

Feature

Education

They Look Forward to Better Tomorrow

by Nazim Mahmood

SUNDAR Agami Kaal Shango' or the 'Association For A Better Tomorrow' unfolds in just a small slice of a yard in between three huts. Every afternoon nearly a hundred women throng the place. Not all alike, they are of different ages and names. But they are all common in two respects: their illiteracy and their poverty. These women mostly earn their own living. They work as housemaids or as unskilled labour. Most of them have the same story of their life — the story of their husbands deserting them and their children without reason. The husbands who have been kind enough to stick to their families, do not earn enough to feed their wives and children. The women therefore have to go out for survival.

Only a few steps out of their huts, these women find the picturesque campus of Rajshahi University — a big light-house spreading knowledge, education and culture all around. But the womenfolk living very close to its are steeped in darkness. One of them, however, tries to break the ice. She is Masura, a mid in the house of a teacher since her girlhood. Her mistress who has always been kind and affectionate, taught her the 3 Rs. This has worked almost like a lamp enkindling another.

Masura, the housemaid decided to make her fellow-women literate and sought the help of her mistress Rini Haq who readily responded to take up the challenge. Thus The Association for a Better Tomorrow was built up for the purpose of removing illiteracy of the poor and helpless working women. Masura had gone round the village and encouraged the women to come for lesson in the afternoon. Large number of women came to learn and their eagerness inspired Rini Haq to sacrifice her time, money and energy for a noble cause. With a missionary zeal she taught them for four months and achieved some tangible result. The women who were totally illiterate, can now read and write simple Bengali words.

It is all on their own that they have founded this association. So far they have received no financial assistance from any quarter. Books, black boards and such other things have been provided by their teachers. The other day when this correspondent visited the place, he found the women sitting on the ground with no shed overhead. Rini Haq had a small table and a chair. At a corner there was a hard board which served as black board. The age group of the learners was between fifteen and forty five. When interviewed, some older ones regretted that they could not start learning in time.

They now believe that a bit of learning will enable them to improve their lot and none will dare deprive them of their rights. When asked about their liking, the younger ones promptly expressed their love for music and wanted to learn some songs. 'But why?' The reply came in chorus: we want to arrange a function and sing on Ekushe February and Pahela Baishakh.

Member States expressed their interest in this new programme and we are getting numerous requests to either establish twinning arrangements between various universities of various regions or to set up UNESCO Chairs. And the response from donor countries, agencies and institutions so far has been encouraging," said Ahdalla Bultana, Programme Specialist dealing with UNITWIN and UNESCO Chairs in UNESCO's Division of Higher Education and Research.

"The main objectives are to promote North-South dialogue among academicians and intellectuals, promote the transfer

of knowledge and technology between developed and developing countries, promote academic mobility between regions and create centres of excellence in selected disciplines," he said.

Under the UNESCO Chairs scheme, the Organization generally provides start-up money and seeks international partners to fund a Chair, which consists of a high level internationally recognized researcher working with a team of post-graduate students and researchers.

Of the UNESCO Chairs already operational and those under preparation, 14 are in Europe, 10 in Asia and the Pacific region, nine in Africa, six in Latin America and the Caribbean and five in the Arab States.

Bubtana said UNESCO seeks to ensure that twinning arrangements and Chairs in Europe are financed by the institutions concerned while minimum funding is provided to those European projects aimed at supporting universities in developing countries, including Eastern and Central Europe.

Among the fields of study by UNESCO Chairs in Africa are nutrition, health and child development; post-harvesting technology; mechanical and production engineering; chemical engineering; dermatology and teacher education. Most of the Chairs were in, or planned for universities in Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

In Asia and the Pacific region, the fields of study include plant genetics; demography; chemistry; biology; rational use of drugs; industry, environment and health studies; technology; higher education; and sustainable development. The universities involved are in China, Indonesia, India, Iran, Japan, Pakistan and Thailand.

University involved in Latin America and the Caribbean are in Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Cuba and the Bahamas and the fields of study include human rights; teacher education; ecotechnology; higher education; biogenetics; and tourism.

In the Arab States UNESCO Chairs will be involved in high level technology; international relations; and management and business administration in universities in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Jordan and possibly Oman. An agreement has been signed for the launching of an

international campaign to support universities in Lebanon. Fields of research in Europe are varied and include, among others, tropical medicine, marine resources; environmental law; peace studies; engineering; history of science, chemical engineering; and journalism and communication in such diverse countries as Spain, Canada, Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, the Russian Federation and San Marino.

