johan Galtung and Ed Mayo. October marked the opening of a season of events under the broad theme “Power of the Arts: The Role of Arts in Personal and Social Development,” which was sponsored by the U.K. Millennium Fund in collaboration with Tate Modern, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Maidenhead and Slough Borough Councils and others.

Conflict and Peace Forums was initiated in 1997 as a desire to explore the broad social implications of the Buddhist philosophy, as well as the specific findings of the peace proposals written annually by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda. Over four years it has developed activities in four main areas: (1) conflict transformation, (2) the role and potential of the media, (3) corporate citizenship and “business for peace,” and (4) the power of the arts for personal and social transformation. In each case, Conflict and Peace Forums has formed partnerships with other bodies active in the arena—most notably Transcend, Peace and Development Network, the U.K. Department for International Development, the New Economic Forum and a host of arts and cultural bodies (Web site: www.conflictandpeace.org).

5. Children's Art Exhibition

The “World Boys’ and Girls’ Art Exhibition” was shown in Germany, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Panama, the Philippines, Switzerland and Venezuela during the year 2000, cosponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in each instance. The exhibition is an appeal for global peace and friendship from those with the greatest stake in the future: the children of the world. There are 400 paintings that are featured in the exhibition by children from 161 countries and regions.

In April, the exhibition opened in Geneva, with support from numerous organizations including ATD Quart Monde/Tapori and the World Federation of United Nations Associations. This exhibition is one of several Flagship Events that the SGI is undertaking in support of the United Nation’s International Year for the Culture of Peace. A major Swiss TV news program covered the successful Geneva exhibition.

6. SGI Italy Members Initiate Peace Bill in Regional Legislature

SGI members in the Campania region in southern Italy conducted a signature campaign and successfully introduced a measure in the Campania Regional Council calling for the promotion and diffusion of a culture of education about peace and human rights in local communities. In only three months, SGI members and their friends collected 13,722 signatures, surpassing the 5,000 signatures necessary to propose a measure for legislation by the Council. Supporting this effort were humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International of Campania-Basilicata and Pax Christi, in addition to a number of noted jurists, academics and legislators.

The signatures were presented to the regional government in April 1999, and a bill was introduced in the Campania Regional Council soon afterward. The Council passed the measure and the law came into effect on April 7, 2000. It calls for: the establishment of peace and its bases such as human rights, freedom, human solidarity, nonviolence, compassion and respect in the local community; the establishment of a permanent committee for peace and human rights in the Regional Council to oversee the technical implementation of the new law; and, the designation of December 10 — the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — as “Peace Day” in Campania.

Through the effort, SGI members helped promote recognition in the Campania region about the importance of nurturing respect for human rights and of pursuing peace not as a static end, but a condition that arises from respect for the sanctity of life.

7. Earth Charter Activities Around the World

In April, three SGI-USA representatives participated in the Earth Charter USA National Conference near Washington, D.C., along with representatives from around the country to plan a national education campaign. SGI-USA Vice General Director Al Albergate serves on this national committee. During the spring and early summer, SGI-USA members sponsored some twenty activities around the country to raise awareness about the Charter.

In June, SGI representatives attended the Earth Charter Conference at The Hague in the Netherlands. SGI Netherlands supported the conference in many important areas, including assuming responsibility for translating the official text of the Earth Charter into the Dutch language.

Owing to its efforts to raise awareness about the Earth Charter, Singapore Soka Association was invited to present a paper on the Charter at two international events. In October, SSA Vice General Director Michael Yap delivered a paper on the Earth Charter at the General Assembly and Press Convention of the Thirteenth Confederation of ASEAN Journalists held in

Singapore. Then in December, Mr. Yap spoke on “Buddhist Perspectives in Promoting a Culture of Peace” at a symposium on “Facilitating Asian Media in Promoting a Culture of Peace” held in Manila, with participants from India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

8. Singapore Artist at Museum of Tolerance in the United States

In May, an exhibition of the works of Singaporean artist Liu Kang opened at the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. The exhibition, “Liu Kang at 90: A Celebration of Singapore’s Treasured Artist,” was hosted by the Museum of Tolerance and jointly organized by the Singapore Soka Association (SSA).

