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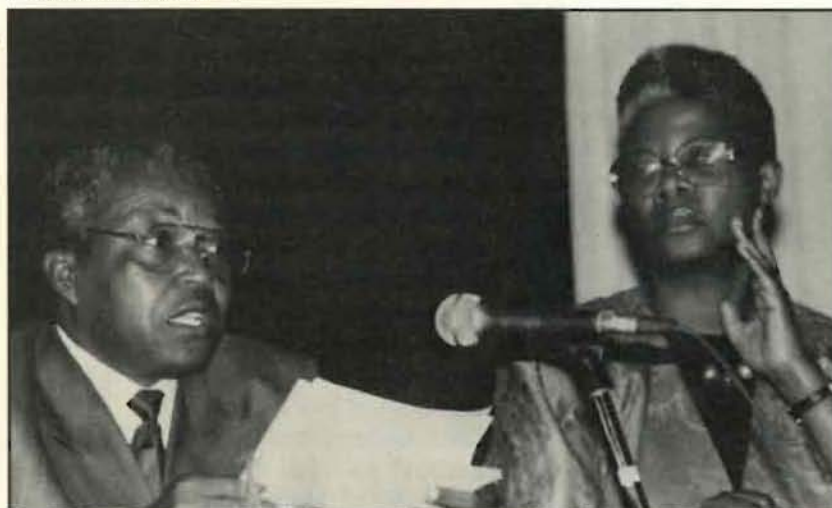
UNITED NATIONS—In words so slow and deliberate as to be almost hypnotic, Eremina Mvura described the challenges facing women farmers in Africa. The audience, gathered in the air conditioned comfort of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium for a day-long symposium on the food crisis in Africa, was spellbound.

"Today we are here for the stomach," she said, getting to the heart of the matter. "This stomach of ours, it has some basic requirements. And the women are working day and night to fulfill the basic needs of this stomach."

"The woman farmer has to go for miles to get water," added Ms. Mvura, who is a farmer and a community development worker in rural Zimbabwe. "If she comes back home without water—the baby, how he will cry. She needs food for her family, and that food needs to be cooked. So she needs water and she needs fuel."

Ms. Mvura's plaintive testimony, however, did not end in a plea for more outside aid. Instead, Ms. Mvura and others at the 5 September symposium asked only that international donors and development agencies support women as small-scale producers of indigenous crops instead of focusing so much on male farmers, cash crops and famine aid. In that way, said Ms. Mvura and others, Africa can become more self-sufficient.

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Alex Ashiabor, left, and Ruth Bamela Engo-Tjega address the Sixth Annual Symposium of the Advocates for African Food Security at the United Nations.

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The Need for International Environmental Legislation

The following statement was presented by the Bahá'í International Community to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Geneva last August.

A little over a hundred years ago, in a series of letters to the world leaders of the day, Bahá'u'lláh spoke of humankind as entering on a period of history that would entail the radical restructuring of the life of the planet. Challenges never before contemplated would, He said, soon overwhelm the resources of even the most ad-

Perspective

vanced nations. They could be addressed only by a world federal system whose central organ would be a representative world parliament empowered to create a code of universally agreed upon and enforceable international law. "The earth is but one country," Bahá'u'lláh asserted, "and mankind its citizens."

As the magnitude, complexity and urgency of environmental problems have gradually forced themselves on public attention, the logic of this prescription has become daily more apparent. The available international legislative machinery and processes are proving inadequate, primarily because they are based on laws governing nation-states.

To the Bahá'í International Community it seems clear that, unless creative new steps in the restructuring of the international order can be taken, environmental degradation alone, and its long-term implications for social and economic development, will lead inexorably to a disaster of appalling dimension.

The current process for creating international environmental legislation, which addresses only one problem at a time, is fragmented and unsystematic. Conventions, treaties, and protocols, have been adopted on such diverse issues as the protection of the ozone layer and control of international traffic in hazardous wastes.

Other conventions are being negotiated on climate change and on biological diversity. Still others have been suggested on such subjects as land-based sources of marine pollution. No one body is responsible for drafting international environmental legislation. Nor have the nations of the world agreed on a set of principles upon which environmental legislation can be based. Moreover, the countries signing the various legislative instruments are rarely identical. Thus, it is almost impossible to harmonize or combine agreements.

The international legislative process is well known to be slow, cumbersome, and expensive. Once a problem is identified, meetings of experts are called to prepare a draft agreement. The agreement is negotiated by interested governments and signed at a plenipotentiary meeting. After what is often a lengthy period of ratification and accessions, the legislation comes into force, but only in those states which have signed it.

Long-term solutions will require a new and comprehensive vision of a global society, supported by new values... acceptance of the oneness of humanity is the first fundamental prerequisite...

A secretariat is generally established to facilitate and monitor the convention's implementation.

If legislation has to be modified, as in the case of the Montreal Protocol, where increased ozone deterioration outstripped the protocol's provisions, updating can be as slow as adoption. Many countries with limited numbers of diplomats and experts cannot cope with such time-consuming and expensive procedures, particularly as the number of negotiations is

increasing to respond to pressing global environmental problems.

