

Trade Unions and Environmentally
Sustainable Development

Booklet 6

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*Workers' Education and Environment
Project INT93/M12/NOR*

*Bureau for Workers' Activities
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It comprises:

Guide to the Booklets

1. Environmental Indicators of Development
2. Political Indicators of Development
3. Economic Development and Security
4. Social Development
5. Equality of Opportunity and Treatment
6. Education and Training
7. International Development

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Introduction

This booklet looks at the promotion of broad systems of education as a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of environmentally sustainable development.

It identifies several stages of education and training for the advancement of these goals:

- ◆ basic education for all;
- ◆ vocational training;
- ◆ development of skills and life-long learning;
- ◆ trade union education and leadership training;
- ◆ provision of information.

A lack of access to any of these means that many people are not aware of the close links between human and work activities and the environment.

There is thus an overall need to increase people's sensitivity to, and involvement in, finding solutions for environment and development problems. In this respect, basic education is fundamental to giving people the awareness, values and skills needed for participating in sustainable development.

The importance of encouraging girls to school is highlighted as a key to improving a country's development and empowering women to participate in environmental decision-making.

Life-long learning, developing skills and vocational training means that workers have the education, training and information to adapt to the changing economic conditions and labour markets that go hand-in-hand with the complex environment and development linkages.

But, more importantly for us as trade unionists, continuing trade union awareness-raising and education and training can also provide members and leaders and the local community with the knowledge and skills to allow for full participation in defining environmentally sustainable policies and in concerned bipartite and tripartite decision-making bodies at all levels.

Hopefully the following pages will help you and your union to:

- ◆ think about the importance of basic education, especially of girls, and of skills development and training of workers to the goals of environmentally sustainable development;
- ◆ think about union needs and resources to promote awareness-raising of workers and community, and education and training of its members to participate in decision-making; and
- ◆ define priorities at furthering these needs to include in a union policy on overall environmentally sustainable development.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of environmentally sustainable development.

A country's ability to develop more sustainably depends on the capacity of its people to understand complex environmental and development issues so that they can make the right development choices for the nation as a whole and relevant decisions concerning their everyday lives. There is thus a need to increase people's awareness of environmental issues and of how their lives both affect and are affected by these issues. Only then can they be involved in finding solutions for environment and development problems. Basic education can give people the environmental awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour needed for sustainable development.

Development must be by people, not only for them. People must participate fully in the advisory and decision-making processes that shape their lives.

Environmentally sustainable development also depends on ensuring that workers have the education, information and training to adapt to changing economic conditions, technologies, and labour markets.

But perhaps the most important factor for us as trade unionists lies in educating our members to become competent in environmental decision-making at all levels — at the workplace and in the local community, at national and international levels.

Education and training, and raising of environmental awareness are linked to just about all the issues discussed in these booklets, especially those on meeting basic needs and equality of opportunity.

Basic education for all

Basic education is the foundation stone for all environment and development education. Some of the goals that have been identified for countries to strive for are access for all to education, and primary education for at least 80% of all girls and boys. Adult illiteracy should be reduced and the literacy levels of women brought into line with those of men.

Education in its broadest sense has to be seen as an essential part of sustainable development. For every one percent improvement in literacy, economic growth over one percent has been recorded in developing countries.

UNDP 1993

Literacy, or illiteracy, is a good indicator of educational achievement in developing regions because it generally reflects a minimal level of successfully completed schooling.

The progress in primary education over the past few decades has been encouraging and it has boosted literacy rates considerably, particularly among young people. Today, almost all the world's boys are getting some form of primary education. In most industrialized countries and in some countries in developing regions, decades of primary education have led to near 100% literacy for the young. But in most of the developing world, generations of educational neglect have left very high rates of illiteracy, especially amongst the older generation, women and the rural people.

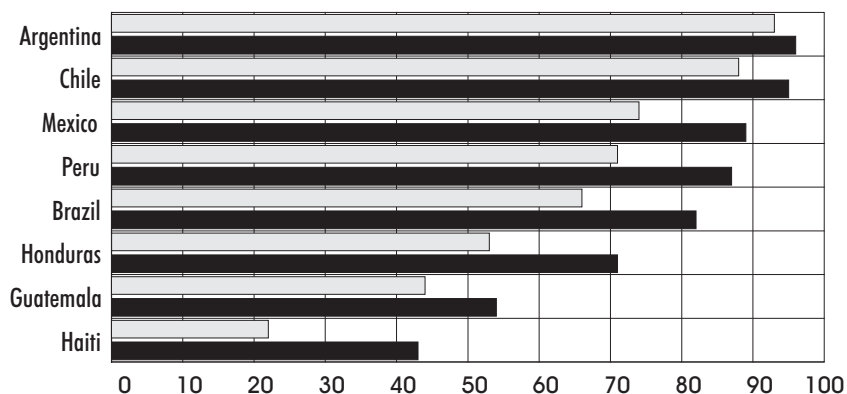
An illiterate person cannot, with understanding, read and write a short simple statement on their everyday life. A person who can only write figures, his or her name or memorized ritual phrase is not considered literate.

