Breast Cancer Won't Kill You if You Don't Let It

by Gemini Wahhaj

REAST cancer is easy to B detect and treat. Yet, an alarming number of the 22.500 Bangladeshi women diagnosed with breast cancer every year do not survive. Multiple reasons make diagnosis and treatment difficult ignorance, shyness to inform family members, hesitance to being examined by a male doctor, and the fear of drastic surgery (losing a breast).

When a woman finally seeks treatment, she is often in the last stages of cancer, when the disease has spread wide, her breast is fungated and ulcerated, and she is suffering from intense pain. Says one young doctor who has seen many women die from breast cancer "Looking at her, it's impossi-

ble to believe that a person could have ignored such obvious signs of illness. These women are young, say in their forties mostly, with small children. And they are beyond help. We can do nothing but watch them die.

Breast cancer is most common in women aged 45-55 years. During the reproductive years, the breast cells are very active. So the chance of mutation is high. These abnormal cells accumulate over time, until at one time they may become cancerous. Women at higher risk are those with a positive family history, early menopause or late menstruation, childless women, and women who conceive after thirty. One source estimates the incidence in Bangladesh at one woman in 50.

The first sign of cancer may be abnormality of the breast shape and size, and abnormalities of the nipple. The most common sign is a lump. The cancerous lump is a "cold"

lump, which means it is not painful. A lump may not necessarily be cancerous, but it should not be ignored. If breast cancer is detected early and treated early, there is a 100% chance of cure. But as time passes and the cancer spreads to other regions,

Self-examination: Stand or

sit. Raise one arm above waist.

With other hand, examine

breast with palm flat against

chest wall. Palpate to locate

examination, mammography.

ultrasonography, FNAC (a

needle is inserted to extract

cells for examination), and

stages in breast cancer with

different prognosis of ten year

freely mobile (65% survival)

node (25% survival)

survival

survival

more hopeless.

Staging: There are four

Stage I: Lump on breast,

Stage II: Lump on breast

fixed and freely mobile lymph

and fixed lymph node (5%

regions (almost 0% survival)

Stage III: Lump of breast

Stage IV: spread to other

Treatment: Chemotherapy,

Radiotherapy, surgery

(lumpectomy or masectomy)

treatment becomes more and

lar self-examination, a practice

that has never gained popular-

ity in Bangladesh. Thus detec-

tion of a lump is late. But even

women who find a lump simply

ignore it. Says Gaenocologist

Dr. Latifa Shamsuddin, who

Doctors recommend regu-

and hormone their therapy.

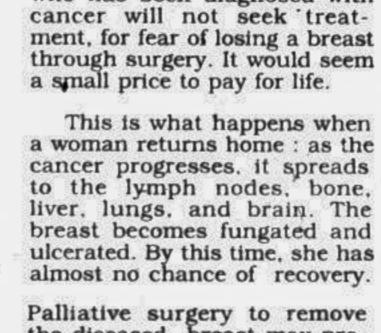
Diagnostic Tests : Physical

any lump or tenderness.

refers many women with breast cancer, "We need to build awareness of breast cancer in this country through the mass media. Women need to be informed on this issue." Gaenocologist Dr. Kohinur Begum agrees. "The real problem is lack of awareness and igno-

Those women who do think something is very wrong drag themselves to a (female) gynaecologist, only to be referred to someone in surgery. As there are not many experienced female doctors in surgery yet, she is usually re-

go into surgery, although Dr. Kohinur doesn't think this is make a significant difference. "Most people who come to me are not concerned about going to a male doctor if a lump is ferred to a senior male surfound," she said. In a final twist of irony, sometimes a woman who has been diagnosed with