A series of inter-university cooperation networks have also been established between developed and developing countries, particularly in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and between universities in Western and Eastern Europe, Asia and the Pacific and North America.

Bubtana said an inter-sectoral and inter-agency cooperation programme of promoting university training and research on population issues has been prepared and will be discussed with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). The programme includes networking universities and the possible establishment joint UNESCO/UNFPA Chairs.

Several projects have also been developed on peace and human rights, including the establishment of a centre on human rights in Prague, a post-graduate programme at the University of Paris I and UNESCO Chairs at the universities of Bratislava (Czechoslovakia), Budapest and Warsaw.

— UNESCO Press



Rini Haq teaching poor women in an afternoon session

Vocational Training European and International Dimension

THE beginning of 1993 will see a revolutionary development in Europe. At this point in time, the borders between EC (European Community) countries, which still prevent complete freedom of movement, will be removed. At the same time, the EFTA (European Free Trade Area) states will combine with the EC in a "European Economic Area" which, with 370 million people, will become the largest domestic market in the world.

Training and further training are particularly affected by the far-reaching changes resulting from this unique historic development. In this context, the success of the internal market will not depend entirely on the ability of correspondingly qualified persons to share in the shaping of new developments.

Vocational training also represents a fundamental factor in the social dimension on European unification. Thus cooperation in further education and training by the members of the European Community is a basic political component of future development.

The advance of structural change in the economic and social fields implies that efforts aimed at improving and expanding vocational training in Germany must be further intensified. Europe-relevant qualifications include, first and foremost, knowledge of foreign languages: recent surveys show that 78% of all firms expect their staff to have a knowledge of English nowadays.

The urgent need for further education measures is shown by the fact that only 2.5% of vocational school students receive foreign language instruction. Europe lives on its many languages which are an expression of its cultural diversity.

Consequently, the mastery of foreign languages is not only indispensable to be able to work as an employee abroad and to acquire experience of other countries. It enhances cultural competence and understanding of the living conditions and historical developments of European neighbours.

But so much important content-matter cannot be included in its entirety in normal vocational training particularly in view of the fact that not all occupations are affected to the same degree and that courses should not be further prolonged.

Statistical developments show that employees have come to regard the acquisition of "European qualifications" as the objective of their further training.

European Community programmes

The German Federal Government and the Länder, and, in particular, the European Community, have initiated a large number of measures in support of the European unification process. The best known programmes in the vocational training sector are:

• **Petra**
This programme provides young persons with the opportunity of being trained in a European network of trans-border training programmes on conclusion of compulsory school attendance. It embraces exchange measure and practical training abroad and concentrates in general on the European dimension of occupational training.

• **Eurotecnet**
The object of this programme is to promote the adaptation of occupational training and further training to changed qualification requirements in the new information technologies. This serves the preservation and creation of new jobs, and promotes mobility on the employment market.

• **Youth for Europe**
This programme is concerned with youth exchange outside school, academic or vocational education, and fits that of a supplementary nature. Trips abroad are offered to young people and further training courses to managerial staff from youth exchange organizations.

• **Lingua**
Trips abroad for foreign language purposes are financed as further training for teachers, language instruction in firms, exchange measure, for pupils at vocational training schools, cooperation between higher education institutes, and student exchange.

• **Delta**
Technological progress is creating an enormous requirement for vocational and specialized trade training and further training. By means of this programme, modern learning technologies are to be elaborated and disseminated.

• **Force**
The target group are salaried workers and lecturers employed in further training, especially in medium-sized enterprises. The programme is designed to promote innovations in further training management and to encourage in-

creased investments in this sector.

• **IRIS**
By this means, a European network of vocational further training measures for women is being set up to improve the exchange of experience and information between the various national, regional and local offices/projects concerned with the enhancement of women's vocational opportunities.

• **NOW**
Through this initiative, women are to enjoy the same benefits as men from the anticipated effects of economic growth and technological development on integration in the employment market. Child-care measures are to facilitate participation in vocational training.

• **Euroform**
This programme is to help enterprises and organizations tailor their training programmes to the requirements of the internal market and technological development by means of new qualifications.