Primary education is defined as education beginning between the ages of 5 and 7 and lasting for about 5 years. Secondary education is considered as beginning at about age 10 - 12 and lasting for about 3 years in a first stage and then 4 years in a second stage from age 13 - 15. Tertiary education includes universities and colleges, begins at about 17 - 19 years of age, and lasts for at least 3 or 4 years.

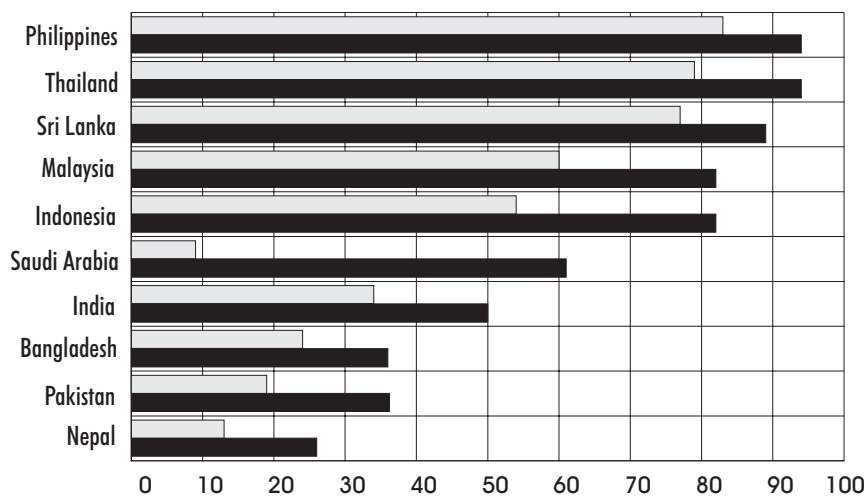
Source: UNDP Human Development Report 1995

