Literacy for rural women in the Third World

Krystyna Chlebowska

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Unesco

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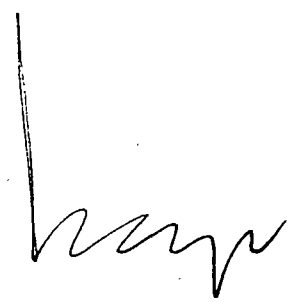
Preface

Today, more than 500 million illiterate women live in the rural regions of Third World countries. Although they play a vital role in agricultural production, children's education and the preservation of the community's cultural identity, they rarely have an opportunity to make their voices heard and are seldom able to exercise rights grudgingly accorded and often still unknown to them, including the right to education. This book is dedicated to these women.

Too often and for too long neglected by the public authorities and generally absent from official statistics, rural women constitute a powerful 'lever' for the development of their countries.

With the tenacity and patience so typical of them, they are engaged in an arduous daily struggle for the welfare—or even the very survival—of their families. Doubly deprived in their capacity as women and as women living in regions that are generally poor, they are confronted by a multiplicity of obligations which leave them little time and few resources for leisure pursuits and still less for educational activities. But the necessary time and resources will have to be found, because education will be the surest instrument to bring about an improvement in their difficult condition. That education must be firmly anchored in the everyday reality of their lives and culture, and must meet aspirations and needs that they have themselves expressed.

This book is being published on the occasion of International Literacy Year; it paves the way for practical action which will need to be both ambitious and sustained if it is to bring functional, participative and liberating literacy training within the grasp of all rural women of the Third World, and by so doing respond to the unanimous appeal from the participants in the World Conference on Education for All for priority to be given to the education of girls and women.



Federico Major
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Introduction

Teaching women to read and write was long considered by Third World countries as a marginal task compared to other development priorities. Literacy training understood and designed as a specific action, taking account of the special features and needs of women, is also a relatively recent phenomenon.

A heightened awareness of the problem in the international community, the wave of feminism of the last two decades and the growing interest taken by educated women in the Third World in their sisters in rural areas who are the most direct victims, were necessary before feminine illiteracy could be recognized as a genuine problem and its elimination perceived as vital both for the women directly concerned and for overall national development. The creation and recognition of government-sponsored or non-governmental women's associations and groups helped greatly to draw the attention of public opinion of both sexes to the need to ensure women the same access as men to basic knowledge, starting from reading, writing and counting.

With the passage of time, women of the Third World have managed to find their place in the national hierarchy of power, assume positions of responsibility and occupy decision-making posts, initially in the educational sector where they play the most active role. In an initial phase the accession of a woman to the office of minister, secretary of state, member of parliament or to

some other post in the government or policy sphere could have seemed to be an alibi to salve the conscience of the decision-makers. Then the token woman gradually became the right person in the right place, in certain cases indispensable. If this woman has the further advantage of solid roots in the reality of her country by reason of her origins or of a determination to understand that reality, she is in a position to really promote the cause of Third World women. Interestingly enough, in Africa most women who have 'succeeded' and hold key positions in the central institutions of their country originate from rural regions, from villages where from their earliest days they shared the lives of the local inhabitants. Since the African continent is predominantly rural, such intimate understanding of its realities is of great value in the fight to improve the condition of women.

The greater the number of women who accede to decision-making functions at every level, the better will be the prospect for the female population of acquiring and exercising rights—in particular the right to literacy. Thus a woman who holds an important post in the educational sphere will be particularly sensitive to the need for action to promote education for girls and women in her own country.

It was in the 1970s that the international community became aware of the need to redefine the role and status of women in development. From that time onwards there has been a growing receptiveness to women's demands; their potential contribution to production and the need to integrate them into the development process, not only as beneficiaries but also as active participants, was increasingly recognized. Education was to occupy a privileged position in this new approach to development. The principle of equality of the sexes in access to education for the whole population was its corollary.

Between 1970 and 1985, the number of children, including girls, attending primary schools in the developing countries grew sharply and the percentage of children attending school showed a significant increase, but the same progress was not made in the

sector of non-formal education including, in particular, basic literacy for women.

Projects and programmes to provide basic literacy for women are still exceptions and are all too seldom included in development plans because the decision-makers—almost always men—are reluctant to embark on a new path, fraught with difficulties and which may constitute a heavy burden on the national budget. Furthermore, strategies and methodologies for basic literacy for women are still in their infancy at both national and international level, and there are few examples of successful projects in this field, especially as the need to learn to read, write and count is not clearly perceived and sufficiently justified. It is not enough for women to understand that the acquisition of this knowledge is a right that they are entitled to exercise; they must be convinced that literacy constitutes a manifest advantage for themselves and their families, which will help them in a real way to live.

It is an arduous task to teach women to read and write; the obstacles could discourage both those responsible for arranging the teaching at every level and the women themselves. In the face of magnitude of the figures, which show that in 1985 the 965 million illiterate adults over the age of 15 throughout the world included 561 million women, 548.5 million of them in the developing countries, mainly rural dwellers, the international community is becoming more and more aware that this one of its own major tasks in the decades to come.

1. How is illiteracy defined?

Traditional dictionaries define an illiterate as a person who can neither read nor write. Unesco suggests that any person who 'can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life'[1] should be considered literate. A functionally literate person is one 'who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development'.[2]

The definition of literacy which takes account of the intrinsic link between the degree of knowledge possessed by an individual and his immediate environment is definitely more appropriate, especially for Third World countries. However, in the case of rural women, this definition must be refined in the light of the realities of their milieu and adapted to the specific aspirations and needs of the feminine population to acquire a degree of literacy. A literate rural woman might thus be defined as a person who possesses

1. Unesco, *Compendium of Statistics on Illiteracy / Compendium des statistiques relatives à l'analphabétisme / Compendio de estadísticas relativas al analfabetismo*, p. 8, Paris, Unesco, Office of Statistics, 1988. (Statistical Reports and Studies, 30.)
2. Ibid.

Women's literacy class in Beira (Mozambique)

sufficient knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic to guarantee an improvement in the quality of her own life and that of her family, and to facilitate her full participation in the development of the group and community.

Apart from more or less official or compulsory mass campaigns, experience shows that the acquisition of literacy in the narrow sense of simply learning to read and write does not mobilize women of the Third World unless it is accompanied by the acquisition of

further basic knowledge and skills genuinely adapted to their daily existence and needs. What counts above all for them is to be able to improve their own existence and that of their family and to better control their personal development, and hence that of their group and community. If literacy campaigns are not adapted to the requirements of everyday life or survival, women will be reluctant to participate, or will give up without staying the course.

It must not be forgotten that in the context of developing countries, and especially in the rural areas with a traditional economic and social organization where the individual is not permanently confronted with the written word, familiarity with the alphabet is not always an urgent need. Whole generations have grown up respecting oral traditions. That is why the acquisition of basic technical skills needed in the daily lives of women is possible without literacy, at least in an initial phase. For some rural women the sale of agricultural or craft products in the market is an important source of family income; they must have a knowledge of arithmetic which is sometimes even more important than reading or writing. The task of the persons responsible for dispensing training will therefore consist largely in responding to the aspirations and motivations of women, in adapting the methods and resources employed to those needs and in creating the necessary motivation if it does not already exist.

2. The figures speak for themselves

In 1985 women living in rural areas represented some 60 per cent of the world female population, as much as 70 per cent in the developing countries and two-fifths of the active population in the agricultural sector.

One woman in three today is illiterate and almost all these women live in third world countries.

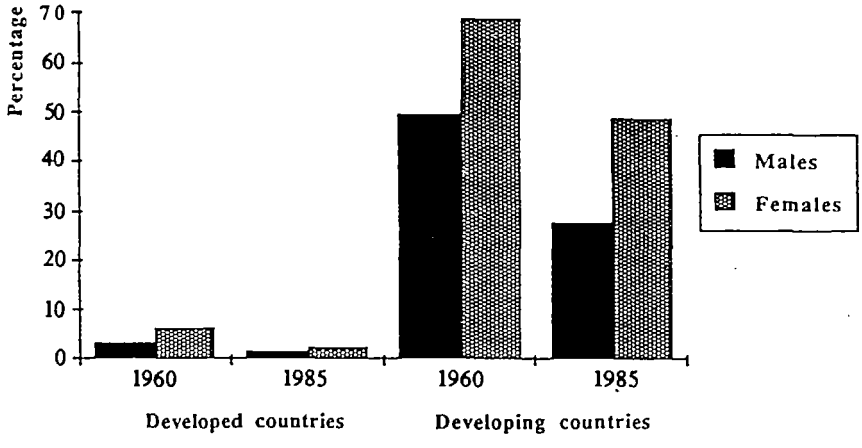


Fig. 1. Male and female illiteracy rates 1960–85.
Source: Unesco Office of Statistics

An analysis of the situation by region and by sub-region shows that the percentage rate of illiteracy among women over the age of 15 is 64.5 in Africa, 47.4 in Asia, 19.2 in Latin America and the

Caribbean, 10.2 in the Pacific (including 64.5 in Melanesia) and 70.4 in the Arab States. The least developed countries (LDCs) have a female illiteracy rate of 78.4 per cent.

Estimates of illiteracy, particularly as it affects women in the different countries, are hard to obtain and often lack reliability. It is even more difficult to define national illiteracy rates by geographical regions or by urban and rural population groups. The statistics obtained by Unesco on the basis of surveys and national census returns nevertheless clearly show that the percentage of illiterate women is systematically and substantially higher in rural areas than in towns in almost all countries of the world, including those in the Europe region.

Table 1. Percentage of illiterate women over 15 in rural and urban areas of selected countries from four regions of the world.*

Region/country	Year	Percentage of illiterate women	
		Urban areas	Rural areas
Africa			
Benin	1979	80.0	97.2
Togo	1981	60.1	89.0
Latin America and the Caribbean			
Brazil	1980	19.2	48.0
Dominican Republic	1981	21.6	42.4
Ecuador	1982	8.0	33.1
Asia			
China	1982	26.4	53.2
India	1981	48.1	82.4
Nepal	1981	67.0	92.4
Pakistan	1981	65.3	92.7
Sri Lanka	1981	8.9	20.5
Europe			
Greece	1981	10.0	25.6
Spain	1981	9.3	12.2
Yugoslavia	1981	7.5	23.9

* The relevant statistics for the Arab States and Pacific countries which exist and are available to Unesco are not recent enough to be included here.

In Africa, twenty-eight of the fifty-five countries listed in the *Compendium of Statistics on Illiteracy*[1] published in 1988 by Unesco have a percentage of illiterate women in excess of 90. Of the forty-five Asian countries covered by the compendium, this percentage is reached in seventeen.

Looking at illiteracy by age group, it is clear that the rate increases with age among both men and women. Practically all rural women over 45 are illiterate. This fact has particular implications in the Third World, where grandmothers and great-aunts play an inestimable role in the education of young children as guardians of the oral tradition; yet educators and literacy trainers seldom address their attention to that group of women.

Allowing for the fact, first, that a period of at least two years is needed to teach a group of twenty to thirty women to read and write and to make sure by post-literacy work that their knowledge is a lasting acquisition, and, secondly, that the approximate cost of this operation is $100 per person, to find the necessary time and financial resources to teach the 550 million illiterate women in the Third World to read and write is a truly titanic undertaking.

To this must be added the fact that 60 per cent of the 135 million children aged 6 to 11 who had no access to primary schooling in 1985 were girls. Tomorrow, they in turn will swell the ranks of illiterate women.

1. Unesco, *Compendium of Statistics on Illiteracy / Compendium des statistiques relatives à l'analphabétisme / Compendio de estadísticas relativas al analfabetismo*, op. cit.

3. Portrait of a rural woman

During a meeting organized by Unesco in Zimbabwe in July 1989 on the subject of access for rural women to education, a professor specializing in adult education at Harare University painted the following typical portrait of a rural woman in his country: (a) a coloured person; (b) surrounded by young children; (c) repeatedly pregnant; (d) carrying jars of water from the river or well; (e) carrying a baby on her back and a pile of faggots or branches on her head; (f) speaking a vernacular language, but not the official language; (g) unable to read or write; (h) knowing very little about modern life and progress; (i) possessing little or no money to cover her family's basic needs; (j) enjoying only limited access to social and medical services; (k) with a husband employed on a marginal job in the town and putting in only rare appearances at home; or (l) with a husband who spends his time drinking beer in the village.

This striking portrait of a rural woman in Zimbabwe seen through the eyes of a man might equally well be that of rural women in most countries of the Third World. But the portrait is only partial; the reality is even more dramatic. To complete the picture, rural women live under conditions of poverty which is often abject, work relentlessly to serve their children and husband, and represent at the same time a vital source of labour for the traditional agricultural sector of which they are a pillar.

The Cochabamba market (Bolivia)

Division of labour

In rural areas, the condition and status of women who remain heavily dependent on men, and the power relationships established between the sexes to the detriment of women, have not kept up with socio-economic trends and progress in general. The norms and values currently valid in rural societies admittedly tend to change slowly, in particular those which govern the condition of women. It is true too that the institutions whose task it is to promote rural development have not always encouraged such changes. Sometimes they have even helped to maintain or strengthen the status quo. The agricultural extension workers

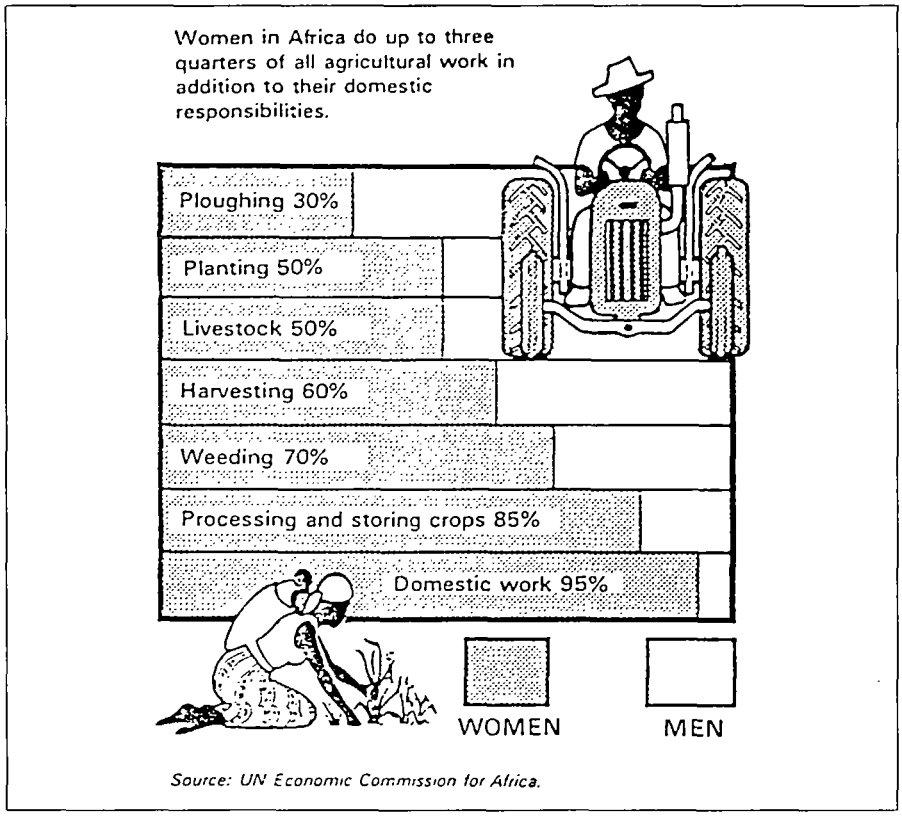


Fig. 2. Division of labour
Reprinted in Joint United Nations/Non-Governmental Organization Group on Women and Development, *Women and the World Economic Crisis*, p. 22, Geneva, United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, 1989. (Women and Development Kit No. 6.)

who disseminate information and dispense training to rural communities are generally men who pass on their knowledge to other men recognized as heads of household. The persons responsible for socially oriented actions are for the most part women who work with women, but primarily in the domestic sector. In this way, the division of roles between the sexes is perpetuated, and the dichotomy between 'man the producer' and 'woman in the home' is accentuated, though in reality rural women assume functions going well beyond the role of housewife which the decision-makers attempt to foist upon them.

Production

Among the many different roles that rural women play as mothers, wives and members of the community, their role in agricultural production merits especial attention. Statistics compiled by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the role of women in agriculture show that in 1985 they represented 42.3 per cent of the economically active population of Africa, 11.9 per cent in Latin America, 46 per cent in Asia and 37.7 per cent in the developing countries overall.

It must, however, be recognized that these figures do not fully reflect the true picture and that there is sometimes a wide difference between the official statistics and reality. More detailed studies have shown much higher percentages of women engaged in productive activities, and they have proved that in many developing countries women account for over half of all food production (between 60 and 80 per cent in Africa for example). Some economists maintain that greater attention to the role of women in agricultural production and help with the major problems which they encounter would be the surest means of finding a solution to Africa's food problems.

The primary reason for these different assessments of the productive role of women must be sought in the inappropriate definition of the notion of work and workers used for census purposes. Domestic activities of women, rearing small animals, craft and agricultural occupations, as well as the processing of food products, are not treated as work. Since the product of such work is traditionally intended for family consumption, it is viewed simply as a supplement to the family income and consequently declared as the result of the unremunerated activities of women in the household. Work by women in the rural environment is thus treated on the same footing as the performance of domestic tasks which are not recognized as activities on census forms. If the work performed by women in the home were correctly reflected in official statistics and calculated as the equivalent of remunerated

Local soap making at Gapé (Togo)

services, it would represent half the gross national product (GNP) of a good many countries.

Work performed by women in the rural environment is not only not recognized as productive, but is also tending to be limited by modernization of the countryside. Whereas the phenomenon of the migration of men to the towns is intensifying, the participation and role of women in agricultural production and the modernization of production techniques are reducing the number of paid jobs for women in this sector and leading to their exclusion from activities which were traditionally reserved for them in the past. With the development of battery poultry farming for example, poultry-rearing, traditionally a female occupation, is less and less the responsibility of women.

In the process of rural development, women play a different role from men. Unless this difference is taken into account in development planning, the success of any development may well be jeopardized. Agrarian reforms from which men have derived more benefit than have women are one example. If the problem of poverty and exploitation with which they are confronted is not to be accentuated, recognition of the work performed by rural women and a redefinition by the governments of their role in the development process are vital.

The flight of the male rural population to the towns makes it necessary for women to remain economically active to ensure the survival of their families (unless the funds remitted by their husband suffice, which is rarely the case). In this situation, women are greatly tempted by the idea of possessing their own source of income and so create small family undertakings (weaving, soap-making, sewing, pottery, market gardening, processing and preservation of food products, etc.). This temptation unfortunately founders on the difficulties which they experience in obtaining ownership of land and access to borrowing facilities.

Land

Despite the importance of the responsibilities assumed by women in the family and in the production process, legislation on the family is the sector in which changes promoting the rights of women are the slowest to occur, while discrimination against them is maintained: some of the most flagrant examples of discrimination concern ownership and management of the land that they cultivate.

Access of women to land ownership depends largely on the position of the family to which they belong in the surrounding socio-economic structure, and on the relationships of authority and subordination within that family. The division of labour and

responsibilities between the sexes in households and the title of 'head of household' generally attributed to men under most legislations make it practically impossible for women to obtain the ownership of land.

Development policies certainly do not make adequate provision for the access of women to land ownership. Agrarian reforms and community development programmes often pass over this problem in silence; in many cases they have aggravated the situation, depriving women of their traditional rights to land ownership or use.

In Latin America, the changes that have occurred in the past two decades in the distribution of earnings have brought about a phenomenon of significant impoverishment of rural areas and a reduction in the population economically active in agriculture (from 50 to 30 per cent between 1950 and 1980). Intensive urban development has reduced the size of the rural workforce and changed habits and family structures; it has also led to an increase in the workload of women in the family unit.

With one or two exceptions, agrarian reforms in Latin America have not taken account of women as direct beneficiaries. The reason for this 'omission' is that, from the judicial angle, only a head of household who is recognized as such is entitled to enjoy the benefits of the reform. The fluctuating contribution of rural women to agricultural production and the 'macho' resistance to treating women landworkers on a par with men (in addition to their role as wife, mother and housewife) have also prevented women from playing a direct part in agrarian reform.

