

AJWS REPORTS

Fall 2011

What's
your

global
impact?

INSIDE:

AJWS on the Hill

Mobilize Your Community

The Changemakers Next Door





AJWS Reports

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Dear Friends—

This fall, gentle winds of change are blowing at AJWS—rustling our agenda, our tactics and our very understanding of what it means to be a Jewish organization working to help people who live half a world away. Our strategic planning process, which has engaged our staff and board since the summer of 2010, has come to a close, and we are beginning to implement the plan that will direct our course over the next five years.

While we won't be changing the kind of work that AJWS does, we will be focusing and intensifying our impact by creating greater alignment between our international and domestic activities, so that they work in tandem to achieve the same goal: to enable marginalized people in the world to achieve their human rights.

As you can tell from the title of this issue, this change involves you. In the coming months we will be asking you to raise your voices with us on issues that directly impact AJWS's grantees in the developing world, in order to help us amplify the changes that we collectively seek. In our ever-more globalized society, this means changing the systems that perpetuate poverty and injustice—many of them originating in our own country.

This issue of *AJWS Reports* reflects our commitment to bringing our global work full circle, so that we can better leverage the inextricable link between change that's sparked by our own actions in the U.S. and change that originates in communities living with and working to overcome poverty in the developing world. From our government's foreign policy and our individual consumption to supporting grassroots NGOs worldwide, there is a lot we can do to make change happen for marginalized people. We'll start by addressing our government's global food policies through our new campaign, *Reverse Hunger: Ending the Global Food Crisis*.

As we continue to evolve as an organization, we hope that you will add your voice and your power to the movements that we're building both at home and in the developing world. Please be a part of the changes that we see ahead at AJWS and follow your passions to effect the change that you want to see in the world. Together we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Ruth W. Messinger
President

Barbara Dobkin
Chair of the Board

AJWS Reports was printed on FSC-certified paper that was produced locally and contains 30% post-consumer recycled content material. This issue saved one ton of wood, a million BTUs of energy, required 1,000 fewer gallons of water and eliminated 500 lbs. of CO2 from greenhouse gas production. These estimates were made using the Environmental Defense Paper Calculator. For more information, please visit www.papercalculator.org.



American food aid saved lives after Haiti's earthquake, but some shipments distressed local farmers—like this rice that was distributed just as the Haitian rice harvest came to market. Procuring food aid locally, when possible, helps damaged economies rebound. Learn more on pages 6-8.

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ABOVE RIGHT Women in Mehdiganj, India, protest the Coca-Cola bottling plant in their village. The American soda company has been accused of violating Indian people's water rights. For the complete story, visit page 12. / GLOBAL RESISTANCE



Change Starts Here

WHERE ARE "WE" ON THE GLOBAL JUSTICE MAP?



By Leah Kaplan Robins

“Global justice” is a phrase we use a lot at AJWS. Pursuing “global change,” working on “global issues” and making a “global” impact are popular terms for describing what we do. But when we say “global” in this sense, we usually don’t mean the entire globe; rather, just the “Global South”—or, in other words, the developing world. Global has become a euphemism for the poorer half of our planet.

To be truly global, we have to complete the circle. Pursuing global justice isn’t only about supporting human rights activists working on the other side of the world. It’s also about effecting change in our own towns and communities, and doing what we can—from here—to fight poverty and injustice far away. This process has to begin with a close examination of our own role in perpetuating or ameliorating the inequalities and injustices that plague our fellow humans.

Let’s start with our government. American laws and policies on trade, foreign aid and diplomacy have far reaching impacts on people in the developing world—both positive and negative. In 2010, for example, our State Department used its tremendous power to help successfully stall a draconian Ugandan law that demonized LGBTI people. In Haiti, U.S. food aid saved lives on one hand, but created long-term dependence and harmed small-scale Haitian farmers on the other. In El Salvador, North American free trade policies are allowing a multinational mining corporation to sue for millions of dollars in an attempt to undo environmental advances hard-won by AJWS grantees.

Our actions as individuals have similar consequences. Our consumption can provide jobs, empower marginalized people and promote sound environmental practices; or it can perpetuate exploitation, pollute the earth and siphon water from the aquifers of indigenous communities that don’t have the political power to prevent it.

Many of us feel paralyzed by the ubiquity and unequal nature of our global connection to other people. It seems we can’t drive, shop or eat without fear of harming someone thousands of miles away.

But giving in to this paralysis just deepens the rift between “us” and “them”—“here” and “there.” It puts up artificial walls between people and countries when, instead, we should be looking at how to turn our global connections from sources of injustice into powerful tools for change. The best solution is to choose to act—to actively take advantage of the connectivity that exists (and is growing all the time) to take down barriers between classes and cultures, opportunity and the lack thereof.

Of course, we don’t have to fix all of the world’s ills ourselves, but we have to recognize that we have the power to do something about some of them: our government’s trade policies are threatening rural communities in Colombia? Protest them. Our food aid system isn’t passing the “do no harm” test? Tell Congress we want to do better. You’d like to improve services for people living in poverty in our own country? Speak up.

AJWS’s community is full of people who are taking these kinds of action—whether on the Hill, in local government, in farmers’ markets and soup kitchens, or in classrooms and synagogues. Some are members of Pursue—AJWS’s network of social changemakers, or Global Circle—our community of young professionals interested in fighting poverty through philanthropy. Others are alumni of our international service programs or donors or members of Jewish communities across the U.S. What many of them have in common is that they’re doing this work in the name of the Jewish imperative to help the stranger, heal the world and create just systems of civil society within and outside our borders.

Read on to learn about some of the ways that people in the AJWS community are making the local global (and vice versa) and to get ideas for taking action yourself.

Together we are

POWERFUL

AJWS's director of advocacy, Timi Gerson, talks about lobbying Congress, shifting the balance of power, and why Jewish values matter on the Hill.

AJWS SUPPORTS GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS ALL OVER THE WORLD. HOW DOES AJWS'S DOMESTIC ADVOCACY SUPPORT THEIR WORK?

It's my job to look at U.S. policies and see how they help or hinder the work that our grantees are doing in their countries and communities. Do they create an enabling environment for sustainable development or not? On issues where changes in U.S. policies would further grantees' work, we advocate for those changes. And when U.S. policy poses obstacles to their work or their communities' survival, we try to remove them.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE OBSTACLES?

Take the U.S. policy on biofuels. The subsidies that our government is granting for corn to produce ethanol have driven up the global price of corn. For people in the developing world who depend on corn as a staple of their diets and who are spending 50-80 percent of their income on food, a few cents a pound can make the difference between eating and starving.