Adult literacy rates, 1970-1992

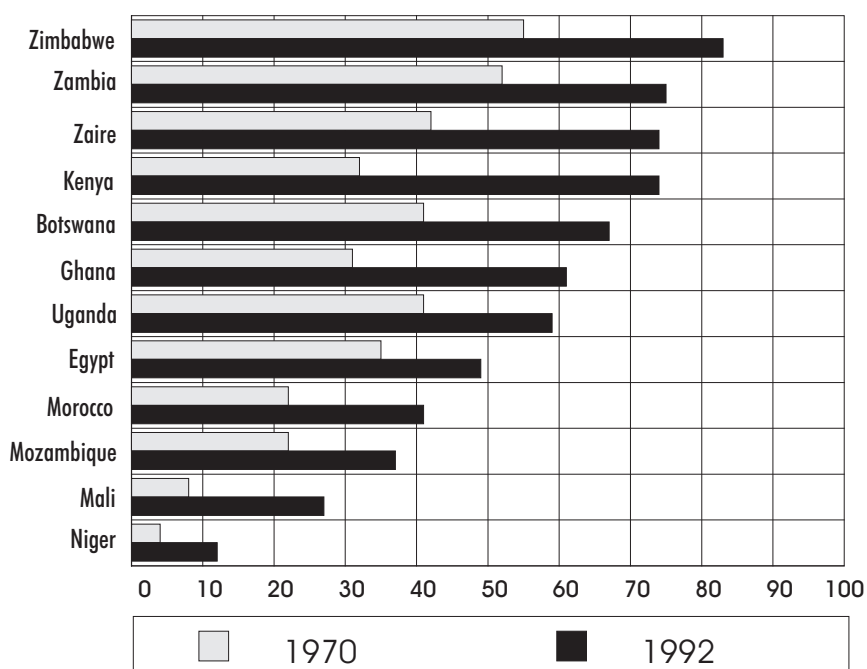
Central America and the Caribbean



Asia



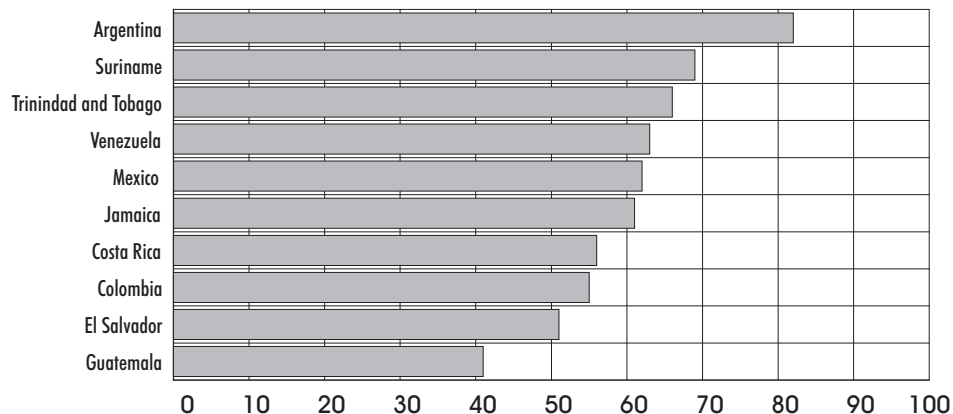
Africa



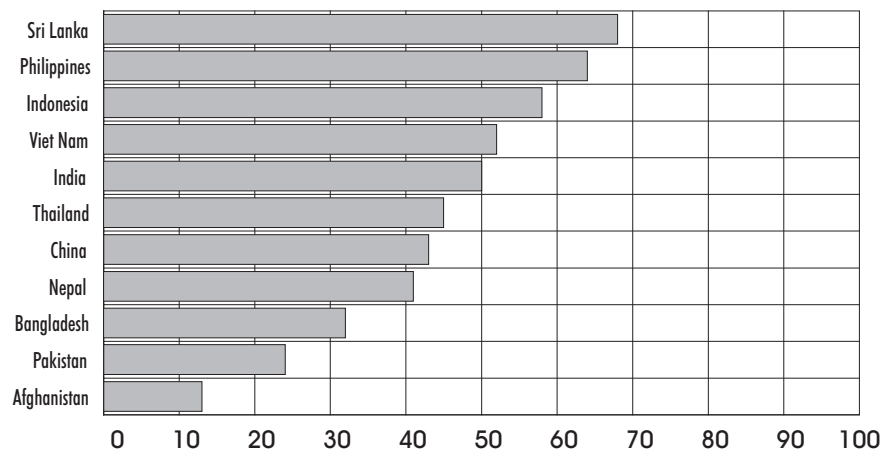
Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 1995

Enrolment in education for all levels: percentage of population aged 6-23 (1992 figures)

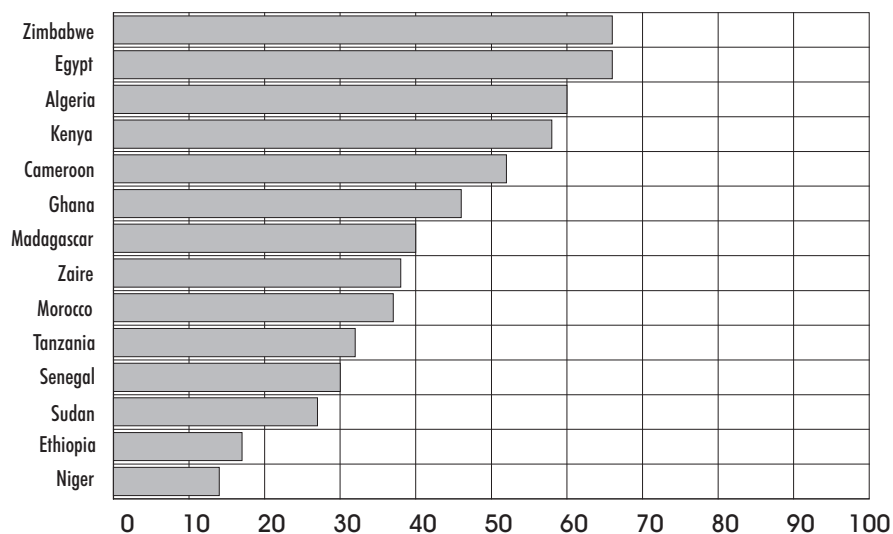
Central America and the Caribbean



Asia



Africa



Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 1995



The problem remains the lack of enrolment of young girls in primary and secondary schools. Although their enrolment rate is increasing faster than that of boys, they have started from a much lower base and school attendance still lags far behind that of boys in southern Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa.

For mass secondary education there has been progress for both boys and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean, but little progress for girls in sub-Saharan Africa, and only moderate progress in other developing regions. The result is that there are about 900 million illiterate people worldwide, of which women outnumber men two to one. Illiteracy rates are highest in sub-Saharan Africa, southern Asia and western Asia, where more than 70% of women aged 25 and over are illiterate. In eastern Asia and south-east Asia, this figure is more like 40%, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, over 20%. This gap will persist well into the next century in all developing regions.

Education and literacy of women are especially important keys to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society.

Illiterate girls tend to marry young and have many babies. Their own daughters are then more likely to stay at home to help look after their brothers and sisters until they leave home to repeat the cycle. The World Bank estimates that where women are excluded from secondary education, they have on average seven children, but if 40% of women go to secondary school, this average drops to three children.