The present ad hoc process for environmental legislation can only become more unmanageable. Numerous proposals have been offered to provide global mechanisms to create and support a sustainable pattern of development. Some experts advise strengthening the existing UN system by upgrading the mandates of agencies such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), reconfiguring the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), or using the Trusteeship Council to administer certain global resources. Others suggest creating new bodies such as an environmental security council, a World Court of environmental justice, or an international environmental negotiating body to prepare, adopt and revise international legislation on issues requiring global action.

However well motivated and helpful such proposals are, it seems apparent to the Bahá'í International Community that the establishment of a sustainable pattern of development is a complex task with widespread ramifications. It will clearly require a new level of commitment to solving major problems not exclusively associated with the environment.

These problems include militarization, the inordinate disparity of wealth between and within nations, racism, lack of access to education, unrestrained nationalism, and the lack of equality between women and men. Rather than a piecemeal approach conceived in response to the needs of the nation-states, it seems clearly preferable to adopt an umbrella agreement under which specific international codes could be promulgated.

Long-term solutions will require a new and comprehensive vision of a global society, supported by new values. In the view of the Bahá'í International Community, acceptance of the oneness of humanity is the first fundamental prerequisite for this reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind.

Recognition of this principle does not imply abandonment of legitimate loyalties, the suppression of cultural diversity, or the abolition of national autonomy. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a far higher aspiration than has so far animated human efforts. It clearly requires the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims

of a unified world. It is inconsistent not only with any attempt to impose uniformity, but with any tendency towards excessive centralization. Its goal is well captured in the concept of "unity in diversity."

The Bahá'í Writings envision the world federal system proposed by Bahá'u'lláh as one "in whose favor all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions." Such a world commonwealth will include "a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples.

"A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system."

Under such a system, "a single code of international law — the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives — shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units..." At the same time, "the autonomy of [the] state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them [will be] definitely and completely safeguarded."

The Bahá'í International Community therefore urges the Preparatory Committee to consider bold and creative approaches to the creation of international legislative machinery and processes. No real change is possible without a vision. The proposed Earth Charter can go a long way toward articulating a unifying vision for the future and boldly asserting the values upon which it must rest. In its work on the text, the Preparatory Committee may wish to refer to *The Promise of World Peace*, a statement to the Peoples of the

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Teacher Lisa Jacobson presents the "Peacemaker of the Week" award—symbolized by a globe of the earth—to Arnon Songlumjiak and Daniel Lai, two students in her primary two class at the School of the Nations.



With Mandarin and peace education, the School of the Nations brings new ideas to Macau

MACAU — Each week, teacher Lisa Jacobson selects from her primary two class at the School of the Nations a recipient for a somewhat unusual award: "Peacemaker of the Week." Those chosen have their photograph placed in a prominent spot, high on the classroom wall.

Although some diplomats might perhaps have trouble with the concept, the seven-, eight- and nine-year-olds in Ms. Jacobson's class for the most part do not — although occasionally someone comes up with a new wrinkle on the definition of peace.

"What is a peacemaker?" the 27-year-old American-born teacher asked her class before presenting the award one day recently. Eager hands shot into the air.

"People are not fighting and use words to solve problems," answered nine-year-old Kam Leong.

"You cannot say bad words," said eight-year-old Lai Yin Yin.

"Don't make strange faces to other people," said eight-year-old Carlos DeSilva.

After a few more such answers, Ms. Jacobson presented the award to two boys, Arnon Songlumjiak and Daniel Lai. "They

were helping each other to learn," Ms. Jacobson said. "They were in a reading group together. Arnon is a slower reader, and they helped each other over the hard words."

That kind of emphasis on cooperation and unity is common in the classrooms at the School of the Nations, a combination preschool and primary school in this tiny urban Portuguese colony on the Chinese coast. Founded in 1986 by the Bahá'í community here after reports that more than 2,000 children had no school to attend in Macau, School of the Nations has rapidly become among the most respected institutions in the colony — and a proving ground for a number of distinctive educational experiments.

In addition to its emphasis on internationalism and its moral education — exemplified by things like the peacemaker — the School of the Nations also emphasizes environmental education. Students are also required to learn Mandarin Chinese, the only school to use Mandarin as a medium of instruction in this Cantonese-speaking colony. Its main medium of instruction is English; between the two languages, the school offers a unique preparation for 1999,

when control of Macau will revert to China.

"We view the School of the Nations as more than a primary school," said Anula Samuel, the administrative coordinator, a title which corresponds to that of academic principal. "It is also a social development project designed to assist the people of Macau to prepare for 1999. Some people, we hope, will be able use Mandarin to help their community communicate with mainlanders."

The school has expanded rapidly since opening its doors in 1988. That year it had six students. During the 1989-1990 academic year, 100 students were enrolled. During the 1990-1991 academic year, 220 students were enrolled. This year, there are 262 students; 91 in the pre-school school and 171 in the primary school, which runs through grade eight.