Even though laws like this have a huge impact abroad, people in the Global South, for the most part, are shut out of the venues where these decisions get made. U.S. policies are enacted in our names and, when we are silent, with our complicity. That's why we have a responsibility to hold our representatives accountable and advocate for changes that will impact so many people globally.

HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT IT?

One tactic is lobbying. We figure out which members of Congress hold the deciding votes on the issues we care

about, and then we meet with them to open dialogue. When we're meeting with someone like-minded, we discuss strategy: how can we help them move things inside Congress, and how can they help us move the issue in the broader public? Sometimes we're there to educate: legislators really rely on groups that specialize in these issues to bring them compelling information and stories that make the policies real and influence their decisions.

WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF AJWS'S RECENT ADVOCACY SUCCESSSES?

AJWS collaborated with other groups to urge the U.S. government to use its influence with the IMF and Inter-American Development Bank to get much of Haiti's debt forgiven. That was a significant win because we've been advocating for debt forgiveness in Haiti for many years, and after the earthquake, the absurdity of expecting a country to rebuild when it was saddled with such unfair and crushing debt became clear. We also successfully pushed for a billion dollars in aid for Haiti, which was an impressive feat given the budget climate in Washington.

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?

For several years, AJWS has been working to reform the way the United States distributes food aid. This is a main focus of our new *Reverse Hunger* campaign. Although the U.S. food aid program provides really critical aid in emergencies, it's a band-aid solution: it feeds people in the present, but it can actually harm local agriculture, which prevents people from sustaining themselves in the future. That's in part because the law requires that the majority of U.S. food aid be purchased from U.S. producers and shipped by U.S. carriers, instead of purchased from local farmers in regions near the crisis.

We saw the detriment of this approach after the earthquake, when a shipment of American rice was sent to Haiti just as the Haitian rice harvest came in—undercutting Haitian rice farmers. Since then, the Obama administration has demonstrated willingness to support local food procurement, but it can only do so much until the laws are changed by Congress.

HOW CAN WE GET THIS CHANGE TO HAPPEN?

Some of the key policies regulating food aid and corn-based biofuels are in the U.S. Farm Bill, which is coming up for revision in 2012, giving us a great opportunity to advocate for reform. But the current laws are backed by powerful special interests like the shipping and agribusiness lobbies, and in order to shift the dynamics of power we're going to have to demonstrate that there's a counter base of constituents who want to see the laws changed.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS HELP?

Learn about this issue and then add your voice. People think that their phone call or e-mail won't make a difference, but the truth is that it does. I've seen it. When I first started working in Washington, I remember being astounded watching a Congressperson switch his stated voting intentions on a bill because of 50 phone calls from voters in his district. By *not* speaking up, you're actually letting those louder voices on the other side wield more than their share of the power.

WHAT DOES JUDAISM HAVE TO DO WITH ADVOCACY?

As a Jewish organization and as part of a faith-based advocacy movement, AJWS serves a vital moral role. Religious advocacy represents the conscience of the country, urging our government to do what's right *because* it's right and not just because it serves our self-interest. Advocacy driven by our Jewish values is an expression of our historical experience of oppression and our biblical mandate to protect the stranger and seek justice. This is our unique Jewish contribution to the struggle for a better world.

—Interview by Leah Kaplan Robins

“Understand that you have power and a responsibility to use it. And amplify your power by joining it with others. That’s how we effect change.”



Take Action with AJWS

Sign up for our advocacy list at www.ajws.org/advocacy so you can receive action alerts and add your voice to our campaigns.

1 Global Circle supporters fill bags of rice to send to U.S. trade representatives as part of AJWS’s *Fighting Hunger from the Ground Up* campaign in 2009. **2** Ruth and faith leaders during an interfaith advocacy day for Sudan. **3** AJWS Volunteers lobby Congress to prevent budget cuts to foreign assistance in March 2010. **4** Ruth Messinger and Phyllis Teicher Goldman with the Obamas on Chanukah. **5-7** AJWS rallies for Darfur in DC, San Francisco and NY. **8** AJWS briefs U.S. officials, Congressional staff and NGO leaders 100 days before the referendum on South Sudan’s independence. **9** Ruth Messinger at the White House in 2009 with former U.S. envoy to Sudan, Gen. Scott Gration, and Sudanese activists Omer Ismail and Jimmy Mulla. **10** AJWS and the Haiti Advocacy Working group organize the first ever meeting between Haitian groups and U.S. aid officials after the earthquake. **11** Ruth with Donald Steinberg, of USAID, and other panelists on International Women’s Day in 2011.

PHOTOS 1 Ron Haviv, 2 Pete Muller, 3 Rachel Weinstein, 4 White House, 5 Gitta Zomorodi, 6 Meredith Burak, 7 Matthew Emry, 8 Dahlia Rockowitz, 9 Voices for Sudan, 10 Shulie Eisen, 11 Patricia Kupfer

From Dreams to Dependency: Biblical lessons for contemporary food aid

By Rabbi Lauren Kurland

Today's global food crisis—which has persisted since 2008 despite its disappearance from the headlines until the current famine in Somalia—is far from the first time the world has been dealt the challenge of feeding large populations in emergencies. Those who dispense food aid today would be wise to learn from the mistakes of their predecessors—the oldest and perhaps most egregious of which can be found in the biblical story of Joseph.

After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams as harbingers of seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, Joseph lands a plum position as Pharaoh's second-in-command, responsible for designing and administering a response to the impending hunger in Egypt.

Judiciously, and ostensibly with good intentions, Joseph develops a simple approach: gather grain during the time of plenty and ration it during the time of famine.¹ For many, the story ends there, with the wise forefather solving Egypt's food crisis. But a close read of the bible shows that Joseph's food aid approach soon takes a turn for the worse.

As the agony of hunger intensifies within Egypt and beyond its borders, Joseph decides to monetize the grain and sell it, thereby removing "all the money that was to be found" from people's pockets.² Now cash poor, the Egyptian people plead before Joseph: "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is all gone!"³ Joseph requests their livestock, and the starving Egyptians agree, aware that there is little room for negotiation with the man who holds the keys to the grain silo.

Yet this grain only lasts a year, after which they return to Joseph, saying: "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that

since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land."⁴ In their desperation, the Egyptians offer to become slaves in exchange for food, finding servitude preferable to their incessant hunger pangs. Joseph agrees without apparent hesitation and certainly without any premonition that his own descendants would themselves one day suffer the torture of slavery.

Yet, despite their hunger, poverty and enslavement, the people express gratitude: "You have saved our lives," they tell Joseph; for indeed, he literally has.⁵ But at what cost?

