

SUSTAINABLE CAPACITY BUILDING:

Empowering Individuals and Communities to Act

Panel discussion: solar advisor, an anthropologist and a spiritual mentor respond to the critical question of how to harness the inner and outer capacity of people. They will demonstrate ways to sustain a new vision, alongside current technology, supporting a good green economy.

Speakers:

Ms. Ann Braudis - Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc.;

Chair of the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development

Sister Jayanti Kirpalani - European Director Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University,
Main NGO Representative, Brahma Kumaris, Geneva

Mr. Golo Pilz - Solar Advisor "India-One" (www.india-one.net)

Moderator:

Usha Jevan, Co-ordinator Brahma Kumaris Durban.

*A joint COP17 Side event in Durban Exhibition Centre, South Africa
of Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University www.brahmakumaris.org
and Maryknoll Sisters www.maryknollsisters.org
Saturday 3rd Dec. 2011 11.30-13.00.*

The key focus for this event was to explore how we build the capacity of individuals and communities to be able to implement policies and adopt a greener lifestyle.

Golo Pilz began his presentation by describing the three levels of capacity building: the individual, organizational, and community levels. He further explained that the oil age is coming to an end and that we already have a negative ecological footprint and are using 1.6 times the earth's resources. We have to reduce our unnecessary consumption and improve efficiency, since environmental degradation leads to poverty which can lead to conflict.

Currently the Brahma Kumaris and its sister organization the World Renewal Spiritual Trust (WRST), a recognized Research and Development center in the area of renewable energies, are among the largest institutional users of solar energy in India.

Golo went on to highlight the details of "India One" – an innovative 1Mw solar thermal power plant that is presently under construction in Abu Road at the headquarters of the Brahma Kumaris and WRST. The India-One solar project features a new thermal storage concept and operates in cogeneration. The plant will produce power and heat for the needs of 20,000 people. All the research and development happens on site and the project generates jobs for the local community. "India One" is an excellent example of decentralized power generation and of developing local capacity to build, implement, and maintain such a system.

Golo Pilz was followed by **Ann Braudis** from the Maryknoll Sisters of St Dominic, Chair of the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development, New York. She shared about a project established in the Philippines after a devastating earthquake in 1990. The disaster was intensified due to the bulk mining processes as well as open pit mining, believed to have caused the destabilization of the earth and deforestation in that area. 1700 people were killed. The project involved the local community in

creating a campaign to stop further ruin of the environment and to apply pressure both to local government and mining corporations under the banner 'save our children'. A voice was given to the indigenous peoples and using art, a beautiful park was created which reflected the interconnectedness of human life in the unfolding of the earth's evolution.

Finally **Sister Jayanti Kirpalani** highlighted the importance of capacity building, starting at the physical and then moving towards the emotional and spiritual levels. She quoted a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) report, which stated that every human being on the planet now has 300 extra manmade chemicals present in their system. One impact of this on humans is that it reduces the ability to concentrate; it brings about limited memory and reduces tolerance levels. She then moved to the topic of Emotional Intelligence - the measurement of how we relate to each other. Do we have the capacity to express the spirit of generosity, compassion and care? In the context of the spiritual law, whatever you put out you will get back; Sister Jayanti drew attention to the fact that something you can't legislate is a person's ability to care.

Spiritual resources can be enhanced through knowledge and providing the right environment, however we need to build capacity so that that knowledge can be accessed and used powerfully. Inner power is vital to develop the resilience to adjust and adapt to the changing environment. We have to remain rooted in our principles but be flexible like a delicate reed to accommodate change and discern the need of the moment. There are two understandings that facilitate this, firstly spiritual identity and second the practice of going in to deep silence. When we go into silence we are able to access the store of inner treasures that every person possesses. Human beings have values at the core, but we disconnect from them when we forget our spiritual identity. The crises we see in the world can be attributed to crises in spiritual values.

