Non-Formal Education

Looking at its Aims, Objectives and Philosophy

by Mr Lemuel Miravalles

The NFE-3 Project provides literacy training to 351,000 hard-to-reach working and slum-dwelling urban children and adolescents (8-14 years) in six Divisional Cities through courses lasting 24 months implemented by NGOs. The NFE-4 Project, on the other hand, targets about 22.88 million illiterate children, adolescents and adults (11-45 years) in 448 Thanas of 62 Districts nation-wide

T ON-FORMAL education (NFE) in Bangladesh is synonymous with mass education or adult literacy. The literacy rate of adults (15 years and above) in the country is low being only 36.4 per cent in 1992 and 47.3 per cent as of 1994. By comparison, Indonesia's 1992 adult literacy rate is 82.5 per cent while that of Sri Lanka is 89.3 per cent. The Government has identified as one of its priorities the eradication of illiteracy within a given time frame. It hopes to increase the adult literacy rate to 62 per cent by the year 2000 (thus achieving its Education for All target) and then to 80 per cent by 2002, the end of the Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) period.

The Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE), organised in 1995 under the Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) has been given the task of planning and managing the implementation of the national literacy non-formal education programme comprising basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education. The DNFE implements the national literacy programme through four major projects with a total target of about 34 million illiterates. Each of the four NFE projects has its own specific objectives, target population, district coverage, age groups, service delivery mechanisms, partners and donor funding

Aims of NFE

The aims of non-formal education or mass education in Bangladesh is to empower learners with technological skills, entrepreneurial traits, and leadership skills in addi-

tion to skills related to literacy. numeracy and communication. Adults will be made literate to enable them to do the following: read and write letters, help their children who attend school, get employment or a better job, gain social prestige. strengthen their self confidence, participate in social and political life, keep accounts and minutes within social or political organisations and improve

Objectives of NFE Programme

the living conditions of them-

selves and of others.

The objectives of DNFE's national literacy programme is not only to increase the overall literacy rate but also to reduce the wide gaps in literacy rates between men and women, between rural and urban areas and among districts in various

As of 1994, the female adult literacy rate was 38.1 per cent against the male adult literacy rate of 55.6 per cent. The rural adult literacy rate was 36.6 per cent against the urban rate of 63.0 per cent. Such District as Sherpur (21.36%), Cox's Bazar (23.75%), Jamalpur (24.59%) and Kurigram (25.26%) have less than half the adult literacy rates of Dhaka district (59.6%). Jhalakthi (56.4%) or Pirojpur

Formal, Non-Formal and **Informal Education**

Non-formal education is different from both formal education and informal education. Informal education is the lifelong process by which everybody acquires knowledge. skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences at home,

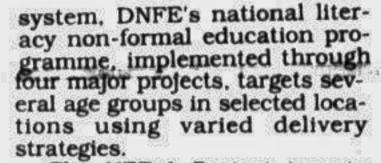
at work, at play. It is generally unorganised and often unsystematic. Informal education means reading newspapers and books, listening to the radio. watching television, talking to

friends, travelling. Formal education, on the other hand, is the highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured education system. In Bangladesh, formal education refers to primary education (grade 1-5) beginning at the age of six; Junior Secondary (grade 6-8); Secondary (grade 9-10); Higher Secondary (grade 11-12); and Higher Education (after grade 12).

Non-formal education is generally defined as any organised, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal education system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population. NFE includes adult literacy programmes as well as skills training programme, agricultural extension and farmer training programmes, and various community programmes of instruction in credit, health, nutrition, family planning, co-operatives, etc.

Both non-formal and formal education have been organised to augment and improve upon the informal learning process. The two are sometimes similar also in pedagogical form and methods. Non-formal education often differ from formal education in terms of sponsorship, institutional arrangements, educational objectives and target groups.

NFE Target Groups Unlike the formal education



The NFE-1 Project targets about 2.95 million young adult illiterates (15-24 years) in 32 selected districts using centrebased courses (9 months basic and 3 months post literacy) implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) The NFE-2 Project, on the other hand, targets about 8.179 million illiterate children, adolescents and adults (11-45 years) in 190 Thanas of 31 Districts under six Divisions using a combination of centre-based courses (12 months) by NGOs and Total Literacy Movement (TLM) approach (9 months courses) managed by local administrations.