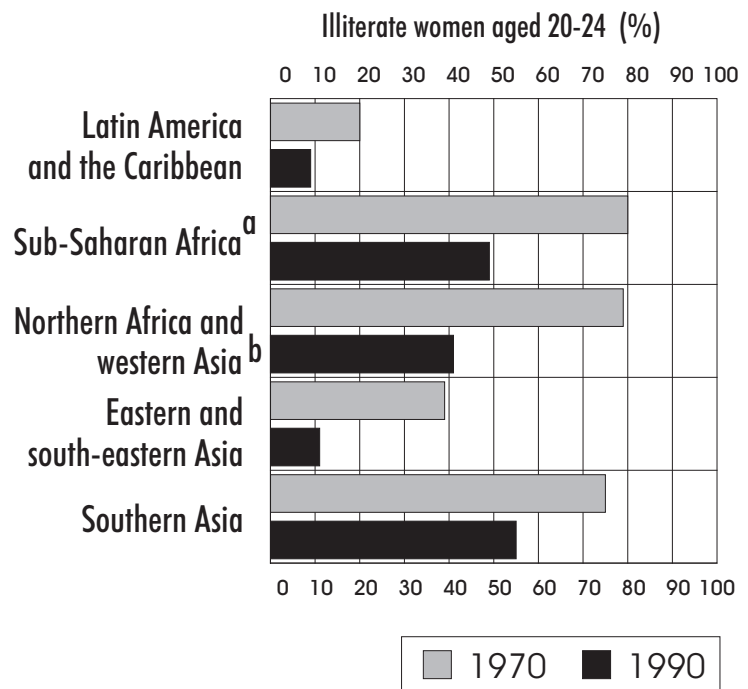
Education means not only having fewer babies but also healthier babies: mortality among Indian babies of mothers with primary education is half that of babies born to uneducated mothers. A literate mother is better equipped to understand hygiene and she can be trained as a health worker.

An educated woman is also more likely to make sure that her child goes to school. In many countries women are the main managers of environmental resources, working on the land and gathering fuel and water. These jobs are done more efficiently and productively by women who have had some schooling. It is not hard to see then that investing in basic education, especially for girls, has very high social and economic returns and has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development.

What matters in educating for future environmentally sustainable development are the choices made today - the best choice for any poor society is to get its girls into school.

Illiteracy rates are falling for young women but are still much higher for young women than men

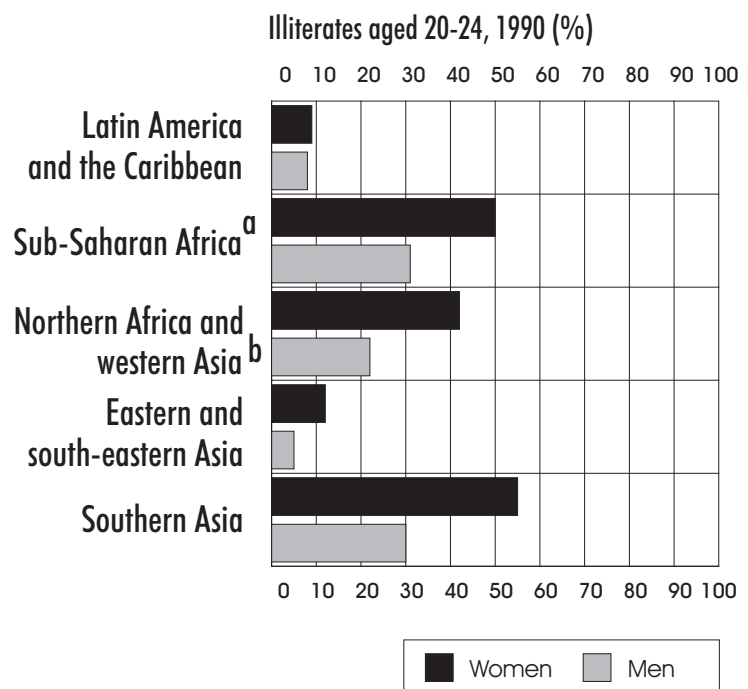
Over 40 per cent of young women are still illiterate in Africa and southern and western Asia



a: Includes Sudan; excludes South Africa

b: Includes Somalia and Mauritania; excludes Cyprus, Israel and Turkey

The widest gaps between women and men are in Africa and southern and western Asia



Source: UN, "The World's women: trend and statistics 1970-1990"

How can more children, especially girls, be encouraged to attend schools? The first step is to ensure that at least primary education is free and universal. Parents will be less likely to send their children to school if they have to pay for it. This is an especially important consideration for girls, as sons will nearly always be given priority if parents can afford to send only some of their children to school.