• **Horizon**
This programme is assisting the social and vocational integration of handicapped and other disadvantaged persons. In this programme, too, measures can be implemented in a trans-border network at community level.

In view of current changes, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, the European Community has considerable extended the scope of its programmes to include little by little the Central, East European and EFTA countries — as well as the new parts of Germany.

Central and East European countries
The radical political reorientation of Central and East European countries is having far-reaching effects on the whole of the training and further training system.

Most of these states were formerly scaled off from world markets and international competition which prevented the introduction of new technologies, the adoption of modern production methods, and the up-to-date training of skilled a managerial staff. The creation of future-oriented jobs and thus qualification courses for employees are a fundamental precondition for economic and political stability.

Germany has had bilateral agreements on cooperation in the training and further training of skilled and managerial staff in industry with the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland since 1989. Further agreements with the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and other former East Bloc countries are to follow.

A series of measures are to assist the countries concerned during the difficult transition from a planned to a free market economy. They consist primarily of informative visits to the Federal Republic of Germany, system advice, the setting up of vocational further training centres, assistance in the preparation of modern teaching and learning materials, exchange of academics, in-service training programmes for managerial staff in industry, disseminators on the trade union side and the exchange and part-training of foreign apprentices in German firms.

In the planning and implementation of qualification projects of this nature, it is of great advantage that the state, industry and commerce, and the organizations involved can fall back on experience gained in the introduction of a free market economy and the West German training and further training system in the former GDR.

International organizations

Education, culture and science play an important part in the many and diverse relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and other countries at governmental and non-governmental level. Questions of further training are also touched upon in a number of cultural agreements. The work of the mixed commissions in each case is devoted first and foremost to the exchange of educational and industrial managerial staff, apprentices and pupils.

As a member of the Council of Europe, the OECD, UNESCO, ILO and other international organizations, the Federal Republic of Germany cooperates with its partner countries in many and diverse areas in which the sector of cultural and further education of adults is addressed.

The Federal Government makes funds available for purposes of vocational and out-of-school adult education via the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and other ministries. Promotion measures take place both within bilateral governmental cooperation projects as well as through supportive activity on the part of private organizers. These include first and foremost the GTZ (Society for Technical Cooperation), the DSE (German Foundation for International Development), the German Adult Education Association, the development-aid organizations of the Churches and political party foundations.

The reciprocal exchange of academics — who want to learn more about the political, social and legal situation of the host country — enjoy particular importance within the framework of international cooperation.

Corresponding courses have been set up at various German universities. Stays abroad by German academics are facilitated through the good offices of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and other organizations.

Last but not least, mention must be made of the work performed by numerous Goethe Institutes in many countries of the world. They organize cultural and educational programmes with state support.

— IN Press

Self-Reliance Leads to a Crisis in Learning

by Harold Tagama

TANZANIA is struggling to salvage an educational system that has been nose-diving for the past 20 years.

Teachers are running away from schools because of poor pay. Books, chalks, desks, chairs and other teaching facilities are lacking.

As a result, schools have about 21,000 dropouts every year, and those pupils who do finish seven years of primary study are often unable to read

100,000 Tanzanian shillings a year to educate a student while the remaining Tsh 80,000 should come from a parent.

With such a violent parents' against the fees, President Ali Hassan Mwinyi is trying to gain parents' support. "We should share the costs of educating our children," the President says.

Student unrest prompted the government to send solitary English, were taught in the local language Kiswahili. Students who joined secondary school found it difficult to grasp the subjects as many were taught in English, except the compulsory Kiswahili and Political Education.

The introduction of the Socialist Education for Self-Reliance in 1968 made pupils spend most of their time farming instead of studying. In 1976, the government launched Universal Primary Educa-

tion, when children as young as seven years old were enrolled in a massive operation.

Two years ago the President started a fund-raising project to buy desks for about 2.8 million pupils who squat or sit on bricks while studying. However, the project was mismanaged.

The placing of primary schools under the responsibility of financially troubled local governments further undermined education. Teachers were not paid salaries for months and thousands abandoned their jobs. Pupils were ill-taught.

Educationalists also blame the government for not allocating enough money to education and depending on Western donors for much of the budget. In 1991, education was given Tsh 6.3 million, compared with Tsh 11.7 million in 1981.