The exhibition showcased some 100 of the artist’s finest oil and pastel paintings and pencil sketches, spanning the seven decades of his career. The artist is renowned for his involvement in the founding of the Nanyang school of painting, a style that reflects the characteristic charm and cultural heritage of the tropics of the South Seas. At this first solo-exhibition in the United States, Liu Kang also displayed a special collection of sketches accompanied by commentary of the atrocities the Japanese imperial army committed in Malaya and Singapore during World War II. These sketches, drawn one year after the Japanese surrender, have been published as peace education material in Japan and Singapore. The exhibition was supported in part by the Embassy of Singapore in the United States.

9. SGI at the U.N. Millennium NGO Forum

In May, SGI representatives attended the Millennium NGO Forum, the first conference of nongovernmental organizations from around the world, at U.N. Headquarters. They contributed to the finalization of the forum report, the “Millennium Forum Declaration,” through their participation in several committees and interventions in a number of workshops.

The declaration’s section on “peace, security and disarmament” embraces an SGI proposition, calling on the United Nations to create a Conflict Prevention Committee within the Security Council to serve as a mechanism for “conflict prevention and early warning.”

Regarding the issues of “sustainable development and the environment,” the document reflects another of the SGI’s ideas: The best way to transform the prevailing consumerist culture is to work for change in human values first.

The SGI also sponsored two symposia as side-events of the forum to afford the general public, which was not able to participate in the Millennium Forum, an opportunity to hear different perspectives and engage in discussions. One titled “From a Century of War and Violence to a Century of Peace and Hope” considered ways to transform a culture of war to a culture of peace, while another titled “Creation of Violence-Free Communities” discussed surmounting violence in personal and local life.

10. Nuclear Disarmament Exhibition in South America

The exhibition “Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World” was held in Argentina (June) and Bolivia (August–October). This well-traveled display conveys with impact and immediacy the horrors of war and nuclear arms. It was first presented in 1982 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to coincide with the General Assembly’s Second Special Session on Disarmament (SSD II), in cooperation with the U.N. Department of Public Information and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The exhibition has since been viewed by 1.2 million people in sixteen countries as part of the World Disarmament Campaign adopted at SSD II.

11. Giving Hope to Children in Nepal

For a majority of children in rural Nepal, getting an education is a dream that often cannot be fulfilled. Learning of their plight, a group of young Soka Gakkai members in Miyagi Prefecture, in northern Japan, decided to take action to make a difference. In a charity called “Post Aid,” the Miyagi youth collected more than 200,000 unused New Year’s greeting cards printed with prepaid postage from their families and friends to raise ¥3,000,000 (U.S. \$26,000) to build an elementary school in the mountainous South Asian country. (Japanese New Year’s cards carry a Chinese zodiac sign, which is used only once every twelve years — the cards lose their social value soon after the New Year’s period.)

The group donated proceeds in July for the construction of Kibou (hope) International School in Dhading District located near Nepal’s capital, Katmandu. The school aims to enable children of underprivileged families and orphans to receive an education in the predominantly impoverished district. Proceeds were used to purchase two acres of land on which construction began in October. The school, which will feature twelve classrooms, an assembly hall and a library, will open in May 2001. Plans call for the school to expand to offer secondary education in the future.

12. Support for the U.N. International Year for the Culture of Peace

Throughout the year 2000, the SGI supported the United Nations in its International Year for the Culture of Peace (IYCP) by promoting the UNESCO-organized Manifesto 2000 signature campaign and engaging in Flagship Events and other activities to promote a culture of peace and nonviolence.

SGI organizations in four countries gathered more than 179,000 signatures in support of Manifesto 2000 for promoting respect for all life and rejecting violence. By country, the results were: India, 109,270; Malaysia, 19,808; Canada, 40,000; and Japan, 10,000. In addition, the SGI-USA collected another 110,000 signatures in support of the IYCP through its “Victory Over Violence” campaign.

