What ILO can Do for Bangladesh | Helping the jobless find work

dietate terms to the member national workshop on countries, it can and does exthe connections between international labour amine the manner in which standards and technical covarious countries carry out their obligations under ratified operation was organised at Dhaka on 12 February, by the conventions. They also pointed out to the two listening jour-International Labour nalists that there was a com-Organisation (ILO), in cooperation with the Ministry mittee of experts for the apof Labour and Manpower. The plication of conventions and recommendations, consisting intention was to study and talk about how international labour of outstanding jurists, whose work it was to present their standards could help endeavfindings in an independent ours to enhance the socio-economic development, and how labour standards are promoted There was also a more gen by technical co-operation proeral review that was made at gramme and projects. Before the ILO conference by a triparthe workshop actually took place, there were a series of

viding technical co-operation services in Bangladesh. Speaking to Dr Leonardo Leonardi from Italy. Mr Groman David from France and Dr Shinichi Ago from Japan, it was learnt that ILO was an outgrowth of social thinking in the 19th century. It was also gathered that the structure of the ILO is composed of a yearly general conference elaborating ILO standards of a governing body and of a secretariat called the International Labour Office. The particularity of the ILO was that it was tripartite in character i.e workers, employers and the governments participated in decision making in the various organs of the organisation. They stressed that the main purpose of the ILO was to improve the conditions of life and work by building up

discussions with the ILO ex-

perts and staff at present pro-

and practice. One understood at the parlev that each convention was a legal instrument regulating some aspect of labour administration, social welfare or human rights. Ratification involved a double obligation for a member state.

a comprehensive code of law

It was both a commitment to apply the provisions of the convention, and a pointer to the willingness to accept an amount of international supervision. Both conventions and recommendations contain standards and present a model and incentive for national legislation and utilisation in various countries.

The experts pointed out that although the ILO cannot

HE first woman to start singing had a light, swcet voice, with a clear, almost crystal purity. The others, seated in the field facing her, joined in the chorus, a bit raggedly at first, but growing in strength and unity as they warmed up to the

"We will not forget you, Tsitsi," they sang, while their babies slept on in their laps. "We came to repay the kindness, for showing up how to be

When the song came to an end, they raised clenched fists and shouted Pamberi (forward). The monthly meeting of the Nhamoinenahro (end to property) Cooperative Everybody got up and gath-

ered around Tsitsi Dzumbira, for whom they had sung their paean of praise and thanks. "You have tried well," they said, helping her to her feet. Six months pregnant and

despite the hazardous road on a recent visit her can had been swept into the river by a flash flood-Dzumbira had driven to this beautiful but arid region 200 kilometres from Harare, the capital.

As a project coordinator for ENDA (Environment, Development and Action), a non-governmental organisation that works with grassroots groups, she was the first person to make contact with the cooperative in 1989.

"What impressed me was their togetherness and their determination to make life a little easier for themselves, she said. "When I asked them what they needed most their reply was unanimous - a grinding mill.

With ENDA's help, the women started what was to become a successful milling business, converting maize into flour with a machine-operated grinding mill. Now, after only six months, they

were earning \$300 a month. Said Dzumbira : "The women overcame every obstacle to start their own business from resistance on the part of husbands to their own lear of borrowing money and the

banks' reluctance to land it to them." Maize is the staple food in Zimbabwe. As elsewhere in Africa, it is the women who plant and weed the crop. During the harvesting season, the sounds of threshing, winnowing and pounding float across the fields. Now a new sound has been added to these

roar of the grinding mill. Although commercial grinding mills existed in the region before the arrival of this one in Nhamoinenharo, they were few and far between. To reach the nearest, women had to walk four hours - often to find it

more traditional ones - the

by Fayza Haq

tions, out of which Bangladesh had voluntarily ratified 31 and freely implemented them, while 179 complementary recommendations supplemented the former with tech nical guidelines. They stressed that a considerable programme of technical co-operation in various fields was being pro vided by the ILO, in cooperation with the government agencies, employers and workers' organisations.

Dr Leonardo Leonardi said that one of the objects of the generally provided community

He continued that the ILO had a training centre in Turin. Two to three fellowships every year were given for each member country. ILO has been supporting institutes in Bangladesh which were, for example, engaged in productivity improvement. He added that there were training courses for subjects such as computers, and vocational training organised in Geneva and nominees from countries like Bangladesh attended these courses every year.



