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Whitman Direct Action
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SADHANA CLEAN WATER PROJECT – WHITMAN DIRECT ACTION

WHITMAN DIRECT ACTION MISSION AND METHODOLOGY

Whitman Direct Action (WDA) is a Whitman College based student initiative dedicated to helping marginalized people by promoting economically and environmentally sustainable opportunity through community based development. We want to play our part in building a world where sustainable practices replace destructive ones, where equitable, mutual, and synergistic opportunity replaces oppression, and where critical thought and action replace apathy and fear. We believe we can best serve ourselves, our community, and the world by researching problems in our society and undertaking a one-to-two year project designed to address a chosen issue as effectively and meaningfully as we can. In regards to determining the focus of new projects, WDA members openly discuss and debate various global issues until a single proposal is mutually decided upon. Therefore, we do not stand for one specific project, instead, the “action” that the group takes on from year-to-year changes depending on the proposal passed by that year’s WDA members. In essence, WDA seeks to create a space where a good can become action.

WHITMAN DIRECT ACTION IN WHITMAN COLLEGE: [HTTP://WWW.WHITMANDIRECTACTION.ORG/ABOUT/](http://www.whitmandirectaction.org/about/)

WDA is unique in that by successfully implementing past projects such as the Central American Biodiesel Project and the Build-A-House Project, we prove to the Whitman community that college students can rise above their expectations. We are currently demonstrating our capacities by organizing the Sadhana Clean Water Project which includes a water conference in Mumbai, India and coordinating a study group on appropriate technology. It is proving to be an endeavor that is both inspiring and surprising to our campus. Through these efforts, WDA is garnering a degree of legitimacy on campus, which is sparking the admiration and imagination of professors, staff, and students alike. For the first time, Whitman community members are approaching WDA and inquiring as to their potential involvement during the coming years.

This shift in campus support comes at a pivotal time for WDA considering the core group of students who have led WDA’s past projects are graduating seniors. As such, we are in the process of establishing a board of advisors composed of professors and staff, and we are recruiting promising freshmen, sophomores, and juniors in order to ensure a solid foundation of volunteers to establish WDA’s sustainability in the years to come. We currently recruit students by holding well attended community forums once at the beginning of every semester. Following the forums, interested students are encouraged to attend our meetings and become grassroots fundraisers, which are vital for the success of our projects. Over the course of the each academic year, we identify dedicated students who will evolve into the change agents facilitating year-to-year transitions and who will also comprise the core leadership group for



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subsequent years. Never before has our volunteer base been so large, eager, and diverse in age. The vision of WDA as a longstanding campus activist organization has become a reality.

In addition to expanding and motivating our volunteer base, we are in the process of outlining tried-and-true fundraising strategies that are easy to implement successfully, which will ultimately codify fundraising and support partnerships with other campus organizations to include interest houses, campus clubs, Greek organizations, and sports teams. This will help provide the internal framework for supporting sustainable fundraising endeavors and aid future WDA members in making transitions from year-to-year as streamlined as possible. For example, this year we successfully organized a silent auction over Whitman's family weekend, which not only gained the attention of the Whitman community, but also the broader Walla Walla community. We raised over \$2,000 for the Sadhana Clean Water Project, and, due to our success, the administration has agreed to establish this as an annual event for WDA. We are currently working on a raffle for next semester, which also has the potential to become a yearly event. As WDA is an experiential learning program, members explore funding options every year by researching and applying for a variety of grants internal and external to Whitman College. Our budget is unique to each project, which, in turn, motivates WDA members to be innovative in how we acquire funds.