The SGI advocated the IYCP through Flagship Events, which included the “World Boys’ and Girls’ Art Exhibition” held in Geneva in April that was sponsored by UNESCO, and the “Toward a Century of Humanity — An Overview of Human Rights in Today’s World” exhibition held in Italy in the fall. It also organized a forum under the theme “Women Building a Culture of Peace” in support of IYCP on June 10 in New York to coincide with the Beijing-5 Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly.

13. SGI India Collects Signatures for Manifesto 2000

A ceremony called “Peace is in Our Hands” was held on August 30 at the Nehru Memorial Hall in New Delhi, in which SGI India presented more than 109,000 signatures collected by its members for the Manifesto 2000 petition calling for a culture of peace and nonviolence to UNESCO. The signatures were handed to UNESCO director for India, Professor Moegiardi, in the presence of Mr. R. Venkataraman, former president of India. Dr. Radhakrishnan, director of the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Committee, also spoke at the event, at which youth members of SGI India told of their efforts to gather signatures.

Ms. Priya Marwah told how she managed to go beyond her own target by collecting more than 10,000 signatures from local schools. In his speech, the former Indian president paid tribute to Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King and the philosophy of nonviolence, which conquered colonialism without relying on a single bullet. He called for increased efforts to transform the world’s culture of war to a culture of peace, and recognized the efforts of SGI President Ikeda and SGI India members.

14. Soka Gakkai Malaysia Supports Manifesto 2000 and the Culture of Peace

The women and young women of Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) initiated a Women's Peace Convention under the theme "Women in the New Era: Leading the Way to a Culture of Peace" with the aim of raising awareness about women's role in building peace. The Convention was held in 27 venues throughout Malaysia during the month of October with a turnout of 17,000 participants from all walks of life.

Also during this period the women worked together to collect nearly 20,000 signatures for UNESCO's Manifesto 2000 campaign promoting nonviolence and peace throughout the month of August. This is part of SGM's support for the U.N. International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000.

On September 9, SGM members handed over the signatures to Kenneth J. Luis, executive secretary of the Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO, when he visited the SGM Culture Center in Cheras for discussions on the role of UNESCO and the significance of the culture of peace.

15. SGI Unveils Peace Monument in New Zealand

Based on its commitment to nuclear disarmament, the SGI unveiled a special monument in the City of Rotorua in southern New Zealand on September 8, 2000, as a tribute to Rotorua District Council — one of the first councils in the world to declare its city nuclear-free. Engraved on three large granite slabs spaced equidistant and surrounding a fountain are inscriptions for peace from New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, Rotorua Mayor Grahame Hall, Maori civil servant Councilor Trevour Maxwell and the three successive Soka Gakkai presidents.

On hand at the unveiling ceremony was the Prime Minister's representative, Minister of Internal Affairs Mark Burton, Mayor Hall and Bishop Kingi, a senior Maori statesman. In his message, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda introduced second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's staunch declaration against the atomic bomb in 1958, in which he refers to the weapon as threatening humanity's right to live and an absolute evil that must be eradicated. Mr. Ikeda pointed to this declaration as the basis of the SGI's efforts for peace. The SGI recognized Rotorua for its courageous stand for peace, which is consonant with the philosophy and goals of the SGI.

B. HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS

1. Children's Rights Exhibition in the United States

In March, the SGI-USA-sponsored exhibition "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" was held at the Kansas City Public Library in the United States, eliciting a broad response. Kansas City Mayor Kay Barnes recognized the importance of the SGI's efforts to raise the awareness of people around the world about the need to protect the rights of children, and presented the SGI-USA organization with a commendation. Originally created by the SGI-USA's New York Youth Peace Committee in 1996 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the exhibition has been seen by more than 60,000 people in twenty-one cities in the United States and abroad. During the year 2000, it was on display in a number of cities, including Jacksonville, New Orleans and San Antonio with the support of many local organizations.

