

# A Woman Conquers Odds

by Syeda Zakia Ahsan

JUDGING from societal norms prevalent in Bangladesh the dominance of the male over female is a common factor in rural Bangladesh. And that this fact plays a vital role in rural households is amply demonstrated in the lives of women we undertake to study.

Sabila Begum from Anupampur, Charghat, Rajshahi, is the daughter of Musammal Haq, a landless peasant. Her Mother Sakina Begum is the mother of eight children. Sabila has five sisters and two brothers and has thus lived a hard life since childhood. Sabila had hardly seen solvency in her prime, leave alone adequacy in clothing, food, leaving no scope for proper education. As a result Sabila received no formal education. Moreover she was married off at an early age, as is the normal custom in Bangladesh. She had hardly seen her two children grow up when her husband decided to remarry. Thus Sabila got separated and would now have to try to be solvent on her own.

Sabila's life seemed to be surrounded by a vacuum that could not be removed. She could not fathom as to how she would be able to feed her son

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of the "Anupampur Women Development Society" and enrolled herself in the "Silk Reeling and Spinning group." She soon became an active member of the group and started attending weekly meetings. Sabila slowly learnt the rules of running a samity and how to maintain ledgers and registers.

She also diligently contributed Taka three per month

which was expected of her as "Samity Savings". Sabila works regularly in the "Silk Reeling and Spinning Production Unit" Sabila's bearing is more reassuring now and her attitude towards life has changed.

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Sabila can now see a ray of hope in the horizon. Under the auspices of the ILO project mentioned above, Sabila received a three weeks' indepth training on Silk Reeling and Spinning at the Rajshahi Sericulture Research and Training Institute, Rajshahi, in

1991. It was the first time that women dwelling in the area were trained in this trade.

Sabila was apprehending whether women's participation in this kind of trade would be accepted socially. But fortunately it was and no elders of community leaders had any comments to the contrary. The main reason being that if women from Anupampur could be trained in this trade, they could be economically solvent and become active financial contributors to family income.

Silk Reeling and Spinning is a sophisticated technology and women in the area had hardly heard of this trade, leave alone being specially trained in it. The training that Sabila received had equipped her with the technological know-how of the trade. With the proficiency attained Sabila should be able to earn Taka 2000 (\$50) per month by working 8 hours a day at the "Silk Reeling and Spinning Unit". This should suffice to educate both her thirteen-year son and fifteen-year old daughter. Perhaps if luck permits her daughter could also master the art and prepare herself for solvent living without much problems.

# Masulita Makes a Comback

by I. Rajeswary

THE aftermath of any war leaves a residue of devastation and pain. Uganda's seven-year civil war was no different. In Masulita, a district 90 kilometres from the capital city of Kampala, many children lost both parents in the fighting.

There was a desperate need for an orphanage. Two years ago, the Uganda Women's Efforts Social Organization (UWESO), led by Janet Museveni, wife of Uganda's President, raised enough money to build one. First, however, UWESO had to build housing for the orphanage's teachers, counsellors and administrative staff.

The question was — how could UWESO afford to build homes from scratch in a district far from Kampala and reached only by a narrow, rutted road? Hiring an outside contractor would push construction costs well beyond UWESO's means.

As it turned out, the answer was found in the district itself when Mrs. Museveni heard of the construction talents of young people from the newly created Masulita Vocational Training Centre.

The President and Mrs. Museveni were particularly impressed with the centre's products on display at a trade exhibition in Kampala last October. Carpenters, brick-makers and welders trained by the centre seemed to be the natural choice to build five staff houses on the orphanage site.

"This recognition," says Godfrey Sebyala, a senior supervisor at senior supervisor at the centre, "did not fall in our laps. It was through sheer hard work." Mr. Sebyala should know. With assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), he was one of six men who launched a drive to set up the centre four years ago.

Today, it is cited by the government as the type of community-based effort that all Uganda could emulate.