Government Grant and Support

This expansion has come partly through the support of the colony's government. The School of the Nations last year received a substantial grant from Macau Department of Education. The money was used to help purchase new space to house the expanded primary school.

"It is significant that the government would subsidize the acquisition of private school facilities," said Dr. Christina Almeida, the deputy director of the Macau Department of Education. "And that means there is a lot of government interest and support of the School of the Nations."

"The school is proposing things that are

rather new in Macau, but which seem very much the sort of thing that can aid us here," Dr. Almeida added. "Because Macau is very much a cultural microcosm, what the School of Nations has proposed in multi-cultural education seems very useful for the future."

Dr. Almeida also said the school's emphasis on Mandarin language skills could indeed be helpful to Macau's future. "For those who want to stay in Macau after 1999, certainly the ability to speak Mandarin can help to develop a sort of specialized group of people who have the opportunity to develop institutions in concert with the Chinese," Dr. Almeida said. "In general, we need more and more Mandarin speakers to develop contacts with mainland China."

The emphasis on Mandarin extends even to the pre-school, which employs three teachers from China to provide basic lessons in Mandarin. The pre-school also emphasizes moral education in its approach to early childhood development.

"This is something that we think makes us different from other schools in Macau," said Jinous Nouri, the administrator of the pre-school. "We talk about kindness, about sharing things with each other. No guns and no fighting. And, because we have students from so many different lands and cultures, we also show that we are all members of the same human family."

Parents seem to like this sense of internationalism. "I like the way the students of the different races combine together," said

"In general, we need more and more Mandarin speakers to develop contacts with mainland China."

— Dr. Christina Almeida



Anula Samuel, left, and Alan Fryback are co-coordinators of the School of the Nations — a shared position that encompasses the traditional role of headmaster.

"We're looking to the preparation of students who will be participating in the creation of a world civilization."

— Alan Fryback

Mr. Lee Veng Fat, a garment importer and exporter who has a three-year-old daughter at the school. "I heard other parents say good things about the school. So I came to take a look, and I liked the place."

Parents with children in the primary grades seem equally pleased. "There is often a tendency in schools to operate on what we call the duck teaching system," said Mr. K.T. Mak, who is managing director of the local Toyota automobile dealership and has two children in the primary school. "The duck system is all rote learning. They have to do a lot of homework. But the children don't learn to think for themselves."

"Here at the School of the Nations, they do learn to think for themselves," Mr. Mak said. "There is a lot of interaction between the students and the teachers. Plus, I chose this school because I want my children to grow up in a more international environment, where they can meet people from all over the world. And here they can."

Students from 24 nations are currently enrolled at the school, a figure which stems from a commitment to internationalism.

"We're looking to the preparation of students who will be participating in the creation of a world civilization," said Alan Fryback, who co-administers the school with Ms. Samuel. "So that means we try to look at all aspects of education, to eliminate those things that impede the emergence of a world civilization, such as nationalism, racism, materialism, and sexism."

The school also attempts to involve the

parents closely in the educational process. "Traditionally, many schools have followed the philosophy that the school is the one that knows how to educate children, not the parents," said Mr. Fryback. "But many of our goals are not achievable unless the parents are brought into the process."

Individual teachers at the School of the Nations also see themselves as part of an educational experiment here. Mahin Kleinhenz, a 30-year-old teacher from Iran, has helped introduce environmental education to the school. Recently, for example, she and her seventh grade class made recycled paper.

"We went around and picked up used paper from the wastebaskets," said Ms. Kleinhenz, whose husband is American. "We cut out the white parts and then we made paper, using a traditional pulping process and drying screens."

As noted, Ms. Jacobson has taken a creative approach to peace education, which was her thesis topic at Stanford University in the United States.

"In my mind, peace education is organized around two things: one is character development and the other is the recognition of world citizenship," Ms. Jacobson said.

"I came here because I was very interested in being involved in the development of education from the point of view of Bahá'í principles," she added. "The school is based on a realization that we need to build and work towards a global society. And that is a challenge." ☼

Teacher Jennifer Fong leads a group of four-year-old children in a dance class at the School of the Nations pre-school in Macau. Founded six years ago, the school has made a strong reputation in the colony because of its emphasis on internationalism and cross-cultural awareness.





Children and youth from the School of the Nations and the Bahá'í communities of Malaysia and Singapore traveled to Guangzhou, China, in June to perform songs and dances from their native cultures as part of celebrations of International Children's Day. The adult in the center of the photograph is Mr. Huang Qiai, secretary of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress, Guangzhou Province.

Cultural exchange is a feature of School of the Nations' look ahead

GUANGZHOU, China — The emphasis of the School of the Nations on building for the future as Macau looks ahead to 1999 extends beyond the classroom — as reflected in a recent excursion to this southern Chinese city, once known as Canton.

In June, seven students from the School, along with 17 other young people from Malaysia and Singapore, travelled here to perform songs and dances as part of the city's celebration of International Children's Day.

Their performances displayed a cultural diversity that drew wide attention.