2. SGI Makes Appeal to U.N. Human Rights Commission

In April, an SGI representative addressed the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva about the importance of education in the context of human rights. This is an idea urged by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda over the years. The representative's statement was summarized in a press release issued on the day of the address, and also distributed through the Internet.

3. Exhibition of Children's Holocaust Art in Western Australia

The exhibition "The Children of Terezin: Their Art, Their Legacy," which features drawings by children imprisoned by the Nazis during World War II at the Terezin concentration camp, was held at the Western Australian Museum in Perth for three weeks starting in late March.

The exhibition, which remembers the children and the mark they left on the world, was held in conjunction with Harmony Day Activities that celebrate cultural diversity each year in the Australian city. The Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests (OCMI) was one of the main sponsors for the exhibition together with SGI Australia. The Honorable Minister for OCMI, Rob Johnson, opened the exhibition.

Prior to this opening, SGI Australia organized the exhibition in Melbourne in 1999 at the Glen Eira Council Exhibition Center in conjunction with the Glen Eira Council, the Jewish Holocaust Center and Latrobe University in Melbourne.

4. "Women 2000" U.N. Conference

In June, SGI representatives participated in "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century" (also known as the Beijing + 5 Special Session of the UN General Assembly) at U.N. Headquarters. At the same time, a symposium geared to fostering international dialogue among women was held at the SGI-USA New York Culture Center in New York City. Approximately 400 human rights activists and citizens participated in the event, exchanging views on the role of women in creating a culture of peace.

5. Calling for an End to the Death Penalty

From July 3-5, SGI Italy participated in a conference organized by the Italian Senate to promote the abolition of the death penalty. The conference, titled "European Parliaments Against the Death Penalty," was attended by parliamentarians from ten European Community countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain. Representatives of Amnesty International, SGI Italy and the Community of St. Egidio also attended as observers.

SGI Italy General Director Mitsuhiro Kaneda delivered a speech underlining the Buddhist prohibition on taking another's life under any circumstances, and presented the conference with 500,000 signatures collected by the Italian SGI in a petition calling for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty. Human rights organizations welcomed the petition and acknowledged the substantial effort involved in gathering so many signatures, especially as each signature represented the fruit of a heart-to-heart dialogue.

6. Human Rights Exhibition in Italy

The exhibition "Toward a Century of Humanity — An Overview of Human Rights in Today's World" was held at three venues in Italy. In September SGI Italy organized the exhibition in the city of Grosseto, and in October mounted it in Grugliasco, near Turin. Justice Minister Piero Fassino attended the opening ceremony in Grugliasco and stressed that the issue of human rights is one that has a direct impact on each individual in their daily lives.

The exhibition was mounted next in the Tuscan city of Siena in December at the Santa Maria della Scala Museum. The Italian vice minister of education, Ms. Silvia Barbieri, attended the opening and underlined in her speech the importance of making issues of peace and human rights a part of the official Italian education program.

The Italian tour of the exhibition is being sponsored by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, the Ministry for Social Affairs, Amnesty International, UNESCO, UNICEF and other institutions. The exhibition outlines the development of human rights and describes existing challenges.

7. "Victory Over Violence" in the United States

Responding to numerous acts of violence committed by school-aged youth in the United States, the SGI-USA's Youth Peace Committee has organized or cosponsored more than 3,000 small "Victory Over Violence" discussion meetings, more than fifty large conferences, youth summits and community events, as well as hundreds of workshops in schools to consider the problem of violence and provide tools to identify and overcome it in their lives. Dubbed the VOV campaign, the program aims to support the United Nations International Year for the Culture of Peace and the International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World.

More than 110,000 individuals have signed a VOV pledge declaring their determination to "value my own life," "respect all life" and "inspire hope in others." The SGI-USA organized community events in Littleton (Colorado), New York, Oakland, Puerto Rico and San Diego to promote nonviolence values. Founder Arun Gandhi of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence spoke at seminars organized by the SGI in conjunction with the Institute in Los Angeles and Denver.

