

# Literacy of Rural Women And The Mass Media

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**H**UMAN resource development is one of the necessary conditions for all kinds of growth — social, cultural, political and economic. It involves change in knowledge, skills, interests, values and the outlook of the people as a whole and improvement of their health and nutrition.

The one instrument through which these changes can be brought about is education. Education may be formal from the primary to the university level or non-formal such as adult education, correspondence education and distance education.

Education has a direct link with national development. It is, therefore, considered as an investment for national development.

Women constitute about 49 per cent of the total population of Bangladesh. But they are disadvantaged in respect of education. The rate of literacy is about 26 per cent. For women this rate is a low 16.3 per cent.

Statistics show that the difference between male and female literacy rates has increased over the last ninety years. Census reports have it

that the male literacy rate was 10 per cent against a 0.6 per cent female literacy rate in 1901. These rates were 13.9 per cent and one per cent in 1911. Male literacy rate rose to 15.3 per cent in 1921 while female literacy rate rose to 1.8 per cent.

In 1961 male and female literacy rates stood at 29.3 and 10.7 per cent respectively. In 1974 male literacy rate was 29.9 per cent and female literacy rate 13.7 per cent — a difference of 16.2 per cent. From 1981 both the rates increased. The difference between the two rates also increased.

In Bangladesh women are neglected and traditionally bound by social and religious customs. Tradition, culture, social values and superstitions have taught women to accept the role of dependent daughters, wives and mothers, not to assume a role of individuals. Education was not conceived as a necessary input for the effective role of women even in the family, their labour was not measured in economic terms.

The people now have begun to realise that it is profitable to educate women in order to develop them as competent individuals, citizens and work-

ers. About 85 per cent of rural women in Bangladesh are illiterate. They constitute the majority of the illiterates and their number is increasing. Female enrollment is low at every level of education. Drop out rate of females again is higher than that of males.

Official statistics show in 1978 sixty-three per cent of students enrolled in primary schools were boys and 37 per cent girls. By 1983 the situation improved slightly with the enrollment rate of girls rising to 40 per cent.

At the secondary level too the rate of enrollment of girls increased from 25 per cent in 1978 to 27 per cent in 1983. But at the college and university level the enrollment rate of females fell from 19 per cent in 1978 to 15 per cent in 1983.

In order to improve the situation of women and make them self-reliant and useful manpower the women community should be educated properly. It is not possible for the formal system of education alone to provide even functional education to them. According to the 1974 census

only 14% of the women population is covered by formal education system. A large number of women who are not covered by the formal education system or who drop out of the system can be covered by non-formal systems of education such as education through mass media. But what do we mean by the mass media? The mass media are communication channels that bring a message to large number of people at the same time. The mass media generally include radio, television, films, newspapers, periodicals, posters, certain forms of popular entertainment, and any other means of bringing a message to large number of people simultaneously.

Among the mass media radio, television and films are more accessible to the people.

**Radio**  
Radio is a very popular and widely used mass media. It is accessible even to the poor and the illiterate. The advantages of radio are:

1. As a major news source it is widely heard and accepted.
2. Since people can listen in groups, chances are that educational programme will be heard by many.
3. It is relatively cheap and portable.
4. It can be used where

electricity is unavailable.