"The fact that the children were so diverse — they came from Singapore, Iran, Colombia, Malaysia, the United States, and Sri Lanka — attracted the attention of people everywhere we went," said Ong Eng Eng, one of the chaperones who accompanied the group.

"The Chinese people, especially, loved the color, the glitter, and the cultural beauty of the Malaysian dances and songs, which were sung both in Mandarin and English," Ms. Ong said.

The visit of the children, and their performances, received extensive coverage in the local Chinese media, including on television.

"During the four days we were in Guangzhou, we were given a rousing welcome wherever we went," Ms. Ong said.

"The Chinese children lined the streets and waved with flowers. The band played loud and clear. Every meal meant a sumptuous banquet of eight or ten courses."

The delegation gave four performances in China during the visit, which extended from 30 May 1991 to 2 June 1991. The activities were organized and sponsored by the school, in collaboration with the Children's Activity Center of Guangzhou and the Women's Federation of Guangzhou.

Members of the delegation paid their own travel expenses. Other support for the trip came from the Malaysian Bahá'í community, which arranged for the 17 young people from Malaysia and Singapore to make the trip.

City officials in Guangzhou expressed interest in having the students from the School of the Nations return to participate in future celebrations. A special tree-planting ceremony, in order that the "tree of friendship may grow every year," was held.

"The promotion of respect for different cultures is very important to us at the School of the Nations," said Anula Samuel, the school's administrator and leader of the delegation to Guangzhou. "Events like this, where we can travel both to meet with people of other backgrounds — and display our own diversity — play an important role in our overall concept of education." ☉

Annual conference of the Advocates for African Food Security highlights concerns of the African woman farmer

"Though many NGOs see relief food aid as important, they would like it to be hand in hand with efforts to improve the amenities and to fortify the ability for Africans to produce their own food."

— Alasebu Gebre Selassie

(Continued from page one)

"The women of Africa can produce enough if given the right support," said Ms. Mvura. "We don't need spoon-feeding. We don't need dependence... What we need is motivational and moral support... What we need is equipment, like wheelbarrows."

The symposium was the sixth in a series of annual conferences about women farmers in Africa sponsored by the Advocates for African Food Security, a New York-based coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations. The importance of women farmers can be summed up by a simple statistic: women produce an estimated 80 percent of Africa's domestic food supply. Yet women are often ignored at the policy-making level when food policies are formed — an issue that the Advocates seek to address.

Survey of NGOs

The newsworthiness of this year's symposium was heightened by the release of a new survey of indigenous NGOs in Africa. Sponsored by the Advocates, the survey points to many of the same concerns

expressed by Ms. Mvura and others. It suggests, for example, that increased environmental degradation, the lack of literacy and technical training programs for small-scale farmers, especially women, and the inappropriate application of famine assistance are among the root causes in Africa's worsening food situation.

"Though many NGOs see relief food aid as important, they would like it to be hand in hand with efforts to improve the amenities and to fortify the ability for Africans to produce their own food," said Alasebu Gebre Selassie, a sociologist and development consultant from Ethiopia who analyzed the responses to the survey.

Of 94 responses received from a survey of more than 500 African NGOs, 65 percent indicated that the overall food situation in Africa had become worse in the six years since the 1986 launch of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD), which is currently undergoing its final review.

"What's significant about this survey is

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Changes in the food situation in Africa 1986-1990
based on respondents' experience

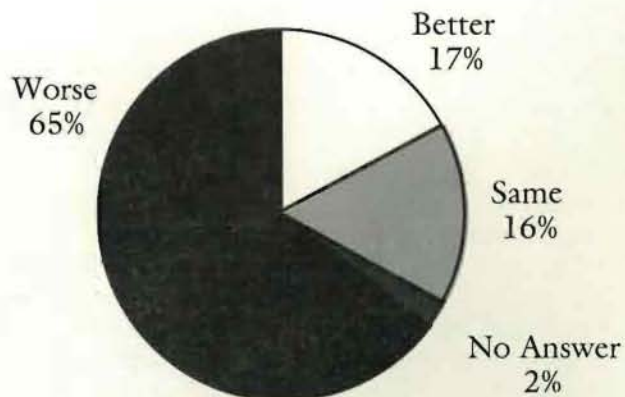


Chart taken from "Food Security in Africa: A Regional Point of View," a report released at the Sixth Annual Symposium of the Advocates for African Food Security. The Advocates sponsored a survey of indigenous NGOs in Africa, which received 94 responses. The chart at left indicates that the majority of those who responded believe that the food situation in Africa have worsened over the last five years.



Eremina Mvura and her seven-week-old daughter during their visit to New York for the Sixth Annual Symposium of the Advocates for African Food Security.

Eremina Mvura: Profile of an African Development Worker

Eremina Mvura's day begins before dawn, when she rises to fetch water from a well two and a half kilometers from her home in the village of Chegutu, in the Mashonaland West region of Zimbabwe.