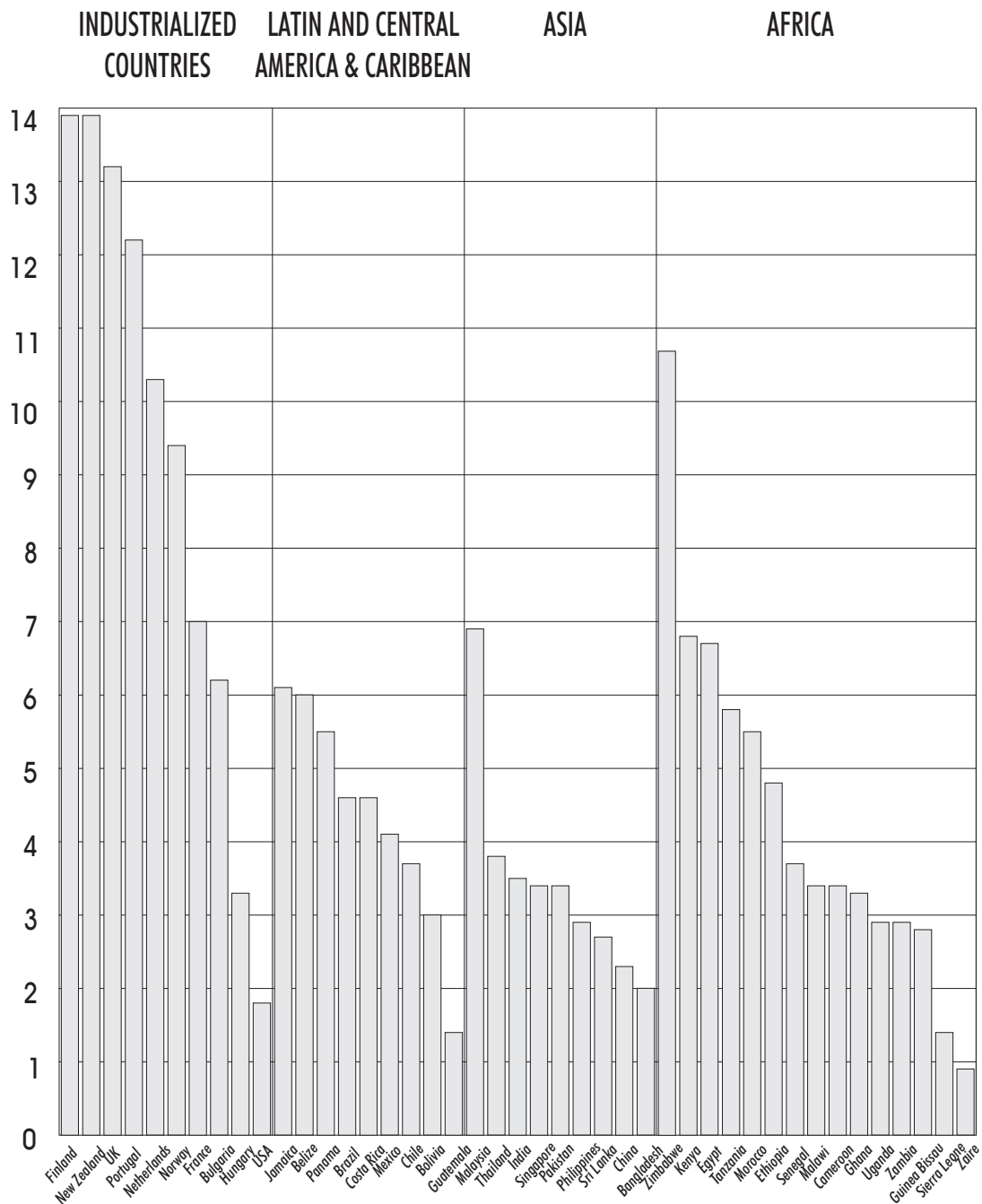
Enrolment at the primary level increased by nearly two-thirds during the past 30 years in developing countries, from 48% in 1960 to 77% in 1991.

But still 130 million children at primary level and more than 275 million at secondary level are out of school. Primary school drop-out rates are high in many countries — 31% in Mexico, 48% in Togo, 80% in Bangladesh...

For poor children, for schooling to be free may not be enough. Enrolment rates can be increased by providing food supplements at school, for example. (This has the added advantage of providing extra calories for those children who may be malnourished.) Anything that lessens the so-called “women’s work” will also help to get more girls to school: a water supply near the family home will mean that girls spend less time fetching water for the family; food supplements for children at school may mean that girls do not have to stay at home to cook for brothers and sisters. School toilets can also help: in some parts of Pakistan, when a girl needs to go to the toilet she has to go home.

Meeting education needs does not have to be costly. UNICEF, the United Nations Children’s Fund, reckons that 5% of GDP is enough to deliver basic health services and five years of education. Resources given over to education, particularly for girls, are, however, in many countries insufficient. In some cases they have been further decreased by government spending cuts and especially by structural adjustment programmes. This can only have a long-term negative effect on human development, especially of disadvantaged groups, and thus of environmental management.

Public expenditure on education, as a percentage of GNP, 1990



Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 1995

The UN Social Summit of 1995 committed the nations of the world:

- ◆ to promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the access of all to primary health care and respecting and promoting "our common and particular cultures (commitment 6)

Basic education is essential to enhance the levels of tolerance and goodwill needed for living in a crowded world. Improved health, lower fertility and better nutrition depend on greater literacy and social and civic responsibility. More directly, it would mean that education on environment and development concepts could be made available to all the population from a very early age.