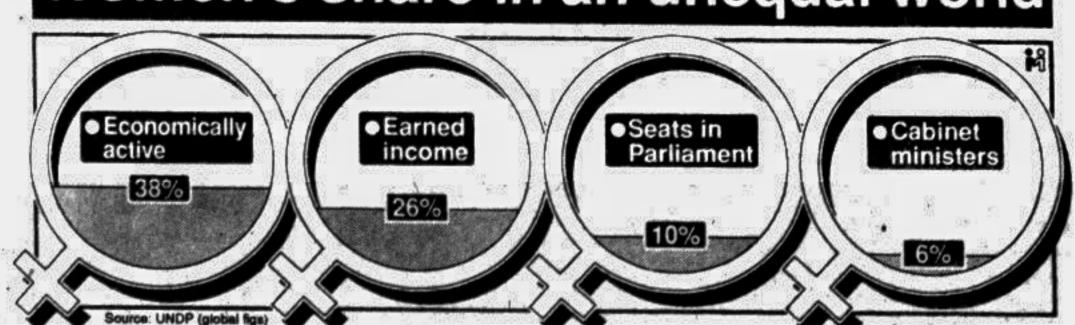
help if more women doctors

the diseased breast may pro-vide some psychological relief. and she may be given some chemotherapy, but her chances of survival are at most a few more months. There is some good news

More women go to a gynaecologist in the early stages of cancer than before. Since breast cancer is an external cancer, it is easy to detect and diagnose (mammography, for example can detect breast cancer with 90% accuracy). It is also curable in the early stages through chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and surgery.

But breast cancer has been sadly neglected. We need to bombard women with information, through TV programs. magazine articles, and brochures. Tell them to take their health seriously. Tell them about self-examination.

Women's share in an unequal world



Equality a Myth in Our Politics

ence), and recently in 1995 in

Beijing, from all sources.

Women's voices for equality are

heard in all national-level con-

ferences, seminars and 5-year

plan meetings. And even after

all this, I hate to see such a

grand defeat of women's aspi-

surprised to see the passive

role of Women's NGOs or NGOs

with women in the inclusion of

women members in this newly

formed caretaker Government.

Where are the active vocal

cords which sound high on so

many issues but remain silent

on a crucial issue like this? I

really fail to understand both

their spirit and their concern.

We don't forget that NGO par-

ticipation on women's issues

was not a mere token of effort

It was a huge contingent of

women from Bangladesh

reaching Beijing, crossing all

the hurdles and breaking all

the previous records of con-

ference participation for both

men and women in this coun-

try. This silence is thus unpar-

watchers, let us ask openly

about the reasons for this vac-

uum and what can be the pos-

qualified experienced and ex-

pert women who can act effi-

ciently like men in this coun-

try. Our records don't say that.

We have enough able women

in this country, not to speak

that neutral women are not

available, and since majority of

The second myth can be

1) It is the dearth of highly

Instead of being mere

donable.

sible responses?

of Dhaka city.

Needless to say, I am also

rations in matters of equality!

HE night I saw the newly formed Advisor's Group taking their oath - I felt a dilemma in my mind. Should I feel happy or I should feel sorry? The qualification, experience and expertise of the newly formed Advisory council leave little scope for much dialogue, even some names are our real pride! But our national quest for peace

The token inclusion of a lone woman member in the term of Advisors (one in ten) is nothing but a mere expression of the prevailing stereotyped attitudes. Bangladeshi women's quest for 'equality, development and peace' is defeated in this new search for National Advisors. Women, thus, lag behind men in meeting their

I am surprised to see a toplevel formation of the Group of Advisors for the Interim caretaker Government which in a way, violates constitutional right for women and women's quest for equality both in national and in global perspec time when the drums of woman's equal right can still be heard from Beijing at the end of the Beijing conference! Bangladeshi women are

struggling for equality at least since 1975, if not earlier. The two decades, at least, have seen their significant partici-

women don't practise politics by Shamima Islam there is no scarcity of neutral women who can participate in methods in 1975 (women's year), 1980 (Mid-Decade this neutral Interim World Conference) and their Government. In reality, proportionally more women can be called neutral, compared to

men in this country. Thirdly if this vacuum is caused due to perception (and in this case it is men's) let us rectify the situation, immediately. Otherwise, this episode of discrimination will remain as a black spot in our history. And history will not pardon

Let us obey and guarantee the constitutional rights which proclaims, "steps shall be taken to ensure participations of women in all spheres of national life" (19.1) and "Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state

and of public life" (28.2). There is no dearth of able women in this country and the proportion of women advisors has to conform to the proportion of women population. It is nothing but a desired expectation in a free democratic country like Bangladesh.