5. Illiterate people are at no disadvantage with radio.

6. Programmes can be produced cheaply and on a short notice.

7. Programmes can be sustained over a long period.

8. As an entertainment medium, it is psychologically acceptable.

9. Radio is both authoritative and friendly. Most people pay serious attention to what they are told on the radio.

10. Most topics can be taught using radio alone. For language teaching it is particularly effective.

11. Radio can provide up-to-date information.

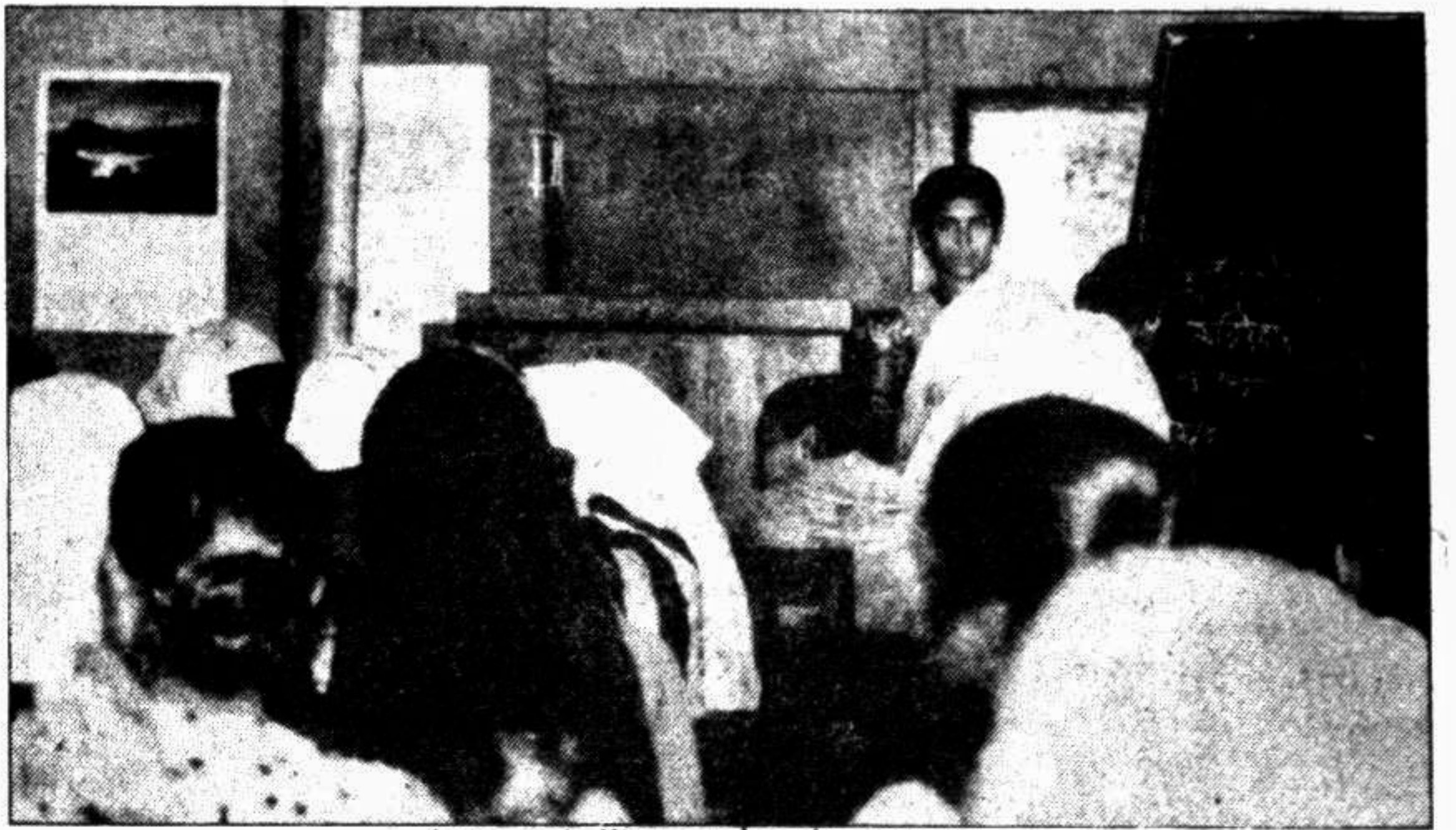
12. It can deal with local problem which may be agricultural and social.

**Television**

Television shares many features with radio.

Advantages of television in providing education to the rural women include:

- 1) It can reach a very large audience.
- 2) It is widely accepted.
- 3) It can teach most subjects well.



A women's literacy class in progress

In Bangladesh, where a large number of people are to be educated in a limited time, radio may be used more effectively than other mass media. Considering the potentiality of radio and many problems associated with education, proper planning is necessary to provide education to a large number of rural people especially the women. Programmes may be designed according to the needs of the rural women and may be broadcasted in a time convenient for them.

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- 1) It can reach a very large audience.
- 2) It is widely accepted.
- 3) It can teach most subjects well.

4) It is both authoritative and friendly.

5) It is attractive.