Joseph's method of distributing food aid transformed free people into a nation wholly dependent and disenfranchised, having exchanged long-term sustainability for short-term and necessary sustenance. While our government's modern system of food aid does not parallel Joseph's methodology on all counts, we must acknowledge that the end result—a vicious cycle of dependence in many countries—has been disappointingly similar.

Though the United States' food aid program—the world's largest—saves countless lives, its tactics have had unintended consequences on many of the communities we seek to help. By shipping American food to emergency zones rather than buying it from regional farmers whenever possible (as most other countries do), we undercut local farmers and damage vulnerable agricultural economies. When local agriculture disappears, people become dependent on imported food; and when global prices rise—as they have in recent years—there is little to cushion these communities from hunger.⁶

Like Joseph, whose food aid system created a culture of slavery that similarly and ultimately engulfed his own people, we, too, face the real possibility that our government's misaligned policies will sooner or later catch up to us. As John Podesta, former White House Chief of Staff under President Bill Clinton, indicates: "Unless we take immediate action, we are destined to race from food crisis to food crisis for generations to come, with grim consequences for the world's poor and our own national security."⁷

The dire repercussions of these misguided food aid systems—both ancient and contemporary—compel us to advocate swiftly and fiercely for food aid reform and for greater investment in local agriculture in developing countries. We must seek ways to stave off famine without trapping the poor in vicious cycles of dependency and contributing to our collective downfall.

By thinking of food aid as a long-term investment in addition to a short-term solution, we may succeed where Joseph failed and current U.S. policy falls short. This is our obligation and our responsibility as Joseph's descendants—so that all may live in years of abundance and plenty.

Take Action:

» Participate in Global Hunger Shabbat & 18 Days of Action, Beginning November 4
www.ajws.org/hungershabbat

» Join AJWS's food justice campaign, Reverse Hunger
www.ajws.org/reversehunger

1-7 Footnotes: www.ajws.org/ajwsreports

Mobilize Your Community

www.ajws.org/advocacytoolkit

So, you want to become an advocate for global justice but aren't sure where to start? Visit us online to access AJWS's advocacy toolkit, a tactical guide for organizing your community to help drive political change. **Here's a sneak peek:**

FIRST STEPS:

- **Know your issue.** Educate yourself and develop an informed opinion.
» Visit www.ajws.org/advocacy to learn more about AJWS's current issue campaigns.
- **Clarify your guiding values.** What is motivating you on this issue and what are the values you seek to promote in taking action?
- **Know the players.** Familiarize yourself with the decision-makers on your issue. A good place to begin is with the members of Congress who represent your city and state.
» To find your representatives, visit www.house.gov/writerep and www.senate.gov.
- **Know your allies.** Chances are there are other people and organizations around you who feel the same way you do. Connect and collaborate!
- **Know your resources.** Assess the tools, people and skills that you have already and explore our full advocacy toolkit to get ideas and tools for planning an event, engaging the media and reaching key decision makers.

HOW TO...

Raise Awareness

Power lies in numbers. Build momentum for your campaign by organizing an event to engage and involve other people in your community.

» Use our how-to guides for [planning and hosting events](#), [marketing your event and fundraising for your cause](#).

Make Noise

Engage the media to generate buzz and help influence public opinion about your issue. You don't have to be a PR professional to get press!

» Use our templates to write press releases and give successful interviews, and learn to use online and print media to shape the conversation about your issue through [op-eds](#), [letters-to-the-editor](#) and [social networking](#).

Shift Power and Policy

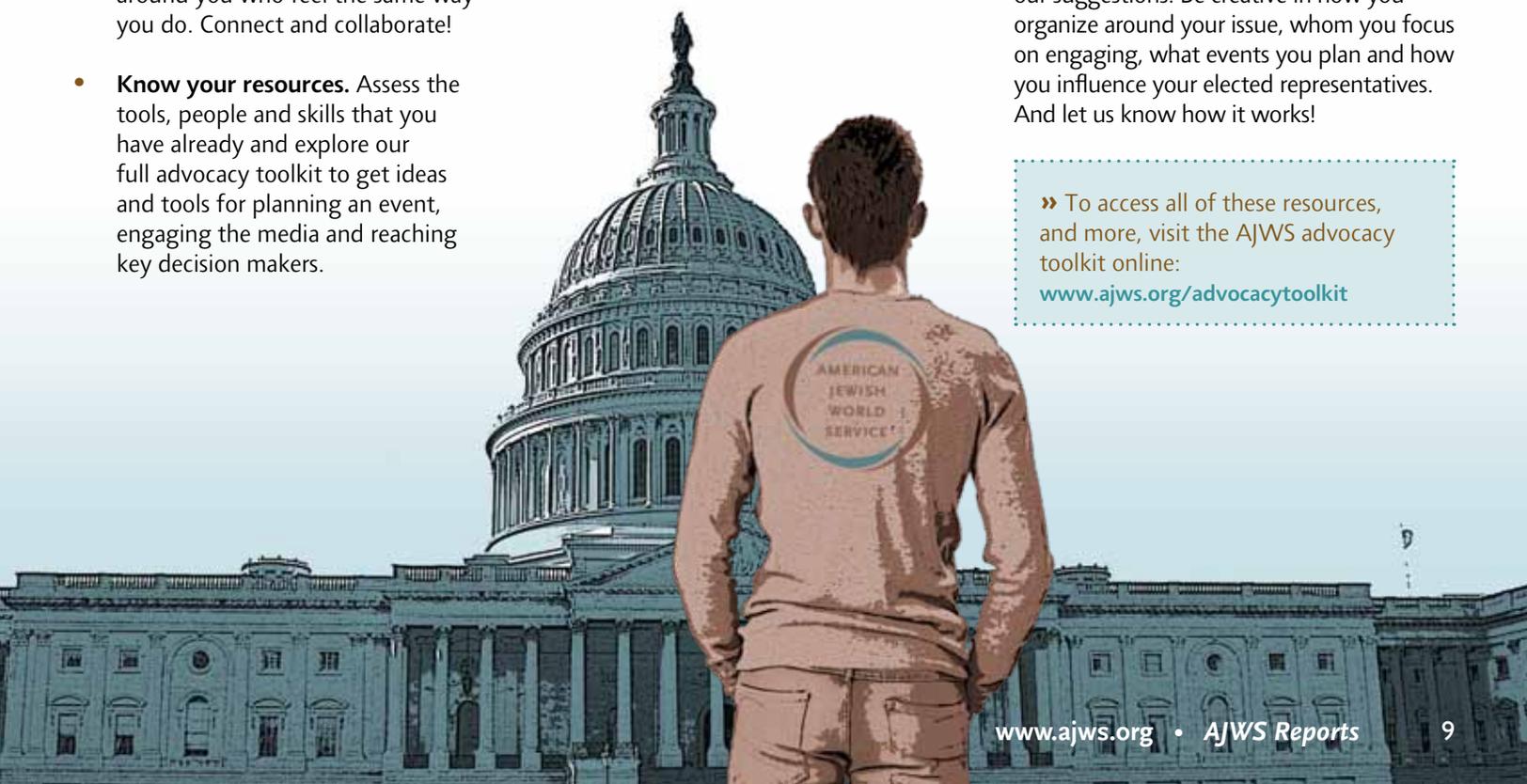
We can use our power as constituents to urge our representatives to make decisions that advance social and economic justice and promote human rights in the world. You can address your concerns to members of Congress, the President, the heads of federal agencies or any other elected or appointed official—and urge your friends, family, neighbors and community to do the same.