Now the genuine concern remains - how can it be done? strongly believe that if the high-powered Election Commission can be re-formulated, the Advisory Council in the Interim caretaker Government can also be reconstituted merely with addition and inclusion and no deletion and exclusion at all. I will like to see a clear fifty-fifty membership in our Interim Advisory Council so that the pious goal of equality remains not on paper, but in reality !

(The writer is a researcher on women's issues in Bangladesh: She heads many organizations in women and children's issues.)

Let us not be silent anymore!

huge physical participation in Nairobi World Conference in 1985 (End-decade confer-

failed to ensure women's quest

for equality!

national aspirations.

tive. And this is happening at a

matter any importance. There Kabir, a senior surgeon who is very little respect for Also, tell them that nobody has treated many instances of women's health in Bangladesh. breast cancer, thinks it will needs to die from cancer. pation, through different

Getting Kids to Class: Ending Exploitative Child Labour CHOOLS are too far away. they cost too much and just don't teach the right things. These are the complaints of many parents in developing countries that send their children to the fields or the factories rather than the classrooms. Almost 25 per cent of chil-

dren in developing countries do not enroll in primary school, and another one-third of those that enter drop out before completing sixth grade. according to the International Labour Organization (ILO). More than two-thirds of the children who have never attended school or who dropped out early are girls. In a report released May

17, the World Bank found that primary school enrollment in Africa is declining, the quality of education in most developing countries is very poor and public spending for education has tended to favour the afflu-

Finding a way to get children back in school, say global labour experts, would be the single most important step toward ending the exploitation of some 100 million to 200 million children workers in developing countries around the world

When schools are inaccessible, prohibitively expensive or of poor quality, they exacer bate the child labour problem when they are plentiful, relevant, and free of cost to the poor they act as a powerful brake on at least the most negative aspects of child labour even if they do not stop children from working outside school hours," said Anthony Freeman, director of the ILO's

Washington office. Teresa Albanez, special adviser to the executive director of the United Nations Chil-

dren's Fund (UNICEF), says

that countries must be innovative in looking beyond traditional public school systems.

If school is to be more appealing than work, classes must be held in more convenient locations, class schedules need to be more flexible. what is taught needs to relate to the reality children are facing, and child-centered and non-authoritarian teaching methods need to be introduced," Albanez said.

Freeman and Albanez, during a recent US Department of Agriculture hearing on child labour, also said that increased access to relevant and affordable education needs to be supplemented with programmes to provide alternative sources of income to families.

Education is Cost Effective Albanez says that stopping child labour is simply good economics and that sustainable

development cannot be built upon cheap labour. "Increasingly, the global economy is demanding highly skilled, well-educated workers," she said. "So it is not only morally imperative for corporations to put an end to child

labour, it is also good busi-

Studies show that in coun tries where school enrollment for girls is less than 75 per cent of what it is for boys, the rate of economic growth is 25 per cent lower than in countries where boys and girls have equal opportunities, according to the Alliance for a Global Community, a group funded by the US Agency for Interna-

tional Development (USAID). Developing countries must give a higher priority to education, especially for girls, if they are to continue to reduce poverty in the next century. according to the 1995 World

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TS FULL OF SWOKN

WEED - WHAT THEY

by Jon Schaffer

Bank report. "The productivity of labour is to a large extent determined by people's skills. which are largely a result of schooling.

rance," she says. "Women just

don't take their health seri-

form family members, says Dr.

