

Feature They Wither Away in Their Prime of Life

A children's summit of ten countries, including Bangladesh, is likely to be held under the auspices of the UNESCO and the UNICEF next year, a recent news item says. The state of the young population, of course, reflects the shape a country is going to assume. It is precisely because of this that whatever is best Lenin wanted to give to the children first. That is the way of building a nation.

But do we pay as much attention to the tiny citizens as they demand? Ours is an attitude of wanton callousness to everything, even to our future which the young faces of today represent. In our country whatever has been done for

the children's welfare so far is only a superficial touch. The academy, the Park or the TV programmes and the prizes for excellence are all for the top two per cent of the young population. The rest remains as ignored as ever. Even the Pathakoli Trust which was full of promise and had enough prospect at last betrayed its hollowness. The diverse programmes in observance of the International Children's Year or of the Children's Day every year do not reach any significant fruit to the millions of children who go without proper food, shelter, cloth or education as ever. The curse of poverty is on their shoulder. Such children constitute nearly fifty per cent



The bones are too tender for the job.

head masseur etc. From dawn to dusk they have to toil away just for a piece of bread. Life is not that colourful to them as it is flashed on our TV screen. We wax eloquent on their welfare and reiterate our commitment to the children at large. But we never mean anything. It is just a routine utterance on solemn occasions.

These children do all sorts of job. Girls are employed mostly as maid servants while the boys take to different hard and hazardous occupations. Besides being boy servants, they are found as shoe-shiners, rickshaw pullers, vendors,

A Return to Biological Farming

by Jean-Marc Dupuich

THANKS to the Minister of the Environment, water has been a much talked of subject over the last year, and the drought of summer 1990 has made the protection of the water table an even more sensitive problem. The main cause of water pollution by nitrates is the over-use of fertilisers by intensive farming and the liquid manure resulting from animal husbandry of the soil, in particular pig-breeding.

The development of intensive farming is closely linked to the massive use of chemical fertilisers. In 1950, 14 million tonnes of it were sold in the world, in 1985 it was 125 million tonnes.

This development of intensive farming, which causes pollution by nitrates, goes together with the increasing use of pesticides, toxic traces of which are found in food. A field of cereals is sprayed 8 or 9 times a year with fertilisers, fungicides, insecticides, herbicides and growth stabilisers.

In order to appease people, farming professionals have undertaken to rationalise the use of chemical fertilisers and the Ministry of Agriculture is encouraging the production of ecological fertilisers (such as fodder-rape and mustard) which fix the nitrates in the soil, as otherwise, they would be washed away by rain into the water table.

However, the situation is absurd. The overproduction of wheat leads to the creation of large stocks and so farmers are given grants to leave land fallow, and yet they continually seek to increase their yield, spending on fertilisers and treatments.

The solution to intensive farming, proposed by Mr MacSherry, in Brussels, is treated with suspicion by those concerned. They feel their income is at stake.

Yet the professional magazine "Cultivar", which is not expected to sympathise with alternative farming methods, reveals an experience which should provide food for thought. Tests carried out over four years prove that averagely manured land for cereal crops was more profitable than identical areas of land which had been treated intensively.

The reduced yield per hectare was compensated for by the reduction in the amount spent on fertilisers. Moreover, on a soil that had been less "improved", the crops were more resistant to diseases and certain treatments were unnecessary. As the title of the article in the magazine stated,

Intensive farming, which is responsible for pollution and damage to the environment, is gradually giving way to ecological farming, carried out by more responsible farmers who are more aware of their role as guardians of nature.

"Intensive farming is being called into question".

The key to the fertility of the land —

This experiment was carried out in the framework of chemically enhanced agriculture. Biological farming, on the other hand, does not use chemical fertilisers or artificial pesticides. At last, the public authorities and firms are becoming interested in this area.

In the United States and in Europe, experimental programmes are being launched and these are attracting the attention of big names in the food-processing industries such as "Pioneer", the American giant for maize. The purpose is to make this form of farming more profitable, by testing its capacity of resistance to insects and to diseases.