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Prospects for NFE

What are the prospects for non-formal education in Bangladesh? The Fifth Plan gives us an overview of developments in the national literacy non-formal education programme:

Literacy programmes will be integrated with income generating activities and micro credit programmes of other ministries, directorates, agencies. Existing facilities of Thana Training and Development Centres (TTDC) will be used as resource centres for non-formal education.

A massive social mobilization programme will be initiated with extensive use of mass media and wide publicity. People from all walks of life will be involved including school teachers, college students, community leaders, extension workers, social workers, professional groups, political activists, local government authorities and NGOs.

The entire country will be brought under the area-based Literacy Movement (TLM). Literacy centres will be established in each village. Efforts will be made to generate funds for non-formal education by mobilizing local financial resources.

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ing from the President of India to academics and public figures - has suddenly discovered a genius in Professor Amartya Sen after he got the Nobel Prize in economics. There have been any number of learned articles on him in national dailies, periodicals,

THE whole country — start-

basic education.... and also extensive coverage on the television. The country is proud of Amartya Sen and he has brought glory to the country — this has been the refrain. Benfocus."

galis have hailed him as a great and "quintessential Bengali intellectual", yet others have written about his Marxism and his views about market economy, globalisation, and so on. A few have written about his concern for victims of famines and his theory that famines are not caused by the shortage of availability of food grains. The Bengal famine in 1943 — one of the significant works of Amartya Sen is on this famine - in which more than three million people died without raising a finger by way of protest, was cussed by hoarders of food stocks. The government did nothing to handle this tragic calamity.

All these are, no doubt, important aspects of Amartya Sen's studies and contributions

Regrettably, the most important contribution made by Sen has hardly been noticed by commentators - both academics and political leaders. This relates to the role and importance of basic education in economic development, which is immediately and directly relevant for India and non-implementation of Article 45 of our Constitution namely that the state is "to endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years for commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory educate on until they complete the age of 14".

Professor Sen's theory, which was recongized by the Nobel Prize Committee, is that without implementing the scheme of compulsory basic education, no economic development is possible. He has given a clear exposition of this theory in his book, co-authored with Professor Jean Dreze, India: Economic Development and Social Opportunities, (1995). He writes: "Basic education, good health, and other human attainments... can help in generating economic success of a more standard kind, which in turn can contribute to the quality of life even more The remarkable neglect of a elementary education in India is all

Relating Amartya Sen's Theory

Perspective India

We must draw attention to what Amartya Sen has said fearlessly with regard to the neglect of

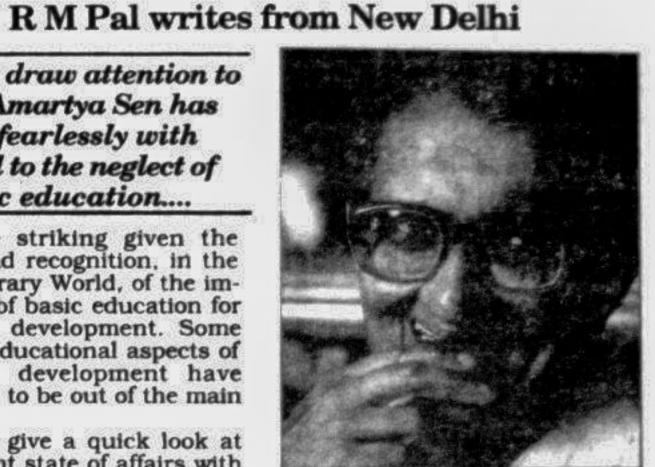
the more striking given the widespread recognition, in the contemporary World, of the importance of basic education for economic development. Some how the educational aspects of economic development have continued to be out of the main

Let us give a quick look at the present state of affairs with regard to this social welfare programme. Our political leaders, since independence, have chosen to forget the fact that it is, to use Abrahim Lincoln's words, dangerous to live in a nation which lives half-free and half-slave. Our leaders have also chosen not to take any cognizance of the fact that slavery thrives on illiteracy. The ground reality today is even according to government statistics, that India is still first in the world in terms of the number of total illiterate persons. Female literacy is 26 percentage points below the male literacy; about 35 million of children in 6-10 age group do not attend primary school; 37 per cent of all primary school

reaching Class V. Vulnerable groups are in a worse position. The literacy rate varies from 90 per cent for rich urban males to a mere 17 per cent for poor, rural scheduled caste women. As a consequence India contributes the largest share in the child labour force in the world, and about 90 per cent of child workers employed in the notorious match factories in Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu are girls.