6) As an entertainment medium it is psychologically attractive.

7) As a visual medium it allows for creative thinking.

8) It is useful for teaching practical work.

The weaknesses of the television are:

(1) It is expensive and not easily available.

(2) It requires highly trained personnel for production and broadcasting of programmes.

(3) It provides one way communication.

Although television has some weaknesses it may be used effectively in educating rural women. Some popular forms of entertainment such as songs, dance performances, puppet shows, popular drama,

street opera may be telecast with definite objectives.

**Film**

Film may be used to motivate and educate rural women. This entertainment medium is accepted by both literate and illiterate people. As an entertainment medium it is acceptable psychologically. It may be prepared in different languages. It can be tested and modified in the production stage.

It has its limitations too. It requires electrical supply, projection equipment, trained production and operation personnel. It can deal only with general themes.

Our radio and television mostly broadcast entertainment and commercial programmes. Educational programme occupies a little place in the overall time schedule of our TV and Radio.

## NGOs Can Seek Assistance For Mass Literacy Work

has prepared guidelines to extend financial assistance to non-governmental organisations for participation in the Mass Education Programme of the government.

The guidelines named 'subvention criteria' aims to encourage and mobilise non-governmental organisations, provide incentives to stimulate extensive action at the grass roots level by small organisations, and to involve non-governmental specialised institutions to contribute to quantitative improvement for expansion of the Mass Education Programme.

According to the guidelines, financial assistance is made available for taking responsibility in well defined areas for eradication of illiteracy and organising post-literacy and follow-up programmes in a planned and concerted manner.

undertaking technical reviews development activities needed to support the programme in certain areas like production of literacy and post-literacy activities, training of teachers, supervisors, organisers and functionaries.

Saifuddin Ahmed, Director of Mass Education told the Daily Star that a total of 56 NGOs are getting assistance from the government and international agencies like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The Mass Education / Project of the government processes applications for subvention. Funds extended from the government for an organization range from Taka ten thousand to one lakh. UNICEF has provided a maximum of Taka 56 lakh to one organisation.

Given below are the guidelines:

Registered (under 1961 act) non-governmental organisations, Public Trusts and non-profit making organisations would be eligible for subvention. Ordinarily, agencies which are not bona-fide as legal entities would not be eligible.

Organizations having a proper Constitution/Memorandum of Association giving its aims, objectives and functions.

Organizations having a properly constituted Managing/Governing body with its powers and roles clearly defined in its Constitution.

Organization which is not to be run for the benefit of an individual or body of individuals.

Organizations that do nothing which may incite anti-national action and

Eligible organizations must have been in existence for at least 2 years for consideration for subvention.

**Pattern of Assistance**

The eligible non-governmental organisations may be granted subvention according to the following pattern

- a) Programme costs
- b) Other cost of the programme

Ordinarily the same pattern will apply to all eligible non-governmental organizations in the country.

**Administration**

A SUBVENTION COMMITTEE constituted by the Ministry of Education considers all applications and proposals fulfilling the conditions of eligibility.

The National Mass Education Programme Office of the Ministry of Education serves as secretariate with the Executive Director Mass Education Programme as its Member Secretary.

All applications and proposals for subvention under

Mass Education Programme addressed to the Secretary Ministry of Education are received by the National Mass Education Project Office, Ganobhabon, Shere Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.

The subvention cell of the National Mass Education office co-ordinates and keeps track of all administrative matters for consideration of Subvention Committee having sanctions issued and communicated to the concerned non-governmental organizations and having the funds released.

**The Procedure**

a) Application: Any organization eligible to receive subvention may submit an application in a prescribed form.

b) Duration: Subvention for a project may be proposed for such duration as the applying organization may consider most appropriate, but not exceeding a two year period. The

project duration can be extended depending on evaluation of performance.

c) Release of Grant: On approval of a project the grant shall be released to the organization. On an annual basis in two instalments. The first instalment shall be released after the issue of sanction. After 75 per cent of the 1st instalment is utilised the organization may make a request for release of the second instalment along with a progress report and statement of expenditure.