Once breakfast is cooked, her family is up, and the housework done, Ms. Mvura heads to her job as a district community development worker. In that position, the 39-year-old mother of three travels throughout the district by bus and bicycle, to meet with community groups, explaining the essentials of nutrition, health, hygiene and basic agriculture.

In her approach to the job, however, Ms. Mvura goes beyond the simple details about vitamins and vaccinations: she brings to her work a strong point of view about the importance of women in development, and the role they can play in promoting indigenous crops, advocating better water supplies, and stopping environmental degradation.

"Since we got independence, there have been too many outside experts coming to Zimbabwe to work with the village women, telling us what to do," Ms. Mvura said recently during a visit to New York. "They tell you you have to do this or that, listing steps from one to ten. But they forget we have our own plans, our own projects. What we need is motivational and moral support, not big

projects stamped with the donor's name."

Ms. Mvura said, for example, that outside aid agencies are too eager to promote cash crops.

"There is agricultural research going on every day in Zimbabwe," she said. "What are they researching? Cotton. What, are we going to eat cotton?"

"And now, all the big farmers are growing flowers for export. Because the donors are coming and encouraging us to grow flowers. Is it serving any purpose for our health?"

Instead, she said, there should be greater efforts at researching and supporting the production of indigenous crops, like groundnuts, sorghum, millet, and sweet potatoes. "These crops, they are very nutritious," Ms. Mvura said. "They can stand poor rains. If more indigenous crops are produced, then Africa will be fed, Africa will be helped."

For her work in advocating a greater role for women in development, she has won several awards in her native Zimbabwe. In 1975, for example, she was selected as the best community development worker of the year.

"She has become a symbol of the struggle which has taken place in Africa for food production," said Sekai Holland, who

"...if you go to rural Zimbabwe, there are plenty of pubs, but not enough clean water."

— Eremina Mvura

Eremina Mvura: Profile of an African Development Worker

is the national chairperson of the Association of Women's Clubs of Zimbabwe.

For Ms. Mvura, the key issue is to get women more involved in decision-making.

"I have attended council meetings in my district," she said. "You will find they are all men. They are handing out decisions. But to me they are sometimes stupid decisions. Let me give an example. They say the community needs a bore hole to bring water. But they build a beer hall. If they used that money to build a bore hole, we'd have water. But if you go to rural Zimbabwe, there are plenty of pubs, but not enough clean water."

Ms. Mvura has always felt strongly about the equality of women and men. "I have always felt people were equal," she said. Her commitment to the issue has been reinforced, however, since she became a Bahá'í in 1981.

"When I heard about the Bahá'í Faith, what touched me very much was the principle of equality of men and women," she said. "That made me want to become a Bahá'í." In addition to her government job as a community development worker, Ms. Mvura also serves on the National Bahá'í Women's Committee of Zimbabwe, a role that enables her to work with Bahá'í communities in the promotion of women's advancement.

"This work has helped me to travel all over Zimbabwe for women," Ms. Mvura said. "Because when you teach people about the principles of the Bahá'í Faith, you are really talking about teaching them how to improve themselves. This is the source of actual community development." ☉

Advocates conference spotlights the African woman farmer

(Continued from page 8)

that it asked locally based, indigenous African organizations themselves about the causes of Africa's food deficit," said Mary S. Power, a representative to the United Nations of the Bahá'í International Community, which is convener of the Advocates for African Food Security and one of its co-founders. "It is not based on the assessment of Western donor organizations or technical experts; rather it is based on the actual experience of those groups that are working in the field to help their own people."

Organizations that participated in the survey suggested that the food situation could be improved by an emphasis on improving the agricultural infrastructure in rural areas; by returning to integrated training programs that stress environmental conservation and organic farming; and through the provision of credit and loans for small-scale farmers.

"Any action program designed to ensure food security in Africa must be totally planned, executed, monitored and modified by the people concerned," wrote Ms. Selassie in the survey's conclusion. "Na-

tional policy-makers should base their plans on feedback of lessons learned by the small farmer at the household level, as well as by large scale producers."

These ideas presented in the survey were supported by the speakers at the symposium, which drew an audience of more than 100 representatives from development agencies, NGOs, and United Nations offices.

Women at the Front Line

"African women farmers are in the front line of food production," said Alex Ashiabor, director of the Africa Task Force Unit (UNPAAERD) at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). "They can see the problems looming on the horizon. Often, they can offer some solutions, but tradition, cultural practices and laws which give priority to men in matters of access to needed resources and even in the decision-making process prevent them from doing so."

Mr. Ashiabor noted that in the Gambia, for example, a 20-year-long project to improve rice production by converting 2400 hectares of swamp land into irrigated rice fields failed because women, "who do most



The Bahá'ís of Mbale, Uganda, participated in the International Women's Day parade last March, carrying a banner that stressed the need for the equality of men and women. The event reflects the concern of Bahá'í communities in Africa and around the world about the issue of women's equality, and its impact on subsidiary issues like food security and the difficulties facing women farmers.

of the land clearance, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting, were denied title to the land and were not fully involved in policy formulation."