In perhaps the largest VOV event, in October the University of Michigan adopted Victory Over Violence and sponsored a weeklong series of activities which included seminars, panel discussions, and a concert by world-renowned jazz musicians who offered their services for this worthwhile cause.

C. HUMANITARIAN ACTION

1. SGI India Sends Relief Materials to Cyclone Victims

SGI India continued its emergency relief operations in support of victims of a cyclone that hit the eastern Indian province of Orissa on October 29, 1999, claiming 15,000 lives and leaving 15 million people homeless. Most of the survivors endured terrible living conditions without proper food, clothing or shelter for many months. The cyclone destroyed crops in many villages and endangered future harvests, having inundated the lowlands with seawater.

SGI India members collected food, clothing and other necessities in New Delhi, Calcutta and Hyderabad, and dispatched supplies to victims in eight afflicted villages (using two trucks). Between December 1999 and January 2000, SGI volunteers hand-delivered supplies three times to survivors in the villages, sometimes using small boats where roads were impassable. SGI India also dispatched a medical team and donated medicine to those rural areas with shortages of doctors and medical supplies.

2. SGI Venezuela Works to Restore Flood-Ravaged Area

The Venezuelan SGI organization formed a logistics team to transport relief supplies to areas devastated by floods in the aftermath of the torrential rains that struck northern Venezuela in December 1999. The organization also assumed a leadership role in the makeshift regional relief headquarters, and carried out volunteer activities in each affected area.

3. SGI Hong Kong Makes Contribution to UNICEF

SGI Hong Kong (HKSGI) presented the Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF with HK \$130,000 (about U.S. \$18,000). The money, which came from donations made by visitors to HKSGI-sponsored exhibitions and from the sale of commemorative items, was earmarked for projects to promote health care, welfare and education in impoverished parts of China. UNICEF officials expressed heartfelt gratitude for the support.

4. SGI Members in Taiwan Support Earthquake Restoration Effort

The Chinese Soka Buddhist Association in Taiwan held the “Light of Renaissance Art Festival” in a number of cities, including Taipei, Kaohsiung, Tainan and Keelung, to support restoration efforts in the aftermath of the major earthquake in September 1999. A total of 17,000 people attended the festivals held in September. The Taiwanese SGI organization received eleven letters of appreciation from ten different city governments and one university for their efforts.

5. SGI India Sends Relief Supplies to Quake Victims in Northern India

SGI India members in New Delhi sent emergency relief supplies to earthquake victims in the Chamoli area of northern India. On March 29, Chamoli was hit by a large-scale earthquake that claimed 100 lives and destroyed or damaged at least 16,000 homes. SGI India members in New Delhi launched an emergency relief drive; members and other local citizens donated a total of fifteen tons of food, clothing and blankets. From April 17 to April 19, SGI India’s relief operation team delivered emergency supplies to victims in three villages.

6. SGI India Supports Gujarat Cyclone Relief

SGI India’s youth members delivered relief supplies to cyclone-hit Gujarat, India. More than 2,000 people were killed by the large-scale cyclone that devastated Gujarat State with gales and floods in early June. Victims in the worst hit areas lived under severe conditions without sufficient food or clothing even a month after the storm. SGI India youth volunteered in emergency relief efforts for Jamnagar since the beginning of July, in cooperation with UNICEF.

7. Soka Gakkai Thailand delivers emergency relief to flood victims

Torrential monsoon rain in July and October severely flooded parts of northeastern and southern Thailand, leaving residents without water or food due to the closure of all transportation links with those areas. Soka Gakkai Thailand (SGT) members sprang to action, gathering thirty tons of food, drinking water, clothing, medicine and other articles in Bangkok, loading them onto twenty trucks and charging its own task force of youth members to deliver the relief supplies to more than twenty villages. In many cases, SGT had been the first organization to reach those communities with relief.

SGT donated extra relief supplies to the Rajaprajanugroh Foundation under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty the King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand in order to help other people in need. In December, His Majesty the King honored SGT members with a citation recognizing their sincerity and timely assistance to flood victims.