In Africa, reforms have had a whole range of consequences for women, particularly in respect of land ownership. In some countries, the law provides for women to be granted the same right of access to the land as men. However, despite current legislation, African women certainly do not enjoy the full benefit of this right. Attitudes, customs and traditions also prevent them from doing so. Ignorance of the reforms and of their mechanisms tends to maintain this state of affairs. The quasi-general illiteracy of rural women is a further factor.

Sahel countryside (Chad)

In Asia, land remains the most important productive resource of the rural areas, but the shortage of arable land and population pressure are growing. Faced with this shortage, women represent one of the most vulnerable categories of the population in social and economic terms. Their formal and real rights of land ownership and agricultural employment depend on civil codes, history, customs and religious precepts. In practice, the exercise of these rights is generally discriminatory for the benefit of men. Designed by men and intended for men, rural development programmes are generally unfavourable to women in their concept and implementation. When agrarian reforms take effect, the ownership deeds are registered in the name of the male heads of household, taking no account of the important contribution made by women to the economic survival of the family, the number of households managed by women or even the customary rights

which they used to enjoy. In cases where agrarian reformers sought to improve the situation of women in relation to titles of ownership and the right to dispose of the benefits of production, values, traditional practices and patriarchal structures prevented them from fully benefiting from these measures by perpetuating a situation of subordination and excluding them from the decision-making process. That is why women abandon agriculture whenever they find a different means of earning their living and they too swell the flood of people leaving the land.

Fuel

Given the essential role played by women in the use of fuel for food processing and heating, the deterioration of the environment and the incipient energy crisis in the countryside hits them particularly hard. Traditionally, women have gleaned branches and wood on communal land and wasteland. As a result of the over-exploitation of pastures, the advance of the desert, population pressure and privatization (which also limits the availability of land), fuel is becoming scarcer and women are finding it increasingly hard to gather enough from a continually diminishing available area. The items which they find there, such as wood and branches, forage, various kinds of food, fibre materials and clay, are also essential elements for their craft activities or for the small family industries managed and operated by women.

Water

Water is the key to health and hygiene in rural areas. Most sicknesses and parasitic infections, so prevalent in Third World countries, are directly or indirectly associated with the consumption or shortage of water. However, the countryside is the

Irrigation canal at Tillabéry (Niger)

area which is the least well provided with adequate quantities of running and drinking water.

Rural women are in permanent contact with water. Obtaining water supplies and using water have been their traditional tasks. They are responsible for preparing food, cleaning, washing and fetching water. Since water is often scarce and its source remote from the home, women have to walk long distances to fetch their supplies. Carrying heavy containers of water on their head and shoulders is a scene which gives peasant women the bearing of queens—but in reality it is an arduous task and detrimental to their health, especially as, in addition to their burden of water, they are likely to carry a child on their back and another child in their womb.

Shortage of drinking water effects family health and creates an additional burden for women, who must devote more time to fetching water supplies. Water also directly influences income derived from gardening or raising poultry and small animals.

Despite all this, the multiplicity of tasks involving water performed by women are not appreciated at their true value. The public authorities care little about granting, maintaining or strengthening the right of women to use water. They are also hardly ever consulted on the location of new water supply installations and rarely invited to attend meetings to prepare community projects to improve water supplies.

Credit

Land ownership is a security needed by peasants to obtain loans. Rural women rarely own land and so experience difficulty in obtaining loans which are vital if they are to acquire the resources necessary to start an enterprise to generate additional earnings.

Not only do women not own land, they are also handicapped by their ignorance of the basic rules of banking systems, the market and marketing channels. To benefit fully from loan facilities, they need a minimum of information on finance, business, management and accounting and above all the ability, which most of them do not possess, to read and write.

There have been some experiments conducted with loan facilties for women in rural areas. Thanks to collective action and effort as well as to the assistance of organizations, associations and specialized banks, they have sometimes managed to become sufficiently organized to collect together the initial funds needed to obtain loans. That is the case with the Grameen Bank project[1]

1. International Seminar on Women and Development: Programmes and Projects, Vienna, 1989, *Women in Development at IFAD; Grameen Bank Project in the People's Republic of Bangladesh: Phase II and III.* May 1989. (Doc. IS/WRD/1989/CS.26.)

in Bangladesh, where a system of loans for the poorest members of the population has been successfully implemented. Rural women accounted for 86 per cent of the 490,363 members of 501 operational branches in 10,552 villages in 1988. The same applies to the action by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which is providing village women in Swaziland with the resources needed to create small local and family-run industries.

In some countries, women are becoming organized to establish their own system of collective savings, like the 'tontine' scheme in Niger. Each month, all the contributions from a group of ten women are handed over to one of them to enable her to effect an important purchase. This system operates by rotation and enables each member of the group to benefit from collective savings.

Co-operatives

Co-operatives and agrarian reforms are among the most effective contributory factors to rural development. By multiplying economic and social activities, facilitating the sale of products, ensuring balanced prices, bringing producers into contact with consumers, strengthening the craft trades, organizing health, education, nutrition and child care services, the co-operatives represent a means for rural women to improve their living standards and conditions.

Women have been associated with the co-operative movement for over a century. To begin with, the egalitarian objectives and non-discriminatory principles of the co-operatives did not *a priori* and explicitly exclude women. However, in reality they were relegated into the background. This disadvantageous situation continues: women are still always in a minority in co-operatives and their contribution to management of these co-operatives is limited to a minimum.

Statistical data on the degree of involvement of women in co-

operatives are scarce, but the available data confirm—with a few exceptions—a very marked disparity in favour of men. Even when women constitute the majority of members of established co-operatives, the decision-making power remains the prerogative of men. In addition, women are often not admitted because they do not own land. This situation is highly damaging to women because co-operatives offer economic and social benefits such as employment, income, credits and commercial outlets which remain closed to them. Unable to participate in co-operatives, women then organize themselves into informal self-help groups or create their own structures, enabling them to reconcile their productive activities with their role in the family.

In most countries, self-help among rural women is a tradition. In some African civilizations and in the pre-Columbian era in Latin America for example, groups of women organized on principles of solidarity formed an integral part of community life and reflected a specifically feminine cultural identity. These traditional collective patterns of feminine life and work have helped women to become better adapted to the new forms of co-operative groupings.

One factor which makes it harder for rural women to participate in co-operatives is their lack of training in the procedures and principles that govern the functioning of such organizations. Their resulting ignorance of the basic rules of administration, management and marketing is a serious handicap, further aggravated by that of illiteracy.

The flight from the land

The migration of men who leave the countryside and their families for a week, a season or years at a time and only return home for short periods before going back to the town, is an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in the rural environment. Generally, men go off alone, so their wives have to take charge of the smallholding,

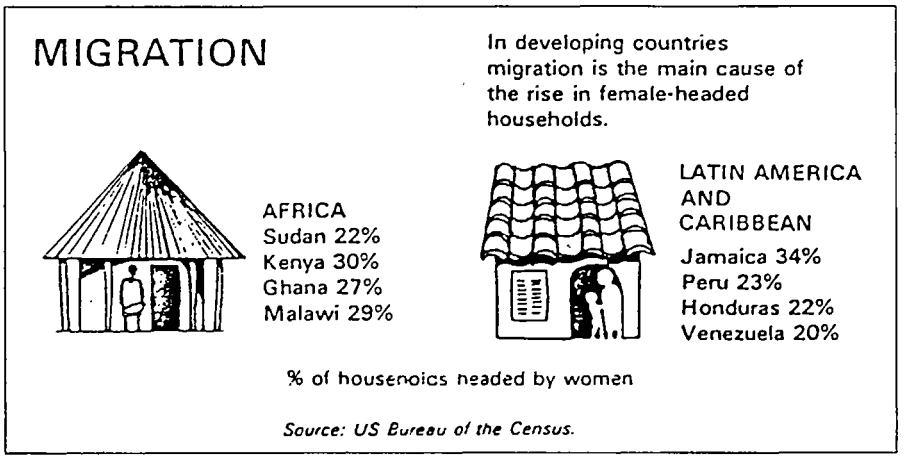


Fig. 3. Migration.
Reprinted in *Women and the World Economic Crisis*, op. cit., p. 25.

cultivate the land, and look after the children and aged relatives. The rural woman is like a latter-day Penelope, waiting incessantly for her man to return and assuming the heavy responsibilities of a head of household. The number of households throughout the world headed by women, or in which women act as heads of family, is some 35 per cent today.

The migration of men to the towns for economic reasons results in the first place in an increase in the proportion of women in rural areas. Over and above their habitual occupations, they have to assume the traditional activities of men. When this accumulation of tasks involves the participation of other members of the family, they become dependent on brothers, on the father or on the husband's family and lose their autonomy. To save the money remitted to them by the husband, they are often obliged to look for additional sources of income and take jobs as farm workers. For some women, however, the absence of the man is the first step towards the development of an awareness of their own value and personal potential—the discovery of those facets of life from which they have hitherto been excluded. They come to realize, for example, that they, too, are able to work with tools and use various

kinds of equipment, and that they can manage their households on their own and react correctly when confronted with difficult situations.

Unesco has analysed the repercussions and consequences of male migration on the traditional patriarchal family and studied the new functions and role of the woman as head of household. A study entitled *Women in the Villages, Men in the Towns*[1] published in 1984 showed that the migration of men may affect women in different ways.

A few examples

In the absence of the man, the responsibilities connected with the household continue to fall on the wife, sometimes assisted by a mother-in-law, older children, members of the family or neighbours.

One of the close relatives of the migrant takes over the responsibilities of the absent male and the woman is kept in her subordinate position.

Major family decisions are taken by correspondence by the migrant husband or else during his home visits.

Although the woman suffers from her solitude, she is resigned to it, realizing that the absence of her husband is an important source of income.

The husband visits his family whereas the wife rarely goes to see him in town.

Despite the additional source of income represented by the husband's work in town, the family continues to live in penury.

Traditional family ties may be strengthened because of the absence of the husband and father, or on the contrary these relationships may become more strained.

1. *Women in the Villages, Men in the Towns*, Paris, Unesco, 1984. (Women in a World Perspective.)

The absence of the father has a negative impact on the process of socialization of the children.

The additional income provided by the man enables technologies to be introduced which facilitate household tasks and enable women to save time.

The additional workload created by the absence of the husband leaves the wife little time for social relations, leisure activities, training and participation in the affairs of the community.

Another Unesco study on the same subject entitled *Women as Heads of Households in the Caribbean: Family Structure and Feminine Status*[1] concludes that poverty is the major problem for women heads of household and that they are all confronted with the same difficulties, the most critical being the lack of sufficient resources to meet their family's needs.

Prostitution

Prostitution is directly linked to the phenomenon of the flight from the land. Women who are obliged to leave their villages to work in towns where they hope to make an easier living often find themselves on the streets. These women, most of them young, have neither the education nor the qualifications needed to engage in a legal activity in the towns. To survive and take care of their relatives back home in the village, and for whom they are responsible, they resort to prostitution.

Women who remain in the country and suffer the consequences of the migration of men to the towns find themselves confronted on their own with everyday problems. The economic

1. Joycelin Massiah, *Women as Heads of Households in the Caribbean: Family Structure and Feminine Status*, Paris, Unesco, 1983. (Women in a World Perspective.)

Peasant woman in the capital (Bolivia)

crisis and food shortages have further aggravated their situation. To supplement the meagre resources which they derive from agriculture and other lucrative work, to eke out some kind of a living for themselves and for their families, to finance the education of their brothers and sisters or children, to obtain the right to cultivate a plot of land or retain their own land, these women too are sometimes obliged to prostitute themselves. Women who are divorced or abandoned by their husbands may also resort to prostitution to meet the needs of the children for whom they are responsible. Sometimes whole rural families live on the earnings which one of the daughters derives from prostitution.

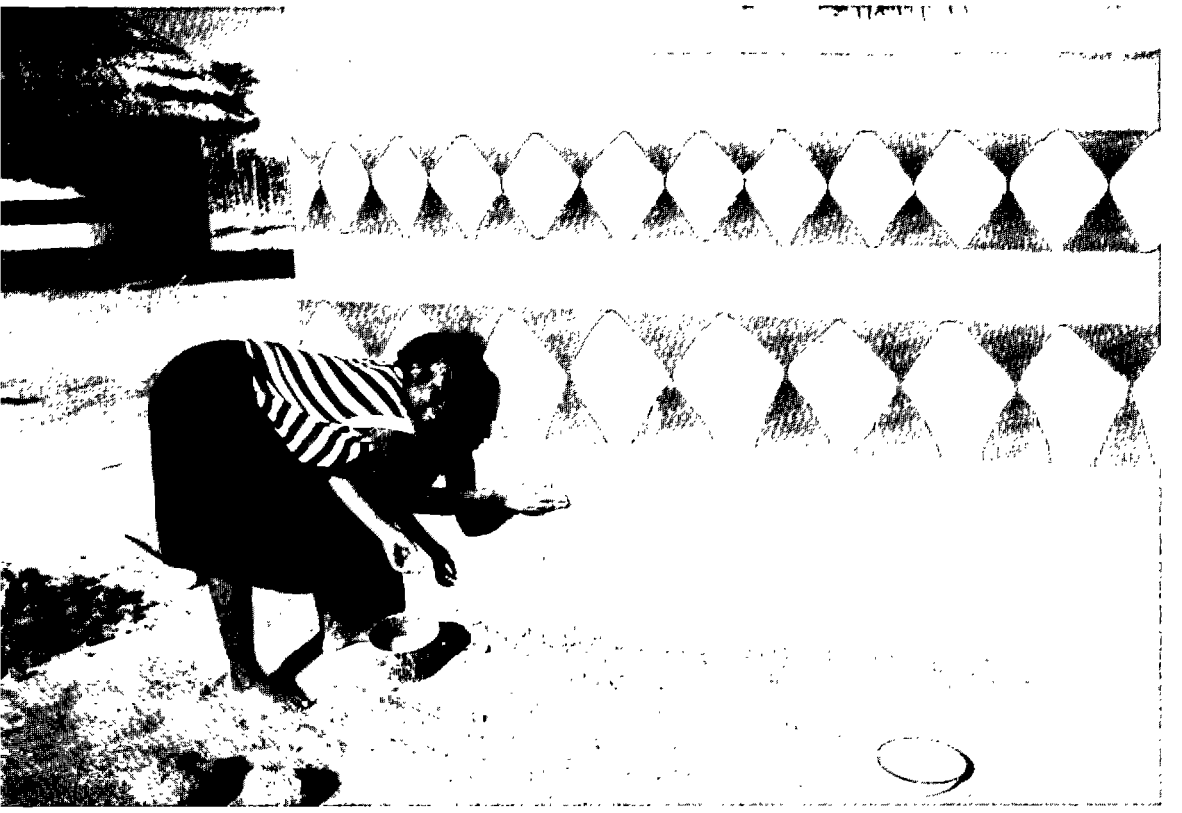
By intensifying the flight from the land and further marginalizing the rural population, the economic crisis which is affecting most Third World countries will increasingly oblige women to practise such illicit activities.

Shelter

The woman is the main user of living space. For her, the house is much more than just a place to live and rest, than a secure home for her family.

First and foremost, it is her place of work. In the house, women perform their main domestic tasks and look after their children. For many of them, it is also a work place at which additional earnings are generated.

That being so, the quality of the living environment is of particular importance. In most developing countries, however, the conditions of accommodation of the rural population are highly precarious. Their dwellings afford little protection against heat, cold, wind and rain. They are difficult to enter in an upright posture and the interiors are too dark for children to do their homework. The main and often only room may be constantly filled with smoke from the cooking fires. Domestic animals often share



Sanyati villager decorating her house (Zimbabwe)

this room with the family. The living space may be so restricted for the numerous children that the minimum of 3.5 m^2 per person recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) in emergency cases seems like an unattainable luxury. There are generally no sanitary facilities, and the hygiene of such facilities as do exist is catastrophic, especially as there is often a water shortage.

Although official statistics overlook this fact, women clearly make a substantial contribution to building activities. In many African countries, women build, decorate and maintain their own huts. In Kenya, for example, the first task of the young wife is to procure building materials, bring them to her new family and

construct a dwelling there with the help of the other women. Year in year out, it is once again the woman who repairs the walls by coating them with plaster and renewing the decorative paintwork; it is she too who repairs the floor of the hut. It would therefore be quite wrong to believe that the construction of a dwelling is solely a matter for men, even if the official statistics do not record the building activities of women and treat them as unpaid work: the work performed by a housewife. Similarly, the dwelling is considered to belong to the man and not to the woman, who is traditionally treated as a household chattel.

Malnutrition

Despite their close involvement with the land and agricultural production, rural women are not necessarily better fed—quite the contrary. They are less well nourished than men, as is proved by recent studies of the distribution of food within the family.

The same applies to girls who suffer much more seriously from malnutrition than do boys. Studies in Bangladesh have for example shown that boys under the age of 5 receive 10 per cent more food than girls, who consequently suffer more severely from the effects of famine.

In the poorest populations, infant mortality is higher among girls than boys. Realizing that security in their old age will depend on the economic situation of their sons, parents tend to reserve better food for boys. Pregnant women and nursing mothers are also badly fed. When food becomes scarce, as is the case immediately before the harvest, pregnant women do not have the extra food that they need and thus do not gain enough weight during their pregnancy. Their baby is weaker at birth and its chances of survival and normal growth are worse.

Rural women have two main obligations which entail the expenditure of a great deal of energy: production (agricultural work, family obligations, carrying water and fuel etc.) and

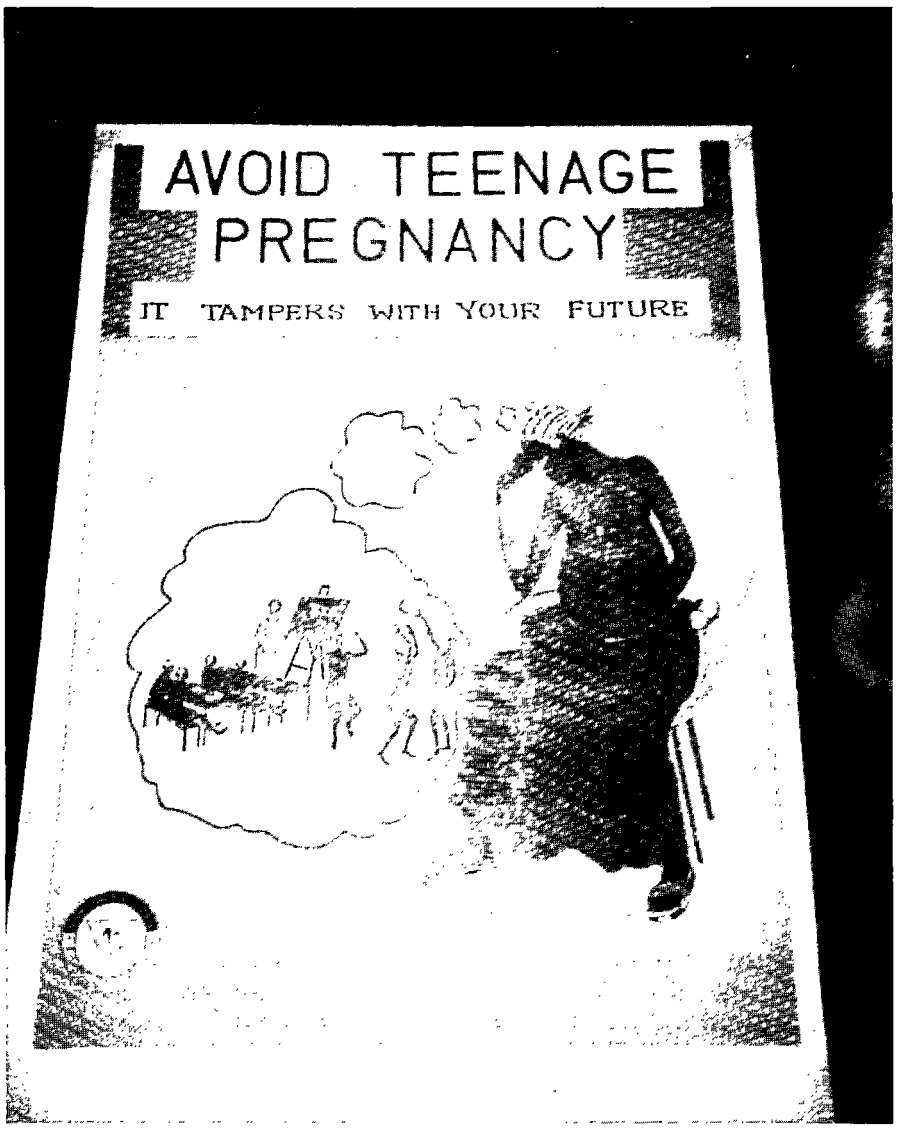
reproduction. To perform these two functions they should at least enjoy a correct diet, but that is generally not the case. 'As long as the nutrition of girls is placed second to that of boys, and as long as women eat last and least and work hardest and longest, pregnancy will remain a greater-than-natural risk.'[1]

In the developing countries, anaemia is very widespread among rural women of child-bearing age. It is a serious problem in particular for women who have had a succession of pregnancies at short intervals. The nutritional state has an impact on the likelihood of a woman giving birth normally, having a child of normal weight and being able to breast-feed without damaging her own health. Close on two-thirds of pregnant rural women and half those who are not pregnant are anaemic. This high incidence is all the more disturbing in view of these women's heavy workload both at home and in the fields.