» Check out our [tips and templates for how to organize a call-in day, letter-writing campaign or petition drive](#); or [how to arrange a meeting with your member of Congress](#).

Get Creative

We hope you'll make use of AJWS's online toolkit, but don't limit yourself to our suggestions! Be creative in how you organize around your issue, whom you focus on engaging, what events you plan and how you influence your elected representatives. And let us know how it works!

» To access all of these resources, and more, visit the AJWS advocacy toolkit online:
www.ajws.org/advocacytoolkit



VOICES FROM THE HILL

Compiled by Dahlia Rockowitz

U.S. officials have been speaking up about human rights issues recently. Listen in to hear what the dialogue has been about.

ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

“I think sometimes in the press and in the minds of many, our foreign aid is exaggerated. It really is a miniscule part of our overall budget and it’s not the reason why we have this growing debt in America. Foreign aid is important. If it’s done right, it [creates] allies that in the future can help us, not just in political struggles but can be our partners in economic trade... A world where people are prosperous and free to grow their economies and pursue their dreams and ambitions is a better world for all of us.

—Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) responding, via video, to a suggestion that the U.S. shouldn’t give foreign aid while there is poverty at home, June 29, 2011

ON GENDER EQUALITY

“Several years ago, when I was traveling with then First Lady Hillary Clinton, a government official was going on and on about how women in his country have no role in the country’s economy. Mrs. Clinton stopped him and said, ‘Sir, as far as the eye can see, (we were traveling in a van), women are bent over with children on their backs doing the farming, carrying wood, carrying water...if they all stopped but for a day, your country would shut down.’

—Melanne Verveer, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues, in remarks at the Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome, Italy, June 27, 2011

ON SUDAN

“...The independence of South Sudan was achieved July 9 without major conflict and with the recognition of the Government of Sudan. All those, in the Congress, among the many public organizations and advocates, the government entities and individuals over two administrations, all those who worked for this over many years should take pride and joy in this achievement.

—Ambassador Princeton Lyman, U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, Statement at Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Hearing, “Two New Sudans: A Roadmap Forward,” July 14, 2011

ON LGBT RIGHTS

“We have to continue to stand up for the rights and the well-being of LGBT people, and sometimes it’s hard when you’re in the middle of a long campaign to see where you’re getting. But I’ve always believed that we would make progress because we were on the right side of equality and justice. [...] This is one of the most urgent and important human rights struggles of all times.

—Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, celebrating LGBT Pride Month at the State Department, June 27, 2011

ON HAITI

“ The challenges for the people of Haiti are daunting but they are not insurmountable. When the right leadership adopts the right policies, and with the continuing support of the international community, progress can be made...that moment could and should be now.

—Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Hearing, June 23, 2011

ON FOOD AID

“ USAID believes that the area for greatest convergence of our interests is in ensuring what we have long held as a basic principle: that the right food should get to the right people at the right time, while doing no harm.

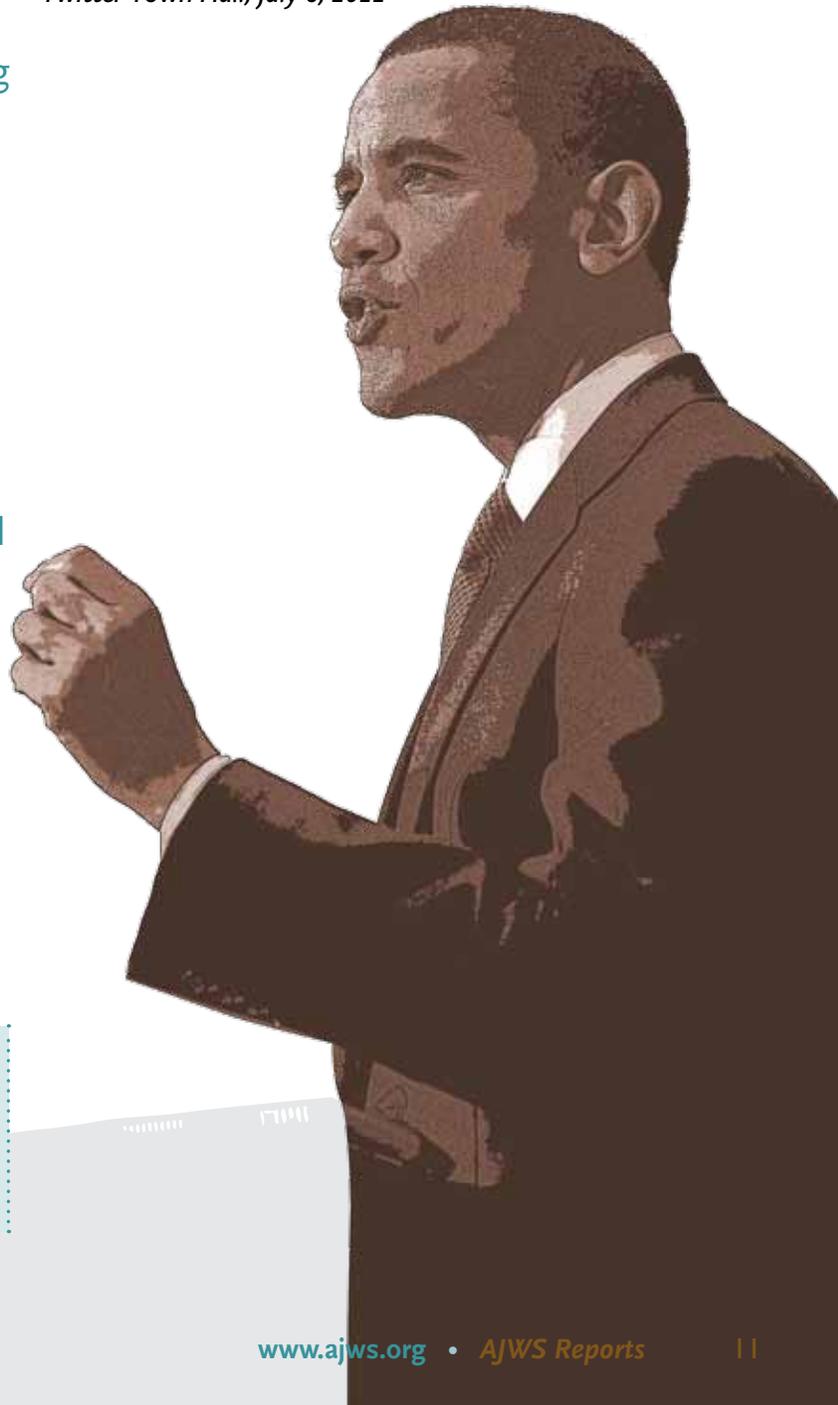
—Nancy Lindborg, USAID, in remarks before the Subcommittee on Rural Development, Research, Biotechnology, and Foreign Agriculture, July 13, 2011