Dr. Ago, Mr Groman and Dr Leonardi at Sheraton lobby

tite committee for the application of the conventions and recommendations that are obtained after public discussion. and on the basis of the report of the committee of experts. Since '64 there had been more than 1,850 changes to bring national law in conformity with ratified conventions, as a response to the observations of the ILO.

Since World War II, the experts explained, the ILO's technical cooperation has increased rapidly, in close cooperation with the United Nation bodies such as the UNDP and the UNFPA. They elaborated that there were at present 172 international labour conven-

discussions was to provide information. "In the first place the country determines its own aim. This is although", he stressed "that ILO, over 70 vears had set international labour standards and helped with technical cooperation.

Mr David Groman men tioned about the Bangladesh Maritime Training Institute which was supported by ILO programmes. He pointed out that the ILO had been supporting the country for many years and helped also in developing the Hotel and Catering Institute. Mr Groman contin ued that ILO helped in voca tional training, management rehabilitation projects and

They No Longer Grind

Their Lives Away

Mr Groman stressed that 90% of the ILO technical cooperation funds come from outside the organisation itself. He said UNDP provided half of it while the World Bank provided 40% of it. The rest 10% per cent which is provided by ILO comes to \$20 million a year. The main beneficiaries, he said were the workers, employers' organisations and the department of labour in each

He added. "We are happy with the participation of Bangladesh and there are nationals of your country on the staff of the organisation. We listen carefully to what you have to tell us and try to assist you,

however many problems should be sorted out by the people of the country themselves. We have, in all, four offices in the Subcontinent and ten in Asia. At the moment, the Bangkok office is headed by Assistant Director-General Mr T Nakamura. We were primartly here to provide infor-

mation" Dr Leonardi, discussing the modus operands of the ILO, explained that there were about 150 member states represented by tripartite delegations, consisting of the government, employers and workers. He said, "Each delegation comprises four delegates, two of them being from the government, one from the side of the employers and one from the workers"

He added, "The spirit is to help the country and not to judge. Dr Leonardi has been working for the ILO for 35 years and has visited a great number of countries, apart from the Subcontinent and the Far East, in connection with his work. Mr Groman said that he too travelled a lot. He has 24 years experience with the ILO. Dr Ago was a professor of International Law before he joined the ILO and has been working for it for 10 years.

Giving their impression of Bangladesh Dr Leonardi said that he liked Dhaka very much and felt more secure in the streets of Dhaka at night than he did in many other cities. The country is one with great culture, philosophy and art. 1 have great admiration for Rabindranath Tagore, and I regret I cannot read him in Bangla," he said.

Mr Groman said, "In Geneva have come across a lot of Bangladeshis. Unfortunately media coverage of Bangladesh is not always positive. But I personally find a tremendous amount of optimism. There is much poverty in the country but this alone should not be projected".

As for Dr Ago, he said 'I feel that democracy is really functioning in Bangladesh. Apart from that, I cannot judge Bangladesh by seeing Dhaka for a few fleeting hours. One cannot assess Japan by being in Tokyo alone. We've simply being shuttling between hotels".

Dzimbura, prepared to make the long drive back to Harare and the sky was the colour of iron. The road that disappeared and reappeared over the gently undulating landscape was lined by fields of maize standing ten feet high in well-tended rows.

From one of the fields a man came running, sloshing his ways along the water-filled furrows with a bowl over his head like a helmet to hole off

As he approached the group standing near the car he recognised Tsitsi Dzimbura. "I have three wives in Simbamukaka co-operative down the road," he said proudly, "and I speak on behalf of the husbands when tell you that we are actually stronger because of the strength the co-operative has given to our wives."

Then as the rain began to subside, he disappeared over the fields, Tsitsi Dzimbura started the engine of her mudspattered car, and the women walked off along the path towards their milling shed.