The principle of this farming method is modest. It is called crop rotation. A return is being made to this method of farming, not for reasons of tradition or a hankering for the past, but because it corresponds to the needs of the soil and the crops. The rotation system, which controlled the crop cycle until it was rejected by the need for specialisation imposed by intensive farming, is improved and systemized. Rotation is practised over 11 years, alternating the crops according to their characteristic and giving the soil a rest by leaving meadows fallow.

"Rotation is the key to the fertility of the soil and to the fight against weeds and parasites", Pierre Vereijken, an agronomist-engineer in the Netherlands, explains. "Plants have very different needs. Some of them, such as carrots and potatoes, consume a lot of nitrates, others, such as cereals, need less. Others still, such as alfalfa and clover, produce nitrates".

Alfalfa and clover, which naturally enrich the soil and provide green fodder in summer and dry fodder in winter, have been given up in favour of silage maize whose excessive acidity is bad for the health of cattle. Butterflies danced around their blue, mauve and pink flowers. The fields of clover and alfalfa have disappeared, like the butterflies which also used to settle in the hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel-nut and dog-rose hedges.

But the hedges which held water, acted as windbreaks and prevented erosion have all too often been ripped up by bulldozers when small parcels of land were grouped together into big farms for intensive farming. Farmers need to once more become the guardians of nature.

L'actualite EN France



Disgraceful and demeaning but necessity knows no law.

Priority Setting in Agricultural Research

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

TERMS like "research priority setting", "strategic planning", and "human resource planning" may be just words out of a management and policy textbook to the average person, but they are vital issues for agricultural research. Effective research is continuously being planned and implemented within the NARS, but scarce resources demand that priorities be set. Decisions have to be made on how to allocate resources to important commodity and non-commodity research, as well as problem areas within them. Additionally, efficient manpower must be developed in the most important disciplines so that the research projects can be carried out effectively.

The International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) was invited by the BARC to assist in analysing agricultural research priorities in Bangladesh and in the process, develop methodologies that could be utilized by the NARS in future planning exercises. A combination of methods called "scoring" and "economic surplus" analyses were used in the study. The latter method is basically a cost-benefit analysis in which the net present value of economic benefits from research are projected for each commodity.

The scoring method identifies multiple objectives, putting weights on them and determining the criteria for ranking commodities and research problem areas within each commodity examined. Five main objectives for use in the scoring method were identified to which importance was attached i.e., i) increase of agricultural productivity and efficiency to produce more food, foreign exchange and income; ii) provide employment; iii) increase the sustainability of benefits for future generations; iv) improve nutrition giving emphasis on the lowest income groups; and v) reduce variation in the production and income.

A vital part of the study was to get feedback from people who benefited or were subject of the research. More than three hundred people were interviewed from different parts of the country to obtain their opinions on the relative importance of 57 different commodities, including crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry. Following this approach Dr Norton, International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR), and Dr Modon Mohan Dey, who benefited or were subject of the research. More than three hundred people were interviewed from different parts of the country to obtain their opinions on the relative importance of 57 different commodities, including crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry. Following this approach Dr Norton, International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR), and Dr Modon Mohan Dey,

Setting Study, some of the highest ranking commodities were T aman, freshwater fish, boro, T aus, poultry and duck, jute, wheat, potato, sheep and goats and B aman. Important research programme areas within crops generally included breeding and genetics, plant production practices, soil science and pest management.

For livestock, the highest priorities tended to be animal nutrition, health, and management. Fisheries management, health, and socioeconomic conditions ranked high, and forestry management, natural resource assessment and post-harvest technologies were high priority programme areas.

The workshop, which was attended by research managers within the NARS, also provided an opportunity for participants to learn the scoring method through practical exercises in which all had to work through the steps of priority setting, and make recommendations based on their findings. It is through workshops of this type that important new techniques can be transferred to scientists within the NARS, thus enabling them to improve the effectiveness of agricultural research in Bangladesh.