Masulita needed all the help it could get. Once a prosperous agricultural area in the Luwero Triangle northwest of

Kampala, it suffered extensive damage during the war. President Museveni's guerrilla National Resistance Army (NRA) took root here and government troops mounted murderous sweeps across the district seeking to wipe out NRA cadres hiding in the area. At the war's end in 1986, many schools and clinics had

temporary wooden shelters for classrooms. A year later, the government obtained US\$320,000 from UNDP to build a formal trade school.

It was initially managed by local representatives of Internationale Centre la Paix (AICP), a French non-governmental organization headquartered in Paris.

Now almost everyone in Masulita has electricity. In August 1989, 12 young women were selected to study weaving over a four-month period.

At the outset, training at the centre was free. "The students had a lot of enthusiasm even though our facilities were minimal at best," says Mr. Sebyala. But despite their enthusiasm, teaching was not easy. "Many could barely speak



Trainees learn to make looms for weaving

been destroyed, and numerous farms and homes were abandoned.

Almost 90 per cent of the pre-war population had fled. Education had been disrupted and Masulita was saddled with young men and women with little schooling. "The elders felt that the next best thing was to teach them practical skills," says Mr. Sebyala, "so that they could fend for themselves and be of service to the community."

In 1987, the government donated four hectares of land to launch the centre. The community cleared it and built

The first young men were recruited in early 1989 for year-long courses, 15 in brick-making and 10 in carpentry. "They learned on the job to make bricks," recalls Mr. Sebyala, "which we later used to renovate our shelters."

Six months later, 10 more were recruited for a one-year course in metal welding.

"We had no electricity then because all our transformers had been damaged in the war," says Mr. Sebyala. "The students rode the bus to Kampala or Lugogo once a week to learn welding." Four months ago, the centre received power.

English," says Mr. Sebyala. "They could only communicate in their local dialect. We had to translate all our instruction manuals, which were in English."

The centre also had trouble attracting staff. Access to the school from the main road is still a dirt track riddled with potholes.

The 16 kilometres to the nearest paved road takes 40 minutes in a four-wheel drive vehicle. The centre's administrators had to offer above-average salaries to vocational experts to entice them here.

— UNDP

# From Poppies to Roses

A government project is luring Thai opium poppy growers to grow roses and cabbages instead. Eric Gamalinda reports.

WHEN the dry spell between the months of March and June comes to the Thai village of Nong Hoi, technicians supervising a project to uproot opium poppy cultivation worry that farmers will go back to their old trade.

Nong Hoi is a small mountain village of 126 households near the resort city of Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. Here in 1969, Thailand's King Bhumibol launched a project to fund agricultural research, development and experimental work, but mostly to uproot opium cultivation.

The project has successfully replaced the opium fields with vegetable farms and flower gardens. Some farmers have given up their nomadic poppy-farming ways in the mountain villages north of Chiang Mai are earning more from the new cash crops.

But the dry season slackens the pace of the project, and farmers are often tempted to tend small opium farms to cater for tourists who flock to Chiang Mai for drugs and sex.

The presence of drug users here has influenced many young people in the village, and heroin addiction is on the rise.

"The heroin pushers made some of our village youth addicts to increase their market," says Prince Bhisatej Rajani, director of the project. "We have seen cases where even children of eight years have become addicted."

Chiang Mai is on the southern tip of the so-called Golden Triangle, the notorious opium-growing area where the borders of Thailand, Burma and Laos meet.

While Thailand has the lowest rate of opium growing in the region, many Thai farmers have been part of the trade, and villagers have long been traditional opium smokers.



to villagers what to grow, and where they have to allow small opium farms to continue to serve the needs of old villagers who have been smoking opium pipes since childhood.

Says Prince Bhisatej: "It is not possible to cure addiction. The only way is to let them grow opium for their old people. They don't grow enough anyhow."

To make sure they don't, the prince's project has been trying to outdo all the possible benefits that may accrue from opium growing. Prince Bhisatej says this isn't difficult to do.