- GEMINI NEWS Ruth Massey is a photojournalist who works for the United Nations Development Programme.

by Regine Pachner

job creation officers appointed in each administrative district.

tes problems - for the

and for the community as a

whole. For the jobless,

exclusion from the working

world means isolation, social

demotion, waning self-confi-

dence. For the community, un-

employment brings huge hid

den costs and a labour market

in which a widening gulf exists

between the kind of jobs on of-

fer and the pool of available

foster social and political dis-

content. Over the last eight

years, the city-state of

Hamburg in the Federal

Republic of Germany has been

trying to ease the unemploy-

ment situation by means of a

special employment policy

programme. Originally a local

project, it has now been

adopted by other states in the

north of the Federal Republic

and seems likely, in the long

run, to be launched as a joint

northern initiative partly

financed from the European

stands at 12 per cent of the

working population. 38 per

cent of the jobless have been

unemployed for more than a

year, 27 per cent for more

than two years and 41 per cent

are ineligible for unemploy-

ment benefit or unemployment

of those out of work have not

completed any form of voca

tional training brings the

problem sharply into focus:

For this reason, Hamburg

turned the tables in 1982 with

the launch of an integrated

employment and vocational

qualification programme. The

labour market was decentral-

ized and regionalized. Job cre-

ation schemes were set up and

qualifications are needed.

The fact that 53 per cent

Unemployment in hamburg

social fund.

In addition, dole queues

qualified labour.

person out of work

On the assumption that anyone with a job is also willing to learn, recipients of social assistance are offered free vocational training alongside jobs governed by regular terms of employment. Young people in particular, including foreign residents, have so far been among the principal beneficia ries of this scheme.

The number of jobs offered by the "Hamburger Arbeits-Beschaftigungs-gesellschaft" (Hamburg Job Creation Institute) has increased ten-

Unemployment in Hum burg stands at 12 per cent of the working population. 38 per cent of the jobless have been unemployed for more than a year, 27 per cent for more than two years and 41 per cent are ineligible for employment benefit or unemployment assistance.

fold in the last seven years. The foundation "Berufliche Bildung - Arbeitslosenwerk provides vocational training for special categories of the unemployed and the "Gesellschaft fur Okologie and Technologie" (Society for Ecology and Technology) offers model jobs designed to meet new requirements resulting from shifts structural employment.

The long-term unemployed find new career prospects in old people's and nursing islation has hit ZEBRA's bud-homes or work and obtain the it has in one year enable qualifications under local job creation schemes.

A special place within the

programme has been occupied over the last two years by ZEBRA, an initiative devoted to the vocational reintegration of the unemployed. Mainly set up to help the long-term unemployed, it runs four parallel operations. The first is for 18 to 25-year-old, offering individual counselling and educational planning followed by part-time work in social services, industry, construction or administration and a two-year course leading to basic or secondary school qualifications.

The second operation embraces industrial and commercial courses, in which foundations are laid for retraining in the field of environmental technology, while the third focuses on information and communication technologies, enabling candidates to obtain qualifications required by employers in the service sector and administra-

Because ZEBRA also offers its charges a socio-psychological back-up service, it runs courses for trainers, foremen and pedagogical personnel, grooming candidates simultaneously for posts within the ZEBRA organization itself. The programmes offer work and training on a weekly rotating basis or in longer block arrangements and run for between two and five years.

All qualifications acquired by participants are officially recognized. Subsequent coopcration between public sponsors and the business community generally results in candidates being taken onto payrolls as regular employees. Although recent federal leg-

the city-state of Hamburg to reduce its jobless total by 8 (IN Press) per cent.

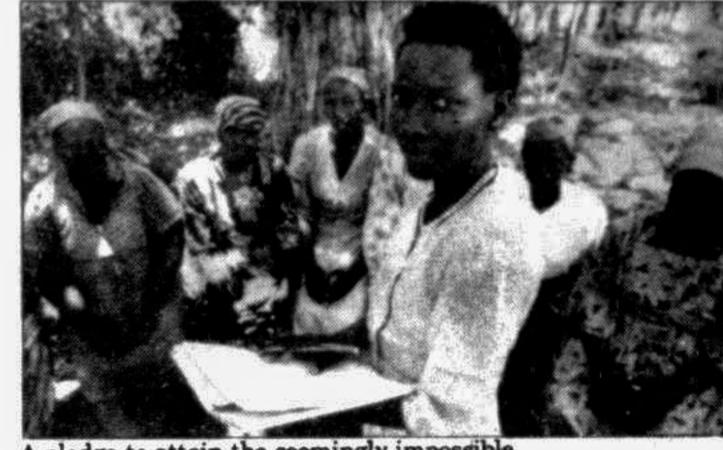
Undaunted She Makes a Mission of Her Job

At 31 years of age Mary O'Kelo, was the first woman bank manager appointed in Kenya - at one of Barclay's main branches, encountering the unbelieving stares of her customers, many of whom were not only male, but white and almost twice her age.

