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Peer reviewed

Review: *Rescue Mission Planet Earth: A Children's Edition of Agenda 21*

by United Nations

Reviewed by DeMond Shondell Miller

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United Nations. *Rescue Mission Planet Earth: A Children's Edition of Agenda 21*. London: Kingfisher Books, LKC, 1994. 96 pp. US\$14.95 hardback. ISBN: 1-85679-174-0; US \$9.95 paperback. ISBN 1-85697-175-9. Sustainable forests products, chlorine-free paper.

This is not another gloom and doom eco-disaster book. Rather, *Rescue Mission Planet Earth* presents children with the strategic plan set forth in the United Nations' Agenda 21 which "meet[s] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs." The book opens with a greeting by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a brief history of the Rio de Janeiro Summit, and a letter from the editors.

To communicate the language of the agenda, 28 young people from 21 countries assembled to edit the book, which is organized into four chapters containing 46 subject headings which correspond to the 40 chapters of Agenda 21. Each chapter clearly represents corresponding concepts detailed in Agenda 21, with excerpts from the United Nations document, quotes from children, commentary, and illustrations from children around the world.

Part I introduces the natural world and sources of environmental problems including ozone layer depletion, desertification, deforestation and clean water concerns. The chapter not only presents problems but also invites the reader to take an active role in environmental stewardship by becoming a global citizen.

Part II emphasizes the human world. To address issues in the human world, the editors selected problems that include waste, poverty, over-consumption and war. This chapter contains illustrations and photographs that provide a logical non-technical overview of the complex environmental problems that humans face.

Part III is titled *Making it Happen: Who's Going to do all This?* In this chapter, laws, regulatory policies and the roles of major stakeholders are

examined. This chapter further explores the current status of global trade, finances, and education and the impact of governments (both national and local) and social movements.

The focus of part IV centers on the role of children in shaping an action-oriented agenda that will give them a prominent role in protecting the environment. The goal of this chapter is summed up by the following quote: "You children of today are the hope for tomorrow." The Law on Child Rights, signed by 148 governments, gave children the right to participate in decisions that affect them. The book shows the effect on children by clearly illustrating the impact of a global political-economic structure that starts at the child's local school/community and extends to international organizations. Furthermore, the editors show how information is vital to protecting the global environment.

Rescue Mission Planet Earth is intended for children in primary school, but would be helpful for any age group. The book is an eclectic blend of multicultural perspectives on Agenda 21. Its multidisciplinary emphasis on natural and social systems provides an optimal learning experience by setting a globally interconnected framework.

Overall, the simplistic yet comprehensive overview of *Rescue Mission Planet Earth* is aimed directly at children, but could provide environmental educators with information and tips for incorporating ideas into their course plans. Moreover, it offers a wealth of information in the form of a glossary, index, listing of the Agenda 21 taskforce, an outline of Agenda 21 and contact information for the national and international Resource Mission.

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