"There's a lot of misunderstanding about opium," he says. "We don't think the Golden Triangle is golden. It's a poverty triangle, and the farmers don't make any money."

Opium growers in Nong Hoi used to earn the equivalent of US\$ 1,176 a year, divided among at least five people needed to work in an opium field. Much of the profit from opium went to traders who had to pass through a series of middlemen before they could reach narcotic cartels in Bangkok.

Today farmers earn more than US\$4,000 a year from growing vegetables, and about US\$5,000 a year from making popcorn from dried flowers — roses, pansies and strawflowers — and alternative industry during the lean months, of the project.

This is considerably more than the US\$2.35 an average farmer earns daily.

Chalot Saeyang, who has been farming in Nong Hoi for seven years, used to work in opium farms here. Now he grows carrots, cabbages, fennel, onion, leeks, spinach,

"It's a big problem among highland people," says Dr Vichit Leelamanit, who heads the Psychiatry Department in Chiang Mai University's Faculty of Medicine. "In fact, opium is a traditional Thai medication, believed to be effective as a neurochemical."

With the project, the Faculty of Medicine recently launched a campaign "to change the behaviour of addicts," by using community-based mobile camps for detoxification, education and rehabilitation.

But in Mae Sa Mai village, 200 out of the village's 1,200 residents were determined to be addicted, 20 of them children. The youngest addict was seven years old.

It's a tricky situation where project workers cannot dictate

peas, and Japanese apricots — crops that don't normally thrive in tropical climates.

"Vegetables are better because opium poppy grows only once a year, but now we plant three or four crops a year," he says. Last year, Chalot earned US\$7,843, moved out of his hut and built his family a bigger house in the village.

Thailand's stringent laws against drug trafficking have lowered opium production here, with estimates by the United States Bureau of International Narcotics pegging potential opium production down to 35 tonnes from 40 tonnes in early 1992.

A ministerial regulation released in March empowers authorities to seize the assets of drug suspects. But there are different ways of implementing the law, especially in the face of traditional opium use among older Thais.

For the moment, education campaigns will have to do the work, says Leelamanit. "We tell them we cannot stop the tourists from using heroin and opium, but you can stop yourself," he says.