A two day workshop on agricultural research priority setting was held from May 19th to 20th at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC). The Executive Vice Chairman of the BARC, Dr M SU Chowdhury, was instrumental to planning for and implementing this workshop which is essential to a larger scheme to develop a self sustaining mechanism for research planning and management with the National Agricultural Research System (NARS). Information presented during the workshop was a culmination of detailed studies carried out during 1989-90, and updated in May this year.

Politics Sets One Shop Against the Other

by Kaleni Hiyalwa

GAINACHAS is a small village in Southern Namibia. At Aspb, the railway station 50 kilometres away, you turn off the tarred road and follow a zigzag road that is visible only by its car tyre tracks.

Across the vast stretches of land, vegetation is sparse among the rocks, stones, and dried-up streams and rivers. Dotted about are the gums and ganu shrubs (thorny bushes) and from time to time there are farm gates.

Some lead to farms that belonged to the whites who left the country after independence in 1990. Others have long belonged to local farmers.

Across the dried River Ganibeb you are in Gainachas. In front, on the road to Berseba, the nearest village 28 km away, are the Burukaros Mountains.

The setting sun radiates pink and gold as it slips below the horizon, turning Gainachas into a place of great beauty.

Soon after sunset the people go off to bed. Without electric lights, tarred roads and disco clubs, Gainachas is quiet and peaceful after dark.

People use kerosene or paraffin lamps for light and firewood cooking. About 500 live in Gainachas and the surrounding farms. They are Damaras and Namas people — mostly original Ovaherero. The Ovaherero fled south during a war with the Damaras a century ago and settled near the Ganibeb river.

The people spring from one Ovaherero ancestral parent and so are all related. Tradition is to marry cousins and other relatives, and most of the family names of Gainachas people are typical Herero names.

All speak the Nama language and have adopted the Nama culture. As a result Gainachas is now emerging as a dynamic, non-racial, non-tribal village. It will probably be the first in Namibia with a population of mixed races and tribes. Tomorrow's population will be of mixed parents — Nama, Damara, Herero, Owambo. Coloured, Bastards and others.

But now there are new divisions — political. Listen to Christian Tsai Tsai Mou, who is 78: "In the past there was unity among the people in this village. We lived as brothers and sisters, but today we see Gainachas shattering into pieces, all in the name of politics."

Gainachas has two shops and a bottle store. Politics has divided the shop owners. People say it happened because of the activity of unscrupulous businessmen just before the United Nations supervised elections in 1989.

The first shop, Gainachas Kontante Winkel, was built in 1988. Before that people travelled 50 km to Asaba to buy their provisions. They say the shop was set up on a dubious contract.

Proprietor Paul Higoan acquired a loan to open it in the name of the village poor. One could not be allowed to buy anything in the shop."

SWAPO and the DTA were the two main parties in the 1990 elections. SWAPO won and became the government under President Sam Nujoma at independence.

The shop owner, a DTA supporter, began using his shop to win supporters for his party, so in 1989 SWAPO supporters decided to raise funds to build a Consumer Co-operative shop. Stock worth 2,533 rand was provided by the Namibian Community Co-operative Alliance (NCCA).

Then people began to say the NCCA had a hidden political agenda. They accused it of trying to hijack the Consumer Co-op by financing it with money from the DTA. The shop was also to be used to win election supporters for the DTA.

Co-op chairman Johannes Oarom said: "The NCCA deceived us by pretending to be a non-political community organisation." NCCA membership was withdrawn from the shop and the Co-op returned its money.

Paul Higoan defends himself and calls the people of Gainachas lazy and jealous. He says: "They say a lot of things about my business, but they have not been able to do something to help themselves. They say I refuse to give them goods on credit. That is not true, but sometimes I have to be hard with those who don't pay on time."

Higoan's shop is stocked with a wide variety of groceries. He is also raising pigs and plans to build the village bigger pigsties.

The Co-op, on the other hand, has problems. Most of the time its shelves are empty. Things are taken on credit and not always paid for on time. Prices are lower because it is non-profit-making.