Health and maternity

In societies where the mother-in-law and the grandparents help the household, the wife is dependent on traditional medical practices. These practices are often beneficial, but they may also have adverse effects on the health of women, children and the family in general. Being illiterate, a woman is not able to follow the advice given by the health services, especially as she is governed by the wishes and decisions of her husband. For a woman, to practise family planning or participate in projects to improve nutrition or health is sometimes tantamount to violating cultural taboos and ancestral customs. Instead of going to the nearest medical centre, she will prefer to consult a traditional practitioner. Like her mother, grandmother and ancestors in her

1. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *The State of the World's Children, 1989*, p. 40, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.



Billboard (Gambia)

tribe, she will continue to believe that leprosy is caused by a spell and not by a germ, and that she can protect herself against pregnancy by stepping over certain bushes.

In most rural societies, breast-feeding is generally practised for a long period. In Africa, mothers breast-feed their babies for 18

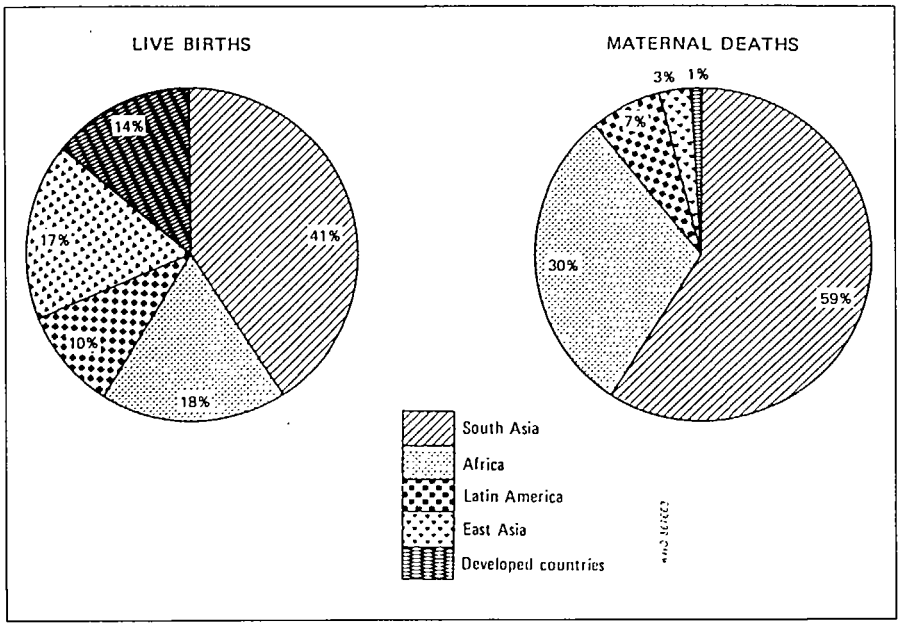


Fig. 4. Live births and maternal deaths, 1987–88
Source: World Health Organization, *Safe Motherhood; An Information Kit,* Geneva. (WHO 861663.)

months and sometimes up to the age of 2 years or more. Since the baby is in permanent physical contact with the mother, it will take milk up to ten times each day.

Although the age of marriage and the first pregnancy is rising, in many countries of the third world over 50 per cent of the first births occur to women below the age of 19. Childbirth may be fatal to a woman who has not yet reached the age of maturity. The death rate in childbirth of women aged under 19 is often three times higher than of women between the ages of 20 and 24.

The highest number of deaths of women of child-bearing age occur in the rural population. In countries where the problem is particularly acute, the rate of maternal deaths may be 50 to 200 times higher than the lowest rates in the industrialized countries. As the cause of these deaths is not always specified, the scale of the phenomenon is inadequately reflected in the statistics.

An African woman has a 1 in 14 prospect of dying from the consequences of childbirth. In Asia, the corresponding figure is 1:18, as against 1:4,000 or even 1:7,000 in the industrialized countries. According to the United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) annual report on the situation of children in the world in 1989, excessively frequent births at close intervals by mothers, who are either too young or too old, are the cause of close on 25 per cent of all deaths of mothers and children throughout the world. Each year nearly 500,000 mothers die from causes associated with pregnancy and childbirth; these deaths could be avoided.

Female circumcision—a practice which dates back to the remote past—is attributable to religious and cultural factors. The resulting mutilations are the direct cause of serious health problems, particularly when the operation is practised in its more radical form which leads to infection, haemorrhages and psychological shock. Further difficulties are encountered at the beginning of the woman's sexual life and during childbirth.

AIDS

WHO estimates that in 1988 some 1.5 million women were infected by the Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) virus. Although a majority of these women live in towns, the rural areas are now increasingly affected, especially in Africa, the Caribbean and some parts of Latin America. AIDS which had, until recently, been considered an urban phenomenon is now also becoming a scourge in the rural world.

The contagion stems mainly from the towns and more precisely from the members of rural families who have left to look for work and who, knowing themselves to be sero-positive, return to their villages where they are looked after by women. Women who, all too often, lack information on the problem are more vulnerable and consequently run a greater risk of contracting the disease. As the phenomenon of contagion of women by the AIDS

virus spreads, the risks of perinatal transmission also increase, as does the rate of infant mortality which is already disproportionately high in the rural world. WHO and UNICEF stress that breast-feeding is not a major vector for the transmission of AIDS and strongly recommend this practice even in regions where AIDS is endemic. The advantages for the infant of breast-feeding far outweigh the minor risk of contracting AIDS through breast milk.[1]

By the year 2000 the double burden of work already assumed by rural women in their capacity as wives and mothers, and as agricultural producers, will be made still heavier by responsibility for members of the family who are infected with AIDS.

The additional resources which women receive from their husbands working in towns will, if the husband is infected, decline or cease altogether if he becomes unemployed for the same reason. The economic situation of women will then deteriorate still further.

Rural women who are undernourished, anaemic and too often pregnant will be particularly exposed to the disease, all the more so as the conditions of hygiene in the medical centres, infirmaries and mother-and-child protection centres in the rural areas are generally deplorable. Health service personnel are ill-equipped and find it hard to respect the basic rules of hygiene, such as the sterilization of syringes which are generally in extremely short supply in village dispensaries. WHO and UNICEF have nevertheless reached the conclusion that the risk of propagation of AIDS infection during vaccination sessions for children is low, even where the methods of sterilization are unsatisfactory.[2]

Although the phenomenon is less prevalent in the countryside than in the towns, under some circumstances rural women resort to prostitution and take drugs, so that they are automatically

1. United Nations Children's Fund, op. cit., p. 70.
2. Ibid.

Mother and child care centre at Banibangou (Niger)

exposed to the risk of contagion. The risk of contamination is heightened by the traditional practices of sexual mutilation of women and the customary ceremonies of child initiation.

Family planning

According to UNICEF, over one-third of the 140 million women who were pregnant in 1988 did not in fact want more children. Some 200,000 of them died while trying to terminate a pregnancy, often by resorting to illicit abortion techniques.

Again according to UNICEF, less frequent births would enable the lives of some 3 million children to be saved annually. However, while in some developing countries, 30 to 40 per cent of women of child-bearing age do use family-planning methods, in others the proportion is only 5 to 7 per cent. WHO maintains that if women throughout the world were able to have only the number of children they say they actually want, the gross birth rate would be in the region of 16 to 28 per 1,000, instead of 28 to 40 per 1,000 as at present. There is a manifest contradiction between the explicit desire of women to practise family planning and their reluctance to do so or lack of knowledge on the subject. This reluctance is explained primarily by cultural attitudes and social factors. In some countries, the number of children enhances the prestige of the wife in the eyes of her husband and of the community. A woman who does not give birth to at least four or five children is seen as an anomaly and risks being marginalized. A rural woman will generally have many more children, first, to enjoy a better status in the community and, second, to protect her existence in old age. She will have a distinct preference for boys. The desire and need to have a son will result in heightened fertility and in a succession of births at short intervals.

Structural adjustment

Although in industrialized countries the last decade has been one of prosperity, the economy of the developing countries has declined constantly. The resulting crisis has dramatically increased the debt levels of these countries and the impoverishment of their populations.

The solution proposed to the problem of the economic crisis and external debt has been a 'structural adjustment' applied in the countries concerned on their own initiative or negotiated with international financing agencies. The purpose of that adjustment is to align the national economy and aspirations on international requirements by cutting their deficits or replacing them by a balance-of-trade surplus. The implementation of policies of adjustment has necessitated the imposition of economic austerity whose repercussions are cruelly felt by the poorest members of the population and especially by women.

The measures advocated to bring about a structural adjustment are supposed to be applied equally to both sexes. However, the inequalities that already existed before the adoption of these measures make women more vulnerable and more seriously affected by the crisis and subsequent adjustments than men. The policy of economic adjustment is thus threatening to perpetuate existing inequalities and to make them even worse. The heaviest burden of the repercussions of the crisis, of debt levels and structural adjustments rests on the poorest women—those who earn, possess and control the least.

The consequences of structural adjustment in rural areas differ somewhat from those in the towns. The higher prices which peasants have to pay for imported products are compensated by the increase in the price of agricultural products. However, rural women generally have little revenue. Most of them are not paid at all. For them, any price increase entails a corresponding increase in the number of hours necessarily devoted to productive work, but does not automatically imply higher earnings. Quite

obviously, aid granted by many governments to the agricultural production sector as a means of finding substitutes for imports has benefited the big farmers rather than smallholders—and peasant women naturally belong to the latter category.

Financial assistance provided by migrant husbands or other members of the family living in towns constitutes a substantial proportion of the income of rural families. Since structural adjustment results in widespread unemployment and a reduction in earnings, it may have a serious impact on the meagre budget available to women to cover their domestic needs. Moreover, the rise in the price of essential foodstuffs makes it harder to buy products which are essential for the well-being of the household and so aggravates malnutrition. This phenomenon particularly affects women who need a balanced diet, especially during pregnancy. Export-oriented structural adjustment has also tended to further devalue the work of women in traditional areas such as subsistence farming and has accentuated their marginalization in the process of economic development.

The new price equilibrium imposed by the process of structural adjustment compels peasant farmers to abandon their traditional agricultural crops for other more profitable produce. It is not always easy for women to adapt to changes that are not necessarily compatible with their family role and responsibilities. Also, the increase in agricultural production requires a further effort and a greater expenditure of time on the part of women. The extra time they have to devote to production means that they spend less time than normal with their children. These new obligations thus have an adverse influence on the family, in particular on the health and nutrition of children and on their schooling (especially that of girls and children of the poorest parents). There will thus also be increases in infant mortality and in the number of high risk pregnancies, and a reduction in the level of education with a corresponding rise in the illiteracy rate.

From 1979 to 1983, per capita educational expenditure fell constantly in almost 60 per cent of the countries of Latin America.

The same applies to health expenditure in half these countries. In 47 per cent of the African countries, health budgets have fallen, while educational expenditure has diminished in 33 per cent. In Asia, the reduction of health and education budgets is affecting one-third of all the countries. In the societies which privilege boys, limitations on access to education or health facilities affect girls more seriously. A United Nations study[1] of a sample of seventeen countries[2] shows that the implementation of structural adjustment policies has led to a significant deterioration in the ratio of girls to boys at every level of education—and more particularly in secondary schooling. The imposition of school charges, as is frequently the case in countries undergoing structural adjustment, is a hard blow to poor rural families and compels parents to withdraw their children from school—beginning of course with girls. In some countries education costs are so high that schools have had to close; this has had further adverse repercussions on access for girls to education, especially in the rural areas.

1. United Nations, *1989 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, p. 31, New York, United Nations, 1989. (ST/CSDHA/6; Sales No.: E.89.IV.2.)
2. Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Sudan, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania, and Yugoslavia.

4. Why teach rural women literacy?

In a village in the remote countryside of Niger, women sitting in the sparse shade of a tree are engaged in a lively discussion, calling out to each other in their vernacular Zarma language while each of them chews at a wooden toothpick. The reason for this animated palaver accompanied by expansive gestures, shaking of the head, bursts of laughter or anger, is that goats, sheep, cattle and camels are finding their way into the women's collective garden and destroying their crops.

This garden, which the women belonging to the Association of Women of Niger are cultivating jointly in their own village, has been assigned to them by the local council. After lengthy clearance work, the land was divided into plots and shared out equitably among the twenty women belonging to the group. In the few leisure moments which their many family, domestic and agricultural obligations leave them, they each cultivate a small plot of land, using rudimentary tools and implements, and trying to follow the technical advice given to them by a young woman who is their agricultural adviser.

The proximity of the canals laid out to irrigate the rice paddies, from which the region derives its wealth, enables fine vegetables to be grown here, tomatoes, onions, lettuces, cabbages, beans and even melons for consumption by the family or for sale in the market. Unfortunately, the garden is not fenced in and badly guarded

A meeting of the Association of Women of Niger, Tillabéry branch (Niger)

animals or cattle allowed to roam freely cause serious damage. Hedges of branches or dried bushes cannot be built to protect the land as this kind of fencing is forbidden for ecological reasons. Wire fencing or barbed wire is out of reach—its exorbitant cost far exceeds the community's meagre financial resources.

Somewhat taken aback by the ardour of these women engaged in their animated debate, I finally decided to bring the discussion round to the subject of my visit which I was undertaking as part of a Unesco mission. I ventured cautiously to question them on the possible organization of literacy courses. The answer was more than evasive and the problem of the fence was brought up again even more vigorously; they suggested that Unesco might perhaps

help them to acquire a fence, because a fence costs a great deal of money as does the payment of a watchman and, they continued, it is hard to keep goats on a lead. . . . In brief, the primary concern of these women was to protect their garden at all costs. Literacy was not an issue for them.[1]

Situations of this kind, frequently encountered in the field, immediately lead on to the question as to whether literacy is a priority, and if so to what extent?

Illiteracy among rural women must of course be fought relentlessly. The need for such action is all the more imperious as the Third World is essentially rural; women represent over 50 per cent of the rural population and a majority of them are illiterate.

How does this message come across at the local or individual level? How do rural women perceive and react to the apparently self-evident message that learning to read and write is a way of leading a better life?

Adult women who were unable to go to school have a second opportunity of acquiring knowledge by learning to read and write. No one can deny that literacy is a factor of personal enrichment and at the very least a right to which everybody must have access.

All this is correct and true. But when it comes to illiteracy and rural women, these underlying facts may be overridden by the question, both simple and difficult, put by the women concerned: 'Why should we bother to learn to read, write and count when our mothers, grandmothers and ancestors never did so and were none the worse for that?' This is a difficult question to which a reply must be found if the great fight against illiteracy is to be more than an empty slogan, and International Literacy Year more than a mere celebration.

1. Krystyna Chlebowska, 'Un temps pour apprendre', 1989. (Unpublished MS.)

Although rural women constitute the least privileged and most numerous sector of the population, research, investigations and studies on literacy training for adult women are few and far between. Reference documents on the subject are also scarce. This is all the more regrettable in the case of rural women as the increasingly varied practical experiments in teaching women to read and write could by now permit an initial analysis of the problem.

Two conclusions valid for every country and region of the world can nevertheless be drawn in the light of existing experience of literacy training for rural women. First of all, attempting to impose literacy, to make it compulsory or obligatory, even if inspired by good intentions, rarely brings long-term results. Second, literacy in the narrow sense of the term, understood as an end in itself and not guaranteeing the acquisition of basic knowledge and technical skills enabling fundamental needs to be satisfied and the quality of life improved, is also doomed to failure.

Two philosophical options emerge in their turn from this experience: the 'feminist' vision of the problem which places the emphasis on the 'liberating' role of literacy training as an instrument of greater well-being for women, the first step towards justice, better control over their own existence and fuller and more equitable participation in the life of society with greater freedom from economic exploitation and patriarchal oppression; and the practical, 'functional' approach which advocates literacy training as an instrument for a better life or—more immediately—for the very survival of women and their families.

It is difficult to make a definitive choice in favour of either approach, which often complement one another even though the second seems closer to the current demands and needs of rural women. Literacy training should contribute to higher earnings and improve the living conditions of rural women by helping them to escape from poverty, marginalization and inferiority. It should also make for enhanced personal well-being, greater confidence and self-respect, an awareness of their own value as women and

of their creative abilities, while at the same time bringing about a realization that the limitations imposed upon them are not immutable.

Rural women do not reject literacy training *a priori*. When they do show willingness to benefit from such action, they invoke specific reasons which always have a direct bearing on their everyday life: to participate in group activities with other women, share experiences, discuss common problems, help each other and spend a pleasant time together; to care better for their children and their health; to be less dependent on others; to be able to sign their name, write a letter and manage their accounts; to understand doctor's prescriptions and labels on pharmaceutical products; to read holy texts and prayers; to avoid being swindled in the market or in shops; to improve the productivity of their garden, plot of land or field; and to be able to express their ideas and experiences in writing.

In more general terms, literacy training will be more readily accepted if it enables women to improve the living conditions of their family, that is, health and nutrition, and increase productivity and earnings; assure better conditions for their children; and gain an understanding of new technologies, and easier access to co-operatives and their management, as well as to credit.

Wide-ranging research has confirmed the negative impact of illiteracy on almost all aspects of health. The inability to read and write prevents women from following medical prescriptions and understanding information on health, even where such information is oral; it may result in the incorrect use of pharmaceutical preparations. Illiterate people are more prone to adopt a lifestyle that harms their health. They do not always know where to go to obtain the medical aid that they need. As they are too embarrassed to ask, they neglect preventive measures and do not consult the health services until it is too late.

Studies have proved that the health of children depends in no small measure on the level of education of their mothers. The

The Tillakaina market (Niger)

implementation of programmes to protect children is easier when the mother is capable of reading the medical instructions which may save her child's life. A literate woman is better placed to face critical situations caused for example by diarrhoea, one of the six main causes of infant mortality in the Third World. A child's life may depend on the mother's ability to prepare an oral rehydration solution in the proportions indicated on the medication's label.

Literate mothers are more likely to break with custom and traditional practices which have negative repercussions on health. They are less fatalistic about illness and more aware of modern medical treatment, thus increasing their own chance of survival and that of the members of their family. Women who have

acquired a certain degree of education are more likely to abandon the practice of breast-feeding their children for excessively long periods. They are also better prepared to claim access to health services. They will be more at ease in their contacts with a doctor or nurse than illiterate women who view access to medical care as a favour and not as a right. They will have less difficulty in dealing with bureaucracy and the petty administrative requirements imposed by public health services.

There is also a correlation between education and the rate of infant mortality which may fall considerably when the mother knows how to read and write. In Pakistan and Indonesia, for example, it has been found that the rate of infant mortality drops by up to 50 per cent when mothers have four years of primary schooling. One study in Bangladesh goes so far as to conclude that the mother's education may have a greater impact on the survival of her children than the health of the family and medicinal preparations.