Latifa. Even when she does,

her family may not give the

Women are also shy to in-

The report estimates that had 50 per cent of Guatemala's children attended secondary school in 1960 rather than only 7 per cent, the country's per capita income today would be almost 40 per cent higher.

It further argues that educated women have fewer and healthier children. An additional year of primary school ing for 1,000 girls in India would prevent an estimated 300 births, 43 infant deaths and two maternal deaths, it

The World Bank views investment in education as one of the key elements to East Asian development.

However, Andrew Samet. US associate deputy undersecretary of labour, says there remains a wide disparity be tween those governments that say they are going to expand the years of compulsory education and those that enforce mandatory education.

"There have been a number of countries that say they have compulsory education and you find that is more a vision or a goal than a reality of the situation", Samet said

What's Being Done

The World Bank is the largest single source of external finance for education in the developing countries, investing more than \$2,000 million in 1994 and \$13,700 million between 1985 and 1994. Basic education, which now accounts for one third of the Bank's lending for education, is the most rapidly growing category of education lending. However

Bank lending is still only one half of one per cent of what developing countries spend on education.

geon. An alarming number of

women decide to go home and

ignore the problem rather

preference for female doctors

among her patients. Dr. C H

Dr. Latifa has seen some

than see a male doctor.

India, with the help of World Bank assistance, has launched a primary education programme aimed at improving the quality of schools and

primary education project in 10 of its poorest southern Separately, the World Bank

announced on May 18 the establishment of a special fund to promote education for poor girls in developing countries. The Lewis T Preston Education Programme for Girls. named after the former .World Bank president who died earDepartment official said. Alternative sources of Income

There is general consensus among child labour experts that the elimination of child

labour is more likely to suc ceed if the income from child labour is replaced. "A number of NGOs and

governments are experiment



access to educational opportunities for a million poor children, girls and socially disadvantaged groups in 42 rural districts. The remaining 292 targeted rural districts will be reached during the next 15

Mexico, also with World Bank help, has launched a

individuals. USAID recently announced

lier this month, will be launched with a \$2.5 million Bank contribution and is soliciting contributions from governments, corporations and

a new 10-year, \$100 million initiative to increase girls school enrollment in some 12 nations, the first being India. Other countries will be an nounced soon, with likely recipients including Nepal, Honduras and South Africa. The money will provide grant funding for technical assistance and small demonstration and research efforts

In Bangladesh, UNICEF is working with the departments of Social Services and Labour to establish new "childfriendly" drop-in centres where education, basic hygiene, health and legal services can be provided. In addition, there are thou-

sands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to improve the lives of children, including the long-standing South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude in India and the defense for Children International. In one region of Pakistan, an NGO called the Academy for Educational Development has, through partnership with local government, created 122 new schools and enrolled more than 70 per cent of eligible school-age girls. A number of countries are

in the process of raising the minimum years children must be in school. According to child labour experts. Thailand intends to raise the minimum number of years a child must be in school from six to nine years. The Thai government also is expected to introduce legislation soon that would impose every strict punishments on those involved in child prostitution, one US Labour

ing with such earnings-replacement approaches." Al banez said, adding that what works in one country or region may not work in another country or region.

In Bangladesh, according to one World Bank official, a "food for education" programme has been implemented where a poor family that sends its child to school instead of work gets some wheat.

Despite some recent set backs, negotiations are expected to resume soon on a programme called "School-E-Jai" (To School I Go) that would remove 25 000 underaged children from the garment industry in Bangladesh and replace them, where possible with older relatives so that family income will not suffer, says Pharis Harvey, executive director of the International Labour Rights Education and Research Fund.

In an interview. Harvey also noted the Grammen Bank in Bangladesh that is run by women and has provided small-scale loans to thousands of women resulting in a large number of income-generating projects. Similarly he said that the Self-Employed Women's Association in India has provided financing, training and child care for women that has helped in reducing the use of child labour in the country.