“ We need to make it clearer to people as to why these programs are so important and why they save us money and why they save lives and why they're in our national security interest. Because...there's not a natural constituency out there ... knocking on doors saying 'please continue to vote for a robust food aid budget for international food aid programs.'

—Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA), Subcommittee on Rural Development, Research, Biotechnology, and Foreign Agriculture Hearing, July 13, 2011

“ I think America, to be a leader in the world, to have influence, to help stabilize countries, and create opportunity for people so they don't breed terrorists or create huge refugee flows and so forth, [must] make a very modest investment in foreign aid. It's a force multiplier, and it's something that, even in tough fiscal times, America needs to continue to do as part of our role as a global leader.

—President Barack Obama in response to a tweet during Twitter Town Hall, July 6, 2011



Now it's your turn to speak up!

Tell your representatives what you think about these issues.

White House Comment Line: 202.456.1111

Capitol Switchboard: 202.224.3121



The People vs. Coca Cola

Indian communities reclaim their water rights from the thirsty American soda giant.

By Amit Srivastava
*Director of AJWS grantee
Global Resistance*

The average Indian consumed about 2 liters of Coca-Cola in 2009. Compare that to roughly 95 liters consumed by the average American. Yet the American beverage conglomerate is causing severe hardship for the tens of thousands of people who live around its bottling plants in India.

Coca-Cola has located many of its plants in water stressed areas—guzzling water from the depleting groundwater table even as farmers and the community do not have adequate water to successfully farm their lands and meet basic needs. “Drinking Coca-Cola is like drinking the blood of farmers in India,” said Nandlal Master in Mehdiganj, the leader of a local group opposed to Coca-Cola’s operations.

Coke’s abuses in India are well documented.⁸ A study conducted by one of India’s most well-known NGOs, the Energy and Resources Institute, concluded that Coca-Cola was a significant

contributor to the growing water shortages in the village of Kala Dera in the state of Rajasthan—a desert area where the company began bottling in 2000. The study recommended that Coca-Cola shut down or relocate its plant because operations in Kala Dera “would continue to be one of the contributors to a worsening water situation and a source of stress to the communities around.”

In the village of Mehdiganj, in north India, groundwater levels have dropped 7.9 meters (26 feet) in the 11 years since Coca-Cola started its bottling operations. The community’s water shortages are most acute during the summer, when Coke’s production is at its peak, and many have called for the company to cease bottling during the dry season.

Communities Defend their Rights

In response to their unwelcome new neighbor, Indians are fighting back. Community after community has organized

to demand that Coca-Cola close up shop because it is significantly hindering access to water, a fundamental human right.

In southern India, in the village of Plachimada in the state of Kerala, one of Coke’s largest bottling plants has been closed since 2004 after the community’s opposition led to state government orders to halt operations. The government subsequently convened a committee to study the impacts of Coca-Cola’s plant in Plachimada, and in 2010, concluded that the company was responsible for at least \$47 million in damages to the local population. In February this year, in an unprecedented move, the state legislature of Kerala passed a law setting up a tribunal which would allow local people to seek compensation from the company.

My organization, Global Resistance, has worked closely with the community-led campaigns through a local initiative called the India Resource Center. The center has helped organize the various arms of the movement in India, and Global Resistance has provided local groups with access to the international stage, enabling Indian

voices to be heard on Coca-Cola's home turf and in the company's other large markets, such as the European Union. We have placed prominent articles in the mainstream Indian and international media and countered the company's denials with documentation and research.

Feeling the Heat

The campaign to hold Coca-Cola accountable for its abuse of water resources in India has significantly impacted the company. *The Wall Street Journal* credited the campaign with costing Coke "millions of dollars in lost sales and legal fees in India, and growing damage to its reputation elsewhere."⁹

Coke now takes water matters much more seriously and has become more efficient in its water use around the world. In 2000, it took more than 7 liters of water to make 1 liter of soda. Today, as a result of the campaign, the company claims to have reduced its use to about 3.7 liters. Coca-Cola has also developed global guidelines to determine where new bottling plants should be located.

Though these improvements are real, the company has also made grandiose, fictitious claims. In a reactionary move to the campaign, Coca-Cola now claims to be a global leader in water conservation and has announced that it has become "water neutral" in India—even as many communities continue to feel the devastating effects of its ongoing appropriation of their country's water.

Coke also employs dirty tactics in countering the claims made against it. A startling *New York Times* article noted that Coca-Cola's "lobbying approach (in India) was to ensure, among other things, that every government or private study accusing the company of environmental harm was challenged by another study."¹⁰

Combating Coke's public relations "greenwashing" and its attempts to cover its abuse of natural resources with bogus scientific studies has become the most recent challenge facing the organizers of the campaign. Coca-Cola's shenanigans have compelled Global Resistance to



BUBBLING OVER

In protests throughout the country, Indian communities stand up to Coke.

work much more closely with experts and scientists to scrutinize the company's fantastical claims, and to work with the media and allies to publicly counter them.

Taking Responsibility for Global Repercussions

As the economic axis of the world shifts towards Asia, the new battlegrounds over unaccountable corporate power are also shifting, as the case of Coca-Cola's water abuse in India illustrates. U.S.- and EU-based companies, generally speaking, are quite dismissive of concerns raised by communities in the Global South, and they take advantage of the weakened regulatory enforcement in these countries. However, bringing communities' concerns to the corporations' home countries, where they are relatively more susceptible to public pressure and to laws that protect human rights, significantly amplifies our voices and strengthens our campaigns.