Literate mothers generally have fewer children than their illiterate counterparts. In Brazil, for example, an illiterate woman has an average of 6.5 children, while a woman with a secondary education will only have 2.5. In Liberia, women who have reached the level of secondary education are ten times more likely to use contraceptive techniques than are those who have never gone to school. A study in Latin America has shown that education resulted in a decline in the birth rate from 60 to 40 per cent in the last decade.

Education also influences the age at which women marry and has a positive impact on the reduction in the number of precocious marriages.

An educated woman will be more likely to change the traditional family relationships and to break the imbalance that places her at a disadvantage and makes her the victim of discrimination. As the main educator of her children, she will have a different attitude to relations with them and in particular to her daughters to whom she will give more attention. She will be more

receptive to their needs and better disposed to allowing them to attend school, recognizing more readily the importance of education for their future. Through literacy training programmes linked with civic education, she will also acquire a greater degree of awareness of her rights and take steps to defend them, thus enhancing her personal status and her economic and political role in society.

The motivation of women to take part in literacy training is directly linked to the growing phenomenon of the flight from the land to the towns. Women who are left alone to face their new responsibilities as heads of household feel an increasing need to be better prepared and equipped to perform this new role. They lack the knowledge of agriculture necessary to successfully engage in the productive work for which they are now responsible. They would also like to be able to read the letters from their husbands and to write back without an intermediary.

If literacy results in a higher income, it will enable women to increase agricultural productivity and the profit therefrom thus improving the general well-being of their families. To this end, they will be to better understand and use new technologies adapted to their needs and possibilities. They will have easier access to credit facilities and co-operatives, and will be able to play a part in their management.

Literacy training for women may trigger a dynamic process which will have multiplying effects that are interdependent and self-reinforcing. For example, literacy influences the rhythm of childbirth and the resulting longer intervals between pregnancies have a positive impact on the health of mother and child alike; children's better health improves their attendance at school. Educational success contributes in the longer term to higher agricultural productivity which means higher family earnings which, in their turn, will be beneficial to the nutrition and health of its members. And so it goes on.

5. What kind of literacy?

We are poor, very poor
but we are not stupid.
That is why, despite our illiteracy, we
still exist.
But we have to know
why we should become literate.

We joined the literacy classes before,
but after some time, we got wise.
We felt cheated. So we left the classes. . . .
What they taught us was useless.
To sign one's name means nothing.
Or to read a few words means nothing.

We agree to join the classes
if you teach us how not to depend
on others any more.

We should be able to read simple books,
keep our accounts, write a letter and
read and understand newspapers. . . .
Why do our teachers feel so superior?
They behave as if we are ignorant fools,
as if we are little children.

Adult education class in the Seti zone (Nepal)

Please do understand that
the teacher may know things
which we don't.
But we know a lot of things
which are beyond him. . . .

We have enough troubles and sufferings.
Why should we add to them by
joining literacy classes?
We don't get a square meal.
We have few clothes.
We don't have a proper shelter.

And, to top it all, floods come
and wash away everything.
Then comes a long spell of drought
drying up everything.
Would it help if we become literate? . . .

Literacy should help us live better.
Would it help us know
how to raise our yield, and increase
our income?
And from there could we borrow money
on easy terms, and what benefits
would we get from the co-operatives? . . .

We are weak and are ill very often.
They say that there are laws to protect
and benefit us.
Would literacy help us know these laws? . . .[1]

This soul-searching prose poem illustrates the personal experience of Asian women and reflects well the daily reality confronting all illiterate women in the Third World, providing a concrete example to set against the concepts commonly encountered in international literature on literacy and development. For rural women, literacy will only have a real meaning if it can give a satisfactory answer to these vital questions and to all the other questions put by women in their search for a better life. Without this, literacy programmes will fail and women will leave classes, never to return.

1. Taken from a poem published in: Margaret Gayfer (ed.), *Literacy in the Industrialized Countries; A Focus on Practice*, pp. 18-19, Toronto, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), 1987. (*Convergence; International Journal of Adult Education* (Toronto, ICAE), Vol. 20, No. 3-4, 1987.)

Education and teaching literacy in particular are rightly described as pillars of development. However, the nature and purpose of that development need to be defined. Flagrant disparities and discriminatory structures which separate the rich and the poor, urban and rural areas, and men and women, generate or heighten conflicts and injustices and make inhibitions still more pronounced. Any campaign against illiteracy, especially for the benefit of rural women, must address itself to all the aspects of the problem, allowing in particular for such essential factors as poverty and inequalities.

One of the originalities of the approach to literacy training by the Brazilian educationist, Paolo Freire, has consisted precisely in establishing a link between education and poverty. In the educational process, he emphasizes the importance of the development of awareness and advocates literacy training as a tool in the struggle against oppression which stimulates personal initiative and leads to the liberation of the individual concerned. In this new 'militant' educational approach where teaching reading and writing is intrinsically bound up with a critical vision of the world, literacy training represents an act of resistance and of social and political emancipation.

If it is important to listen to individuals in the process of literacy training by giving them the right to speak and think correctly, women must necessarily receive an equal share of attention. However, in his new pedagogic approach, Paolo Freire pays little heed to the specific problem of the oppression of women and prefers to approach the development of awareness primarily from the angle of an analysis of facts and classes and not of sexes. A more attentive examination of the condition of women would, however, permit a readjustment of the major principles to take account of this reality. A feminine view of pedagogy is particularly valid in providing literacy training for rural women in whose case everyday problems of life and survival make theories and training practices which disregard their real situation irrelevant.

Rural women have specific needs and aspirations. They also

have their own experience of life and their own way of acquiring knowledge. Consequently, they have specific needs as pupils.

Peasant women have a body of knowledge which enables them to interpret nature, plants, trees, the sky, the sun, clouds and rain. They are capable of managing their household with scant resources and of feeding their family day in day out, however poor they may be. They respect the rhythm of the seasons, rites and rituals. They talk to the spirits, they know how to appease the living and pacify the dead, and they have possessed this knowledge for centuries. It is hardly surprising that, strengthened by this body of ancestral knowledge which they enrich and hand on from generation to generation, peasant women want a literacy training that takes account of this science of life, they want to see it reflected in the programmes proposed to them. But non-formal educational programmes are generally designed without regard to the specificity of rural women. When their special characteristics are taken into account, the subjects mainly covered are linked with their domestic duties—cooking, sewing or embroidery, in short domestic education. Few programmes reflect the characteristic duality of rural women who are at one and the same time producers and reproducers. The stereotypes reflected in the most common educational texts represent them as individuals destined essentially to serve others and confined to the closed world of the family circle in an inescapable, natural role of providing efficient and free services to the man, the head of the household. Non-formal education programmes that do take account of the daily life of rural women fail, more often than not, to mention their activities outside the home, activities which generate products and income.

Most of the criticisms of literacy training formulated by women relate specifically to the content of the tuitional material in which they find at best a partial reflection of their own reality. The only picture of them that may emerge from this material is distorted and essentially reflects their functions as a mother, wife or housewife, that is, dealing with their domestic chores while

Wę́shkę se' tö nį̀mą̀ ktèkę.

Nį̀mą̀ diö̀ dör chkö̀ buà.

Ye' gmì tö ù diö̀ mè̀kę ye' a.

Illustration by Luis A. Vásquez M., in *Stsawö we* , p. 26, San José, Costa Rica, Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1986. (Reading and writing manual for the Bribri language.)

disregarding their role as producers. Little attention is paid to their rights and to their place in the development of the community and society.

Since the needs of women are generally identified by men, it is hardly surprising that they do not figure prominently in the tuitional material, and when they do appear it is only under the conventional portrait of a housewife. Why not give women the possibility of defining their own needs for themselves, of conveying their personal experience and expressing their particular vision of the world and their own values?

Training programmes in which women could explore their own experience of daily life in a shared perspective so as to derive pedagogic benefit and personal enrichment would pave the way for a truly participative form of literacy training capable of transforming the existence of the women who take part.

However, this approach requires a detailed analysis of the social, economic, cultural and political conditions under which rural women live. It is important, for example, to realize that women will not become better mothers simply by acquiring knowledge of how to protect their children, etc. To achieve effective results, account must also be taken of the social context in which this learning takes place. What is the point of a woman learning the basic elements of healthy nutrition and knowing what changes to make to the nutritional habits of her family if it is ultimately the husband who decides?

The recognition of literacy training as a right and not as an additional chore is also a prerequisite for its success. Literacy training classes should be an opportunity for women to meet, to get to know each other better, to speak and to express themselves.

Lack of motivation, like lack of time, is a serious obstacle to literacy training for women. The need and desire to read, write and count are not automatically manifested in the everyday life of women. Basic initiation to agriculture, health and nutrition necessary in their daily fight for survival can very well be achieved without the aid of the written word. A number of community

Women's literacy class at Legbassito (Togo)

development projects have proved this. The need and desire for literacy often must be created. Consequently functionality can no longer be treated as a mere component of literacy training, as one of the elements in the learning process, but must be seen as a point of departure. For example, the traditional African midwives may well be illiterate, but their services are nevertheless in great demand in every village, especially if there are no mother-and-child protection centres or village maternity clinics. When such centres do exist, they gladly call upon the services of these midwives on a paying basis, provided that the midwives themselves accept adequate training and adaptation. In that context, it is difficult for the midwives to remain illiterate since

they have to keep the accounts, a list of pharmaceutical products and the attendance register. Functional need here creates an interest in learning and a real desire to learn.

Literacy training, understood and accepted as an integral part of a process which will enable the vital needs of the beneficiaries to be satisfied, presupposes an inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach to the design of the projects and programmes for literacy training directed at rural women. Agriculture, the environment, ecology, health, food, nutrition, hygiene, family planning, domestic economy, protection of children, management of co-operatives and technology should all be given a prominent position in such projects. This new approach implies closer co-operation between all the agencies, services, institutions and organizations concerned, together with the fullest possible use of all available human resources in the areas involved.

The training of intermediate-level educators and rural female supervisors assumes particular importance in this context. The services of female polyvalent rural educators, for example, who define, promote and co-ordinate the various activities of interest to rural women, including training and literacy training, meet a need which is felt today by the female population and is increasingly advocated by associations of women and governments.

A more thorough reflection on the different types of literacy training for rural women is necessary. The real issue is not strictly speaking the need for specifically masculine or feminine literacy training or pedagogy. Nor can there be any question of adhering to rigid principles, such as that of mixed education at all costs. The organization of mixed literacy training classes should not be dependent on a preconceived view, but above all on the particular environment and on the wishes expressed by men and women who must decide for themselves whether or not they want to learn to read, write and count together. The main factors which should determine the membership of the learning group are stability and

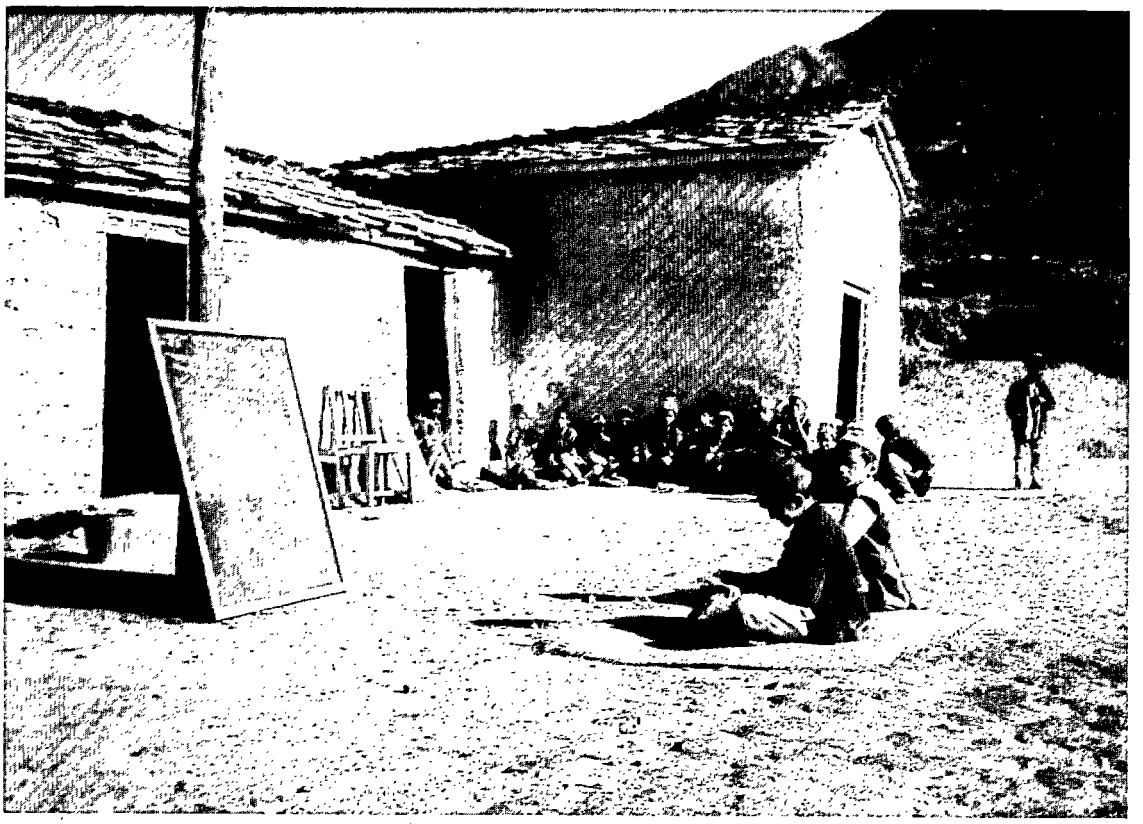
the effectiveness of the results. On the other hand, in both traditional or functional literacy training, whether the inductive 'awareness-creating', 'auto-informative' or some other approach is adopted, the rural woman must always be portrayed if that is not already the case and time set aside to deal with her own wishes, interests and true problems.

6. Schooling

Should you happen to be looking for the school, do not expect to find it in the village, that's not the way. Leaving such dwelling-places far behind, you will have to go to a deserted spot where you will see it perched high on a mountain top. Arriving at the summit, breathless, your heart beating fast after climbing for hours and crossing precarious bridges which made you tremble, standing out against a grandiose background of the Himalayas you will find a charming little adobe school with a magnificent local slate roof.

In the school courtyard, sitting on the ground in a semi-circle around a blackboard . . . the children will greet you, wide-eyed in astonishment at the rare sight of a foreigner. Slates on their knees, the pupils listen with respect and apprehension as their schoolmaster teaches them to recite texts learned by heart, barely related to the daily round of family and village life. Or you will find them seated on rush mats in a tiny clay classroom; when they see you they will rise hastily and chorus the friendly greeting 'namaste', whilst placing their hands together as if in prayer in the traditional gesture of welcome. . . . In the classroom, in a corner, alone among the boys, a little girl with a white cotton scarf on her head, ever so tiny in a flowered dress, looks at you timidly. . . .[1]

1. Adapted by Krystyna Chlebowska from her work *The Cheli Beti Story*, pp. 2–3, Paris, Unesco, 1987. (Notes and Comments . . ., No. 177.)



Rural school in the Bajhang district (Nepal)

Girls and primary schooling

Long experience gained by international organizations involved in the fight against illiteracy throughout the world and marked both by successes and failures, has shown that a two-pronged approach makes for greater efficacity: that of literacy training for adults and appropriate schooling for children, since, paradoxically enough, the school may be the institution which—directly or indirectly—generates illiteracy.

In the past two decades, primary education underwent extensive development throughout the world, but today it is manifestly on the decline. In the developing countries, some 130

Pupils in the village of Kasai (Gambia)

million children of school age did not attend school in 1985, including over 80 million girls, the large majority of whom came from poor families in rural regions.

Insufficient numbers attending school, drop-out and absenteeism are phenomena which characterize the education of girls. It has been proved that distance from the school is one of the main obstacles to school attendance. In rural areas where transport facilities are limited, parents hesitate to send their daughters to a school which is too remote from their village or home. When means of transport do exist, they are rarely free. Parents who are too poor must either abandon schooling for their children or make a choice, and unfortunately that choice is almost

Primary school in Cotopaxi (Ecuator)

always made to the detriment of girls who stay at home.

A recent study by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Egypt has shown that the percentage of school attendance was 94 per cent for boys and 72 per cent for girls when the school was 1 kilometre away, but fell to 90 and 64 per cent respectively when the distance from the school was 2 kilometres.

As to school drop-out, particularly frequent among girls, engagement, marriage and precocious motherhood at school age are among the main causes in the rural environment.

With the exception of Latin America, the percentage of girl pupils in primary schools in most developing countries is lower

than that of boys. In Africa in 1987 the rate of enrolment of boys aged 6 to 11 was 69 per cent and that of girls only 56.5 per cent for the same age-group. In Asia the disparities are even greater: 77.4 per cent for boys and 59.3 per cent for girls.[1]

Not only do fewer girls than boys attend schools, but when they do go to school they experience difficulties which their male counterparts do not encounter. In mixed schools, the schoolmasters often do not adopt the same attitude to girls and boys. Girls are relegated to the back of the classroom and often ignored by the teacher, who rarely puts questions to them; he is convinced that they are less gifted and less able. Girls are in a minority in the class; confronted with boys who enjoy the favour of a schoolmaster with sometimes pronounced misogynist tendencies, they have great difficulty in asserting their presence.

The progression of schooling differs according to sex, especially in the rural areas. Although insufficient data are available for a completely satisfactory analysis of this problem, it is nevertheless clear that the decline in numbers is often very important between the first and second years of primary education and that, apart from some countries of Latin America, drop-out, which may attain alarming proportions, is more evident among girls than boys.

The under-attendance of girls at schools in countries of the Third World is attributable to the condition of rural women, who are generally poor, and to the devaluation of their role in the family, the community and society. Parents do not see attendance of their daughters at school as a necessity, whereas it is for boys who in turn will later themselves become heads of household. Sending a girl to school is rarely perceived as essential, especially when there are household chores she could be performing which,

1. Marlaine E. Lockheed and Adriaan Verspoor, *Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries: A Review of Policy Options*, pp. 167–8, Washington, D.C., World Bank, 1989.

In a village in Nepal [Photo: UNICEF]

in the eyes of parents and especially of the mother, are more important than education.

To help her mother who is overwhelmed with work in a household that is often too numerous, the girl stays at home and prepares or helps to prepare meals and takes care of little brothers and sisters while her mother is out in the fields. She goes after water, pounds millet, and fetches and carries dry wood to cook the meals. Little girls may also have to help their mothers in agricultural production or in craft activities.

The constraints

The path of girls to education is hampered by many obstacles which prevent them from going to school at all or interfere with their school attendance. The difficulties which they encounter vary from one country, continent and culture to another, but always gravitate around the two poles constituted by the home and the school, if they are not already inherent in the workings of the institutions and of society at large. An impression of the scale of the problem can be gained from a review, which needs no commentary, of some of the reasons invoked throughout the world for inadequate attendance of girls at educational establishments, many of which are cited by the girls directly confronted with the problem.

In the home: poor conditions for doing homework; mothers who are tired or ill leave their daughter to do the housework; a succession of births at short intervals; little girls have so much housework to do that they are too tired to go to school; their parents do not encourage them to learn; parents are too poor to send their children to school and fail to understand the importance of the education of their daughters; parents consider education to be incompatible with feminine qualities and values; they do not accept mixed classes; girls do not have time to do their homework; their parents are themselves illiterate; mothers want above all to teach their daughters to become model wives; illnesses are prolonged through lack of medical care and services; school costs are too high for the parents of large families who prefer to send boys to school instead of girls; the cost of school textbooks, meals and uniforms is excessive; parents derive benefit from the customary marriage of their daughter at an early age; and girls have to guard animals in the fields and protect the crops against birds and predatory animals.

In the local community: the education of girls is treated as a matter for the family and community; religious leaders are opposed to schooling for girls; attendance at religious ceremonies,

marriages and other celebrations is compulsory; and there is a fear that the girl may be better educated than her future husband.

Travel to school: the school is too far from the home; the classes finish too late for girls' safety; there are no means of transport or they are too expensive; and the family is afraid that the little girl may suffer sexual aggression going to and from school.

In the school itself: the schoolmasters lack qualifications; communication between the master and parents, especially mothers, is inadequate; there are no boarding houses for girls; and the school timetable and syllabus cannot be easily adapted to the seasonal calendar and the specific tasks of girls.