children leave school before

Many countries which are poorer than India have managed a much higher rate of literacy: Kazakhstan — real GDP per capita income 1117 dollars and literacy rate 98 per cent; Kenya 1404 dollars, and literacy rate 94 per cent; Vietnam 1208 dollars, and literacy rate 78 per cent. In 1994 India's real per capita income was 1348 but literacy rate was 52 per cent. So that poverty of resources (the reason advanced by government agencies and also by intellectuals and activists for not achieving literacy in India) is not the real reason for India's dismal performance in this



The fact remains that even in India some states have made rapid progress in this field. Kerala, for example, whose per capita income is less than that of the all-India income has a literacy rate of about 90 per cent. The other extreme is that about three-quarters of our-ofschool children live in states like Andhra Pradesh. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, UP, Rajasthan and West Bengal.

Professor Sen has offered

convincing reasons for the will

ful and criminal neglect in the field of elementary education "The traditionally elitist tendencies of the ruling cultural and religious tradition in India may have added to the political problem. Both Hinduism and Islam have, in different ways, had considerable inclination towards religious elitism, with reliance respectively on Brahmin priests and on powerful Mullahs, and while there have been many protest movements against each (the medieval poet Kabir fought against both simultaneously), the elitist hold is quite strong in both these religions. This contrasts with the more egalitarian... tradition of Buddhism. Buddhist countries have had much higher levels of basic literacy than societies dominated by Hinduism or Islam. He adds that in our country both ancient and modern biases shape our policies reflecting prejudices of class division as well as tradition cultures. The difficulty, he writes, in "getting even left-wing parties interested in combating inequalities in education relates to the general social atmosphere, "including the nature of the leadership of the different parties which takes some major disparities as simply 'given' and not particularly worth battling against in view of other - perceived to be more 'pressing' challenges".

Professor Sen maintains that illiteracy and educational backwardness in India have many adverse effects: on the freedom and well-being of people in general and women in particular, on mortality and fertility rates (in Kerala life expectancies are 71 years for male and 74 for female; and the fertility rate is 1.8; and mortality rate is 17 and 16 per thousand for boys and girls respectively). on pressure for social change, and on the ability of the Indian masses to demand responsible public attention in all important matters like health care. It must also be added that education alone can do away with divisiveness and dissension and enable our people at have a healthy and creative outlook on

national unity and integration. Our own Supreme Court in a judgement in February 1993 gave a ruling that primary education must be considered a fundamental right. The court observed then: "Does not the passage of 44 years, more than 4 times the period stipulated under Article 45 convert the obligation created by the Article into an enforceable right? In this context, we feel constrained to say that the allocation of available funds to different sectors of education in India discloses in inversion of priorities indicated by the constitution. "Very telling, indeed The court added: "Be that as it may we must say that at least now the state should honour the command of Article 45. It must be made a reality - at least now." One need hardly add that successive governments since then have totally ignored the court order which, according to our Constitution has become a

If the government can ignore a Supreme Court order, will it care for the wise theory of the Nobel Laureate? The nation will applaud him, but his theory will not surface from the backyard. And yet we must draw attention to what Amartya Sen has said fearlessly with regard to the neglect of basic education.... The educational inequalities both reflect and help to sustain social disparities, and "for a real break, much more determined political action would be needed than has been provided so far" by either the party in power or the one in opposition. The weakness in this field of even parties of the "left' is particularly strik-

- Mandira The writer is a human rights

A Surprising French Lesson for the World

Claude Martin writes from Gland, Switzerland

TT is not unusual for me to be The life of France is so bound up with the asked how I cope with the Afrustrations of life as a motor car that the decision to hold a car-free professional environmentalist. After all, people say, it is not simply the constant and sometimes unavailing battle to persuade people to change their careless and harmful ways but also the fact that barely a year passes without the emergence of some new threat to the wellbeing of the planet and its inhabitants.

In response, I and others like me usually mutter something about the necessity of having a thick skin in this business and then point out that we have seen at least some positive results from our efforts.