**Area of work**

The project should be run by the organization as far as possible in a compact and contiguous area. It will take responsibility for eradication of illiteracy from that area within a specific time-frame. As far as possible, the project should be undertaken in a Union Parishad area, but for the sake of viability of project and to conform

to the concept of compact and contiguous area, a project falling within two adjacent Union Parishads may also be allowed. In case of two organizations running projects in one Upazila their respective areas of operation should be clearly demarcated.

**Monitoring**

All non-governmental organizations operating mass education projects under subvention either from government or any other donor agency will be required to comply with the system of reporting as issued by the Mass Education Office. While initial reports and monthly reports may be sent to Upazila Parishads for the villages concerned under their areas soon after commencement of projects, quarterly progress report should be sent to National Mass Education Programme Office at the end of July, October, January and April.

## 13 Teachers, 18 Institutions Get Education Week Awards

Star Report

The Education Ministry has awarded prizes to 18 educational institutions, 13 teachers and two education administrators for their outstanding performances in the field of education for the year 1990.

The awards, given during the national education week, observed on June 2 and 3. The week is observed every year.

The heads of the award-winning institutions; teachers and education administrators received their prizes at a function held at the Shilpyakala Academy. Education Minister Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury distributed the prizes and certificates.

Education institutions which received awards from the Dhaka metropolitan area are: Lalmeta Women's College, Monipur High School, Udayan Viddalay and Madinatul Uhum M.E. Girls Senior Madrasa.

Prize winning institutions of the Dhaka division are: Narayanganj Government Women's College, Rani Bilash Moni Government Boys High School, Gazipur, A.V.J.M. Government Girls High School, Munshiganj; and Jameya Kashemia Fazil Madrasa, Narasingdi.

**Khulna division**

Rotary Madhyamik Viddalay, Khulna, Barguna Government Girls School, Barguna, and Kushtia Kuautul Islam Aliya Madrasa, Kushtia.

**Rajshahi division**

Rajshahi University School, Rajshahi, Salema Girls High School, Rangpur, and Btraidaha Syed Karam Ali Darus Sunnat Senior Madrasa, Puthia.

**Chittagong division**

Comilla Government Women's College, Sylhet Government Pilot High School, Our Lady Fatema Girls High School, Comilla, and Baitus Sharaif Adarsha Madrasa.

Chittagong.  
List of the award winning teachers of Dhaka metropolitan area are: Abdus Shaheed, Principal of Kabi Nazrul College, and Md Jahirul Huq, Headmaster of Mohammadpur Government High School.

**Dhaka division**

Dr. Mohammad Abdul Jabbar, Principal of M.M. Ali Government College, Kagmari, Tangail; Md Nurul Islam, Headmaster of Rani Bilashmoni Government High School, Gazipur and Md. Abdul Hamid, Principal of S.S. Madrasa, Gopalganj.

**Khulna division**

Prof. Moazzem Hossain Miah, Principal of Patakhali Government College, Abdul Mannan, Headmaster, Borhanuddin Madhyamik Viddalay, Bhola; and Abdul Hannan Mohammad Salam

Ullah, Professor of Bhola Darus Hadis Aliya Madrasah, Bhola.

**Rajshahi division**

Dr. Mohammad Azizul Huque, Principal, Sirajganj Government College, and Khandakar Mohammad Anwar Hossain, Principal Had Ahmad Ali Aliya Madrasah.

**Chittagong division**

Dr. Mohammad Abdus Sabur Chowdhury, Principal, Chittagong Government College, Lutfar Rahman Khan, Headmaster, Matiranga Pilot High School, Rangamati, and Abul Abbas Mohammad Abdul Kuddus Bhuayan, Principal of Feni Aliya Madrasah.

Two education administrators who received prizes are: Abu Mohammad, director of NEARER and Abdus Sobhan, Chairman of National Curriculum and Textbook Board.



## Increase Allocations For Education

Star Report

The central programme of the Education Week-1991 was held in Dhaka on June 2 and 3 with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia pledging to universalise education and free campus from terrorism.

During the 2-day programme educationists, teachers and educational administrators closely examined the government's education policy, its successes and failures.

After the formal inauguration of the programme on June 2, a seminar was organised. Prof. M. Shaahul Huq, Chairman, University Grants Commission presented a paper on education and democracy. Education Secretary Mr. A.N.M. Eusuf presided over the seminar.