In the classroom: the schoolmaster is a man; he takes no interest in girls during his classes; his language is too coarse; parents are frightened of sexual misconduct by the teacher; and boys tend not to talk to girls.

Educational policy-making: not enough schools in general; few schools for girls and no secondary school in the vicinity to continue studies; difficulty in guaranteeing suitable working conditions for female schoolteachers in remote rural areas; lack or unsuitability of school equipment; and lack of employment prospects and models for girls.

Mental attitudes: lack of interest in school among the girls themselves who are waiting to get married as soon as possible; lack of self-confidence in girls; existence of cultural inequalities and barriers between men and women; fear among parents and men that the daughter may be better educated than the future husband; poor understanding or misinterpretation of certain religious precepts; and the idea that girls are by nature less capable of learning than boys.

Statutory provisions: the principle of compulsory education is not enshrined in the legislation of the country or remains a dead letter; there are no specific provisions for the education of girls and for educational equality of the sexes; and fees are charged for primary education.

Stereotypes

The text and illustrations in school books convey stereotypes prejudicial to the image of girls and so tend to perpetuate various forms of sex-based discrimination. Although insufficient data are available to prove the impact of these stereotypes on the school results of girls, it is certain that, as vectors for the transmission of sexist norms, values and ideologies, they do have quite a significant adverse influence on the development of attitudes and behaviour patterns. School textbooks are a vital instrument of education and a tool in the service of progress and change; it is therefore unacceptable for girls to be portrayed so often as passive, self-effacing and excessively emotional, while boys are shown as aggressive, combative and insensitive. Stories about males only, examples of exclusively male heroism and scenes in which girls are engaged in purely 'feminine' tasks, do nothing to foster among schoolgirls a feeling of esteem and confidence in their own abilities and a conviction that they can do as well as boys. On the contrary, they tend to reinforce in young people of both sexes the widely held view of the superiority of man and the inferiority of woman—'the strong sex' and 'the weaker sex'.

The discrimination against girls in school textbooks is evidenced in various ways: they are mentioned less often than boys and their presence is less apparent in the texts and illustrations; they are described as obedient, devoted and quiet, clumsy, weak, nice, dependent and sometimes frivolous, thus fostering the myth of the woman as an object. They like flowers, poetry and animals, and are sympathetic and tender, whereas boys are rebellious, talkative, active, strong, aggressive, brave and intelligent. In the home they spend their time washing, cooking and looking after children while the men are resting.

A study covering Peru[1] lists the sexist illustrations and texts

1. See: Andrée Michel, *Down with Stereotypes! Eliminating Sexism from Children's Literature and School Textbooks*, p. 29, Paris, Unesco, 1986.

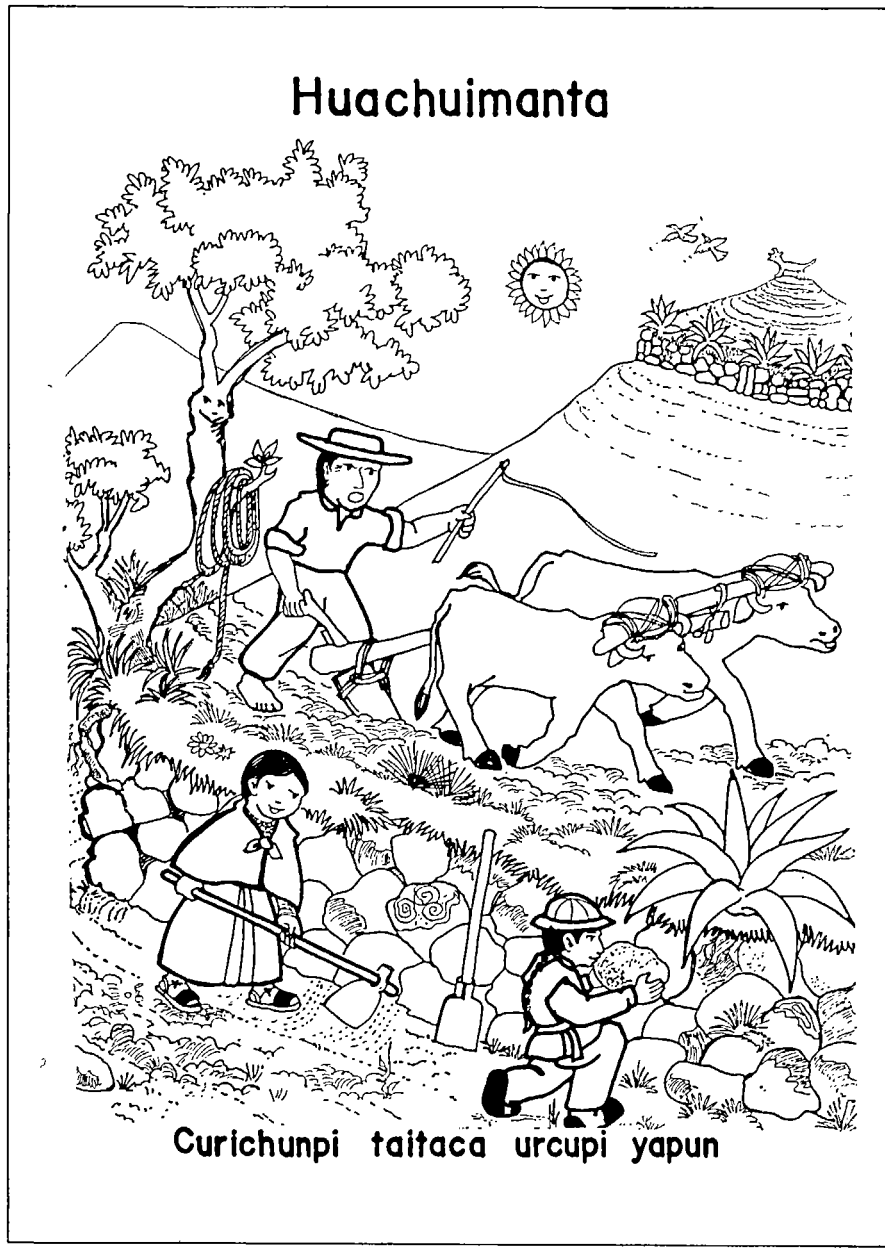


Illustration by Humberto Cachiguango Lema, in *Mashi Achic,* 1st trial ed., p. 23, Quito, Ecuador, Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1987. (First year reader, Proyecto de Educación Bilingüe Intercultural, Convenio Ecuatoriano-Alemán.)

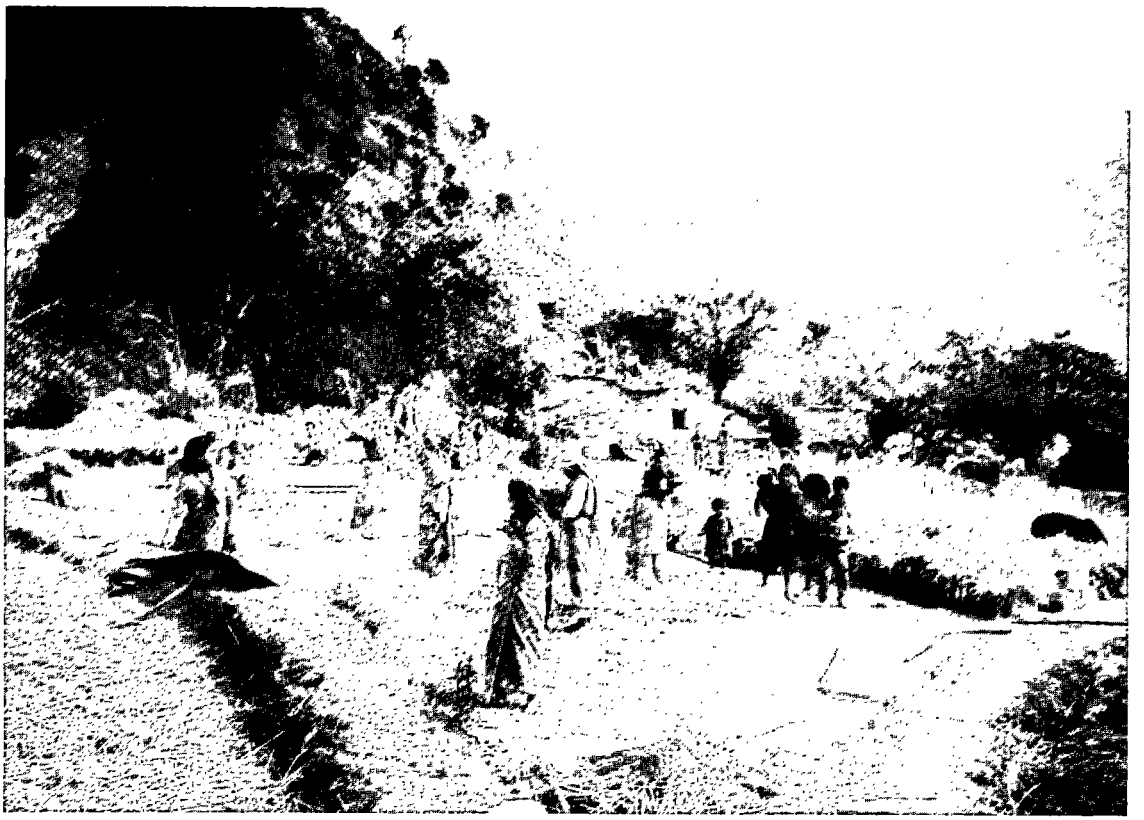
to be found in twenty-nine course books used in six primary classes. Some 78 per cent of the references in the texts are to men and only 22 per cent to women, with figures of 75 and 25 per cent respectively for the illustrations. The preponderance of male references increases with each successive grade in primary school, from 65 per cent in first-grade textbook illustrations to 82 per cent in the course books for the sixth year of primary education. The same study showed that out of 100 texts describing a home, 70 per cent represented women and only 30 per cent men. On the other hand, in illustrations of schools, 80 per cent of the characters are male and only 20 per cent female. The world of work described in these textbooks is essentially a preserve of men: out of 104 occupations listed, only 8 are described as women's work, while 79 are reserved for men and only 17 considered appropriate for both sexes. The professions requiring higher education are reserved almost exclusively for men. The so-called women's occupations are usually an extension of the woman's household tasks (laundress, dressmaker, cook, etc.). Game-playing is also shown as a predominantly male activity: 31 games for boys appear in textbook illustrations as against 7 for girls. The activities of boys are more varied and require a spirit of adventure, speed and daring. Girls on the other hand are more often than not seen playing with dolls or tea sets.

7. Obstacles to literacy

Since cultivable land is scarce and agricultural production is insufficient, the peasants are obliged to look elsewhere for supplementary resources with which to ensure that their families survive. In winter they leave their homes to find seasonal work, either in another region, generally in the plains, or in India to which they often emigrate for longer periods.

While the menfolk are away, the women take over their work in addition to their own already heavy customary chores. On their shoulders lie the responsibilities of household, children and the work of the fields.

Men, it is said, work from sunrise to sunset, whereas a woman's work is never done. Rising in the morning at four or five o'clock, they pound the rice or the millet, draw water from the spring or the river, clean the oven, prepare the morning meal and serve it to the family, wash the dishes, feed the domestic animals and look after the children. At the end of the morning and the beginning of the afternoon, they cut grass for the cattle, gather firewood, take the animals out to graze, carry compost or dung to the fields, prepare feed for the animals, go and help their husbands with seasonal work in the fields, do the washing and, finally, bathe themselves. In the late afternoon and evening they do the housework, bring the cattle back to the stable, milk the cows, clean out the stable, pound and grind the corn, draw water, prepare and serve the evening



Nepalese peasants

meal, have their own meal, clean up the cooking area and wash the dishes. As night falls, the peasant women of the Seti zone pound more corn for the next day and prepare more feed for the cattle. The following day the whole cycle begins again . . .[1]

Of course the daily timetable of women's occupations in the rural environment varies according to the continent, country, climate, race, caste, class, tradition, rhythm of the seasons and the number

1. Krystyna Chlebowska, *The Cheli Beti Story*, op. cit., pp. 4–5.

Preparing a meal traditionally (Chad)

of other wives and children in each household. In general, however, a rural woman begins her day at dawn at 5 in the morning and ends between 8 and 10 in the evening; her working day is of at least fifteen hours. To her farm work on her husband's field, her own plot of land or on collective land are added her many obligations in the household. The woman helps her husband to cultivate, harvest, carry and store agricultural products. She is generally responsible for their sale and processing. She prepares the daily meals and looks after the laundry, the household and the children who may or may not go to school. Sometimes she also spends time on craft activities such as pottery, leather work, weaving, sewing or embroidery which bring in additional income.

Often she has to cover long distances carrying wood, water and farm products, going to the market or accompanying her sick child to the medical centre.

The introduction and expansion of cash crops have transformed the division of labour, almost always to the detriment of women. In some countries, the adoption of high-yield crops has deprived them of the lucrative activities which were their traditional preserve. The mechanization of farm work has also resulted in the loss of part of their income. To make good this deficit, women must devote more time to work in the fields as family labourers. The temporary or permanent departure of men to other more profitable rural areas, towns or other countries has obliged women to take on additional tasks. The competition from manufactured goods is compelling them to extend, step up and improve local production; it too is creating an additional workload.

As an example, the typical daily timetable of a rural woman in Mali and Bangladesh is given below (with a few variations, it resembles that of most rural women everywhere):

MALI

4.30 a.m.	Rise
4.30–6 a.m.	Fetch water
	Prepare breakfast
	Children's toilet
6–10 a.m.	Wash up
	Pound millet
	Collect vegetables or leaves for the meal
	Laundry
	Visit to the market
10 a.m.–3 p.m.	Carry the meal out into the field
	Farm work on her plot of land, or helping the man to till the fields, hoe, weed, plant or guide the plough

3–6 p.m.	Gather wood to cook the dinner
	Collect wild fruit or *karité* almonds
6–8 p.m.	Fetch water
	Pound millet
	Clean the compound
	Prepare dinner
8–9 p.m.	Card and spin cotton.[1]

BANGLADESH

5 a.m.	Rising, cleaning the house and compound, releasing the poultry, collecting eggs.
6–7 a.m.	Preparing the early morning meal for the working members of the family before they go out to the fields.
7–8 a.m.	Milking, collecting fuel, making dung cakes, tending kitchen garden, cleaning cowshed and compound, drying straw to burn it.
8–9 a.m.	Preparing food for the midday meal, grinding species, peeling vegetables.
9–11 a.m.	Husking paddy, winnowing and sifting, preparing rice products.
11–12 a.m.	Cooking.
12–1 p.m.	Washing clothes, bathing, fetching water, feeding the animals and the poultry.
1–2 p.m.	Drying jute and paddy, putting other stores out in the sun to dry.
2–3 p.m.	Feeding her husband and family, after this eating herself.

1. Malick Sene, 'Un projet d'allégement du travail des femmes au Mali', *Les carnets de l'enfance/Assignment Children* (Geneva, UNICEF), Vol. 36, October-December 1976, pp. 69-70. (Summary in English: 'Alleviating Women's Workload in Mali', pp. 120–1.)

3–4 p.m.	Making articles such as baskets and quilts for home use or for sale.
4–5 p.m.	Preparing and cooking the evening meal.
5–6 p.m.	Praying, bringing the children home, shutting up the poultry and animals.
6–7 p.m.	Eating the evening meal and cleaning up.
7–8 p.m.	Rest period, sitting outside talking and smoking before going to bed.[1]

The heavy timetable of rural women obviously makes it difficult for them to set aside time for leisure or training activities requiring a regular and protracted absence from their domestic and agricultural occupations. Lack of time for learning is one of the most serious obstacles to literacy for rural women.

Apart from the limited time available for rural women to attend literacy classes, other immediate constraints arise. She may be afraid that her husband will look askance on his wife's departing from her daily routine and going out in the evening to attend literacy classes. Often, the schoolmaster is not a woman. She has to look after her children and grandchildren and is tired out at the end of her harassing day.

Then there are the difficulties encountered by decision-makers, organizers and persons responsible for literacy campaigns directed at women. These include: the lack of financial resources; the lack of qualified personnel, especially women; the difficulty of recruiting volunteer literacy workers; the lack of suitable premises; transport difficulties; programmes, methods and contents which are not adapted to the real experience of rural women in general; the shortage of literacy training and post-literacy training material; and the problem of choosing the vehicular language for literacy.

1. Elizabeth O'Kelly, *Simple Technologies for Rural Women in Bangladesh*, 2nd ed., p. 7, Dacca, Bangladesh, UNICEF, 1978. (Women's Development Programme.)

8. Action

Improving the condition of women

The condition of rural women in the Third World varies as a function of the country, region or area in which they live. However, poverty remains a factor common to most of them, which is why every action designed to improve the situation of women, including first and foremost literacy training, presupposes equally measures to combat poverty and injustice. If women are overlooked in this struggle, the development of the nation as a whole will suffer.

To promote access to training for rural women, it is therefore also necessary to improve their daily existence, the material security of their family and the future of their children.

To this end, a United Nations report on the condition of women in rural areas, published in October 1989,[1] proposes a range of measures for their benefit, emphasis being placed as a matter of priority on: family planning; access to the health services; adult education and literacy training; basic agricultural training;

1. United Nations General Assembly, *Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000: National Experience Relating to the Improvement of the Situation of Women in Rural Areas; Report of the Secretary-General,* pp. 14–18, New York, United Nations, 13 October 1989, 32 pp. (Doc. A/44/516: General Assembly, 44th session.)

measures to prevent girls from leaving school prematurely; the creation of nurseries, crèches and maternity clinics; easier access to water, electricity and new sources of energy; initial training in new technologies; the enhancement of women's productive activities; access to credit; access to co-operatives; access to land; and improvement of shelter.

Against this background, rural development strategies and procedures for their implementation should be reviewed to allow for the participation of women, taking account of their needs and the role that they can play in the community. The failure of programmes and projects in favour of women is often due to the indifference of national and international leaders to the needs of women and to their lack of knowledge of the role of women in development. Decision-makers are more sensitive to the contribution of rural women to production and to their demands if national mechanisms exist to formulate policies and promotional programmes to improve the condition of women. Those responsible for these mechanisms should be specially trained to perform the new tasks of reorienting policies and actions in favour of women.

Support should also be given to the feminine organizations which protect women's achievements and help them to make further progress. Encouraging and assisting associations and groupings of rural women is of central importance in this connection.

The training of those responsible for dispensing non-formal education needs to be improved, matters of interest to rural women should receive more emphasis in this process and the resources, methods and material used for teaching purposes should be adapted accordingly. Information on successful model projects of literacy training for rural women are also an excellent pedagogic tool.

Research into the design of literacy programmes and projects for rural women should be conducted at both national and international level to prepare flexible and inexpensive implementation

methodologies. The methods used to draw up statistics should be rationalized and census results systematically broken down not just by sex but also by type of population—rural or urban. Data should also be made available on women living in regions remote from the centres and in sparsely populated areas.

In countries where literacy campaigns are undertaken on the basis of initiatives by several different organizations, a pluri-disciplinary national team or literacy committee should be set up with responsibility for defining ways and means to promote adult education and prepare coherent methods and contents in particular for literacy efforts directed at rural women. A good feminine representation on such teams or committees is imperative.

Public opinion is also important, and the dissemination and information media should endeavour to foster a better awareness of the concerns, needs and rights of rural women. Information campaigns on the importance of literacy for women in general, and for rural women in particular, should be conducted in all media.

