

ONENESS-ARRIVAL-SHORE

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THE INTERNATIONAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DECADE:

A success story of the United Nations system and the international community at large

Often, perhaps too often, the United Nations is criticized for perceived failure, without an understanding of the complexity of the many factors affecting the outcome of its efforts. Seldom, much too infrequently, are the positive results achieved by the Organization known or acknowledged.

The International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, launched by the General Assembly in December, 1980, is one of those success stories that are unfolding quietly but surely as a result of the persistent efforts of Governments, the organizations of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations and NGOs.

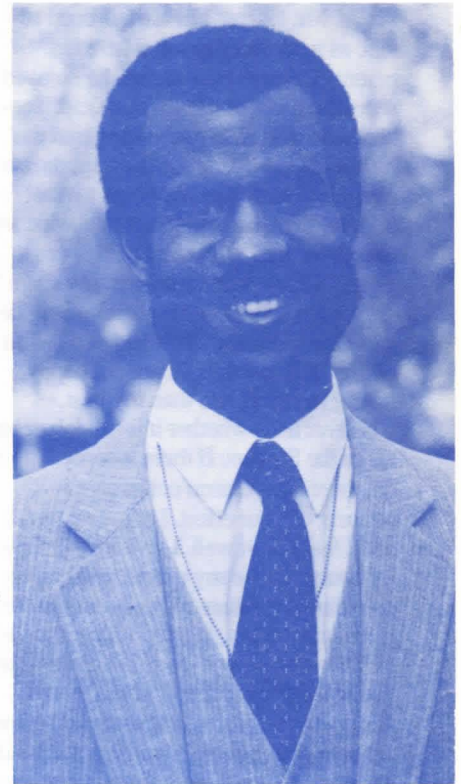
The World Health Organization has estimated that some 15 million children under the age of five die in developing countries every year, mainly because of water-borne diseases - that is, nearly 29 children under the age of five die every minute of every day in developing countries as a result of diseases associated with inadequate drinking water supply and sanitation facilities. The same diseases that exact such a heavy toll of mortality also drain the vital energies of millions who do not die but only sicken, some of whom must spend hours each day traveling to fetch the water which is unfit for human consumption.

Yet, a global awareness of the problem and the will to combat it has been on the rise since the 1960s. In 1961, the Charter of Punta del Este recommended targets to be reached by Governments in the Latin American region from 1961 to 1970. In October of 1970, in adopting the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, the General Assembly stated that each developing country would endeavour to provide an adequate supply of potable water to a

specified proportion of its urban and rural population. In 1976, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements recommended that quantitative targets should be established by countries to ensure that all would have access to a safe water supply and sanitation by 1990. In 1977, the United Nations Water Conference proposed that the Decade 1981-1990 should be designated as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, and in 1980 it was so proclaimed by the General Assembly. At that time, the Assembly called upon Governments to develop the necessary policies, set targets and priorities, and mobilize the necessary resources to achieve their objectives. The Assembly also called upon the international community to increase its technical and financial cooperation.

From a quantitative point of view, the Decade has so far achieved a moderate degree of success. The report of the Secretary-General to the 40th session of the General Assembly concerning progress at the mid-point of the Decade estimated that during the first five years some 344 million additional people received access to a safe water supply, and some 137 million additional people received access to adequate sanitation services. The report, however, also estimated that some 1,200 million people still needed safe drinking water, and some 1,900 million would still require access to adequate sanitation facilities, most of the people without adequate facilities being in the urban fringe and rural areas.

The real success of the Decade, however, is far from being quantifiable in this manner. Its main achievements must be seen in terms of its raising of national and international awareness to the urgency of the problem, and in terms of new
(continued on reverse)



Martin Garratt: "Nothing less than my best"

A GARLAND FOR MARTIN GARRATT

Martin Garratt, a UN staff member for 13 years, offers exceptional talents to the UN community on a full-time basis. During office hours he is hard at work servicing meetings from his post in Documents Distribution. He has performed with distinction as accompanist for the UN Singers for the past 12 years and provided spirited support on the keyboard during the Staff Day Talent Show last month. A true all-rounder, he has also been President of the Tennis Club for two years, and an active and outstanding member since 1978.