Dr. Abdullah Al Muti Sharafuddin presided over an open discussion on education that was organised after the seminar.

The programme was concluded through a prize giving ceremony on June 3. Thirteen best teachers, 18 best institutions and two best educational administrators were awarded prizes for their performances in the year 1990.

Education secretary A.N.M. Eusuf told the inaugural function of the two-day programme that it was not possible to reduce the rate of illiteracy significantly only by relying on the compulsory primary education programme of the government.

He said that in 1981 23.8 per cent of the people of five years and above were literates the rate of literacy was 29 per cent among the people of 15 years and above at the time. In 1990 these rates stood at 29 per cent and 33 per cent respectively.

Explaining the situation he said out of a total population of five crore in the age group of 11 to 35 years, 3.5 crore were illiterates. 1.14 crore out of 1.52

crore children in the primary school age group go to schools. Eight crore out of the 11.5 crore people of Bangladesh are now illiterates.

Again the main problem of education in Bangladesh was not only enrollment but also retention of students in school. A high drop out rate turns a high enrollment rate meaningless. The government has taken a number of steps to reduce the drop out rate. These include waiving of annual examination for promoting students of class I to class II, reservation of 60 posts of primary teachers for women, and strengthening of school inspection.

The education secretary urged the government to increase allocations to the education sector which is now only 1.9 per cent of the Gross National Product. Allocations to the sector is 3.5 per cent of G.N.P. in neighbouring countries, he said.

## DU Newsletter

The classes of new first year students of Arts, Social Science, Commerce and Law faculties of Dhaka University began of June 1.

The date of starting the classes of Science and Biological Science faculties have not yet been fixed.

**Chair to be installed**

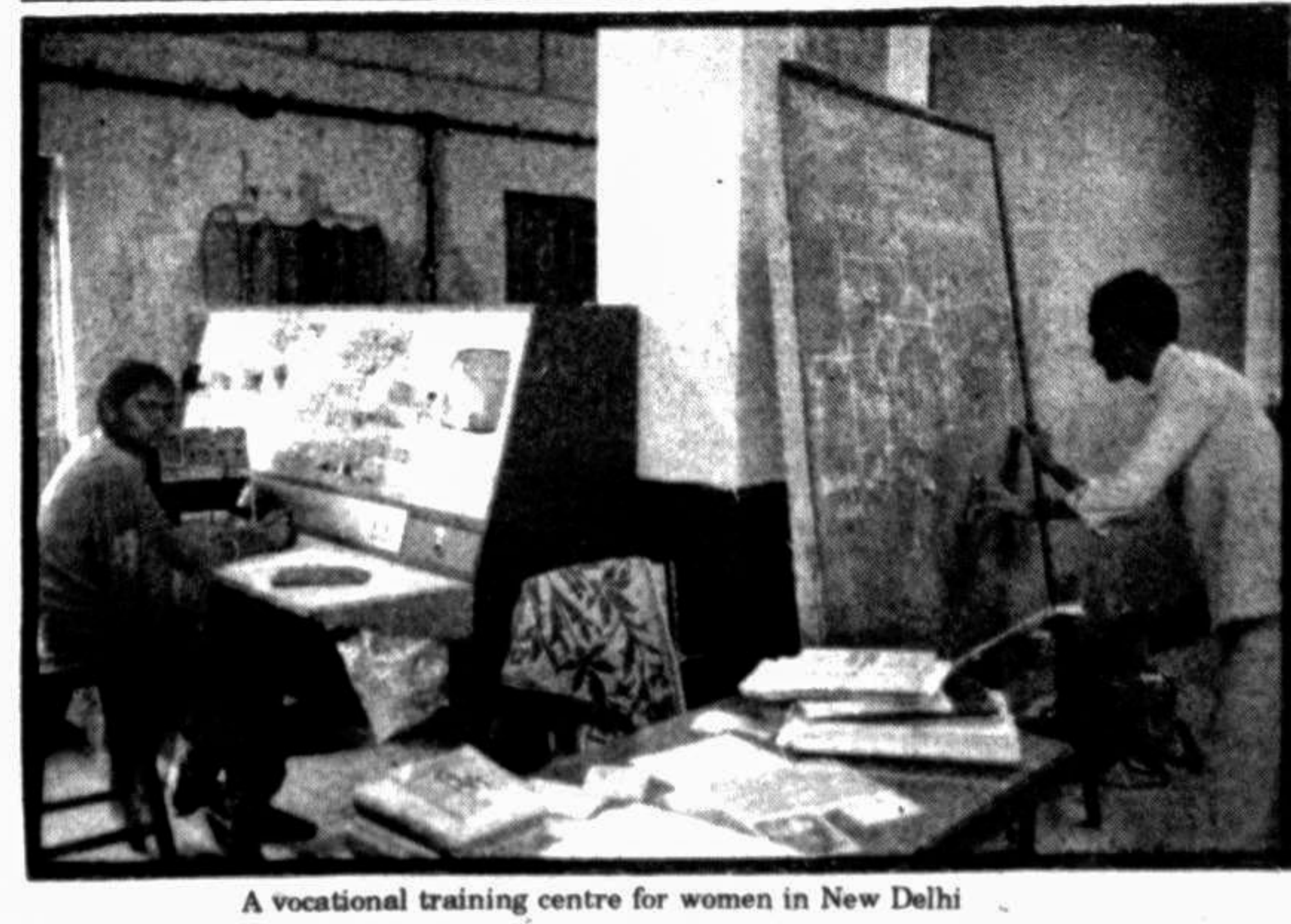
A cheque for Taka ten lakh was handed over to Prof. Maniruzzaman Miah, Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University for installing a 'chair' in the department of Physics naming it after late Prof. Abdur Rab Chowdhury.