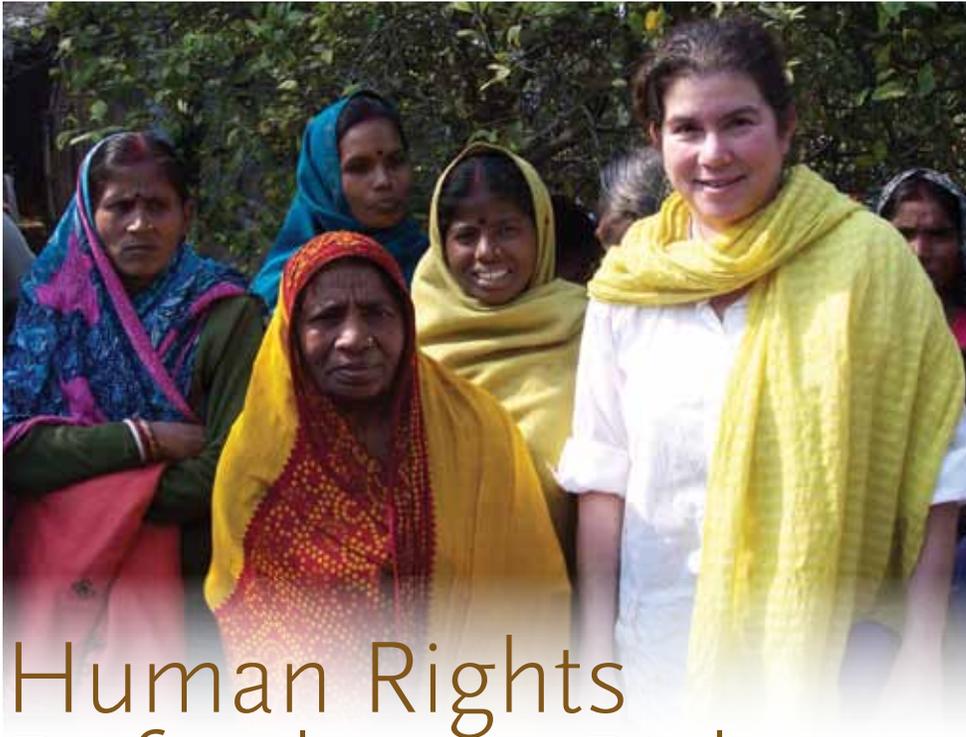
Indeed, as corporate investment in emerging economies and the developing

South increases, often infringing on the rights of local people, more and more communities are resisting attempts to usurp their rights. It is more important than ever that we lend support to these grassroots efforts to counter unrestricted corporate power. And especially when the company being challenged is American, it is imperative that social movements and activists in the U.S. work with their counterparts in the developing world to take the company to task. ■

8-10 Footnotes: www.ajws.org/ajwsreports

AJWS has supported Global Resistance and its India Resource Center initiative since 2009.

The organization works to empower small-scale farmers to hold the Coca-Cola company accountable for the degradation of water sources in drought-affected regions of India.



Human Rights Defenders at Risk

AN AJWS VOLUNTEER IN INDIA MEETS ACTIVISTS WHO RISK EVERYTHING TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS.

By Cynthia Hirsch

It was the most brutal, horrific video clip of inhumanity I had ever seen. I viewed it one hot muggy afternoon at People's Watch, a human rights advocacy NGO in India, where I worked for several months last winter as a volunteer with AJWS's Volunteer Corps. The video showed a military official from a nearby country* torturing, raping and shooting civilians and captured opposition soldiers—taken with the officer's own cell phone as a perverse gesture of bravado and pride.

While I heard about many horrors perpetrated against minority and marginalized populations during the course of my work at People's Watch, this particular footage will always shake me to my core. It was shown to me by B and T, human rights activists who had fled their country in fear of government

reprisal for their activities. They explained that they became involved as students in a movement to protest their government's brutal treatment of a persecuted ethnic minority population that was living in displacement camps due to civil war.

As members of an activist group, B and T helped organize a demonstration and authored a letter protesting the abuses in the displacement camps. When plainclothes investigators came to their home and questioned family members about their whereabouts, they knew that their activities had caught the attention of the government. Fearing for their lives in a country where those who speak out about government abuses routinely disappear, they immediately fled to India, finding refuge at People's Watch, which advocates for the safety and security of human rights defenders and, in extreme cases like this one, helps them to start new lives when they can't return home. The director, Henri

Tiphagne, graciously agreed to "hide" them until he could get them visas to a safer country.

I spent many hours with B and T soon after their escape, hearing their stories and looking at photographs of their friends and relatives living the life they had left behind. The video of torture and murder was among this ephemera—on the cell phone that B had carried with her to India. She explained that it came to her second-hand; a journalist had hacked into the soldier's phone and distributed the video to activists so that they could use it as evidence for their cause.

After watching this primitive but horrifying clip documenting the violence, I was stunned, tearful and speechless. It was an intimate view that felt far more personal to me than any other news or documentary footage I had seen of this humanitarian and human rights crisis. B, a very soft-spoken woman, moved her face close to mine, looked me in the eyes, and whispered, "How can I be silent? I know this is happening in my country—my children will never be safe."

In that moment, the vast differences in our nationality, religion, skin color and circumstances melted away. I was transported back to my childhood in a suburban Chicago Hebrew school, viewing for the first time pictures of the victims of the Holocaust in Europe and vowing to never forget. In this moment of shared humanity, we both understood: I knew she could not be silent, and neither could I.

A few days later we hugged good-bye. People's Watch had helped B and her husband acquire visas and plane tickets to another country, where they would be safe and anonymous. They hoped to be able to return home someday, but for now they planned to go to school and continue their activism—determined to bring attention to and address the atrocities they knew to be happening in their own country.

A Growing Trend of Threats

Situations like this are, unfortunately, all-too common. People who object to human rights violations are often

* The country cannot be identified in this article because it might jeopardize the safety of other activists working with People's Watch.

themselves at risk of violence inflicted by members of the groups and governments that they seek to protest. Even in India, where the constitution protects civil rights, many activists (including People's Watch's director) have faced arrest on false charges, harassment, violence and death threats, presumably in an effort to silence those who defend India's lower castes and marginalized minority groups.