Mr. Garratt, who is British, began his musical studies at age ten and soon began performing in age-group competitions and music festivals. After piano studies with private teachers, he entered the Royal College of Music in London (comparable to the Juilliard in New York) and contemplated a musical career. Deciding to pursue his goal in New York, he found himself at the

United Nations after a series of unpredictable circumstances and events. "I have no regrets whatsoever," he reflects. "I have been very happy." He continues to seek musical engagements wherever they present themselves, however. "Accompanying is my interest," he explains. "I like collaboration."

Mr. Garratt has always been athletic as well. In England, where his parents and sister still reside, he enjoyed soccer, cricket, and track and field. Tennis came later, when he discovered that he did not have time for team sports, but could find a racquet partner at the last minute. When queried about his wins and losses, he modestly admits of his court game, "I have won more than my share."

An unreservedly positive attitude underlies the great talent and dedication of this staff member. "I am not happy giving anything less than my best, whatever it is—whether it is my job or tennis or the Singers. If there is something to do, there is no reason not to give it 100 per cent of your effort. I enjoy my work and I feel I do it well. I give it what I can. Of course, I love my music, and I try to give that more than 100 per cent if I can. Even with things you don't like as well—for instance, if your job is not quite what you want it to be, if you give it everything you can, you can always find something to like about it. You get some kind of satisfaction just from the fact that you have done your best, you have given it all you could."

"I have had a lot of positive contacts at the UN," notes Mr. Garratt. "I have been very fortunate in the people I have worked with through the years. I can't think of a time when I have been unhappy working here; it has always been a positive experience."

Reflecting on the organization as a whole, Mr. Garratt comments thoughtfully, "There were some dark days, but I do feel the worst is over. The morale on Staff Day was outstanding. There are still things which are of concern to staff members, like reclassification and the G to P exam, but recently things have been much more positive for the organization and for Secretariat staff." Mr. Garratt's enthusiasm for the UN extends beyond the Secretariat as well. "I tend to defend the UN to outsiders, especially people who only read certain things in the tabloids and don't really understand what is going on. The UN isn't a perfect instrument and

it probably never will be, but it is doing a lot more than people give it credit for. This is becoming more apparent since the Nobel Peace Prize and other recent events."

Superlatives flow readily when the subject of discussion is Martin Garratt, and words like "ideal" keep reappearing. "I feel he is an exceptional person," noted a member of the Tennis Club. "I am sure I can speak for all the players in saying that we value not only Martin's leadership as President, but also his exceptional talent, dedication and high standard of sportsmanship." The Singers are also quick to praise him. "He's great!" remarked one long-time member. "He gets along well with everybody and he handles the group well. He's strict when he has to be strict and he can be very funny, too. He has his little jokes he can pull to relax you. He's always there, always willing, and very versatile. He plays the organ, too, when we have performances in churches."

"I am deeply impressed by him," said another singer. "As our assistant conductor he performs his functions nearly perfectly. As a pianist he is very sensitive, on time, in tune, alert. He definitely inspires us, because he is completely committed to his job. He really puts his heart out. When the leader is involved in heart and mind, of course the members follow."

How does Mr. Garratt envision the possibilities of the UN? "What I would like," he says, "is to see the UN realise its full potential. What I would like is for people on the outside really to appreciate what is going on. Of course, there is some education to be done inside, also. A lot of people who work here don't realise what the UN is doing and what good it can do. Eventually I would like to see the UN get its place as an organization highly regarded by the whole world."

When that happens, it will be due, in large measure, to the excellence of attitude and effort exemplified by staff members like Martin Garratt.

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approaches to the problem through institutional arrangements, the use of low-cost, reliable technologies, greater attention to operation and maintenance requirements, community participation,

and perhaps most of all by stressing the importance of the role of women — not only as users of water supply facilities, but also as participants in the planning, management, operation and maintenance process in rural areas. Dramatic progress in these areas constitutes the cornerstone from which the ultimate goals of the Decade will be reachable in the near future.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

..Indeed, the U.N. shows more promise than it has for 40 dreary years. The great powers are feeling cooperative, the third world pragmatic, the U.N. leadership purposeful. The U.N. has helped ease the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, move the Iran-Iraq war toward resolution and bring peace to the Western Sahara. But continued progress will require a continued commitment from member nations....

The U.N.'s founders believed that the horror of two wars had made the world ready for a new political order, in which nations would work together to avoid conflict. Their effort had barely begun when the cold war overtook it, and their dreams have since been mocked by 40 years of ideological rigidity and querulous rhetoric. But their hopes seem less naive today than yesterday.

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