Finding time

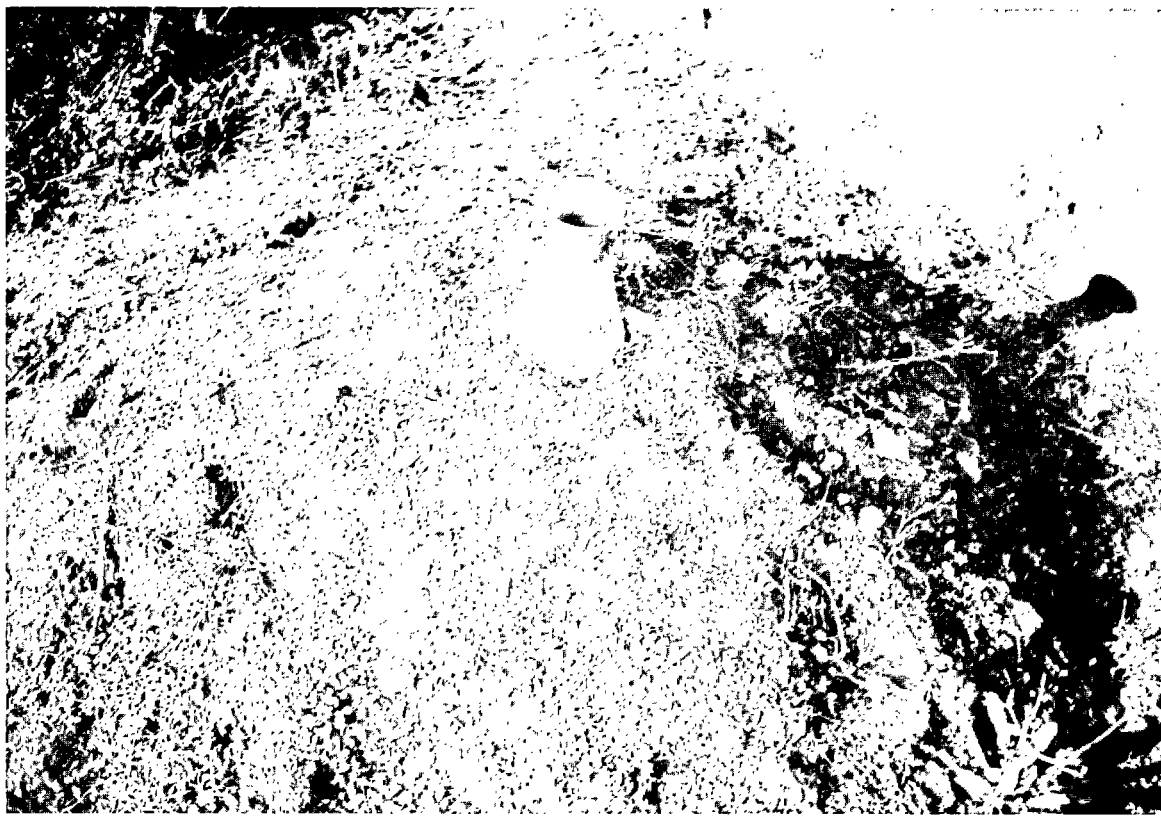
An excessive workload and resulting lack of spare time are the most difficult obstacles for rural women in finding leisure hours to use as they please. However, these leisure hours are the only time possible for literacy activites. Lightening village women's workload to find the time needed entails, first and foremost, an improvement in the living conditions of the rural populations in general and, in particular, a solution to a whole range of practical problems involving health, hygiene, accommodation, water supply, roads and rural tracks. The proximity of medical centres and centres to protect mothers and infants would, for example, enable women to avoid long journeys to the town to obtain medical care for their children.

On a collective plot (Niger)

The solution must also include the introduction of appropriate small-scale, simple, intermediate or village technologies, positioned somewhere between modern technology based on standards and models generally originating in the developed countries, and traditional, sometimes even ancestral, techniques. State-of-the-art technology rarely reaches the rural regions, let alone their female population. Traditional techniques on the other hand are usually too inefficient to generate income or a surplus, even if their direct cost is low. Traditional techniques demand a great deal of effort, energy and time on the part of the users and are not, in the last resort, economically viable. Intermediate technologies enable traditional techniques to be rationalized and made more cost effective through a better use of raw materials, local materials and the skills of the population. They are also better suited to women's physical aptitudes and levels of technical knowledge.

Intermediate technologies adapted to rural women are mainly used in agricultural production, water supply, processing and storage of crops, preservation of foodstuffs, clothing, accommodation and household equipment, the craft trades and social services, including health and education. It was only recently that research workers, economists and statisticians recognized the major role played by women in rural development and their importance as full-time producers. Hitherto, agricultural machinery and equipment had been primarily designed for male farmers. In the 1970s, technologies adapted to the needs and aptitudes of women began to make a timid appearance. Projects and programmes were then formulated for their specific benefit.

Manual work can be made less strenuous, working conditions improved and free time arranged for rural women by simple expedients which are a first step towards the use of other more efficient techniques. For example, the hoes which most African women use to till their fields have very short handles for unexplained customary reasons. Hoes with longer handles would



Irrigation using buried porous jars (Chile)

ease the work and give better results, provided that the fields worked are correctly cleared. Then again, it is surely not inconceivable that peasant-women might place a small cushion on their bruised shoulders to protect them against the yoke from which they suspend the burdens that they carry. The use of buried jars with porous walls which allow water to filter through, is a simple, effective and inexpensive means of irrigation which can be of considerable assistance in the dry season.

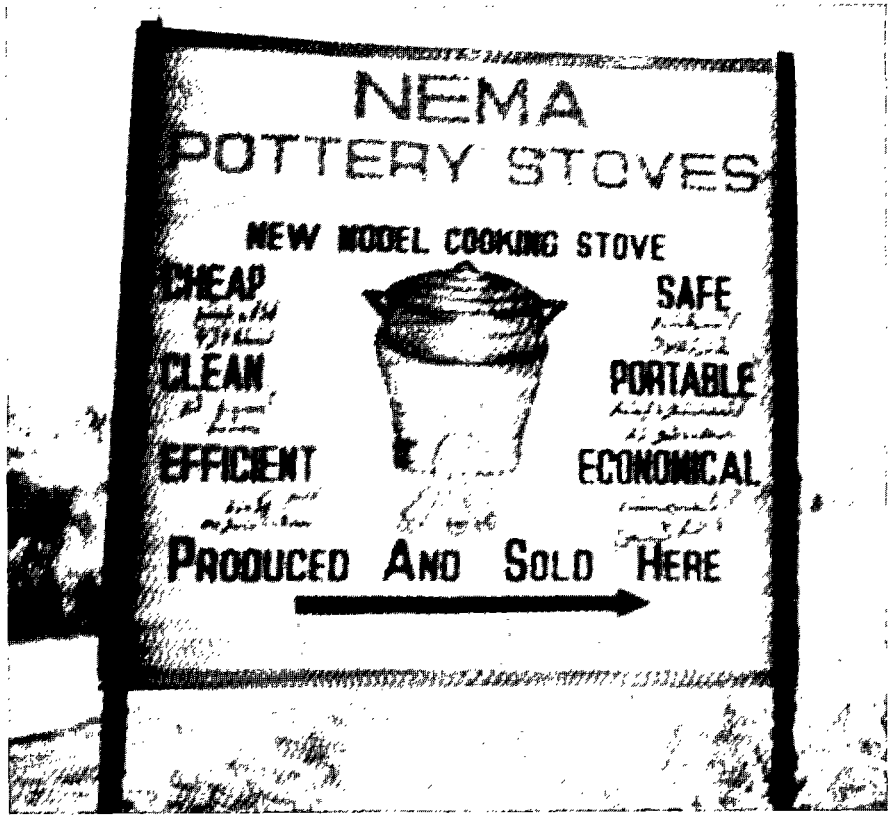
Rural women generally need more than two hours each day to prepare maize, millet, sorghum or rice flour and the other staple foodstuffs for meals. If this long and harassing operation could be cut by half, precious time would be saved each day which the

women concerned could devote to their children, leisure activities, and why not even to literacy? It would be sufficient to replace the pestle and mortar by little mills operated by a handle or foot pedal or drawn by an animal; this solution would be all the more satisfactory as of the many chores performed by women in the household, pounding grain is the one of which they would most like to be relieved.

The problem of carrying burdens is even more complex. Women spend many hours and walk long distances every day to fetch water; this is a problem which remains unsolved in many Third World countries. This arduous task which obliges women to walk for miles prevents them from performing other activities which would be of greater benefit to them, including their own training. Apart from the fact that the water points are too remote because they are generally chosen by men for whom the water needed for domestic purposes is not a priority, water cannot always be carried by wheeled vehicles. The rural tracks are too steep in places and, in some mountainous regions, so narrow that even horses or mules cannot use them. The use of animal-drawn vehicles to replace human energy is not always well accepted, either by men or by the women themselves. In this, as in so many other areas, old habits die hard.

The carrying of water may also be facilitated by creating reserves closer to the dwelling places, by collecting water in reservoirs, by increasing the number of wells or by installing pumps. In several countries, it has, however, been found that these pumps tend to break down frequently because their levers have been designed for operation by men, despite the fact that their main users are women and children who cannot manage to actuate them correctly.

Women must be involved in the planning and exploitation of new water-supply sources. In the construction of wells and other facilities, account should be taken of the importance of the water point as a place where women meet and wash their laundry, and where animals come to drink and children to play.



Billboard advertising an improved cook stove (Gambia)

Wood for heating which women have to gather and carry every day is becoming increasingly scarce and hard to find. If the necessary means of transport are not available, the simplest way of lightening this chore would be to rationalize the use of fuel. One means of attaining this end is the use of improved stoves which need less fuel for the same amount of cooking; this not only benefits women but is also a means of protecting the environment. The reafforestation of the land surrounding the villages with fast-growing tree species is a priority in this respect.

Rural women generally know little about new techniques which could improve their living conditions and those of their families, ease their workload and increase their family earnings.

Grinding millet (Mozambique)

Generally illiterate, they are unable to obtain information from the written media and radio is usually the only way of reaching them, especially in remote regions. In many rural areas it is the most important, if not the only source of information. Although poor rural women have the greatest need for the new techniques, they are the persons whom information services most often disregard. The programmes offered by such services in rural areas are intended mainly for men. The few agricultural advisers who work with women lack training and do not possess the necessary knowledge of technology in general and of technology of interest to rural women in particular.

Introducing improved technologies is usually seen as the responsibility of men, men who take scant account of either the needs of rural women or the spin-off from these innovations and tend to forget that it is women who perform most types of agricultural work. Any action to promote the use of village technologies requires a good knowledge of the specific characteristics of each class or social group and of its environment. The introduction of these technologies which generate free time should be preceded by a detailed analysis of the distribution of tasks between the sexes, social and cultural norms, and the human potential to use new techniques. Steps must be taken to ensure that they do not destroy the existing equilibrium in the allocation of tasks between men and women to the detriment of the latter. Before introducing new technologies designed for women, their habits, beliefs and value systems must be fully understood, as must the reasons for which they are so attached to them, without losing sight of the fact that changes can only acquire a positive image if values also change.

Training methods should encourage women to participate and permit them to play an active role in the discussion of new technologies. Training could be adjusted to enable them to learn how to use these technologies and undertake simple maintenance and repair tasks themselves.

When it comes to introducing new technologies in a

development project, the women concerned must participate in the choice and implementation of techniques; they must make their own views known and assume their share of responsibility for the anticipated changes. Rural women are generally cautious and realistic. They can recognize a sound decision when their own survival and that of their family are at stake. They will not adopt a new technique unless they are themselves convinced that it will make their life easier. Their simple common sense and practical outlook will guide them in the choice of the solutions best suited to their needs.

The introduction of new technologies in a project must take account of the choice made by the women themselves and be effected under auspicious conditions if a new technique is to bring the desired results. It must be tested in advance and have proved its efficacity. Failure could lead to women losing confidence in any innovation and in technological progress in general.

Finally, it must not be forgotten that rural dwellers do not always have the resources needed to buy tools and equipment; implements that they make for themselves, at least in part, using local materials are more accessible to their limited purses.

Adaptation of projects

Implementing literacy operations is both more difficult and less spectacular than building roads or schools.

The task becomes even more arduous if projects must be carried through in rural areas of the Third World, and especially if they concern village women.

In general, donors finance fewer literacy projects than projects relating to primary education. Literacy projects for women, especially rural women, are even rarer and consist for the most part of small-scale projects implemented in co-operation with non-governmental associations or local agencies with modest financial resources.

Along with more limited numbers, the funds allocated to literacy projects are also generally smaller. Rural women are often not reached by development programmes, and literacy projects for their benefit take a low priority in the options of financing agencies. Admittedly, school projects are easier to implement. First of all, the school system generally has teaching staff, even if they are not always qualified and are only available in insufficient numbers. Adult education personnel exist only on an ancillary basis or require training, an additional burden on any project. Furthermore, the formal education sector has infrastructures, equipment and general facilities, far from the case for adult education, especially in developing countries. Finally, governments have up to now rarely shown any real and sustained interest in literacy activities for women where everything still remains to be done—ranging from training teaching personnel to supplying suitable teaching materials.

There are three categories of literacy programmes and projects for women: national programmes, large scale projects and small-scale projects. The first group takes the form of literacy campaigns in which women are automatically included, literacy programmes designed specifically for them, or inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary development programmes which bear on improving the condition of women, such as the 'Women in Development' programmes which the main United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Banks, are tending increasingly to finance. Projects in the second group generally benefit from relatively substantial outside financing. UNDP, bilateral-aid organizations and the funds administered by United Nations agencies have hitherto been more inclined to finance conventional projects of this type. However, such projects, especially those intended for women, rarely acquire an independent existence and project activities often cease altogether when the initial external funding has been used up. The final group is made up of projects on a more human scale, adapted to the needs of the target populations and

involving their participation; they are generally supported by local bodies, non-governmental organizations, feminine groupings and voluntary associations.

Experience of international co-operation in recent years has shown that to obtain more satisfactory and lasting results, the best literacy strategy for women is one based on an inter-sectoral approach and small-scale projects. Projects which take account of the local context, mobilize energies, and encourage participation and initiatives by the community itself are the most suitable for rural women. However, compared to development activities deployed on a national scale, small projects tend to have a marginal effect and receive limited political and financial support.

Many projects which benefit from outside technical and financial assistance and are addressed to a feminine clientele are costly, rigid and excessively complex. Dependent on a long chain of intermediaries, they do not allow the beneficiaries to profit fully from the results; they do not always reflect the realities and true needs of women, their life-styles and customs; and they fail to take account of women's aptitudes and growing determination to assume responsibility for their own existence.

Project identification should be a local responsibility; the community and main beneficiaries should be consulted when priorities and needs are defined. The 'natural partners', that is the local populations and authorities concerned, should be familiar with project formulation and preparation techniques. In Ecuador, for instance, the Latin American Radio Education Association has drawn up a practical guide for the preparation of community development projects in the form of strip cartoons. In Niger, the Institut Pratique de Développement Rural has included in its official programmes of rural development studies, a methodology for the design and implementation of local development projects.

Experience shows that a feasibility study and socio-economic surveys of the target population must be made before designing a literacy project for rural women, especially as few national statistics exist. The data gathered will relate in particular to the

living conditions of women and their families, to daily tasks and their distribution, to the use of time and ways of adapting available time, to the sources and level of their earnings, to access to resources, to languages, customs and traditions of the community, to the possibilities open to women to gain access to social services, training needs, etc. To construct durable projects a sound knowledge of the local social and political climate is necessary, as well as respect for the action and initiatives taken in the country itself and consultation with the discussion partners who have the widest audience. Those responsible for gathering data should be specialists from the country itself, preferably women who have lived in the region or have a good knowledge of the rural environment.

National and local feminine organizations and groups should be consulted, as should the local authorities concerned, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, co-operatives, teachers, information officers, female organizers, village heads, the media and all the institutions and persons with a direct or indirect bearing on the future project. The beneficiaries should be associated with the implementation of the project and the personnel concerned made aware of the problems involved in literacy for women. In the case of mixed projects, those responsible for implementation must include women.

The planning of project activities should permit such adjustments as may be necessary. Sufficient time must be allowed to put them into effect. The donors must give both those responsible for implementation and the beneficiaries the necessary time and agree to finance the costs. Rural women who are submerged with work must have the leisure and the desire to participate in a programme tailored to their style of life and available time.

Examples of projects

Large-scale projects

Option: Civic education
Project: Literacy and civic education for rural women
Country: India

This project forms part of a Unesco programme to train female educators who will provide rural women with a basic knowledge of civics in the context of a literacy action.

Four countries have been selected for this pilot project: India, Peru, the Syrian Arab Republic and Cape Verde.

In India, the project is being organized in the state of Uttar Pradesh in the north of the country. In this predominantly rural region, the lack of teachers and the high level of illiteracy among women are major problems which the project had to face. Following a feasibility study in 1985, some 300 education centres for adult women and girls were opened.

The project's aim is to provide simultaneously basic education to adult women aged 15 to 45 and to girls aged 6 to 14, while facilitating the development of their social and civic awareness.

The principal beneficiaries of this project are poor rural women, generally from the lower castes and illiterate, as well as girls who dropped out before the third year of primary education. The 300 educators in the 300 centres are young women aged between 18 and 35. Classes are organized in groups of 25 to 35.

A publicity campaign directed at the members of the communities through the village heads, direct door to door contact with villagers, and by means of slogans and posters preceded the opening of the centres. The project also benefited from wide publicity on the radio and television and in the local and regional press. Cultural programmes have been organized as well as lectures and exhibitions on the occasion of local festivals and markets.

Motivated by these campaigns, a high percentage of the local population has taken part in the programme; some have even made premises available for the organization of centres. The village literacy committees created for this purpose, consisting of eight members and a village head, have played a preponderant role in the awareness-creation campaign, in the establishment of the centres and in co-ordination with the various community development agencies involved. Basic aspects of civic education, the main topics of which were chosen by the participating women themselves, have been integrated into the literacy manuals. The post-literacy course reader literacy also covers this subject.

The efforts undertaken in this project have brought positive results. Songs and poems have been written about the negative consequences of the dowry for girls; the rural population has developed an awareness of the need for family planning; women are better aware of their rights; improved smokeless ovens or *chulhas* have been developed and thousands of fruit trees planted; nutritional habits have changed; children are vaccinated more systematically; and women express themselves more readily in public on subjects which are important to them. The percentage of illiterate women has dropped.

The problem of the lack of female teaching staff in the rural areas has been partly solved by an approach enabling a single educator to train both adult women and girls. The project has thus helped to reduce illiteracy among girls and women aged 6 to 45, to develop a civic awareness among the participants and improve the quality of their lives.

The results of the project have proved sufficiently conclusive for the approach consisting in training educators responsible both for girls of school age and for adult women using a curriculum integrating literacy, civic education and vocational training to be adopted by the Uttar Pradesh authorities with a view to its general application.

Option: Population education
Project: Integration of population education into post-literacy programmes
Country: Morocco

The primary objective of this project financed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and implemented by Unesco in 1987 is to reinforce the ability of executive staff at the Ministry of Craft Trades and Social Affairs to plan and administer educational activities covering population questions in literacy training programmes.

To date the project has produced and distributed 60,000 copies of a reading manual and 1,200 copies of a teacher's guide covering subjects such as the structure and dynamics of the population, parental responsibility, health of the mother and child, family planning, social roles, development, the environment, civil status and censuses. Some 3,000 copies of three posters have also been printed, dealing with family planning, the environment and the integration of women into development.

Thanks to this project, 15 members of the teaching staff at the National Institute for Social Action, 47 regional representatives, 73 supervisory staff and 280 primary level teachers responsible for adult education, have received training in the area of population and demography. Some 60,000 adults and 240 students have been trained.

Option: Education in an armed conflict situation
Project: Education of displaced populations
Country: Mozambique

This project, which benefits from Unesco assistance, is being implemented in the Dondo district, Sofala province, one of the regions which is worst affected by the war. Its primary objective is to facilitate access for refugees to education. Cheringoma camp

at present accommodates over 7,000 persons originating from various villages in the country; 90 per cent are illiterate—mostly women including a growing number of widows.

The aim of this project is to dispense basic knowledge to the largest possible number of adults, thereby equipping them better to face present difficulties and their return to their villages at the end of the war. The 850 children of school age are also being prepared to attend school under the best possible conditions; their schoolmasters have received additional training in active pedagogy and a new school is being built.

Instability is the main characteristic of the lives of refugees in Cheringoma. This is evidenced by the constant influx of new refugees, the increase in the camp population, the deterioration of the existing infrastructures and the lack of the necessary equipment to build new facilities. This emergency transitional situation inevitably has a negative impact on human relations, health, diet, hygiene and local agricultural production, and requires a specially adapted educational approach.