Disagreements ensued, Mr. Ashiabor said, and many women stopped working the land. "While technical factors contributed to the failure, socio-cultural factors, notably, attitudes towards women, proved more important," Mr. Ashiabor said.

The Value of Indigenous Foods

Mr. Ashiabor also called for increased research on the nutritional value, the production, the preparation, and the preservation of indigenous foods. "The dietary values of many African foods are known to African women, but they are not widely publicized," Mr. Ashiabor said. "Greater awareness of their food values will encourage consumption in the place of imported varieties."

Ruth Bamela Engo-Tjega, senior liaison officer at the Steering Committee for UNPAAERD Secretariat and a co-founder of the Advocates, said war, environmental degradation, and the "absence of national food strategies" were among the key causes for Africa's worsening food situation.

"For many countries — Angola, the Horn, and Southern Africa including Namibia—war has been the greatest single obstacle, not only to food security, but to overall growth and development," Ms. Engo-Tjega said. "We therefore need to put war and related strife at the top of our list."

The exploitation of timber and land for livestock has caused extensive deforestation and depletion of wildlife, Ms. Engo-Tjega added, further eroding Africa's ability to feed itself. "In countries like Uganda, deforestation has been estimated at 10,000 to 15,000 hectares per annum, with Africa as a whole losing woodland at around 3.7 million hectares every year," she said.

Ms. Engo-Tjega said other development efforts will prove fruitless unless food production is addressed first. "Food must be the priority because it is, after all, the source of life," she said. "This year, once again, the over-all approach of the Advocates is based on the belief that the common people are the builders of nations, and that hungry, malnourished populations cannot develop a country anymore than a bird with no wings can fly." ❁

Network of NGOs, UN agencies, to promote Education for All

Seeks to promote continuing partnership and information exchange worldwide

NEW YORK — Calling itself the Education for All Network, a newly formed coalition of United Nations agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has opened a small international secretariat here with an ambitious goal: improving cross-sector communication about new models and means to provide basic education for everyone on the planet.

"We're calling this a 'network of networks,'" said Daniel Wegener, who is a member of the Network's International Coordinating Committee and a representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the

United Nations. "We're not trying to create another monster organization with a lot of formality. Rather, we see the Network as a means to help education specialists from all sectors talk to each other and learn from each other."

Dr. Anele Heiges, a Dominican Sister with extensive experience in education and with NGOs in both New York and at the grassroots,

has been hired as the secretariat's only full-time staff person. Her job title will be international communications facilitator.

"I feel this is a meaningful project," said Dr. Heiges, "because if we can truly follow through with the goals of this network, we have the potential to reach many people that would otherwise be forgotten. This can be done, I think because this project brings together a different kind of group than one ordinarily sees in international education circles."

Members of the Network include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), The World Bank, and more than 70 national, regional and international NGOs.

"In many respects, the Network continues the partnership between UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs that emerged at the World Conference on Education for All last year," said Mr. Wegener. "The big challenge after the conference was to sustain the momentum and interest that had been generated for the overarching ideas of education for all. The Network, we hope, will help keep that process in motion."

Held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990, the World Conference on Education For All brought together representatives from 155 governments, U.N. agencies, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs to create an "expanded vision" of basic learning needs of children, youth and adults, and to forge a global consensus on a framework for action to meet those needs.

"But there was, in fact, no international mechanism after the conference to sustain the relationships needed to promote some of the innovative solutions to the challenge of assuring universal basic education," Mr. Wegener said. The New York office will be kept small, Mr. Wegener said, so that the focus can remain at the regional level, which is closer to the type of grassroots initiative that the Network hopes to promote.

Among the priorities for the Network will be to organize a series of regional conferences. "The idea is to promote regional consultations throughout the world, bringing NGO representatives together with representatives of U.N. agencies and governments to share information about model projects," said Mr. Wegener. "We would then hope to develop regional position papers and strategies to advance education for all in each area."

Membership in the Education for All Network is open to NGOs at all levels, national, regional and international, said Mr. Wegener. The Network's new secretariat is located at 2 United Nations Plaza, room 1124, New York, N.Y., 10017, U.S.A. ☉



Dr. Anele Heiges, international communications facilitator for the newly formed Education for All Network.



Warren H. Lindner, executive director of The Centre for Our Common Future and co-coordinator of the '92 Global Forum, met in New York recently with Rebequa Getahoun, the newly appointed deputy director for the Bahá'í International Community Office of the Environment. A native of Ethiopia, Ms. Getahoun has a master's degree in international studies from the University of Oregon. She has worked extensively in rural development in Africa, specializing in women's organizations. She has also been involved in peace education with children and youth throughout Alaska. Mr. Lindner and Ms. Getahoun were meeting to discuss NGO participation in the upcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, scheduled for June 1992 in Brazil.

ONE COUNTRY receives encouraging awards and notices

NEW YORK — ONE COUNTRY, the newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community, won a Grand Award in the newsletters category of the APEX '91 Awards for Publication Excellence.