WDA's advanced use of technology is also a unique and defining characteristic of our organization, allowing for both increased productivity and collaboration as well as for educating WDA members on the most efficient tools of the future. For internal communications, we've implemented Google Apps (<http://www.google.com/a/>) to give everyone email addresses under the [whitmandirectaction.org](http://www.whitmandirectaction.org) domain, create email lists, share community calendars, and work together on documents such as grants and press kits. Externally, we use the open-source WordPress as a CMS for our website. The site is used to publish minutes from meetings, write updates intended for people interested in the progress of WDA, detail our projects, and ultimately make WDA as transparent as possible. Expanding this idea, we aspire to publish and make available as much information as possible about WDA on our website in hopes to "open-source" the organization itself! More information, including recent progress on these initiatives, can be found at:

 <http://www.whitmandirectaction.org/opensource/>.

With all of this work being put into the future, we strongly believe that the success of this year's project is equally important to the longevity of WDA as an activist organization. Given the campus atmosphere, current campus interest, and the funding base we have established, we are confident that the successful completion of the Sadhana Clean Water Project will culminate into the actualization of WDA as a long-term component of the Whitman community. WDA has become a nexus between two established Whitman College programs: the Study Abroad Program and the Center for Community Service. We are working with the administration to become an established experiential learning program for Whitman students.



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INTRODUCTION TO OUR 2007-08 PROJECT: SADHANA CLEAN WATER PROJECT (SWCP):

[HTTP://WWW.WHITMANDIRECTACTION.ORG/CLEANWATER/](http://www.whitmandirectaction.org/cleanwater/)

The SCWP aims to address obstacles to clean water access in rural India. India claims the second largest population globally with 1.25 billion people: of that, 226 million people do not have access to safe water. In the state of Maharashtra in western India – also the site for our conference – approximately 700,000 people contract water related diseases annually. The problem of water access is further exacerbated by competition for the limited supplies available. The demand for water in India is expected to double by 2025 with few viable alternatives. Our project aims to explore possible strategies with local NGOs and communities to improve the conditions of water access in India through a two pronged approach: 1) An Appropriate Technology (AT) study group with India's Sadhana Village NGO and United World College (UWC) and 2) The Safe and Sustainable Water Conference we are hosting in Mumbai, India.

SADHANA CLEAN WATER APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY STUDY GROUP:

[HTTP://WWW.WHITMANDIRECTACTION.ORG/STUDYGROUP/](http://www.whitmandirectaction.org/studygroup/)

The appropriate technology (AT) study group is an effort to better understand the complex socio-political obstacles surrounding the implementing of an AT project in rural communities. The inspiration for this study group comes from our research and first hand experience leading AT development projects with NGOs, both of which indicates the importance of taking a “whole systems” approach to technology implementation rather than focusing narrowly on technological obstacles and solutions. Our collaborating partners, Sadhana Village and UWC, share our experience and intend to use this study to help coordinate future AT programs. Together, we are conducting a case study of AT impediments in Kolwan Valley where Sadhana Village has 13 years of experience. We will carry out surveys, focus groups, and personal interviews to gather information about the multi-faceted socio-political systems encompassing and hindering the success of AT projects. Following the study, in March the UWC, Sadhana Village, and WDA will collaboratively evaluate and synthesize the study's information into a report designed to describe and assess our findings as well as provide recommendations for strategies which will eliminate obstacles. A detailed case study will then be compiled which Sadhana Village will be able to use while soliciting grants from organizations in order to fund an AT project grounded in the socio-political sensitivities of the region and community rather than continuing ineffective directives from government and large multinational NGOs that focus exclusively on technological solutions. The case study will also be available to other NGOs to use as a reference for better understanding similar dynamics. Furthermore, the study group provides Whitman College students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of what a change agent can be and also help them think more comprehensively about such complicated issues. The report will be presented at the Safe and Sustainable Water conference.