Yet when, as a consequence of such questions, I think about why we continue to bang our heads against the brick walls of thoughtless behaviour, vested interests and ingrained prejudice, I generally come to the conclusion that perhaps it is sheer curiosity that keeps me and my colleagues going. By curiosity I mean an unquenchable desire to see what will happen

In many cases, what happens next is barely different from what happened before. But sometimes our curiosity is rewarded with a pleasant surprise - a selfless act of faith or a sudden and extraordinary leap in understanding that helps to make all our campaigning worthwhile.

Just a week or two ago, for instance, I was startled to hear on the morning news broadcast that 35 French cities, including Paris, were taking part in a "day without cars". For a moment I thought there was some confusion about the date: it was not September 22 but April 1 and

day in Paris and 34 other cities came almost as a shock. Not only that, but most French people supported the idea. It is the sort of thing that helps to make the life of the environmentalist worthwhile.

this was an April Fool's prank. This was France they were talking about, the country where the car occupies a position somewhere between the sacred cow and a proud symbol of national identity. France,

where people routinely use "les environs" to mean simply "surroundings" and the word "environment" hardly figures at all except for the government department in whose title it oc-

I well remember the time 12

years ago when the compulsory fitting of catalytic converters on all new cars had already been adopted in Sweden and Switzerland as an anti-pollution measure. Renault cars fitted with converters began to arrive in those countries from France, while back home the French car-makers were still telling their customers that the technology had not been perfected and, in any case, it was not economically feasible to insist on the inclusion of catalytic converters in all new

That was the line followed to the bitter end, and with barely a protest from the French public. Most people seemed content to believe the lies and settle for the status quo. So the idea of

France falling for the concept of a car-free day in cities seemed

to me like something from Al-

But it was true, and confir-

ice in Wonderland.

mation of its success came the next day with four pages of special reports in the august Le Monde, one of Europe's greatest and most thoughtful newspapers. "Will there be life in cities after the car?" an editorialist asked, pointing out that in Paris 60 per cent of public space is now reserved for motorists and that France as a whole will soon reach the American level of one car for every two inhabitants (including babies).

He went on to answer his question positively, drawing attention to a new phrase used by growing numbers of people to describe the stranglehold of the automobile — "la mobilité paralysante". There was, he said, a feeling that the time had come to "take back the city" and restore to people the space that had been stolen from them by the motor car.

A way to help achieve that was featured on another page. in an article describing ambitious plans to revive tram travel in the Paris region. It recalled that in 1921 the area had boasted nearly 1,000 kilometres of tramways, but they had

gradually been ripped up until the last tram was taken out of service in 1956. Two lines did reappear in the early 1990s, but now the local authorities are cooperating on a project to reinstate 200 kilometres of tram tracks, which will revolutionize transport in the suburbs.

The country's biggest-selling daily. Le Figaro, was characteristically churlish about poor organization and information in relation to the car-free day, but it reported that in Paris there had been a 20 per cent fall in motor traffic and that, according to a survey carried out for the mayor's office, 87 per cent of Parisians thought the initiative was a good idea.

On its front page, the paper printed a remarkable photograph of the famous thoroughfare Boulevard Saint-Michel "empty as far as the eye can see" apart from a couple of cyclists.

If the idea of tackling the increasingly urgent problems caused by unlimited car travel can capture the imagination of the car-mad French, then there is hope for us all. The gesture was largely symbolic and it has come rather late in the day, but a precedent has been set and an example given that can be built

That is often how good things happen in society. It is also hat sustains us in our environmental crusade, continuing to press for change in the face of constant charges of alarmism. Every flash of enlightenment renews our energy to continue preparing the way to that great day when complacency finally submits to reason.

- WWF Features

The writer is Director General of WWF International.

Peace Dividend Doesn't Include Jobs

Many of the freedom fighters who helped Namibia win its independence are languishing without work, a decade after

the war ended. Gemini News Service reports on the growing anger in Namibia over the lack of jobs for ex-soldiers. David M Kashweka writes from Windhoek

HOUSANDS of men and women camped in the bush for decades to wage a bitter bloody war of liberation for Namibia against apartheid

South Africa. But eight years after independence the war is not yet over for about 12,000 members of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). The only difference is that the war is on a different front, changed from a fight with guns and ammunition to a fight for jobs.