One young artist I met was traveling around the country performing a one-act play she wrote to protest military control in Manipur, a state in northeast India. Last spring, she was detained and interrogated—and then released only after the human rights defenders' community made numerous calls to local officials and the National Human Rights Commission on her behalf. Also last year, a doctor who treated political activists was arrested and detained for several months, allegedly on sedition charges. Even now, having returned from India, I continue to receive alerts from People's Watch about human rights defenders who have been targeted for violence and detention without cause.

Reducing Risk and Speaking Out

People's Watch trains human rights defenders to mitigate risks and to investigate, monitor and report the abuses

they identify on the ground. When it's safe to do so, People's Watch encourages activists to speak out and testify about the abuses they've experienced or witnessed—both in the media and the courtroom.

As a volunteer and an attorney, I helped edit a report exposing the failures of India's National Human Rights Commission, which receives approximately 400 human rights complaints a day and takes action on only a handful. In addition, I wrote a manual for attorneys to use in demanding information from authorities regarding these cases, using India's Right to Information Act. Most incidents I learned about were believed to be perpetrated by police, military or school officials against vulnerable citizens such as Dalits (traditionally India's lowest and poorest caste), children and women.

Safety in Numbers

In this climate of impunity for violence against citizens and defenders of human rights, People's Watch has worked to unite the Indian activist community to make their work safer and more effective. At a meeting of directors of grassroots organizations working with the Dalit community, People's Watch's director, Henri, advised the group to be alert, not take unnecessary risks, communicate with each other and educate themselves

about their own rights under Indian law. He spoke eloquently about the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which mandates fair and just treatment of human rights workers.

The UN's declaration speaks deeply to me as a lawyer in the U.S. Article 11 specifically admonishes those professionals who can affect human rights through their occupations—police, lawmakers, government officials and attorneys—to adhere to standards of conduct and ethics. Yet in so many parts of the world, the law—and those whose responsibility it is to uphold it—has failed.

The activists in Henri's audience implicitly understood this: the existence of Indian laws protecting basic rights did not ensure their safety in a world where law could be undermined by violence and in a culture where disregard for minority groups and those who defend them is so deeply ingrained. Henri concluded his message by reminding the activists that their true protection comes not from treaties and laws—or the courts and officials who are supposed to uphold them; but rather, from their commitment to each other.

I have learned in India that the community must step up to fill the void in law enforcement. I have learned that the threat to those who defend human rights plays out globally and, as Henri implored, from all corners of the globe we must speak out on behalf of each other. ■■■



STANDING UNITED

Hirsch (left of center) with the staff of People's Watch and (on facing page) with members of the local community.

You don't have to go far to find people in the AJWS network who are making waves for social justice. These three young changemakers—members of AJWS's action and philanthropy programs Pursue and Global Circle—are making an impact on the world right from their own communities.

By Leah Kaplan Robins

The Changemakers Next Door

Running for Global Change

Ilana Shapiro demonstrates that you don't have to leave New York to make a big difference in the Global South; in fact, her feet are extremely grounded.

Shapiro is one of 10 runners on the AJWS team for the 2011 New York City Marathon. She is running to support people struggling to overcome poverty, but she is also dedicating her miles to someone else: her dad. Eric Shapiro, who passed away in 2007, was an avid walker/jogger and lived and breathed *tikkun olam*—the Jewish imperative to make the world a better place.

In her dad's memory, Shapiro has raised \$67,000 for AJWS so far, to fund scholarships for Alternative Breaks—the overseas volunteer program that inspired her to get involved with global justice causes when she was a student at Brandeis. The fund in her dad's name has already

awarded three scholarships to college students and recent graduates, and will continue to enable young people to visit developing countries and volunteer with grassroots NGOs fighting poverty in their communities.

Shapiro's marathon journey began last year, when, as an active member of AJWS Global Circle, she decided to merge the two passions that her father instilled in her. She advocated for AJWS to become a Charity Partner of the ING NYC Marathon—a dream that finally came to fruition this spring. Thanks to Shapiro, AJWS is now raising more money to fight poverty and promote Jewish service; and this month, she will be one of 10 AJWS marathoners supporting global justice with their minds, bodies and "soles."

"AJWS embodies the true meaning of *tzedakah*, which is how my father lived his life: helping others in need and healing the sick," she says. "I'm proud to have my dad's name and legacy commemorated by AJWS. As I train for the marathon and tell my friends and family, the donations have been pouring in. People recognize when someone is truly passionate about something and are willing to donate money to that cause."

International Service Inspires Activism

Nathaniel Berman, a Washington, D.C.-based alumnus of AJWS Volunteer Summer 1999, is a local activist who applies global inspiration to his work to promote the rights of workers and immigrants.

He is a leader in two Jewish social justice organizations—Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) and Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). Last summer, he chaired JUFJ's Day Laborer Justice campaign and is currently the organization's representative on the D.C. Wage Theft Prevention Coalition. He is also community service chair of HIAS's Young Leaders D.C. Steering Committee—and, as a passionate proponent of immigration reform, he has worked with HIAS to advocate for implementation of the DREAM Act.

Berman maintains that AJWS helped inspire this path: "I would not be involved in any of these programs today if it were not for having traveled to Zimbabwe with AJWS 12 years ago. AJWS showed me what Jewish social justice was really all about, and I have done whatever I can since then to help improve the lives of others." He derives inspiration for his work on labor and immigration rights from AJWS grantees in developing countries who work to defend the rights of exploited workers and vulnerable refugee populations.

Berman also learned from AJWS to bring a Jewish voice to all of his work. He infuses letter-writing campaigns and demonstrations with insight and moral guidance from Jewish text, and will hone that skill and other activism techniques this year as a JUFJ Jeremiah Fellow, through a nine-month course for activists on organizing, advocacy and Jewish study.

As an active alumnus, Berman is involved in AJWS's Pursue community, which invited him, in July, to join the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable's White House Community Leaders Briefing Day. He and 169 Jewish changemakers met with administration



Shapiro with a friend after completing her first marathon, in 2009.

PHOTO: ILANA SHAPIRO



Berman (left) and other Jewish activists at a D.C. immigration rally in 2010.

officials and raised social justice issues like AJWS's work around food aid and the 2012 Farm Bill. He credits Pursue and AJWS with helping to unify and strengthen Jewish initiatives for social change in the D.C. area. "Working with other groups that are similarly inclined and passionate about this work," he says, "just amplifies what a positive impact all these groups can make together, both locally and globally."

While much of Berman's daily work is locally focused, he says that AJWS "transformed me into a global thinker. Whenever I hear now about things like threats to foreign aid, I think about the impacts that I saw and felt in Zimbabwe and it keeps me hopeful and optimistic, and keeps me wanting to learn what more I can do. I can always count on AJWS to keep me involved and connected to the global issues that I am now inspired to continue to impact myself."