Announced in late June, the APEX '91 judges cited ONE COUNTRY for "outstanding work" in the newsletter category, citing "excellence in graphic design, editorial content and the ability to achieve overall communications excellence."

The APEX '91 Awards are presented by Communications Concepts, a U.S.A.-based communications consulting firm. This year, according to Communications Concepts, more than 2000 publications were entered in the Apex Awards contest. ONE COUNTRY received one of 27 Grand Awards.

Other participants in the APEX '91 contest included major corporations, such as McDonald's Corporation and Exxon, and other non-governmental organizations,

such as the American Lung Association and the Arthritis Foundation.

Also in July, ONE COUNTRY was recommended to the readers of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, the monthly diplomatic supplement to *Le Monde*, which is published in Paris.

The editors of the "Dans le revue..." section called attention to edition number 7 of the French edition of ONE COUNTRY, taking note of its coverage of education projects in India and Bolivia.

Earlier in the year, ONE COUNTRY was given an "Award of Merit" by the U.S.A.-based Religious Public Relations Council (RPRC). Presented at the Council's annual convention in April, ONE COUNTRY received the award in the category for newsletters.

The RPRC is an international, inter-faith association of professional religious communicators, dedicated to improving the communication of religious issues in the media. ☸

U.N. human rights panel says the Bahá'í situation in Iran continues to be of "great concern"

Slight increase in prison population and other forms of oppression indicate a "precarious" situation, says Bahá'í representative

GENEVA — Despite isolated and sporadic improvements in the treatment of individual Bahá'ís in Iran, the campaign of persecution against Iran's 300,000 member Bahá'í community continues, according to a statement presented in August to the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

Techeste Ahderom, representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations, told the Sub-Commission on 13 August that the recent arrest and imprisonment of several Bahá'ís, as well as continuing economic, educational and religious discrimination against the Bahá'í community as a whole, indicate the need for continued international monitoring of the human rights situation for Bahá'ís in Iran.

"This wave of persecution, which began in 1979, has profoundly affected a whole generation of Bahá'ís, who have lived daily with the knowledge that, for no other reason than their religious beliefs, they have no rights," said Mr. Ahderom. "The Bahá'ís in Iran must, therefore, continue to rely on the vigilance of the international community as their main source of protection."

Vote of 19 to 2

Following Mr. Ahderom's testimony and the testimony of other individuals and organizations about an overall deterioration of the human rights situation in Iran over the last year, the Sub-Commission on 23 August passed a resolution expressing "deep concern" about the overall human rights situation in Iran by a vote of 19 to 2, with one abstention.

The resolution also called on the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to continue

to monitor the human rights situation in Iran, by extending the mandate of its special representative, who has investigated conditions in Iran on behalf of the Commission for the last several years. The Commission meets again in February 1992.

The Sub-Commission also noted specifically that the situation of Iran's Bahá'í community continues to be a matter of "great concern," and it decided "to consider the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the situation of minority groups such as the Bahá'í community," at its next session, in August 1992.

Number of Prisoners is Up

In his statement to the Sub-Commission, Mr. Ahderom said that as of July there were ten Bahá'ís in prison in Iran, all detained solely because of their religious beliefs. That figure is up slightly from January, when seven Bahá'ís were in prison. The number of detentions of Bahá'ís has also increased.

After several years when the number of Bahá'ís in prison in Iran has steadily declined, these increases suggest just how precarious is the situation of Iran's Bahá'ís, Mr. Ahderom said.

"...as long as Bahá'ís are officially considered as 'unprotected infidels' and do not enjoy any protection under the law of the Islamic Republic of Iran, any substantial improvement in their situation could be reversed in a moment."

Mr. Ahderom said also that economic, educational and other forms of discrimination are also continuing.

"Bahá'ís are being strangled economically. Thousands of Bahá'ís dismissed from positions in government and education due to their religious beliefs remain unemployed and are officially deprived of the pensions to which they are entitled.

"There are inconsistencies in the issuance and renewal of business licenses for Bahá'ís, and Bahá'í farmers are still being refused access to farmers' cooperatives... Furthermore, many of the private and business properties of Bahá'ís, arbitrarily con-

(Continued on next page)



Begum Khaleda Zia, far right, the prime minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, received a check from the Bahá'í community of Pakistan for 10,000 Taka as a donation to her cyclone relief fund. The presentation was made on 28 June 1991 by Mr. S. Chatterjee, center, who is secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Bangladesh. To the right of him are Dr. Jena Shahidi and Dr. Hussain Ajmal, of the Bahá'í community.

Perspective: international environmental legislation

(Continued from page 3)

World issued in support of the United Nations International Year of Peace (IYP) by the Universal House of Justice.

Bahá'is the world over find in the UNCED process a powerful reinforcement of the optimism they feel about the future of humankind. We believe that, empowered by the

universal recognition of the dangers presently facing the planet, the governments of the world can be moved to act courageously on behalf of the human race as a whole.

The result may well prove to be not only an effective response to the environmental and developmental problems now facing us, but another enormous step forward in the building of a federal system able to take up the entire array of challenges confronting a rapidly integrating human race. ☉

The persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran continues

(Continued from previous page)

fiscated during the last twelve years, are now being sold at Government auctions."