Justice Abdul Wadud

Chowdhury, Abdur Khaleque Chowdhury and Umme Ayesha Khatun handed over the cheque on June 2, on behalf of their brother Prof. Abdur Latif Chowdhury. Dhaka University has received this kind of donation for the first time in its 70-year history.

Dinajpur District Students' Welfare Association donated a good amount of relief materials to the Vice-Chancellor for the Central Relief Fund of the University.

The relief materials included clothings of different types and an amount of Taka 3000, which the association collected from the inhabitants of Dinajpur residing in Dhaka.



A vocational training centre for women in New Delhi

### UNESCO Books

**O Mass media codes of ethics and councils**

A comparative international study on professional standards

by J. Clement Jones  
(Reports and papers on mass communication, special issue)  
1980, 80 pp.  
ISBN 92-3-101715-2  
12 FF

**O News values and principles of cross-cultural communication**

by Alcino Louis da Costa, Yehia Aboubakr, Pran Chopra and Fernando Reyes Matta  
(Reports and papers on mass communication, 85)  
1980, 51 pp., tables  
ISBN 92-3-101697-0  
10 FF

**O Organizing educational broadcasting**

by David Hawkrige and John Robinson  
1982, 302 pp.  
ISBN 92-3-101878-7  
100 FF

Co-published with Croom Helm Ltd, London, who have exclusive sales rights in the United Kingdom

**O Small printing houses and modern technology**

(Monographs on communication technology and utilization, 6)  
1981, 80 pp., illus.  
ISBN 92-3-101637-7  
16 FF

**O International flow of television programmes**

by Tapio Varis  
(Reports and papers on mass communication, 100)  
1986, 62 pp., figs., tables  
ISBN 92-3-102365-9  
20 FF

Although most of the figures in this report must be regarded as indicative rather than precise, they still give a reliable and comparative view of the present trends in the global traffic of television programmes. The results of this worldwide survey on television programmes will be of particular interest to policy-makers and media specialists who are concerned by the increasing gap between those who have access to information and means of using it and those who do not.

**O Latest statistics on radio and television broadcasting**

(Statistical reports and studies, No. 29)  
1987, 132 pp., tables  
ISBN 92-3-102468-X  
40 FF

Contains valuable statistical information on broadcasting throughout the world.

**O Many voices, one world**

Towards a new more just and more efficient world information and communication order  
Communication and society today and tomorrow  
1988 (reprint) (first pub. 1980), xx+312 pp., figs., tables  
ISBN 92-3-101802-7  
95 FF

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