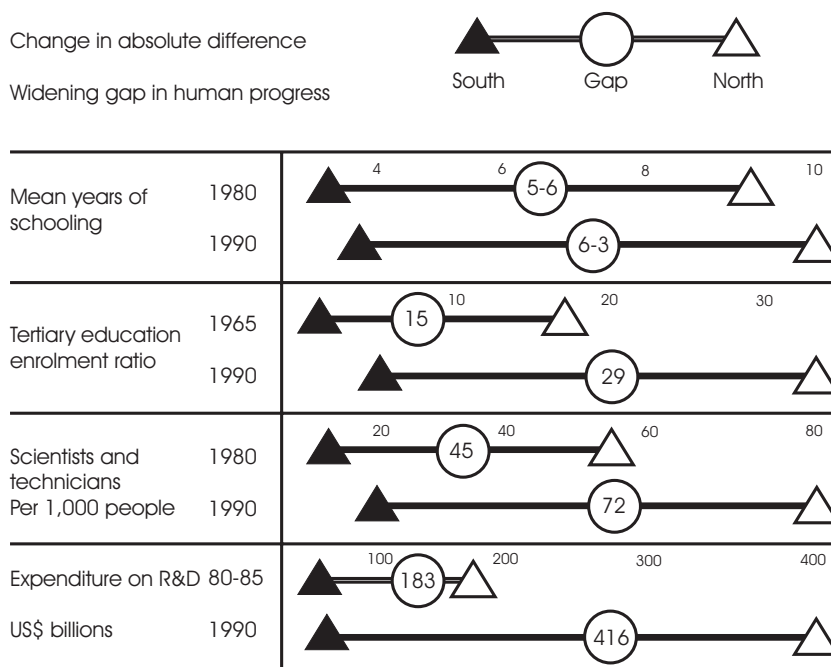
Education for all

While the growth in basic education over the past few decades is encouraging, a large gap exists between industrialised and developing countries in enrolment rates after primary schools and other indicators, and this gap is increasing.

People the world over have progressed towards equal education opportunities, but huge gaps persist between North and South, between men's and women's educational achievements, and between boy's and girl's opportunities.

Making development sustainable means that these trends should be corrected or speeded up, with the main task of education policy to make literacy for all a goal and to close the gaps between male and female education.

North-South gaps in human development



Source: UNDP 1992

Development of skills and vocational training

Learning skills through basic education is the stepping stone to developing specialised skills and being able to adapt and upgrade them to facilitate mobility and integration. People should be able to benefit from obtaining knowledge and skills beyond those acquired in youth. This concept of life-long learning covers that gained in formal education and training, and the learning that occurs in informal ways such as volunteer activities and work and traditional knowledge and experience.

**Training experts in environmental management is not enough.
What is needed is true environmental literacy on the part of each worker and citizen.**

Training is one of the most important tools to develop human capacities and equip workers with the means to meet growing development challenges during the transition to a sustainable society. Vocational training programmes for new entrants to the labour market, and retraining programmes for displaced and retrenched workers should be directed towards acquiring and upgrading practical and vocational skills.

Such programmes should have a job-specific focus aimed at helping individuals find employment and be involved in environmental and development work. In the present era of technological change and unemployment, many workers have seen their work situation becoming increasingly insecure. It is therefore important that any training and re-training be connected to employment security, so that workers respond positively in a spirit of security in change, rather than retreating into defending security against change.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Talk to two or three union members doing different jobs at work and find out:

- ◆ What kind of training have they had to help them do their job?
- ◆ What kind of training would they like to have to help them do their job more effectively?
- ◆ What kind of training would they like to have to provide them with the skills to do other jobs?
- ◆ What kind of training or education would they like to have for their own personal development? For trade union development?

Education and training can also help different groups act as agents of change. It can help them identify problems of potential hazards in their immediate working and living environments, and to make plans to improve them. It can provide the necessary skills to increase options for income generation.

For social and cultural reasons, women and other disadvantaged groups have had less opportunity for, and access to, formal and informal education. This has often prevented them from fully realizing their own potential and thus their contribution to development — a contribution that we have seen is considerable given their knowledge and skills in managing natural resources and the environment.

It is therefore important within education and training systems, within trade unions, the workplace, and in other organizations, to provide opportunities and training materials targeted at the special needs and contributions of all different groups in achieving environmentally sustainable development.