Albanez says that India has announced plans to quadruple spending on primary education over the next five years. In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the introduction of compulsory primary education, rural development and income generation schemes are being tar geted to the families of children in the fireworks and matches industries of Savakasi. she said.

Each family has a contract card which approves the manufacturing of 10,000 sticks a

Children Working at Bidi Factories

by M M Islam

According to industry sources, about 20,000 children are working bidi factories in and around the thana headquarters. They work with tobacco, and other harmful substances that cause serious health hazards. Factory owners usually prefer child workers as they cost less.

NSTEAD of going to school, thousands of children at Daulatpur, a frontier administrative unit of Kushtia district, are working at bidi factories to supplement their families.

The children, mostly aged between six and 14, are toiling dawn to dusk to earn their livelihood, risking their health. Born and grown up in a dirty and unhealthy environment, most of them are malnourished. Moreover while working in the bidi industry, they indulge in smoking at an early age, further injuring their

According to industry sources, about 20,000 children are working bidi factories in and around the thana headquarters. They work with tobacco, and other harmful substances that cause serious health hazards. Factory owners usually prefer child workers as they cost less.

Most of the labourers at bidi factories are suffering from serious respiratory problems and other illnesses which include constipation, asthma. TB and liver infection. Local doctors attributed the causes to continuous inhalation of pungent tobacco dust.

"Most of the employees working with tobacco fall sick with serious bronchial diseases. Even within only five years of their services many of them are forced to take leave" said a local physician.

"But they do not care nor abide by the doctor's advice. These people are so poor that they do not have any other option," he said. The doctor expressed concern at the indifferent attitude of the mill-authorities regarding health and hygiene of their employees.

Workers in bidi factories normally work in two ways contract basis and wage basis. Workers, especially the women and children who belong to a family, prefer to work on contract basis while the regular employees work on wage basis. The number of families working with the factories in the area is about ten thousand.

day. Instead of working individually, the children work with their family members.

The factory authorities supply papers, filter, gum, tobacco and other necessary materials. The elderly members of the family prepare the paper rolls and fill them with tobacco mixtures while the children plug them and make the bundles, sticking band rolls around each bundle.

A five-member family can manufacture as many as 20,000 sticks daily. They earn eight taka per 1.000 sticks. On an average, a medium size family earns Tk 400 per week.

large scale bidi factories, at Allar Darga Bazar, about 10 kilometre west off the thana headquarters, which employ about 10,000 workers. Of the employees, about 75 per cent are women workers, mostly deserted by their husbands: The bordering township

There are about six small to

Daulatpur is inhabited by about 360,800 people, mostly living in abject poverty and doing odd jobs to earn their livelihood. Of them 1.75,229 are women. Many of the local people are engaged in some illegal trade with neighbouring India, which has a 43 kilometres bordering line with the township.

When asked most of the workers and employees, working with the bidi factories. replied that they worked in the industry accepting all the hazards, as there were no alternatives. Where will we go. if we leave the job," said a, middle-aged woman who was deserted by her husband five years ago.

"I am now well and running my family quite smoothly, with sufficient means for subsistence. My children help me in the work," said the women, mother of three children. "At least we could evade the starvation which we experienced at my parents' house just after my divorce.

She is now happy. The only dissatisfaction that haunts the family is the lack of education facilities for the children who are now at the prime of their schooling age.

-- News Network

James Bond You WATCH YOURSELF BY IAN FLEMING MR MARK THE THUNDERBIRD HOTELS BRAWING BY HORAX A SANGSTER SET_P -AN THAT SCARALANGA MAN HES WORSEN Garfield ®











by Jim Davis

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BAD NEWS

FOR JAMAICAS

EH? THAT'S

TO START A

SHALL WAR

AMONG THE

SUGAR GROWERS.

ENOJGH WEED