Travel Restricted

Mr. Ahderom said Bahá'ís are still not allowed to travel freely. In 1990, although 380 passport applications were submitted by Bahá'ís, only 61 passports were issued—mostly to the sick and the elderly. Since March 1991, the issuance of passports to Bahá'ís has completely stopped.

Although Bahá'í children have recently been re-admitted to elementary and secondary schools, Bahá'ís are still not admitted to institutions of higher education.

Since 1979, 197 Iranian Bahá'ís have been killed and 15 others have disappeared and are presumed dead. The frequency of such killings declined in late 1987, although

two Bahá'í were executed as recently as December 1988.

Since the mid-1980s, the United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly expressed concern for the human rights situation in Iran.

Mr. Ahderom reiterated that the Bahá'í community of Iran is not aligned with any opposition movement, ideology or government; rather, he said, Bahá'ís are enjoined by the principles of their Faith to be obedient to the government of the countries in which they live.

"Thus, they represent no threat to the Government of Iran," Mr. Ahderom said. "Bahá'ís wish only to be granted the same rights as other Iranian citizens to practice their religion freely both as a community and as individuals." ☉

From inspiration to execution: the creation of an architectural masterpiece

Jewel in the Lotus

A documentary

Directed by
Fred Badiyan

Written and
produced by
Charles Nolley

Even before its completion in December 1986, the Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi began to win international acclaim for its architectural design.

More than one architectural specialist or writer compared it to India's most famous building: in April 1986, for example, the British publication *Construction News* carried a headline calling the temple the "Taj Mahal of the 20th Century."

In 1987, the graceful nine-sided building won top international awards from the American Institute of Architects and from the Society of Structural Engineers of the United Kingdom.

The challenges of designing and constructing

such a
ground-
breaking
work of ar-

chitecture is the subject of a new video documentary, titled *Jewel in the Lotus*. Produced by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States of America, which contributed to House of Worship's construction, the 27-minute documentary tells the story behind the building, exploring the inspiration for its design, examining the difficulties faced during its construction, and, finally, giving viewers a close-up look at the award-winning result.

Jewel in the Lotus draws on a wide variety of sources in telling this story: historical photographs that trace the early history of the Indian Bahá'í community, interviews with the House of Worship's architect and members of his design team, and stunning footage of the completed project itself.

Central to the story of the New Delhi House of Worship is architect Fariburz Sahba's search for a design theme—a theme he found in the lotus flower. "Symbolism has great significance in India," Mr. Sahba is quoted as saying. "I went travelling and everywhere I saw the lotus..."

The result was a soaring white marble structure, composed of 27 billowing reinforced concrete "petals." Raised around a central point, the 27 petals are arranged in groups of three, creating a nine-sided lotus flower. Nine doors and nine reflecting pools complete the design.

Once conceived, few people were convinced that such an innovative design could be executed, especially in India. In order to

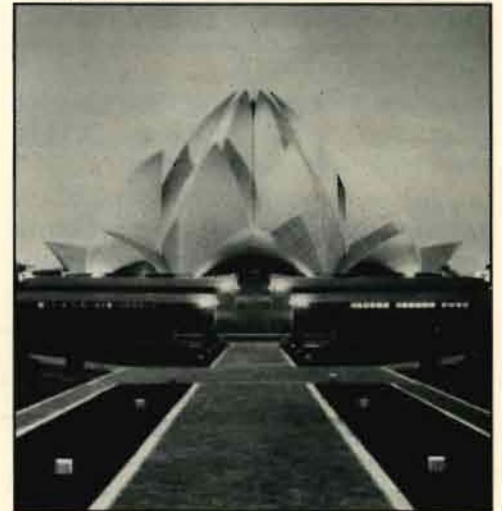
achieve the soaring delicacy envisioned by Mr. Sahba, it was necessary to make the petals extremely thin, yet self-supporting — something which had never been accomplished before, anywhere.

The first step in executing that vision was to calculate the precise curves and thicknesses required — a feat that was accomplished with the help of a computer.

That high technology approach during the design phase was then brought to the low technology environment of India. The challenge there was to coordinate the hundreds of skilled laborers required to build the complicated wooden forms that would contain the concrete while it cured into the precise shapes of the lotus flower design.

Once the operation to pour the concrete was started, each layer of concrete could be allowed to set no longer than ten minutes before the next layer was begun, otherwise the two layers would fail to adhere properly, and the structure would not

Review



New Delhi House of Worship

be strong enough to be safely self-standing.

The documentary, which was directed by Fred Badiyan and written by Charles Nolley, also explores the rich diversity of religious life in India by way of explaining the extraordinary appeal of the House of Worship since its completion. More than two million people now visit the temple site each year, a testimony to Mr. Sahba's success at creating a design that is attractive to people of all backgrounds.

By the video's end, the viewer not only has an appreciation for the building's beauty, but also for the intelligence and inspiration required to bring it into existence. ☉