Poor salaries are forcing teachers to seek better jobs in European and Southern African countries. At the University of Dar es Salaam alone, educationalists say more than 100 professors have left in the past 10 years.

Officials at the Ministry of Education and Culture complain that only a few inspectors are available to inspect schools. The number of pupils at primary schools is falling. Even some of those who go to secondary schools have low passes compared with 20 years ago. And every year, more students fail to qualify for enrollment in veterinary, pharmacy and medical degrees at universities.

Educationalists blame politicians for the declining educational standards. After independence, they say, politicians discouraged English, calling it the language of the "brain-washed." All subjects in primary schools, except clemen-

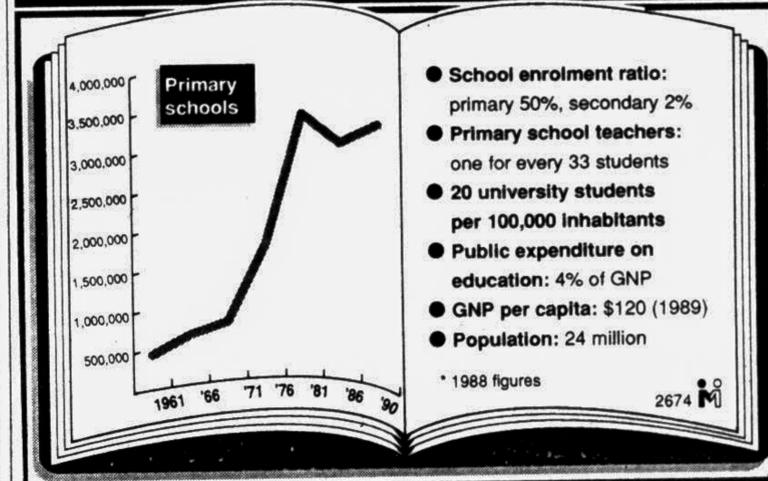
ters to educational institutes. Colleges and universities were closed down and ring-leaders were expelled. Such actions have further spilt the educational system.

International donor agencies, including the Danish International Development Agency and the Norwegian Agency for Development are unhappy with the harsh steps. The Norwegian agency has threatened to stop its assistance if the government does not re-instate 600 students expelled last year.

The donors' tough stance has changed the President's mind. "We won't close the institutions of learning any more. But we will expel all trouble makers until we remain with even five obedient students," Mwinyi said.

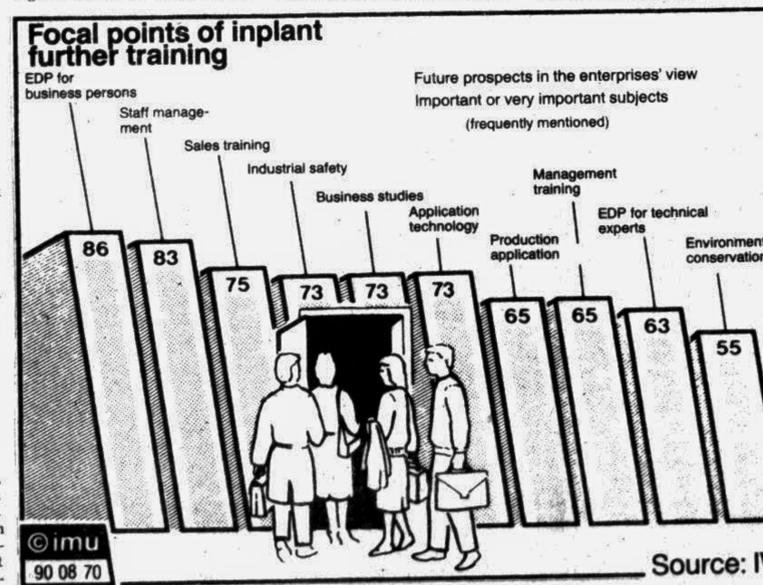
The President is also wooing private investors to help run the schools, but private investors are not showing much enthusiasm as most property was nationalised after the start of the Tanzanian socialism in 1967.

School enrolment in Tanzania



- School enrolment ratio: primary 50%, secondary 2%
- Primary school teachers: one for every 33 students
- 20 university students per 100,000 inhabitants
- Public expenditure on education: 4% of GNP
- GNP per capita: \$120 (1989)
- Population: 24 million

* 1988 figures
2674 M



Source: IW