She recalls her first job as an assistant. She arrived at the bank and was ushered into the manager's office, a white man. "He couldn't accept it. As soon as he saw me he reached for the phone and in my presence complained loudly to the head office. He obviously got nowhere. But he slammed down the phone, turned to me and said, hoping perhaps this would finish me off: We have no totlet for you."

It takes more than a rough remark to put Mary O'Kelo out of her stride. She says she spent most of her years at Barclay's "fighting guerilla warfare in a diplomatic dress. "I smuggled a lot of women clients into the bank - people whom the bank wouldn't lend to. In those days a bank insisted a women had to have a lawyer at her side before she got a loan, to make sure she understood the conditions of signing. My superiors used to make their annual reports on my performance saying things like 'she's intelligent but spends her time on non-essen-

Pushing women forward was not what Mary considered inessential. She started Barclay's Women's association,



A pledge to attain the seemingly impossible

partly to help employees think about their own situation but also to look at the problems of women clients. "For example, since they often couldn't fulfil the bank's condition of having a formal introduction to the bank, we'd introduce them."

"But by 1978 I pushed so hard I did start to fear for my career. So I started a school on the side - with a loan from the bank! The school still runs profitably with 500 pupils, boys and girls.

years at Barclay's were happy and satisfying ones. But today she is Vice-President of "Women's World Banking", an unusual global group with headquarters in New York that helps women get started in business. So far it has made appear to have a long-term 70,000 loans virtually all in the Third World, mainly for mi-

bicycle repair shop to buying a

Overall, she insists, her crobusinesses, anything from a 11?"

Mary travels the world, improving management in her bank's many affiliates and training staff. "Women are good businesses. They are good credit risks. We are needed as mediators to reduce the cost. We organise women into groups. We prepare bankable proposals. This helps lower the administrative cost and then they become attractive to a commercial bank."

At the end of the day she is optimistic. "We still need a critical mass of women in rural areas to facilitate change. To get that we need political commitment. We need political will. But I feel sad our leaders are so confused. They don't perspective or sense of direction I wonder if I'll live to see

Women Must Share Development Boom

ITTY E have no food in kitchens," wailed Inderbai, a woman farmer who lives near the Indira Gandhi Canal in Rajasthan state, India.

Her complaint may seem strange, the Canal area having been the beneficiary of a development project that has brought more work opportunities and bigger incomes. But it is true. Inderbai ex

plained, at a workshop held to look into the situation of local women, that their harvests of groundaut and mustard go straight to the market, and the money used to repay debts incurred in tilling the land. The workshop was organ-

ised by Urmul, a rural health and development trust which also conducted a study of the impact on women's lives of the Indira Gandhi Canal Development Project.

The general finding of the study is that while incomes in the project area have more than doubled, the prosperity is not reflected in the health and nutritional status women and children. For women, the workload

has even increased. They now have to do housework and child-rearing singlehanded. relocation having broken down the support structure provided by relatives and covillagers. The shift in the

economy of the development area from pasturing to irrigated farming has placed more work in women's hands.

While men's work has gradually become mechanised (like levelling and ploughing). women's work (like weeding, turning soil, clearing the sand. covering the crop and harvesting) remains largely manual.

With irrigated agriculture, there has been a sharp decline in the availability of fodder for livestock. The indiscriminate

fodder have been replaced by

burden of responsibility is

falling, as never before, on

young girls. With both parents

out in the fields -now cul-

tivable the year round with ir-

rigation — it is the young girls

keep house and look after

nor daughter benefits from

improved nutrition. The re-

placement of traditional food

crops by cash crops has de-

prived them even of their sta-

ple diet. And they no longer

However, neither mother

The study noted that the

cash crops like cotton.

small siblings.

keep that cattle to have a substantial supply of milk.