8. Singapore Soka Association Makes Contribution for International Relief Effort

The Singapore Soka Association (SSA) raised funds for the Singapore Red Cross Society to help provide relief for victims of two recent overseas disasters. In July, SSA raised \$16,237 (U.S. \$9,500) in an emergency weekend appeal for victims of the Sumatra earthquake. In a similar emergency appeal made in September 1999, SSA raised \$42,922 (U.S. \$25,000) — the second largest contribution from a civic organization — for Turkish earthquake victims.

9. Continuing Refugee-Relief Effort in Japan

Youth of the Soka Gakkai have been engaging in a refugee-relief campaign on a continuous basis, with the dual aims of raising public awareness about the plight of the world's refugees and collecting funds to facilitate assistance. This year's fundraising effort took place in the fall. The \$600,000 (U.S.) collected in last year's fund-raiser was earmarked by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for use in assisting refugees from Burundi, Congo, Rwanda and Kosovo. To date, 21 refugee-relief campaigns have been held in Japan.

10. Helping Women Gain Financial Independence in Vietnam

In October and November, Soka Gakkai members in Japan and their friends who work as barbers, beauticians and hairdressers participated in a novel fund-raising drive dubbed "Charity Cut." Nine hundred hair-care professionals donated their free time to give haircuts to 6,200 participants in return for a 1,000-yen (about U.S. \$9) donation to support vulnerable women and children.

In February, the hair-stylists donated ¥2,000,000 (U.S. \$19,000) in net proceeds from their fundraising efforts in 1999 to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which uses the funds in a program to repatriate Vietnamese women who have escaped from their captors after being sold into slavery abroad. IOM provides a loan of \$50 (U.S.) to the repatriated women at an interest rate of just one percent to help them restart new lives. More than 1,700 women have been able to embark on the journey of financial independence using these loans since the group began donations to IOM in 1997.

D. ENVIRONMENT

1. SGI Korea Recognized for Community Contributions

Numerous local governments and organizations in the Republic of Korea have awarded SGI Korea commendations in recognition of its long-standing contributions to the community. Since 1998, SGI members in Korea have been involved in efforts to support local beautification and clean-up projects throughout the country's urban areas.

2. Amazon Environmental Exhibition

The exhibition "Symbiosis and Hope: The Amazon — Its Environment and Development" was held in Brazil. Having attracted more than 600,000 visitors in South American countries since 1992, it is designed to raise awareness of the human impact on the environment. The exhibition is cosponsored by the SGI, SGI-Brazil and the Amazon Coordination Secretariat of the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources with the cooperation of the United Nations Development Program and UNESCO.

3. SGI Members Clean German Park to Protect Child Safety

Through participating in a cleaning initiative of the City Recycling Center of Hamburg, the youth of SGI Germany (SGI-Deutschland) discovered the city's "Schanzenpark" is favored not only by many children, but also by drug users. This meant that in addition to regular refuse, one could find drug-related litter, including used needles, at the site. The SGI members felt that they needed to act to protect the children from getting hurt, and from possible infection from the needles.

With the cooperation of the City Recycling Center, the 250-member-strong SGI team decided to take turns cleaning the park four times a year in 1999 and 2000, respectively. This effort resulted in a cleaner park and better protection of the public's health. Dr. Dirksen-Fischer, a member of the city's Health Department, paid a special visit to the SGI Center on November 18 to thank the SGI clean-up crew.

E. INTERCULTURAL ACTIVITIES

1. Interfaith Dialogues: Germany, USA and Singapore

The SGI's efforts to promote interfaith dialogue have been continuing in several countries. In Germany, the SGI joined the European Academy of Sciences and Arts to sponsor their sixth interfaith symposium on the theme "Daily Life and Nature: Environmental Problems." Dr. Karl M. Woschitz of Karl-Franzes University and Professor Shuichi Yamamoto of Soka University explained the respective approaches of Christianity and Buddhism to environmental problems.

