

WOMAN

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Struggle

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STUDY ON WORKING CHILDREN

Child labour is the subject of a study done by a lecturer at the University of the Philippines, Carolyn Anonnevo, and funded by the ILO. She estimates the number of child workers in the world between 50 and 100 million, mostly found in mining, construction, glass and carpet making.

The study included interviews with 455 Philippino child workers below the age of 15 and noted that all the children were from large poor families. The researcher said that child labour is a complex phenomenon rooted in a country's underdevelopment and sustained by cultural factors.

(PCF Media Service from International Dateline, June 1986)

BRITISH LAW LORDS RULE FOR CHILDREN'S LIBERATION

The British House of Lords has voted 3 - 2 that parents do not have absolute authority over their children. This has given British doctors the legal go-ahead to prescribe contraceptives to girls under sixteen (16) without their parents' consent.

The controversy was intensified three years ago when Victoria Gillick, mother of ten, had opposed the Department of Health and Social Security guidelines concerning contraceptive treatment for girls under sixteen (16), the legal age of consent in Britain. Her campaign was very popular with anti-abortion and conservative groups.

Last year the Appeal Court ruled that the department's guidelines infringed on the parents' right to control how and where children spend their time. However, in this recent ruling, the Lords said that British law had never treated parental rights as sovereign.

"Parental rights are derived from parental duty and exist so long as they are needed for the protection of the person and property of the child", wrote Lord Scarman in the decision.

(Herizons Volume 4 #3 April/May 1986)

UNDP REPORT MARKS WOMEN FOR PROJECT SUCCESS

Failure to tap women's energy, motivation and direct contribution in development activities, has often resulted in projects being more or less successful.

This is contained in a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) document on "Promotion and Support for Women's participation in the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade" (1980 - 1990).

According to the report, since the launching of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade in 1980, billions of dollars have been spent to drill wells, install pumps and construct latrines, but most of these projects had failed due to their primary focus on technical feasibility and neglect of "social feasibility" by failing to ensure participation by intended beneficiaries" - mainly the women of these rural areas..

Women are the sole collectors of water for use in the rural communities they live in. It is estimated that in Kenya alone, three million women spend an average of three hours a day on the single task of fetching water. Other tasks include agricultural production, household chores and looking after the rest of the family.

However, the report continues, examples from a number of African countries have shown that women's effective involvement at all project levels can result in the development of more appropriate plans and designs, hygienic use of water and sanitation schemes, reduced burdens and increased production.

With the help of the governments of Canada, Norway, the Netherlands and other donor agencies, UNDP has so far carried out Water and Sanitation projects in Kenya, Lesotho and Zimbabwe with the aim of demonstrating the values of the ways of achieving women's effective involvement in planning, designing, implementing and maintaining drinking water and waste disposal schemes.

(African Women Link Vol.1 #3)

CHILDBEARING DEATHS HIGH

The Economist magazine reports that about one woman of every ten women in the Third World dies during pregnancy - a fatality rate more than 100 times higher than that in Sweden or the USA.

The causes of death are a combination of generally poor health and inadequate medical services. In Latin America, illegal "back street abortions" cause one half of all deaths during pregnancy.

Herizons Volume 4 #3 April/May 1986

PREVENTING MATERNAL DEATHS IN AFRICA

At least twenty-five per cent of all deaths in women of childbearing years in developing countries are due to maternal problems as compared to less than one per cent for the same reason in some developed countries such as the United States of America. This and other facts are what came out of the workshop on "Preventing Maternal Deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa" by the World Federation of Health Agencies, during Forum '85.

This situation is all the more tragic because the majority of those deaths are preventable the workshop emphasized. Women who give birth before 18 years and after 35 years, as well as women with more than four children stand a greater risk of dying as a result of pregnancy and should be discouraged.

Some other reasons cited for the precarious situation are: lateness of expectant mothers in seeing a doctor; the fact that most doctors work in urban medical centres, whereas most of the population lives in the rural areas; problem of getting medical supplies; lack of supervision of traditional birth attendants; professional negligence by a few impatient health staff; abortions; legal and social barriers preventing the use of contraceptives; the fact that pregnancy reduces a women's resistance to any illness.

(African Woman Link Vol.1 #3)

BAJAN MEN LEAD IN VASECTOMY

More Barbadian men than any others in the region volunteered for sterilization in 1985. Nearly three times the number of men to women underwent the operation. The Barbados Family Planning Association has been providing the service since 1980.

(Family #22, May 1986)

TRAINING IN TORTURE

One of the major programmes of the General Federation of Iraqi Women - the official government organisation - is directed at preparing women for involvement with the security and intelligence apparatus. One of the GFIW's 'prestigious' courses for women is to witness the torture sessions of experienced, professional torturers/executioners in order to 'strengthen their hearts' so they will participate in the torture of suspected women opponents of the regime.

Women are also being trained in Judo, Karate and photographic skills. The aim is to breed 'heroic women' - wives who are prepared to inform on their husbands, mothers who will inform on their sons (and, presumably, their mothers, sisters, daughters)

(Outwrite Issue #46, April 1986)

Info. from AIDA (Voice of the International Committee for the Release of Detained and 'Disappeared')

CALL TO CHANGE ZIMBABWE ABORTION LAWS

The Women's Action Group in Zimbabwe has called for changes in the law to make abortion available to more women. Under present law, a woman can only get a legal abortion if she has been raped (and reported it immediately), if the pregnancy is the result of incest, if her health will be seriously damaged if the pregnancy continues or if there is a serious risk that the child will be born with a severe mental or physical handicap.

At a workshop organised by the group in October, to discuss unwanted pregnancies and baby dumping, abortion was a major issue. Many women faced with unwanted pregnancies (or who cannot afford to support a child) are forced to have a dangerous 'illegal' abortion or to dump their baby when it is born.

WAG is also calling for changes in the law to differentiate between infanticide and murder (so that social and psychological circumstances are taken into account) and for more education about contraception - especially to make men face up to their responsibilities.

(Outwrite Issue #46, April 1986.

Info. from WAG Newsletter.)