At the Urmul workshop, it was pointed out that nuclear families formed with the breakdown of the larger traditional family structures -- have moved into single houses which are two to three kilometres apart.

There is no one to share joys and sorrows with. We have become extremely lonely. In the old days we would meet at the village well but now a fort-

Development, to be meaningful, should not bypass women, much less add to their burdens.

night may to by without conuse of tractors has destroyed tact with another woman," said grass plots. Traditional crops Mohini, also a farmer. which provided substantial

If anyone falls ill or is due to deliver a baby, neither medical help nor the comforting presence of another woman is within easy reach.

There are no schools near the fields. A non-formal education centre was opened, but families are reluctant to send their daughters there.

Girls tending cattle or on the way to school had been raped, said Inderbai. In two rape cases which ended in pregnancy, the parents had to pay a hefty sum for an abortion. One girl, who was sexually assaulted on her way to school

and later got married, was left by her husband when he learned that she had such an experience.

"In these circumstances, we would much rather keep our girls at home," said Inderbai.

Researchers at the workshop clarified that their aim was not to belittle the benefits of the Indira Gandhi Canal Development Project but to seek a strategy of development in which women shared the boom of prosperity.

A study by the Institute for Development Studies at Jaipur City does reveal positive effects of the Canal project on the women. With the breaking up of joint families, it says. women have gained more independence. Many have begun to acquire a central place in family decision-making.

Agencies responsible for the rehabilitation of villagers should provide health and schooling facilities in the complex, to be run by people in the community.

Since the use of tractors is destroying grass and tress, authorities 'should reserve certain areas for fodder and fuelwood cultivation, workshop participants suggested.

If development is to be meaningful, women should not be the victims of its byproducts, they stressed.

-Depth news Women's

by Ruth Massey broken down when they got came from the United Nations the new mills. Fund for Women (UNIFEM). which agreed to provide a If the mill was operating, they would then spend hours \$250,000 loan to help the Nhamoineneharo group as well queuing for their turn, which often meant making the return as two other co-operatives in Wedza province - Nyenyedzi journey next day. The lucky (shining star) and key-drawn cart, but most car-

ones travelled by ox-or don-

Simbamukaka (inexhaustible

on usage and maintenance of

A maintenance team of two women selected by each group was taught how to take the mill apart completely and reassemble it an how to clean and grease the machinery, avoiding the danger of each

In many parts of Africa women still spend long hours grinding maize between two stones to produce just small amounts of flour. Grinding mills are few and often far away. One group of women in rural Zimbabwe had to walk miles to the nearest one and then queued till it was too late to walk home the same night. Now all that has changed for them. Gemini News Service reports how it happened.

ried their heavy loads in sacks or buckets on their heads.

Margaret Magaba, chairperson of the Nhamoineneharo group, said: "We usually ended up doing what we had always done, grinding the maize between two stones. That meant spending two or three hours to produce just a small amount of

flour. Now it takes three minutes to grind two full sacks." After Dzumbira's first visit and interviews with the group in 1989, ENDA helped them but land from the local district council. Using their savings from the sale of vegetables grown on family plots, they hired a builder to construct the milling shed. Funding to

purchase the grinding mill

energy) - to buy mills and set up revolving loan funds, which the groups manage themselves.

Meanwhile, village community workers distributed training manuals and conducted workshops in starting a new business. Classes were held in financial management, budgeting, and record-keeping as well as agricultural production and food processing tech-

nologies. Like most rural women. they had never borrowed money from banks or financial institutions and the thought frightened them, so a lot of time was spent educating the group about credit and encouraging them to take it. Much attention was given to training

user leaving these tasks to someone else until the machine broke down.

"We started million on 7 November 1990," says Mrs Mugaba, "charging Z \$1 (30 US cents) for each bucket of corn milled - half the price changed at a commercial mill. Now that word has spread, we get an average of 50 customers

Millet, sorghum and wheat are milled at the same price. In November and December the co-operative averaged \$330 a month. Once the harvest is in the granaries, each co-operative will be able to

make up to \$700 a month. It was raining by the time



Members of the cooperative meet to discuss about the new grinding mill.