Lars Johansen, ILO

Action should be taken to:

- ◆ increase the coverage of environmental considerations in training and education at all levels for all people — vocational, management, union, cooperatives...;
- ◆ develop accessible and appropriate training materials for all groups;
- ◆ develop awareness and promote active participation of all concerned, underlining the need to change consumption and production patterns;
- ◆ enable groups with specific needs to participate fully in training activities by providing special arrangements, for example, for women (child-care facilities), workers with disabilities (access), migrants (language), etc;
- ◆ integrate traditional knowledge and skills of different groups within projects aimed at the improved management of natural resources.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- ◆ What is the extent of training on environmental issues in your workplace?
- ◆ Are there any differences in training opportunities between the following groups of workers at your workplace?
 - men and women?
 - different ethnic groups?
 - old and young?
 - workers with different abilities?
 - fulltime, part-time and temporary workers?

Give examples with your answers.

Trade union education

Trade unions are vital actors in promoting environmentally sustainable development as they have the organization, experience and commitment to identify both problems and seek practical solutions. They can build on traditional union areas of concern — workplace health and safety, solidarity with other workers, and the overall achievement of economic, social and environmental goals — to improve the quality of work and life for everyone.

Just as they have done, or are doing, in occupational health and safety, unions will have to develop competence in the area of environmental issues and policies to be effective. This will involve the development of structures and a commitment of resources to awareness raising and education and training of members to become “environmental representatives”.

Trade union education allows workers and their representatives to improve their knowledge and provides them with a basic grounding in the issues necessary to promote environmentally sustainable development. The aim is, firstly, to create a clear awareness of the issues, and, secondly, to be able to use the knowledge for effective action to bring about improvements at the workplace and to be able to participate in policy making at national level.



This is an important concept, for while other parties may be responsible for a large part of environmental damage, trade unions will obviously have to develop their own policies and strategies so that the interests of their members are not sacrificed in the process of change. There are many different ways in which unions can motivate and educate their members towards promoting their interests in this area.

The aim of trade union environmental education is, firstly, to create a clear awareness of the issues, and, secondly, to be able to use the knowledge for effective action to bring about improvements at the workplace and to be able to participate in policy making at local and national level.

Awareness-raising

To raise awareness of environmental issues, unions need to relate closely to the immediate needs of their members, and the issues taken on board must be those that directly affect them. Many workers, if asked about priorities, will propose such traditional areas of concern as wages, job security, etc., without realizing the links with environmental and developmental issues. It is therefore one of the tasks of the union to sensitize members to environmental issues in themselves and also to point out the many linkages between these and economic, political, social and development issues. (It is hoped that these discussion booklets can help you in this task.)

Trade union experience shows that the way members “see” environmental issues often reflects past attitudes to occupational health and safety. That is, they may be apathetic or accepting of risks for a variety of reasons — they may be unaware of the risks as many environmental hazards are hidden or do not show up until the damage has been done; or they may overestimate their own, or the environment’s, ability to survive; many workers are not aware that improvements can be made.

Another aspect is that members may think that environmental improvements will mean job losses. While this is not necessarily true, it still has to be approached by the union, which in turn should be receptive to members’ attitudes and use them to build confidence and commitment to a union environmental strategy.

Training for decision-making

Trade union awareness-raising and education on the environment, perhaps more than with other trade union issues, has to be strongly oriented to the local situation and reflect the job experiences and lives of the members. It must aim to help members find solutions that will be acceptable to both themselves and people in the local community at large.

Once members have an awareness of the basic issues, it becomes necessary to train some representatives to be able to participate in advisory and decision-making bodies concerned with environmentally sustainable development at all levels. Most unions have identified a sequence of training from general trade union development to specialized training, in occupational health and safety or environment, for instance, to training in campaigns and specific issues, for instance on toxic waste.

While unions in industrialized countries may have the resources to follow through on this line of strategy, many unions in developing countries would probably find it difficult to implement training on specific environmental issues. Based on experience in environmental training so far, it seems that integrating environmental issues into occupational health and safety training programmes is a good path to take in the immediate term. (Although the issues raised in these booklets can also be integrated into education and training dealing with such union issues as collective bargaining, women's rights, etc.)

Educating and training workers to become motivated to improve working conditions has been a major concern of trade unions in both industrialized and developing countries for some time now. This has resulted in a network of health and safety representatives and joint union-management committees at the workplace that are capable of actively participating in decisions concerning safety at work, of monitoring the workplace to identify hazards, and of initiating action to get rid of risks. It is a small step to extend this to integrate environmental issues into the training of safety reps, especially in view of the links between safety and health and the environment.



Environmental auditing

One of the skills that union reps need to develop in this area is the ability to carry out environmental audits of companies in much the same way as a health and safety rep is trained to use a checklist to pinpoint workplace hazards. (See booklet 5 “The New Bargaining Agenda” in the ILO “Workers’ education and Environment” series.)

Training in skills will allow a union representative to look at the environmental impact of a company’s processes and products.

The aim of environmental auditing is to determine and improve the environmental performance of a company, to check compliance with regulations and company policy, and provide information on all aspects of its environmental protection, including employment and training implications.