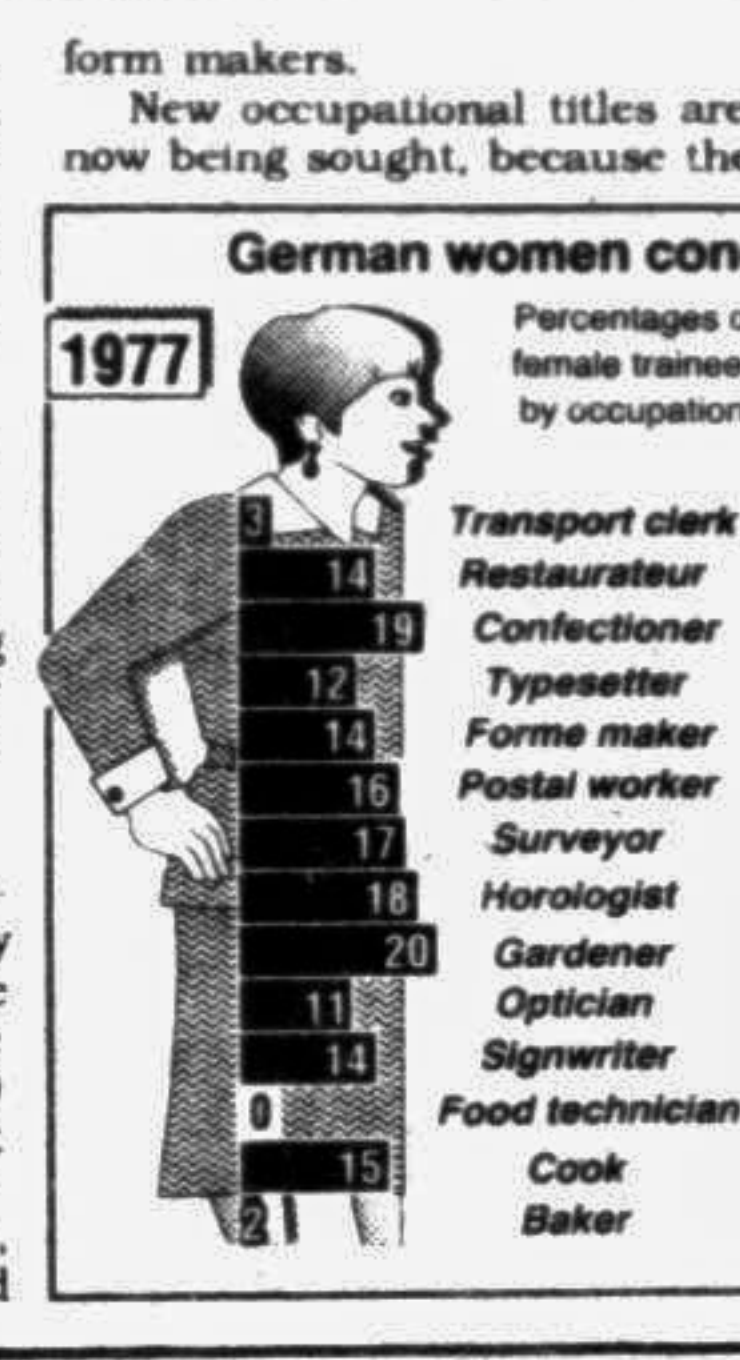
— IFS

# Women Making Inroads into Male Preserves

THE term "male occupation" in Germany is taken to mean any apprenticeship trade or occupation requiring training in which there were fewer than 20 per cent women in 1977.

Five years ago, nearly 200 occupations met that description. Today, their number has dwindled to less than 150, because women are making headway in areas of the labour market traditionally associated with men.

In five former male domains, there are now actually more female than male trainees. Top of the list are female transport clerks (69 per cent of trainees), but women are also gradually replacing men as restaurateurs, confectioners, typesetters and



form makers.

New occupational titles are now being sought, because the terminology is becoming increasingly complicated.

— IWP/GLOBUS

# Development's Meaning Depends on Whom You Ask

by Jill Forrester

THE end of the Cold War brought hope that world attention would shift towards the problems of the South. Many economists now fear the opposite is happening.

When communist East and capitalist West were pitted against each other, developing countries were able to exploit the rivalry to their benefit.

Indian Professor Meghnad Desai, of the London School of Economics, fears that bargaining power has now been lost and that developing countries have moved down the list of priorities.

"The (former communist) east has jumped the queue" for economic aid and technology, said Desai at a recent conference of development economists in Britain. Proof, he argues, is that within only six months of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a special bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, was set up to deal with Eastern debt.

He also worries that the trading blocks of South-East Asia, Europe and North America could exclude imports from developing countries. The only hope that the Third World will not be left out in the cold is the strengthening of the guidance of the United Nations and "good global governance."

Even optimistic economists



PROF. THOMAS ODHIAMBO

believe the economies of developing countries will probably worsen before they improve.

But there are developments in the South that Northern economists do not yet know

Ecology (ICIPE): "The essence of Africa's poverty is not so much one of a growing mountain of external debt, or even one of endemic hunger and recurring epidemics of tropical diseases."

He believes the biggest problem is a lack of vision for the future from Africans themselves.

Research and practical solutions for Africa's problems cannot come simply from ideas and technology of the North, he argues. They have to incorporate the wisdom of African people.

This is the guiding philosophy of Odhiambo's institution, although funded by the international community. ICIPE is run by scientists from the developing world studying insect pests indigenous to the tropics, not fully understood in the North.

One of its goals is to reach a day when harmful chemical pesticides will no longer be needed, improving the health and lifestyle of Kenyan farmers.