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THE SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE WATER CONFERENCE:

[HTTP://WWW.WHITMANDIRECTACTION.ORG/CLEANWATER/CONFERENCE/](http://www.whitmandirectaction.org/cleanwater/conference/)

The Safe and Sustainable Water Conference at the Nehru Conference Center in Mumbai, India is scheduled for March 19th, 2008 with the expected attendance of over fifty prominent NGOs, as well as government officials and lawyers. The conference will be a medium for NGO leaders, federal, state and local government officials, and community leaders dealing with clean water access issues to gather together in order to network, share knowledge, resources, and experiences via presentations, workshops, forums, and a water fair. The first part of the day will consist of a panel with four speakers from diverse backgrounds and extensive experience in water access problems. Keynote speakers include a member of parliament, prominent human rights lawyers, the chairman of the Maharashtra Water Resources Authority, and at least one academic speaker yet to be determined. The latter half of the day will be a continuation of networking and consist of multiple smaller forums and workshops. For example, presentations by NGOs concerning their experiences and challenges will be showcased. WDA will be collaborating with UWC and Sadhana Village to present the appropriate technology study group's findings, analysis, and recommendations. There will also be workshops targeted at the legal issues and challenges faced by NGOs addressing the problem of water access. Finally, WDA will publish a collaborative book with the NGOs detailing the multifaceted political, cultural, technological, and economic obstacles faced by each representative organization and then detail the multifaceted approach taken to overcome those obstacles. Because water solutions are never one-size-fits-all, we believe that providing a series of case studies is the best resource we can generate to provide organizations and communities with the tools needed to begin their own creative initiatives designed to address the specific circumstances of their representative region.

IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN

The logistics of the conference and study group are well underway. For the AT study group, we are already obtaining data and developing our surveys and focus group strategies with UWC and Sadhana Village, which puts us in a very good position for this coming spring. With regards to the conference, we have reserved the Science center, confirmed most of our keynote speakers, and researched NGOs and community leaders we plan to contact and invite come mid-December. From there it is a matter of small-scale logistics and financing.

SCWP's financial backing is our foremost concern at this point. Our project depends upon effective grassroots fundraising to ensure that the AT Study Group and the conference will be successes. With this in mind, we began working on a raffle scheduled for late January 2008 after the success of our silent auction on October 19th, 2007. The raffle depends upon advertising, collecting an array of attractive prizes through donations, organizing entertainment and food, and finding an appropriate venue at Whitman College campus. Our first step is to



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work with the fundraising team to determine all of our variables. Then we will need to analyze financial investment and budget for our raffle, identify different jobs, and divide responsibilities between members. Additionally, we will work on writing letters and visiting local businesses and organizations for the donation of auction items, research local bands interested in performing at our event, and contact possible food caterers. Furthermore, we are designing brochures, fliers and raffle tickets to help us advertise along with contacting local media. WDA hopes the raffle will gain as much community and campus support as our silent auction did.

Our other fundraising opportunities span the breadth from smaller events such as bake sales to large-scale endeavors such as grants and donations. Our immediate success depends upon a financial foundation which will allow us to initiate the Sadhana Clean Water Project and the Safe and Sustainable Water Conference.

WHITMAN DIRECT ACTION TEAM: [HTTP://WWW.WHITMANDIRECTACTION.ORG/STAFF/](http://www.whitmandirectaction.org/staff/)

Jessie Conrad (Fundraising team leader and finance coordinator)

Jessie is the fundraising team leader and is responsible for coordinating the team logistics and general delegation of responsibilities. For the raffle, she is in charge of contacting businesses, organizations and individuals for donations.

Jens-Erik Lund Snee (Public relations coordinator)

Jens-Erik is the public relations coordinator who works on advertising and publicity for events. He is in charge of creating and distributing fliers, brochures and posters for fundraising events.

John Loranger (Recruitment coordinator)

John is the recruitment coordinator and helps find volunteers for fundraising events. He is also coordinating our collaboration with the Center for Community Service at Whitman College. Furthermore, he is helping organize and recruit members for next year's WDA team.

Molly Knell (Logistics coordinator)

Molly is in charge of organizing the logistics for WDA events and particularly the raffle event in January.

Joseph Bornstein (Project Coordinator)

Joseph is responsible for coordinating WDA by organizing meetings and ensuring everyone is well informed. Furthermore, he is the appropriate technology study group coordinator.