Educational work for adults will be based on integrating the school into the community and on direct co-operation with the teachers. In a first phase, it will be concentrated on organization and mobilization of the population and development of a greater awareness of its benefits in an integrated programme whose main purpose is to improve living conditions. At this stage, literacy is not a priority at Cheringoma; immediate requirements are to build wells, distribute seeds and agricultural implements, and obtain the material and equipment needed for the medical centre.

Three instructors with adequate prior training were selected to work with the adult population in the camp: two for adult education and one for agricultural extension work.

An study of local conditions based on conversations with the population led to a better definition of problems. The proposals for a work plan which followed that study were discussed and approved at a public meeting of the members of the Cheringoma community.

The main activities carried out in favour of adults on the basis of this plan were the construction of latrines, wells and a refuse dump, the allocation of land to families, the distribution of seeds and farm implements, the rationalization of food distribution, the refurbishment of the old school and participation in the construction of a new school. Sessions were organized on subjects relating to hygiene, health and agriculture; information was given in the local language of the refugees at Cheringoma, assisted by visual aids.

The impact of these activities for adults carried out by the instructors in co-operation with the schoolmasters has been positive. Living conditions in the camp have improved, thereby giving greater scope to satisfy the basic needs of the population.

After one year of activities of this type, the demand for more advanced and better structured training has made itself felt, particularly in the area of literacy. This project has shown that under exceptional emergency situations the improvement of the elementary conditions for the survival of individuals must precede educational action. Literacy must be treated in this context as a component of education programmes for adult women and not as a point of departure.

Option: Training female supervisory staff
Project: Training polyvalent rural instructors
Country: Niger

Out of a total population of over 7 million in Niger, more than half of them women, 90 per cent of the active population live in rural areas. The economic activity of the country is based essentially on agriculture, cattle farming and fishing. Women play a considerable part in these activities but are nevertheless underprivileged in many respects. For the most part illiterate, they have practically no access to training and are insufficiently integrated into the co-operatives which are an important facet of

rural development in Niger. Courses in agriculture, hygiene, health, management, literacy and other types of training or information which would be useful to them cannot be given because of the lack of a suitable infrastructure, technical resources and an adequate supervisory framework or programmes adapted to their real needs and possibilities.

The improvement of the status of rural women in Niger requires first and foremost the acquisition of basic knowledge on 'survival', primarily in the areas of agriculture, health, hygiene, domestic economy, nutrition, protection of infants, family planning, co-operative management and in all other sectors which concern them directly: this knowledge should be transmitted by methods and techniques adapted to the specific characteristics and requirements of the women concerned and the tuition should be given by specially trained personnel.

At present no institutions in Niger offer multi-disciplinary training specifically adapted to women in areas corresponding to the reality of their daily life in the rural environment.

The services of polyvalent rural female supervisory staff are recommended in Niger, both as a solution to the demand for training rural women and as a palliative for the lack of specialized interlocutresses in the areas which interest these women.

The project is designed to train rural instructors who would become civil servants under the Secretary of State for Public Health with responsibility for Social Affairs and the Status of Women. They would be progressively assigned to all the regional departments and districts of the country to represent the Directorate for the Status of Women. They would plan, promote and co-ordinate the various activities intended for rural women, and mobilize available human resources to support action in favour of women in the rural environment.

Polyvalent rural instructors acting at the level of the regional departments would have the following main tasks: participation in the preparation of regional development plans and programmes; design and elaboration of development actions of

interest to women; carrying out studies of local conditions; encouraging women to participate in actions to enhance their condition as women and producers; co-ordination and animation of the activities of women's associations in the *départements*; co-operation with the various technical services responsible for agriculture, animal husbandry, health, hygiene, nutrition, the economy and family planning, literacy and with the non-governmental organizations, international organizations and bilateral agencies concerned so as to derive full benefit from all the human resources available to meet the needs of development and rural women; participation in the design and implementation of development projects directed at women; co-ordination and supervision of the work of rural organizers in the *arrondissements*; and organization of periodic refresher courses for instructors in the *arrondissements* and provision of training whenever needed.

At *arrondissement* level, the instructors will have to carry out much the same tasks as those performed in the *départements*. However, they will in turn have to train local instructors in the villages, arrange refresher courses for them, and supervise and co-ordinate their activities for the benefit of village women. They will also be called upon to assist rural women directly in every area falling within their terms of reference, depending on their availability and the needs expressed.

Option: Literacy training by audio-visual methods
Project: Literacy and post-literacy programmes using video techniques
Country: Peru

This project implemented in Peru, has benefited from Unesco support through the Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC) and contributions from the UNDP and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations

Development Organizations (AGFUND). It is an original experiment in literacy and post-literacy work for the population of the Andine region involving a strong feminine participation.

The primary objective of the project is to improve teaching methods for reading, writing and arithmetic and all the basic knowledge useful for local development. Particular attention has been given to the needs of women in the rural environment.

The population of the Andine region, predominantly rural, ekes out a difficult living from subsistence agriculture based on family production units. Illiteracy, like poverty, is omnipresent and reaches percentages between 33.8 and 51.2 depending on the area. Some 73.1 per cent of the illiterate population over the age of 15 are women, almost all of whom speak Quechua.

Schools in these regions tend to be alienated from the needs and concerns of the population; they do not prepare children for a rural future, but on the contrary isolate them from it. The application of urban educational models which have no relevance to Andine rural life is one of the main reasons for the failure. Many children drop out, absenteeism is frequent and school success rates are low. Furthermore, rural schools function under precarious conditions. Teachers do not have the necessary training and the classes are far too large in relation to the number of teachers.

The failure of the school system as it functions in the rural areas has largely contributed to the development of illiteracy. Based on that observation, the efforts of the Peruvian government will be oriented towards a simultaneous campaign of literacy training for adults and schooling for children. That is why the Ministry of Education decided in the 1980s to carry out a literacy programme directed at adults, setting up mobile units using audio-visual educational techniques to which the population of the most remote Andine regions would have access. That was the origin of the literacy and post-literacy video training project which forms an integral part of a national multi-sectoral literacy plan.

Video literacy programmes were chosen because of the

mobilizing value of the audio-visual technique and its better cost-benefit ratio.

The use of video methods required changes in the way in which teaching material is produced and used, and substantial adjustments to the training of teaching staff. The teaching material was organized in easy-to-handle and easy-to-maintain interchangeable modules. In selecting teaching staff, priority was given to adult educators with training in audio-visual technology and procedures.

Video programmes were not prepared in the same way as in conventional literacy programmes. A substantial part of this preparation was devoted to a study of local conditions and the reality of peasant life; based on observations, direct evidence, and individual and collective conversations, the participants described their real problems and looked at ways of solving them. The input from the future beneficiaries was then converted into teaching content.

The principal themes of the curriculum are based on the daily life of the population and community development. Each of the themes is divided into three sub-topics: natural resources, productive activities and family life. The literacy training groups are generally mixed. In some cases, a majority of participants are women, joined by children who are attracted by the pictures and familiar subjects.

This Peruvian experiment has not only confirmed the educational potential of audio-visual techniques but also permitted their use in new ways. In this project, video becomes a vehicle which does more than provide information; it also enables the beneficiaries to understand the reality of their lives and make better use of their skills.

Used in this way, video can no longer be manipulated and does not generate alienation or cultural aggression. On the contrary, it has enabled the Andine populations to identify more closely with their own everyday reality and culture.

Option: Income-generating activities
Project: Literacy and post-literacy programmes for girls and women
Country: Togo

Togo, where the illiteracy rate among women is about 70 per cent, is one of the few African countries to have undertaken a sustained national programme to provide literacy for women. Until 1976, the national literacy programme was directed at both women and men. In 1977, a project destined specifically for women in the rural regions got off the ground with the principal aim of providing training in reading, writing and arithmetic, associated with income-generating activities.

Unesco provided technical support for this difficult long-term task, while the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) and AGFUND gave financial assistance.

The particular features of this project, which has been implemented with a great deal of conviction by the Togolese authorities, derive from the fact that it is addressed to rural women throughout the country and makes use of the four principal Togolese languages: Ewe, Kabiye, Tem and Ben. The theoretical courses are accompanied by practical, productive activities such as manufacturing local soap and palm oil, cattle-rearing, agriculture, weaving, sewing, pottery and basket-work. Women are organized in productive units which both ensures their active participation in the literacy classes and enables them to derive immediate and concrete benefit from their knowledge. These activities are not new for Togolese women, but a knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic enables them to be pursued more effectively. In future, the women concerned will be able to keep accounts and registers; it will be harder to swindle them in the markets where they sell their products; they will be able to understand medical prescriptions and notice boards; they will take a greater interest in their children's school work; and they will be able to read whatever they can find in the rural library as

well as leaflets and local newspapers published in their own languages.

The literacy classes are conducted with the assistance of volunteers who have fifteen days' special teaching training and refresher courses every six months. The classes, organized as a function of the agricultural calendar, take place preferably before nightfall to save lamp oil and to reassure husbands who do not like their wives returning after dark.

Today, this project has achieved significant results: 12,000 women and girls have attended the classes; some 521 literacy centres have been opened and equipped; and 1,030 literacy instructors, 600 rural organizers, 80 rural librarians and 60 'local writers' who act as correspondents for the local press have been trained. Over 54,000 copies of a whole range of teaching materials have been drawn up and distributed throughout the country. In addition, women have managed to increase their family earnings through the productive activities of the productive units.

Togolese women involved in literacy activities under this project have acquired new knowledge and are taking a greater interest and participating more willingly in community life. They are better able to understand the nature of the problems affecting them and at the same time are better equipped to confront the difficulties inherent in their two-fold disfavoured condition—women and inhabitants of rural regions.

Small-scale projects

Option: Education and health
Project: Health education
Country: Brazil

Established by a non-governmental agency, the Institute for Cultural Action (IDAC), this project is being implemented in Paraty, a village in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

This experiment in health education, designed to establish a link between the feminist movement and ordinary people in Brazil, is an example of the trend for women to undertake professional activities in the context of the feminist movement.

The project animators who come from the feminist movement and from IDAC have considerable experience with popular education.

Paraty, some 240 kilometres from the capital, has an extremely poor population whose main productive activities are agriculture and fishing. Disorganized and underprivileged, the residents have barely enough resources to satisfy their most elementary needs, particularly in the areas of education and health. The women are severely affected by health problems of a somatic and psychological nature, such as constant nervous tension associated with the difficulty of their lives and bad sexual experiences.

In one of the poorest areas of the village, IDAC has set up an educational project with five objectives: (a) to develop within the community an information and training programme for women, giving them the means of preventing illness, preserving their physical and mental health and that of their families; (b) to give women the means of asserting their rights of access to public health services normally difficult for them; (c) to enable women to acquire a deeper knowledge of their own bodies; (d) to give them a better understanding of the problems of their community; and (e) to test, through a community education campaign linking education and health, a work methodology for training women based on the concepts of autonomy and independence.

The first phase of the project consisted in a field study aimed at identifying the problems suffered by women in relation to certain physiological mechanisms: menstrual periods, pregnancy, childbirth, the post-puerperal period, breast-feeding and the menopause. This initial work enabled the whole community to be made aware of the objectives of the project; it also traced the local women who have a fund of popular knowledge of health matters.

Some 100 families were visited and 96 women agreed to talk. Their testimonies were recorded to serve as a basis for the production of audio-visual aids and for the initiation of a process of reflection. The collective history recounted by the women was reconstituted with slides. A synthesis of the individual stories led to the definition of a work programme.

The second stage consisted in a series of working meetings in small groups, intended to inform and train the participants, assisted by female instructors who tried to develop a process of reflection on the underlying reasons for the problems encountered and to stimulate the joint search for solutions and the collective development of a social identity among women.

In the second year, the project continued with environmental research activities. The participants themselves formulated the need to reflect on the unhealthy state of their community and on the causes, consequences and possible remedies. This developing awareness of the relationship between health and the environment paved the way for local initiatives to improve living conditions, particularly *vis-à-vis* hygiene and dwellings, access to drinking water and the improvement of diets.

Although this was quite a small-scale experiment (sixty participants over two years), it brought interesting results. As far as teaching is concerned, it led to an action model capable of serving as a point of reference and inspiration for the introduction of educational policies for adult women.

Co-Action Programme

The projects outlined below form part of a Unesco programme which has been giving practical and ongoing support for over thirty years to activities designed and implemented by the local population of developing countries. Projects are submitted to the Co-Action Programme through either the national Unesco committees or non-governmental international organizations. In

principle, the projects must make a contribution, however modest, to the improvement of the living conditions of the community to which they are addressed. Priority is given to activities located in the least developed countries and to the most vulnerable groups: women, the handicapped and refugees. The possibilities of assistance offered by the Co-Action Programme must serve as a point of departure for the continuation of activities and the development of the scope of action of the project.

Project: Mothers Club
Country: Bolivia

In pre-Columbian times, Bolivia formed part of the Inca Empire. Today 60 per cent of its population are Indian (Quechua and Aymora). In the sixteenth century, Bolivia was the world's major silver producer, but is has today become one of the poorest countries of Latin America. Women represent over two-thirds of the total illiterate population. Despite the fact that women in the rural areas provide the principal source of family income through agricultural production and the sale of market gardening produce and craft objects, only 20 per cent of Bolivian women are considered by official statistics to be in active employment.

There is a flagrant contradiction between the economic and productive role of women in Bolivia and their social status. Growing frustration due to their deprived situation coupled with the pressing need to feed their families have led over 100,000 rural women to organize themselves into over 1,250 self-help associations known as 'Mothers' Clubs'. Varying in size, these clubs all have the same aim: to promote food production, craft trades and other means of existence and sources of revenue.

The project is intended to provide the clubs with the tools and equipment needed for the production units in which women cultivate the land and raise animals. It will also facilitate the purchase of paper, ink, photographic equipment and

photocopying machines needed for training and information work.

Project: Construction of a community centre for literacy classes
Country: Kenya

Women's groups are a powerful force for rural development in Kenya, very active in agricultural production and in small undertakings. With the assistance of the Co-Action Programme, the group of women of Mokan, near Lake Victoria, has already built an underground water reservoir and a water conduit, and is acquiring a mill for millet grain. The group has now decided to construct a community centre which will be used for adult literacy classes, family planning and vocational training, in addition to serving as a meeting place for the whole community.

Project: Construction of a school library
Country: India

The St Justin's girls secondary school was built about ten years ago by an order of Roman Catholic nuns in Sivaganga, a town in the south of the Tamil Nadu district. A majority of the pupils here come from poor families living in Sivaganga and in neighbouring villages where the illiteracy rate is the highest. To ensure that the pupils do not lose their newly acquired knowledge, the school headmistress would like to build and stock a school library. Plans for the construction of this library have been prepared by a local engineer.

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Appendices

I. Standard model for the presentation of a project to a potential donor[1]

Project description

Title:

Duration:

Project site:

Implementing agency (national):

Implementing agency (external):

Estimated project starting date:

Local or governmental inputs:

Requested external contribution:

Brief description of the project:

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1. Based on UNDP guidelines for project formulation.

The fundamental structure of a 'conventional' project corresponds to the following hierarchy of basic project elements: (a) development objectives; (b) immediate objectives; (c) expected results; (d) activities, and (e) inputs.

A project formulated with this structure has the following logical sequence: the *inputs* must be converted by *activities* to obtain specific *results* which taken together will contribute to the attainment of the *immediate objectives.* Once the latter have been attained, they will contribute at least partially to the overall development objective.

A. Context

Succinct explanation of the major characteristics of the development setting in which the project will operate: the development sector concerned and its major characteristics; the relevant plan or strategy of the host country.

B. Project justification

Explain the reasons for undertaking the project and why it is designed the way it is.

Describe: (a) the problem to be addressed by the project; (b) the expected situation of the end of the project; (c) how and by whom the results of the project will be utilized; (d) the particular strategy and implementation arrangements of the project and the reasons supporting the application for external assistance; (e) the arrangements made to co-ordinate the project with other efforts in the same sector; and (f) the means and efforts proposed to provide the inputs and support necessary for the successful completion of the project and to sustain the results after its completion.

C. Development objective

Present the objective at sectoral level as defined in the plans drawn up by the host country in a long-term context.

The development objective is a higher level goal and the project is simply one means of attaining that goal.

D. Immediate objectives, outputs and activities

Objectives

Correct definition of the immediate project objectives is essential, since the other elements and structure of the project flow from these objectives.

An immediate objective states what the project itself is expected to achieve and should be defined in terms of specific changes in behaviour, status or condition which the project is intended to bring about.

The objectives of the project must be realistic and take account of the constraints of time, money and human resources of the project. They must be defined as far as possible in terms which are quantifiable or at least allow observation during implementation and after completion of the project. Objectives defined by words such as 'strengthening', 'supporting', 'advising', etc. are difficult to measure and are best avoided.

The number of immediate objectives of each project should be limited; some projects will have only one single objective.

Outputs

Outputs are the tangible 'products' to which the project should lead in order to attain a specific immediate objective. These outputs must be described as concretely as possible and in verifiable terms, each immediate objective being illustrated by at least one output. All the outputs necessary for the attainment of an objective must be described, failing which the objective may be unattainable. A single output may also correspond to more than one immediate objective.

Activities

The activities of the project flow naturally from the outputs. They consist of the substantive tasks to be carried out under the project. Each output must be supported by at least one activity. Only those tasks which are to be undertaken by the project should be listed, care being taken to

distinguish between the project activities and those which are part of the broader, ongoing activities of the host country or institution. Each output will generally require more than one activity; some activities may contribute to more than one output.

E. Inputs

The inputs are the 'raw materials' of the project, be they in the form of equipment and supplies, personnel, fellowships, etc. All the inputs required to carry out the project activities or otherwise to produce the specified outputs are to be listed; the inputs which the host government or institutions can reasonably supply will be identified and listed, after which the inputs that may be supplied by a source other than a host country will be enumerated.

F. Follow-up, reporting and evaluation

Follow-up serves to measure progress made. It should be sufficiently flexible to permit ongoing evaluation so as to determine whether implementation is progressing satisfactorily and to make changes if shortcomings are detected. In every case, intermediate reviews and a final evaluation should be made. Technical reports should also be compiled on the activities of the project and a final report prepared.

G. Budgets

Indicate the national or local contribution, and the external financial contribution requested.

H. Annexes

Annexes may include a work plan, training programmes, technical equipment details, job descriptions for recruiting necessary personnel, etc.

II. Example of a project document United Nations Development Programme

Title: Literacy integrated into agricultural production groups
Duration: 45 months
Sector and sub-sector: Education, Non-formal education
Government implementing agency: Ministry of Public Health, Social Affairs and the Status of Women
Executing Agency: Unesco
Estimated starting date: April 1988
Government input (in local currency):
UNDP input (in US dollars):

Brief description of the project: The purpose of the project is to provide literacy training for 10,000 members of pre-cooperative groupings and to equip them, through a process of ongoing training, with the skills necessary to increase their agricultural and pastoral production, and contribute to the self-administered development of village communities.

Special attention will be given to women and girls, having regard to their specific motivation, interests and needs, and to determining their role in the family and in the rural community.

On behalf of:	Signatures	Date	Name/title (please type)
Government			
Executing agency			
UNDP			

A. Context

Evaluation of the successive socio-economic development plans of..... has identified illiteracy as a major obstacle to development. The current educational policy strategy of the country is therefore designed to promote education as a major factor in development. One of the long-term objectives set by the government is to eliminate illiteracy by the year 2000 through an integrated approach consisting of the generalized introduction of a reformed primary education and intensified functional literacy programmes for young persons and adults.

Since 1971 literacy has been defined as a priority in all the successive development plans of..... The national budget has therefore included financial appropriations which have increased from one year to the next, to extend the actions undertaken in this area. The literacy training programmes reach the population of both sexes throughout the national territory, and more specifically in rural areas. They focus primarily on the development of agriculture, the improvement of cattle-farming, the organization of health care, the marketing of products and the social organization of the villages.

B. Project justification

Evaluation of rural development experiments in the region has shown that action in this area can only be viable if it is effected under the responsibility of the populations concerned and enables a solution to be found to the problems posed by development with a view to greater control of the environment. Micro-projects adapted to real needs and local conditions constitute an effective means of attaining this objective, provided that they are accompanied by an adequate training programme for the benefit of the population concerned, permitting individual and collective self-enhancement of the villagers while mobilizing the community with a view to self-administered development.