And it is seeking local answers, working closely with farmers. One of the solutions is "intercropping" — a traditional practice of planting several crops together. It keeps the land naturally fertilised and insect pests away.

The tradition was largely replaced by colonial rulers who favoured planting single crops such as coffee. Although this made for profit on the interna-

tional markets, if left farm families hungry, poor and dependent on chemical fertilisers and pesticides and unstable international markets.

Only 10 years ago, says Odhiambo, any mention of intercropping in an international setting would have been ridiculed. Today it is gaining popularity in African and Asia, and is earning a following in the industrialised world.

Permaculture, for example, is an organisation that teaches backyard gardeners and farmers around the world to grow a mix of plants that closely copies growth on untouched land. In Thailand, many non-governmental organisations and even Buddhist monks are encouraging farmers to mix crops and stop using chemicals.

Odhiambo's philosophy is that science needs to take into account, from the very beginning of every research project, the needs and practices of the people who will use the technology.

In the dozen African countries that participate in ICIPE's research, this means working closely with knowledgeable and experienced farmers and keeping their poverty in mind when working out solutions.

All too often, he says, technology is developed without consulting the people who will be using it and in the end it is useless.

— Central News

# Tata Wins 1992 Award

AN INDIAN INDUSTRIALIST who pioneered India's population movement and a New York-based private research organization will share this year's United Nations Population Award.

Over the past 40 years, JRD Tata, one of India's leading industrialists, has been a private sector crusader for population stabilization. The Population Council has become world renowned for developing new and more effective contraceptives.

The laureates will receive their awards — a diploma, a gold medal, and a monetary prize — at a ceremony later this year. They were chosen from among 16 nominations by the Committee of the United Nations Population Award on 5 February.

In the 1950s, Tata's steel firm in Jamshedpur, Bihar established one of India's first factory-based family planning and family welfare programmes. That programme is widely credited as a model for family planning programmes throughout India, which is the world's second most populous country.

In 1970, he set up the non-governmental Family Planning Foundation India.

Tata is also credited with raising public awareness of population issues through speeches and writings, and with aiding the government in formulating India's national population programmes.

Established in 1952, the Population Council has become world renowned for its scientific research, for its training

of population experts from around the world, and for its technical assistance to population programmes.

Its publications, Studies in Family Planning and Population and Development Review, are thought of as the leading professional journals in the field of modern population planning.

The most recent contraceptive developed by the Council was NORPLANT, a set of matchstick-size tubes that, once implanted under the skin of a woman's upper arm, release the hormone progesterin

for up to five years.

The award committee is made up of representatives of 10 UN member states elected by the Economic and Social Council. The current members are: Belarus, Burundi, Cameroon, Ecuador, El Salvador, India, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, and Rwanda.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and UNFPA Executive Director Nafis Sadik serve as ex-officio members. There are five honorary advisors.

— Populations

# Tanzanian Farmers Try a New recipe

by William Labulu

USING a package of production techniques propagated by the Sasakawa-Global 2000 Agricultural Project (SG 2000), farmers in northern Tanzania have significantly increased their output of maize, sorghum and wheat.

The project was started in Tanzania three years ago and aims to replicate the "Green Revolution" — which boosted grain output in Asia and Latin America — among Africa's small-scale farmers.

Asia's "Green Revolution" has been criticised as inappropriate because it depends on efficient delivery of seeds, fertiliser and irrigation, and has benefited big rather than small farmers.

In Tanzania, one acre (2.5 hectare) "management training plots" are used to teach extension agents farming methods based on high-yielding varieties of grain and artificial fertilisers.

The agents introduce the production package to farmers. They sell seeds and fertiliser and advise on weeding, planting, intercropping and fertiliser application.

By the end of this year, 13,000 farmers will have tried the production package. The organisers say that almost all farmers have been able to recover the cost of seeds and fertiliser by increases in yields.

SG 2000 is also operating in Ghana, Togo, Benin, Zambia and Sudan/PANOS.