The situation threatens trouble for the Namibian government. For the past few months, the daily headlines in the national media have been about the Ex-PLAN combatants and their demands for immediate jobs as a reward for their part in the struggle.

Close to 2,000 former South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) combatants are holding a vigil at one of the country's small airports at Ondangwa in the north, vowing not move an inch until they are allocated jobs right there.

The vigil began after the group had started a gruelling 800-kilometer walk to the capital Windhoek for a face-to-face encounter with President Sam Nujoma. He flew to Ondangwa to meet with the leaders of group, which began with only 400 people. He asked them to go back to their respective villages while the government was "urgently looking into you plight." They adamantly refused to

While this was happening in the far north, police in the capital Windhoek had to fire teargas canisters to stop another 400-strong group from storming into State House, Nujoma's official residence in the city centre, demanding an audience with the head of state on the same issue.

Some ex-soldiers recently held hostage the Minister of

Trade and Industry, Hidipo

Hamutenya, as a bargaining chip, a repeat of a tactic used in

At the centre of the grievances is the accusation that the Namibian political leadership is only looking after its own interests while ignoring the cries of its countrymen and women in need. A regular placard at every demo continues to read: "Some of our leaders are building big houses like castles for themselves while we are suf-

fering. Why?" Unlike the case in Zimbabwe, where senior members of the ZANU-PF government misused the war veteran's fund. Namibia is at least trying to address the plight of its ex-combatants. But with a right economy and an ever-rising general unemployment rate, the government's hands seem to be

Compounding the problem is the fact that the majority of the ex-fighters have little education and qualifications.

The country was rocked by nationwide demonstrations a vear ago, with thousands of these ex-fighters demanding to be employed or be paid monthly pensions. One group numbering more than 1,000 marched from the countryside to Windhoek to see Nujoma.

Realising the situation was a powder keg, Nujoma, after consulting with his cabinet, pledged the immediate creation of 4,128 jobs, 1,000 of which were to be deployed urgently in the Ministry of Defence and Police's Special Field Force. Other were to occupy all unfilled lower posts in public service. A joint report by a team of

consultants from the International Labour Organisation, the government's National Planning Commission, and the European Union recommended the commercialisation of the state-owned Development Brigade Corporation (DBC). It recommended the DBC operate

Post-war Namibia

A decade after the war, 12,000 former members of People's Liberation Army are unemployed. The reasons include a poor economy, a shortage of skills and a lack of programmes to assist ex-soldiers in their transition to work.

The facts:

1988 Talks between South Africa, Angola, US and Cuba result in agreement of principles of UN independence plan; South Africa withdraws

from Angola ANGOLA Ondangwa Windhoek BOTSWANA Atlantic SOUTH Ocean

1989 SWAPO wins 41 of 72 seats in parliamentary election

1990 Independence, with Sam Nujoma as President 1994 SWAPO wins two-thirds

majority in National Assembly, giving it power to amend constitution 1995 Demonstrations by unemployed ex-guerillas

force government to absorb

2,000 of them into police & defence forces 1996 Most of Namibia receives less than half its normal

rainfall, causing one of the country's worst droughts

with a vision to provide the excombatants with employmentrelated training and a source of income generation.

The DBC became a holding company with a number of subsidiaries employing several hundred ex-fighters. The companies included Namibia Brick Enterprise, Namibia Pioneer Engineering, Star Protection Services, and Pyramid Construction. However, due to a lack of experience and foresight, several of these companies became cash-strapped towards the end of last year, resulting in workers going without pay for months.

The Ministry of Finance had to step in by authorising substantial overdrafts, sometimes up to \$4 million, to bail out the holding company and its subsidiaries. This resulted in many ex-fighters being laid off, and

putting the problem back to square one.

The DBC has announced that it must retrench 40 per cent of its workforce or reduce salaries by the same amount if the corporation is to survive.

The workers' frustrations culminated in the hostage drama. President Nujoma delivered a blistering attack on the DBC workers, but offered no solution except to rub slat in the wound, stating that the government could not create any immediate jobs.

Several months later, there is still no light at the end of the tunnel for the ex-fighters.

The writer is an editor and consultant on the New Era, a bi-weekly newspaper in Wind-

Garfield ®