The project is addressed chiefly to inhabitants of both sexes of rural regions throughout the national territory whose primarily agricultural, pastoral and craft occupations are effected in the context of agricultural productive groups (*précoopératives*). These small-scale groups created at

village level seek better operating conditions and a higher yield, while respecting traditional types of organization. Literacy and other types of training are an important contributory factor to such change.

Functional literacy which combines access to knowledge and expertise with the local requirements of work and endogenous development and is aimed at providing familiarity with the mechanisms of reading, writing and calculation, higher professional skills and the application of new technologies to increase and improve production will be the training instrument used in the project.

UNDP assistance is requested to supplement the government inputs and local potential, and to strengthen and further broaden the national effort of literacy and post-literacy training.

Addressed to a mixed population, the project concerns women particularly, taking account of their specific needs and impact on the life and progress of the community, and their motivation and willingness to join together in organized structures, notably in production groups.

C. Development objective

To familiarize the population with local development projects by giving them the further training needed to enable them to play a more active and effective role in the economic and social development programme of the country and to enable rural communities to make use of new agricultural techniques to acquire self-sufficiency in foodstuffs.

D. Immediate objectives, outputs and activities

1. Objective 1

To progressively establish literacy centres in the context of agricultural, pastoral and craft groups throughout the country.

1.1 *Expected outputs 1*

300 literacy centres created, i.e. 50 centres in the first year, 70 in the second year, 80 in the third year and 100 in the fourth year, taking

account of the following criteria: existence of a literacy committee in the village, existence or need to build premises to accommodate the literacy class and the availability of two volunteer literacy workers.

Activities

1.1.1. Feasibility study in 400 villages to define target villages.
1.1.2. Choice of viable groupings offering favourable conditions for the proposed action.
1.1.3. Developing an awareness in the selected groupings.
1.1.4. Socio-economic study to define needs for preparation of the programmes.
1.1.5. Establishment of literacy centres in the groupings.
1.1.6. Fitting out the centres with teaching materials and demonstration equipment.

2. OBJECTIVE 2

The provision of basic knowledge in reading, writing and arithmetic for the populations organized in pre-cooperative groupings to enable them to better administer their activities and improve their individual and collective standard of living.

2.1. *Anticipated outputs 1*

10,000 people able to read, write and calculate, and thus to keep basic written accounts for the groupings, and read and write a text relating to their production activities and daily life (food, family, health).

Activities

2.1.1. Design and development of the training programme for members of the groupings.
2.1.2. Design and development of teaching material in the national languages.
2.1.3. Recruitment of literacy workers.
2.1.4. Training and refresher courses for literacy workers and instructors in the post-literacy centres.
2.1.5. Distribution of teaching and follow-up materials to centres.
2.1.6. Opening the centres.

2.1.7. Operation and follow-up of centres.
2.1.8. Evaluation of the knowledge and aptitudes of the participants.

2.2. *Anticipated outputs 2*

Some 600 literacy workers trained for the literacy centres.

Activities
2.2.1. (See 2.1.3. - 2.1.4. - 2.1.6. - 2.1.7.)
2.2.2. Refresher courses for literacy workers.

2.3. *Anticipated outputs 3*

100 supervisors, for literacy and post-literacy activities trained to provide pedagogical support to the centres (10 supervisors, 45 literary organisers, 25 text writers and 20 text producers).

Activities
2.3.1. Identification of supervisory staff.
2.3.2. Definition of the training needs of supervisory staff.
2.3.3. Organization of training sessions and refresher courses (seminars, workshops and study tours).

3. Objective 3

To promote the continuing education of the newly literate in order to improve their professional, socio-economic and cultural levels.

3.1. *Anticipated outputs 1*

50 experimental post-literacy centres created in the 5 economic regions of the country, to cover about 2,000 persons.

Activities
3.1.1. (See 2.1.8.)
3.1.2. Selection of experimental post-literacy centres.
3.1.3. Determination of the post-literacy needs of newly literate members of the population.

3.2. *Anticipated outputs 2*

Design, development and distribution of post-literacy material to 50 experimental post-literacy centres.

Activities

3.2.1. (See 2.3.3.)
3.2.2. (See 2.1.4.)
3.2.3. Inventory of technical services and institutions with responsibility for adult education.
3.2.4. Preparation of a list of institutions responsible for adult education.
3.2.5. Analysis of the training programmes of these institutions to determine the relevant data and most appropriate themes to be covered.
3.2.6. Constitution of data banks and groups of 'resource persons'.
3.2.7. Organization of a literary competition.
3.2.8. Screening the results of the competition.
3.2.9. Production of documents.
3.2.10. Distribution of the documents by setting up rural libraries.
3.2.11. Evaluation of the post-literacy experiments.

E. Inputs

1. GOVERNMENT INPUTS

The input from the government and local populations estimated at 300,000 million CFA Francs will cover expenditure in:

The construction by the local population, using local materials, of 300 literacy centres.
A printing works to produce documents.
Voluntary participation of 700 literacy instructors for the duration of the project.
Provision of furniture for the literacy and post-literacy centres (5 tables, 5 benches, 1 desk, 1 stool, 1 blackboard and 1 lamp for each centre).
Provision of fitted-out premises for the project personnel.
Equipped offices in the regions.

Equipped offices in the social sectors.
Covering water, electricity, telephone and maintenance costs.

The project will draw on the following existing personnel:
At central level: the Director-General of Social Affairs, the Director of the Literacy and Adult Education Division (who is also the national project director), 5 section heads, 30 printing shop technicians and text writers.
At regional level: 5 regional directors of social affairs, 5 co-ordinators of women's activities, 5 regional literacy supervisors, 47 literacy organisers, 5 text writers, 25 heads of social sectors.

2. UNDP INPUTS

2.1. *Personnel*

(a) International: 1 United Nations Volunteer (UNV), specializing in literacy work (24 m/h), 1 evaluation consultant (0.5 m/h), 1 co-operative management consultant (0.5 m/h).
(b) National: 5 literacy training advisors (220 m/h), 1 consultant, specializing in teaching arithmetic (1 m/h), 1 illustrator (2 m/h), 1 agricultural consultant (1 m/h), 1 nutrition consultant (1 m/h).
(c) Administrative support: 1 administrative assistant (45 m/h), 1 secretary-typist (45 m/h), 1 driver (45 m/h), 1 manual worker (45 m/h).

2.2 *Training*

20 training sessions for 600 literacy organisers.
60 refresher courses for the 600 literacy organisers.
5 training sessions for 100 literacy organisers in the literacy centres.
10 refresher courses for literacy organisers in the post-literacy centres.
5 workshops to design and prepare literacy teaching material intended for the writers, advisors and literacy training supervisors.
5 training sessions for the newly literate population.
2 technical training seminars for project supervisory staff, covering supervision, evaluation and co-operative management.
continuing training for 2,000 newly literate persons in 50 experimental post-literacy centres.

2 study tours by national supervisory staff within the region;
2 short fellowships (1 regional, 1 international).

2.3. *Equipment*

(a) Non-expendable equipment:
1 Peugeot 504 estate car for liaison purposes
1 7-ton truck
45 Vespa Scooters and Suzuki 'Ladies' mopeds
2 typewriters (with national language keyboards)
2 duplicating machines
2 projectors
1 calculating machine
demonstration equipment

(b) Expendables:
office supplies and supplies for printing teaching aids at central and regional levels.
raw materials for demonstrations.

F. Follow-up, activity reports and project evaluation

The project will be the subject of a tripartite review (with joint participation of the government, the executing agency and UNDP) at least once a year from the date on which it commences.

The national project director and/or the responsible international official from the executing agency will prepare and submit, to each tripartite review meeting, a report evaluating implementation of the project. If necessary, other reports may be requested while the project is in progress.

At the end of the project, the person(s) responsible for the project will prepare a draft report for analysis and technical comment by the executing agency four months prior to the final meeting of the tripartite review body.

G. Budgets

Project budget covering government contribution (CFA Francs)

Country:
Project number:
Project title: Literacy integrated into agricultural production groups

Code	Component	Total	1988	1989	1990	1991
10	*Project personnel*					
	1 National director	6 000 000	1 500 000	1 500 000	1 500 000	1 500 000
15	*Technical support*					
	5 Supervisors	20 000 000	5 000 000	5 000 000	5 000 000	5 000 000
	47 Literacy organizers	165 000 000	41 000 000	41 250 000	41 250 000	41 250 000
	700 Literacy and post-literacy instructors	72 000 000	18 000 000	18 000 000	18 000 000	18 000 000
20	*Administrative support*					
	1 Secretary 1 Accountant	4 800 000	1 200 000	1 200 000	1 200 000	1 200 000
40	*Equipment*					
	Construction of literacy and post-literacy centres	35 000 000	7 000 000	14 000 000	10 500 000	3 500 000
	Operation and maintenance of printing shop	10 000 000	2 000 000	4 000 000	3 000 000	1 000 000
	Project total	312 800 000				

Project budget covering UNDP contribution (U.S. dollars)

Country:
Project number:
Project title : Literacy integrated into agricultural production groups

	Total		1988		1989		1990		1991	
	m/m	$	m/m	$	m/m	$	m/m	$	m/m	$
10. *Project personnel*										
11.50 International consultants										
11.51 Evaluation	0.5	7 500			0.5	7 500				
11.52 Co-operative management	0.5	7 300			0.5	7 300				
11.99 Sub-total	1.0	14 800			1.0	14 800				
13. *Administrative support*	180.0	33 600	36.0	7 500	48.0	8 000	48.0	8 700	48.0	9 400
14. *United Nations Volunteer*										
14.01 Literacy and adult education	24.0	33 400	6.0	7 700	12.0	16 700	6.0	9 000		
15. *Travel costs*		18 150		5 000		5 400		3 350		4 400
16. *Other costs* (tri-partite reviews evaluation missions)		15 570				12 320				3 250
17. *National consultants*										
17.01 5 Literacy advisers	22.0	76 590	40.0	17 000	60.0	18 360	60.0	19 830	60.0	21 400
17.02 Mathematics consultant	1.0	1 040			0.5	500	0.5	540		
17.02 Graphic artist consultant		2.0	1 695	1.0	800	0.5	430	0.5	465	
17.04 Agriculture consultant	1.0	1 040			0.5	500	0.5	540		
17.05 Nutrition consultant	1.0	1 040			0.5	500	0.5	540		
17.99 Sub-total	225.0	81 405	41.0	17 800	62.0	20 290	62.0	21 915	60.0	21 400
19. Component total		196 925		38 000		77 510		42 965		38 450

30.	*Training*							
31.	Individual fellowships							
31.01	Evaluation	2	8 100		2	8 100		
31.02	Post-literacy work	2	5 400		2	5 400		
31.99	Sub-total	4	13 500		4	13 500		
32.	Study tours		8 000			8 000		
33.	On-the-spot training (seminars workshops retraining etc.)		197 045	34 470		54 440	47 400	60 735
39.	Component total		218 545	34 470		75 940	47 400	60 735
40.	*Equipment*							
41.	Expendable supplies		62 000	17 000		9 000	27 000	9 000
42.	Non-expendable supplies		100 000	45 000		27 000	20 000	8 000
49.	Component total		162 000	62 000		36 000	47 000	17 000
50.	*Miscellaneous*							
51.	Running costs		26 500	5 000		6 000	6 500	9 000
52.	Reporting costs		3 500	-		-	-	3 500
53.	Sundry		12 000	3 000		3 000	3 000	3 000
59.	Component total		42 000	7 000		8 000	8 500	18 500
99.	Total		619 470	141 470		197 450	145 865	134 685
Overhead (13 %)			80 530					
	Project total		700 000					

H. Annexes

I. WORK PLAN

Activities	Date/ Duration	Responsible Authority	Place	Observations
1. Recruit 5 literacy advisers	4/88	National director	Capital	In the 5 regions
2. Awake public awareness, study local conditions, select and set up centres	4–6/88	Advisors, those in charge of literacy and local population	Regions	
3. Recruit a graphic artist	6/88	National director	Capital	National consultant
4. Conception and elaboration of literacy programmes	6/88	Authors	Regions	
5. Equip centres with teaching and demonstration materials	7/88	Literacy advisors	Villages	
6. Recruiting and training literacy workers	7–8/88	Literacy advisors and those responsible for literacy work	Administrative centres, villages	
7. Recruit one UNV	4–6/88	UNV/Unesco/Government		Arrival of UNV as soon as possible
8. Conduct literacy classes	8/88 to 8/89	Volunteer literacy workers	Villages	
9. Monitor literacy centres	8–12/88	Advisors and literacy organizers	Villages	
10. Technical initiation of the newly-literate	9/88	Advisors and literacy organizers	Sectors	
11. Information, study local conditions, select and set up centres	1–3/89	Advisors, those in charge of literacy and local population	Regions	
12. Retraining literacy instructors	2/89	Advisors and literacy organizers	Sectors	

13. Design and development of literacy teaching materials	4/89	Authors	Regions	
14. Tri-partite review	4/89	Government/UNDP/Unesco	Capital	
15. Recruit a graphic artist	4/89	National director	Capital	National consultant
16. Recruiting and agricultural consultant	4/89	National director	Capital	National consultant
17. Equiping centres with teaching and demonstration materials	5/89	Literacy advisors	Villages	
18. Recruit and train new literacy workers	6/89	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Administrative centres, villages	
19. Conduct literacy class	7/89	Voluntary literacy workers	Villages	
20. Monitor centres	7/89 to 12/91	Advisory and literacy workers	Villages	
21. Recruit a mathematics consultant	8/89	National director	Capital	National consultant
22. Recruit a nutrition consultant	9/89	National director	Capital	National consultant
23. Technical initiation of the newly literate	9/89	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Sectors	
24. Evaluation mission	10/89	Government/UNDP/Unesco	Regions	In-depth evaluation
25. Award 2 grants (for evaluation and post-literacy work)	10–11/89	National director/Unesco	Canada Niger Africa	(1 to a woman)
26. Study tour (1)	10/89	National director/Unesco		
27. Recruit international literacy cosultants (2)	11/89	National director	Capital	(1 post-literacy, 1 evaluation)
28. Awaken public awareness, study local conditions, select and set up centres	1-3/90	Advisors, those in charge of literacy and local population	Regions	
29. Identify needs, select post-literacy centres and literacy instructors	3/90	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Villages	
30. Design and development of literacy and post-literacy teaching material	4/90	Authors	Regions	

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I. Work plan *(continued)*

Activities	Date/ Duration	Responsible Authority	Place	Observations
31. Tri-partite review	4/90	Government/UNDP/Unesco	Capital	
32. Recruit a graphic artist	4/90	National director		National consultant
33. Equip literacy and post-literacy centres with teaching and demonstration material	5/90	Literacy advisors	Villages	
34. Recruit and train new volunteers and instructions for pilot post-literacy centres	6/90	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Sectors	
35. Retraining courses for volunteer literacy workers	7/90	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Sectors	
36. Conduct literacy courses	7/90 to 7/91		Villages	
37. Conduct post-literacy activities centres	8/90		Villages	
38. Retraining courses for post-literacy centre instructors	11/90	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Sectors	
39. Technical initiation of the newly literate	11/90	Literacy advisors	Regions	
40. Awaken public awareness, study local conditions, select and set up centres	1–3/91	Advisors, literacy organizers and local population	Regions	
41. Identify needs, select post-literacy centres and literacy instructors	3/91	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Villages	
42. Tri-partite review	4/91	Government/UNDP/Unesco	Capital	
43. Design and development of literacy and post-literacy teaching material	4/91	Authors	Regions	

44.	Retrain literacy workers and instructors of post-literacy centres	4/91	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Sectors
45.	Equip new literacy and post-literacy centres with teaching and demonstration materials	5/91	Literacy advisors	Villages
46.	Recruit and train new volunteers and instructions for pilot post-literacy centres	6/91	Literacy advisors and literacy organizers	Sectors
47.	Literacy courses and post-literacy activities	7-8/91	Volunteers and literacy instructors	Villages
48.	Final tripartite review	12/91	Government/UNDP/Unesco	Capital

II. TRAINING PROGRAMME

Nature, objet and length of training	1988		1989		1990		1991		TOTAL	
	No. of centres	parti-cipants	No. of centres	parti-cipants	No. of centres	parti-cipants	No. of centres	parti-cipants	No. of centres	parti-cipants
1. *Train literacy workers* Teach participants to run a literacy centre 2 weeks	5	100	5	140	5	160	5	200	20	600
2. *Workshop for the conception and elaboration of literacy* and post-literacy materials 3 weeks	1	20	3	60	1	20			5	100
3. *Literacy training for members of agricultural production groups* Learn to read, write and do simple arithmetic 12 months		1 650		2 400		2 6500		3 300	3 300	10 000
4. *Train support personnel* Improve their supervisory, evaluation and co-operative management and skills 10 days			2	100					2	100
5. *Retraining literacy workers* Provide solutions to teaching problems met in their work 4 days per session			20	240	20	400	20	600	60	1 240

6.	*Training instructors for post-literacy centres* Produce instructors capable of ensuring the functioning of a post-literacy centre 2 weeks			3	60	2	40	5	100
7.	*Continuing training for the newly-literate in experimental centres* Give participants a thorough mastery of already-acquired knowledge 12 months	10	400	20	800	20	800	50	2 000
8.	*Retraining literacy instructors from post-literacy centres* Find adequate solutions to problems met in their work 4 days			60	120	4	80	10	200
9.	*Technical initiation of the newly-literate* Improve their level of knowledge and skills 2 weeks	1	30	2	60	2	60	5	150

III. List of equipment

1. Non-expendable equipment

1 Peugeot 504 estate car
1 7-ton Toyota truck
35 Vespa scooters
10 Suzuki 'Ladies' mopeds
2 duplicating machines
2 typewriters (with national language keyboard)
1 calculating machine
2 16-mm cinema projectors

2. Other equipment

Soap and oil production groups

cutting table, mould
plastic drum
empty galvanized drum
25 l drum
galvanized bucket
plastic bucket
aluminium dish
enamelled dish
trowel
oil drum (200 l)
caustic soda
cast iron pot
knife
galvanized trough
funnel

Agricultural groups

machete
hoe
daba
jute sack
axe
pick
rake
wheelbarrow
watering can
wire fencing
galvanized wire
chicken feed

Craft groups

coloured thread
ball of string
plastic ring
iron ring
wooden ring
iron frame
ball of wool
knitting needles
scissors

IV. STANDARD JOB DESCRIPTION

Job designation: National expert in literacy and post-literacy training

Place of work: Main town, with frequent travel throughout the region

Duties:
The expert will belong to the project team. He will work under the authority of the national project director, in close co-operation with the other members of the project team and with the personnel of the regional Directorate for Social Affairs and the Condition of Women.

The main duty of the expert will be to advise the supervisors and literacy workers in the region on all literacy and post-literacy training activities.

He will assume responsibility for the following activities:

- identification of training and planning needs for project activities in the region
- design and development of literacy and post-literacy programmes;
- design and development of teaching materials;
- design and development of follow-up and evaluation instruments;
- training supervisory staff responsible for literacy and post-literacy work;
- training the centres' students;
- supervising follow-up and evaluation of centres' activities;
- preparing six-monthly activity reports for submission to the national project director.

Qualifications required

- higher level of training in educational science or linguistics;
- preferably, specialization in literacy training and adult education
- practical experience of teaching literacy

Duration: Post to be filled for a period of four years by renewable one year contract

Languages: Knowledge of French and written and spoken fluency in at least one of the national languages used for literacy work.

This book looks at the 500 million women living in rural areas of the Third World who carry a tireless struggle for their survival and that of their families while at the same time playing a vital role in agricultural production, in educating their children and in handing down the traditions of their culture. Occupied from dawn to dusk working the fields, preparing meals, fetching water and fuel, and looking after their children and husbands, they are all marked by poverty, sometimes extreme poverty. And they are all illiterate!

Here, these women are given a face and a voice by Unesco's Krystyna Chlebowska.

Here, the floor is given to these women of the Third World, these rural women who, to escape poverty, silence and exclusion today must take a stand against their illiteracy.

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