Its stock is bought at Keetmanshoop, a town 100 km away. Transport is a problem because the shop does not own a car. The two women shop assistants are paid R200 a month.

Most Damara/Nama people live in traditional oval huts plastered with cow or goat dung. The rooftops are covered with reed-mats. Some people have now made homes with cardboard and others have built modern houses.

People have discovered that the dry bed of the River Ganibeb is full of building materials. Men collect rocks and crush them in brick shapes and sizes. Some quite beautiful modern houses have been built out of rocks and stones.

About 90 per cent of the people of Gainachas are Christian. The village has three churches — African Methodist, Ryne, and Evangelic Lutheran.

Recently, a cold war broke out between the churches and the bottle store owner. Church leaders say people absent themselves from church Sunday mornings because they wake up with babalas — a hangover.

Joseph Isack, the bottle store owner, says: "I have to close at 1 pm on Saturdays because I am being accused of making people drunk."

Many people complain that the fruits of independence have not yet reached them and some, like Oupa Alexander, 89, still do not even realise the country is independent.

— Gemini News

Small-Scale Fisheries

by Nestor Cervantes

SMALL-SCALE fisheries are anything but small. Small-scale fisheries employ, either full — or part-time, about 15 million people worldwide, most of them in developing countries. They are engaged in fishing, processing, distribution and marketing.

And small-scale fisheries provide more than 25 per cent of the world's fish catch.

Yet small-scale fisheries represent the lowest level of fishery organisation. It involves some of the poorest and most neglected groups of society.

These fisheries are characterised by high levels of labour, low capital investment, low levels of mechanisation and frequently, the use of antiquated fishing methods.

Artisanal fisherfolk are often at the mercy of the weather which limits their catch and their incomes. Poverty and malnutrition are compounded by geographic isolation and lack of facilities. Without land to represent their concerns, such fishing communities find themselves out of the mainstream, often ignored by politicians and policymakers.

In many poor countries, fishing is the occupation of last resort. It is a situation that threatens the management, conservation and sustainability of limited fishery resources, especially in certain parts of Asia and Africa.

In Asia, the problems of small-scale fisheries development are being tackled by the Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP). Started in 1979, the BOBP operates projects in seven countries bordering the Bay of Bengal — Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

In Malaysia, pond culture of shrimps is being encouraged by a BOBP project. Oyster culture is also being popularised in Malaysia and Thailand. Pen culture of shrimp in Tamil Nadu, India, and seaweed culture in Sri Lanka are among the many BOBP projects.

Under the BOBP, fisherfolk are being assisted in India through non-government organisations; extension services are being strengthened in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives; credit is being provided in Indonesia; and the importance and role of a native fishing craft in Indian communities are being studied.

Resource assessment is an important BOBP concern. Through a UN Development Programme-funded project, the capabilities of six Bay of Bengal countries for resource assessment were strengthened. The BOBP is organising exploratory and demonstration fishing to measure the abundance of tuna in the offshore waters of Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Specialists in fishing craft, gear and aquaculture are focusing on developing technologies to raise catches, incomes and efficiency or lower costs. Beachcraft development is a major activity in India and Sri Lanka where BOBP efforts have led to a more mobile, reliable and efficient beachcraft.

The BOBP is putting emphasis on cage culture — a low-cost and economically sound aquaculture system. In Thailand, demonstration projects have inspired more than 1,000 fishermen there to take up finfish cage culture.