Farming Sows Self-Sufficiency in the U.S. and Around the Globe

45.7 million Americans depend on food stamps to feed their families. But because the stamps don't go very far, many people use them to buy cheap processed foods. When Pursue member **Daniel Bowman Simon** stumbled across a little-known line in the U.S. Farm Bill dictating that food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—or "SNAP") can be used to buy

greener thumb.

By using their SNAP benefits to grow gardens, people can turn just a few dollars worth of seeds or plants into a bounty of fresh veggies—his website (www.snapgardens.org) explains. Sounds simple, but, of course, actually using food stamps to garden isn't so easy when most grocery stores don't sell edible plants and gardening stores can't accept food stamps.

Simon set his sights on farmers' markets (many of which accept stamps and sell plants). He has peppered markets in 24 states and Washington, D.C., with posters declaring "Grow Your Food Stamps," and he is currently developing toolkits to help market managers, farmers and government officials publicize and facilitate food-stamp gardening. To circumvent some of the natural challenges of growing food in low-income areas, he is partnering with organizations and individuals who already have the tools and wherewithal to garden successfully. These early adopters will help get the word out and share skills and tips with others.

As the country's current expert on the topic, Simon receives a constant stream of phone calls and e-mails asking for information and support and has been invited to give a webinar hosted by

seeds and plants, a light bulb went off. Already an advocate in the community garden movement—in 2008 he campaigned for the White House to plant its now famous vegetable garden—it was a natural transition for Simon to launch "SNAP Gardens," a project that aims to give food stamps a

the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the fall. He hopes that anyone reading this will help build his movement by passing the news along to local farmers' markets and organizations that work with Food Stamp recipients. Not all farmers' markets accept food stamps yet, and voices from the community can encourage them to do so.

As a local advocate with global awareness, Simon believes that encouraging gardening as a solution to hunger here in the U.S. could have a ripple effect around the world: "Anything that elevates gardening as part of the solution here in America has the power to influence policy worldwide," he says. "It can also influence hearts and minds and provide inspiration to boost self-sufficiency and food sovereignty wherever people might be able to grow some of their own food."

Indeed, Simon's work in the U.S. echoes efforts by AJWS grantees in developing countries to build local people's capacity to grow their own food while supporting economic growth.

Simon has been a key member of AJWS's food justice community, and spoke last year at Pursue's "Growing Food Justice" event. ■■■

» Get involved in social change by joining Pursue or Global Circle, AJWS's communities of next-generation activists and philanthropists.

www.pursueaction.org
www.ajws.org/globalcircle



Simon spreading the word at a farmers' market.

ADVOCATING FOR THE FUTURE

Donors Invest Through Planned Giving

Donors Edmund A. and Arlene Grossman discuss planned giving, clean water and tikkun olam.

Edmund A. and Arlene Grossman, donors through AJWS's new planned giving program, are part of a growing number of people in the Jewish community who hope to leave a lasting legacy in the area of global justice.

When I asked what drew them to AJWS, Ed said that they "have been very much taken with the idea of Jews being involved with social justice and trying to provide it to all people. That strikes a responsive chord with us, the concept of *tikkun olam*."

The Grossmans are particularly passionate about the work that many AJWS grantees are doing to advocate for water rights. During a trip to India, Arlene became very aware of the lack of proper sanitation in the slums. "The situation with water there was terrible," she told me. "Often the same water was used for drinking and bathing, and all purposes. Water waste ran through the streets—

it was very bad. Water is the core of everything; it's so basic and so significant," she said. "Access to clean water should be available to all."

The Grossmans are also drawn to AJWS because so many AJWS grantees empower women. "Women tend to accomplish more than men," Ed said, "and it's incredibly important because they're also the ones giving birth to the next generation. It's important that they get fresh water, overcome poverty and stay healthy."

When asked why they chose to give to AJWS through planned giving—designating AJWS as a beneficiary in their will—Ed remarked: "We do not have children, which changes things dramatically. Most people place primary importance on taking care of their descendants. We will be supporting our family, but the bulk of our estate will go to charities that we think can make real change in the world. We spent a great deal of time thinking about it—we hope these things will help the world in the future."

Arlene added that they "hope AJWS continues to do the wonderful things it has

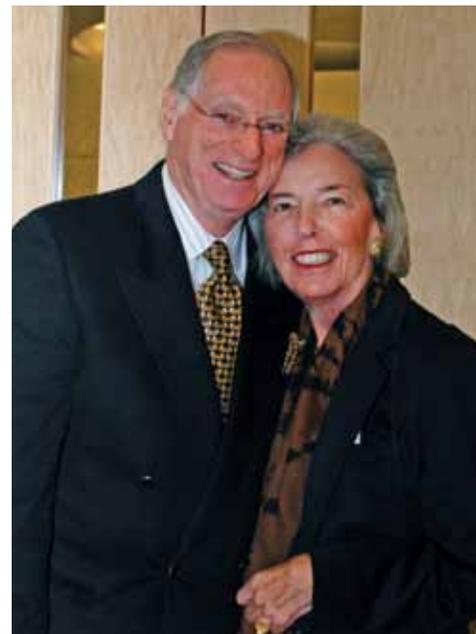


PHOTO EDMUND AND ARLENE GROSSMAN

been doing and will succeed in doing these things in the chaotic world we live in. It's very difficult to make change and we think AJWS will accomplish change."

I suggested that because they had no children of their own, the couple were—in a sense—taking into account the future of the whole world. The Grossmans didn't seem to want to take credit for that kind of poetic thinking; they are just trying to make a difference. ■■■

—Miller Oberman

PHOTO ROSALIE NEZIEN



IN MEMORIAM

AJWS mourns the loss of our dear friend and colleague Jeanne d'Arc Mihigo, who died in a plane crash on July 8th at age 41. As AJWS's country consultant in Democratic Republic of Congo, Jeanne worked selflessly to broaden and deepen AJWS's work with grassroots NGOs in the country, promoting human rights in a complex and challenging environment. She brought to the table great expertise in human rights, particularly those of women, children and sexual minorities.

Jeanne was loved by her colleagues and AJWS's grantees for her warmth of heart, intelligence and passion for improving the lives of people in the DRC. Janvier Bahati Bindu, director of AJWS grantee Action des Chretiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT) in the DRC said: "She was for us a lady of tremendous value, she has left us when we still have such great need of her!"

Jeanne's life was a blessing, and will continue to inspire our work for social change in the DRC and around the globe.

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