In Washington, D.C., SGI-USA took part in a panel discussion "Future Trends in American Religion" on May 6 as part of the North American (Episcopal) Cathedral Deans Conference. Bill Aiken, director of the SGI-USA Office of Public Affairs, represented Buddhism on the panel, whose other members represented the Islamic and Jewish faiths. Each panelist's 15-minute presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session.

The Singapore Soka Association (SSA) was also invited to represent the Buddhist community by participating in a panel in a public forum on May 12 in Singapore. The event was organized by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore and the Center for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs on the theme "Civil Society: Its Existence in a Multi-religious State." Chan Heng Yuen of SSA introduced the Buddhist concepts of dependent origination and altruism that form the core values of civic consciousness. Other panelists shared their views from the Muslim and Christian faiths, respectively.

2. SGI-USA Supports Conference of Society For Buddhist-Christian Studies

From August 5-12, nearly thirty SGI-USA members played a major role in supporting the year 2000 conference of the Society For Buddhist-Christian Studies, an international gathering of some 250 scholars and religious practitioners, which is held every four years. A message from SGI President Daisaku Ikeda was read at the conference opening at the campus of Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. Virginia Straus, director of the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, which the SGI leader founded, helped to coordinate the daily working group titled "Spirituality and the Earth Charter: Buddhist and Christian Approaches." During one of these sessions, SGI-USA Vice General Director Bill Aiken presented the "Buddhist World View." Vice General Director Al Albergate read a passage from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* during an evening plenary session.

3. Soka Gakkai Seafarers' Photo Exhibit Opens in Mumbai, India

On May 12, "Beyond the Horizon," a collection of photographs taken by the "Hato-kai," Soka Gakkai members working as sailors on ocean-going vessels, opened at the Royal Mumbai Yacht Club in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), India. The exhibition displays breathtaking photographic images of natural beauty captured at sea and at port cities. Also displayed are photographs taken by Indian sea captains and valuable photographs from the Rahman Maritime Museum taken of prominent Indian figures, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. Captain K. Guha, who heads the Company of Master Mariners of India, an association of more than 1,500 sea captains supporting the exhibition, lauded the Hato-kai's efforts to present the display in Mumbai, and praised them for contributing to peace through cultural exchange and friendship. The exhibition has also traveled to the Pacific ports of Russia, the Philippines, China, Vietnam and Malaysia.

4. Seminar on Australian Reconciliation

SGI Australia (SGIA) held a seminar on reconciliation between Aboriginal people and European settlers, which is an important issue in the country, at the SGIA Culture Center in Sydney in October. An Aboriginal woman told her story of the "stolen generation" of native youth and related how she escaped — literally running through the bush — from being separated from her family, to be reared by the government or "adopted out" to a white family. Another woman described the discrimination Aboriginal students faced when they began attending white schools. Now a radio broadcaster, she said that excelling in sports was her way of gaining the respect of her peers as a youth.

"Reconciliation" is a people's movement that was initiated more than ten years ago in Australia. A committee was formed and they organized reconciliation meetings in community halls throughout the country. It culminated in the "Walk Across the Bridge," where more than 300,000 people, including some SGI members, walked across the Sydney Harbor Bridge to signify their support for Reconciliation. Keen interest in this issue on the part of a number of SGIA members led to the presentation of the reconciliation event at the SGIA center.

5. Dialogue on Difference in the Asia Pacific

SGI Australia cosponsored a conference titled "Religion and Culture in Asia Pacific: Violence or Healing" in conjunction with Latrobe University and Pax Christi at Latrobe University in Victoria, Australia on October 25. The state of intercultural and inter-religious relations in the region was an important consideration of the event.

In his keynote speech, Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, president of the International Movement for a Just World, opined that individual transformation is essential in resolving simmering animosities and creating a culture of peace. Conference convener Professor Joe Camilleri of Latrobe University spoke of a need for a new spirituality that can underpin humane and legitimate governance. The conference proposed the establishment of an "Asia Pacific Center for Civilization, Dialogue and Training" to support mediation and reconciliation efforts.