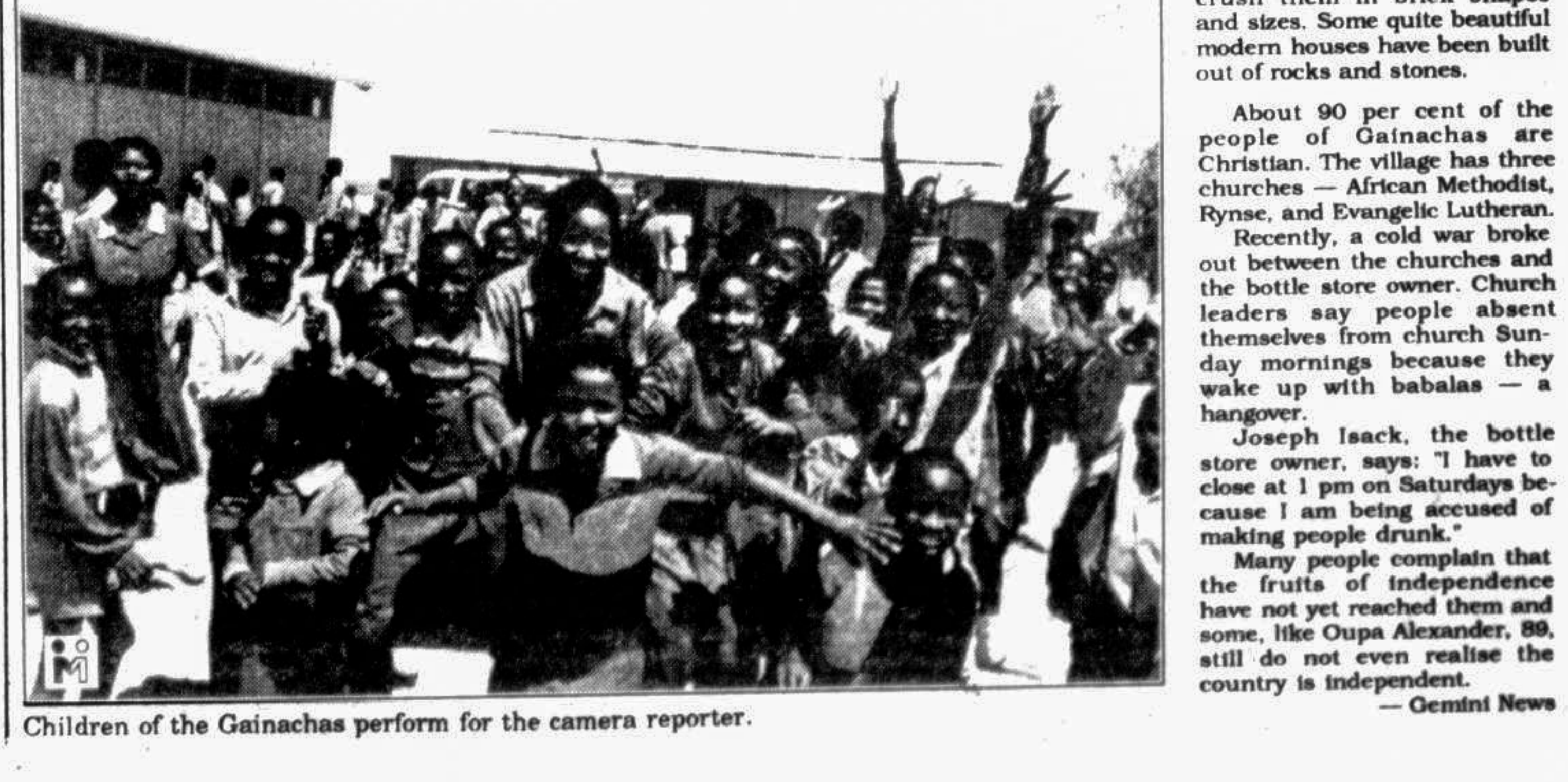
Improving extension services is successful in many Asian countries because the network of government, social and technical services available to fishing communities is well-developed and education standards are relatively high.

Particular emphasis is directed at bringing women into the development mainstream.

Fisheries are a major concern of the FAO. Fish, after all, ranks as one of the world's major food commodities. About 70 per cent of world fish production is consumed directly as food.

Fish catches in developing countries now equal those of the developed world. Developing countries now account for 45 per cent of total world exports, earning for them in 1988 some US \$8,000 million.

— Depthnews Asia



Children of the Gainachas perform for the camera reporter.