Environmental bargaining

A large part of union education and training in environmental matters will also have to be aimed at communication and building links. Communication with management has always been part of trade union training, and the same will be true of communication concerning environmental policies, as they take on increasing importance in collective bargaining and negotiation in joint workplace committees. (For more information on environmental bargaining see the ILO “Workers’ Education and Environment” booklets.)

It is at the level of the workplace that promotion of environmental standards can be maximized and measures to control pollution put into effect. Environmental issues are thus key workplace issues, so effective workplace organization and policies are essential. Negotiators will therefore also need access to union education on environmental issues and their links to other union areas of concern.

Building links with the community

The efforts that unions make to raise awareness among and train their members can also improve their image within the local community. Taking on and defending the interests of a wider community can be used to raise the union's credibility, and as a recruiting tool, for instance in the informal sector, or for appealing to women to take on a greater role in union affairs.

Indeed, Agenda 21 calls for trade unions to participate in environment and development activities within the community and promote joint action on potential problems of common concern. Joining up with other unions, local organizations, environmental groups and people into community coalitions can be a most effective means of promoting common policies.

Participation at national level

While the need for representation is of prime importance at shopfloor level and in the local community, unions also have to be represented at national (and international) level, in decision-making, in monitoring the application of standards and in coalition-forming. Strengthening the role of trade unions in environmental policies and tripartite bargaining on them can only benefit all three social partners and facilitate the achievement of environmentally sustainable development.

As with work at the local level, trade unions will have to set aside both the time and the resources for education and training, information and technical backup to be able to participate effectively with their counterparts in industry, government and other organizations.

Participation at international level

This may seem very far removed from the everyday experiences and lives of "ordinary" workers, but it is important that we understand the global consequences of environmental hazards. The industries and companies that are at the origin of much of the exploitation of resources and pollution are international. Standards vary from country to country, so that national policies and strategies have to be backed up by effective means of international cooperation and agreements.



Paid educational leave.

Trade unions therefore need to have access to international bodies on environmental matters. As with any negotiating process, unions will be more effective if they can develop a common policy. International solidarity through close links with unions in different countries, primarily through the international trade union movement, is one way to advance this aim.

The international trade unions have three major functions, all of which are essential to global environment and development concerns:

- ◆ they help coordinate international solidarity;
- ◆ they represent the interests of workers in international and regional bodies; and they provide information, education and other services to affiliated unions worldwide.

In this way, national unions can benefit from the information, experience, and training and assistance programmes of international unions (and other international bodies), many of which have developed programmes aimed at addressing environmental issues.

We have seen that unions can have a great deal of influence in educating and training for development of their members' skills. Negotiating for paid educational leave will ensure that workers develop both new skills to meet changing economic conditions and also increase their awareness of, and involvement in finding solutions to, environment and development problems.

Time off during working hours, with pay, has been crucial to the success of setting up trained health and safety representatives in many countries. Extending this right — by law or by collective bargaining — to workers trained in environmental matters could also be central to an efficient functioning of a strategy aimed at bringing management and workers closer together over environmentally sustainable development.

DISCUSSION POINTS

ILO Convention 140 on Paid Educational Leave states that countries that have ratified it should promote the granting of paid educational leave for the purposes of:

- training at any level;
- general, social and civic education;
- trade union education.

- ◆ If you are on a course right now, are you taking advantage of paid educational leave?
- ◆ Has your country ratified Convention No. 140 on Paid Educational Leave? If not, find out the reasons for this.
- ◆ Does your union take advantage of the provisions found in the Convention that allow for paid leave for union education, or is educational leave a developed practice in your country without the benefits of the Convention?
- ◆ Would ratification of this Convention bring advantages in any way to your union?

Give examples with your answers.

Leadership training

Training in environmentally-sustainable development issues is also necessary for union leaders, for it is the leadership that commits support — both morally and financially — for any union projects and campaigns. If the leaders can be made aware of the linkages in all these issues and their importance at all levels, then a union with a dedicated leadership will have more chance of really carrying out its responsibility to its members to make sure their rights are not sacrificed in a changing world.

The role of the leadership is especially important at the international level where they are probably the ones to be involved in negotiations. Education on the environmental links to political and international issues is especially important in this context.

Information

Those union members who have been trained to represent workers' interests in environmental matters will need technical support to make sure that their training is used to the best advantage. Technical support and advice for the trained rep is of vital importance — reps who lack support will not be effective and will rapidly become disheartened.

Such support on the part of the union may take the form of inquiry services, field inspection services, documentation, for instance from employers, manuals, agreements, legal standards, and promotion of awareness through distribution of circulars, pamphlets, bulletins, etc.

The trained representative should also expect all necessary information and support from employers. This could include information on processes, accident and illness statistics, environmental monitoring results, etc; support for joint or union inspections; and a place to work with at least a minimum of equipment such as a desk and lockable filing cabinet. Such demands should be incorporated into a collective agreement.

To complement union support, or where this sort of backup is not available, the environment representative will know when and where to seek expert help or information and know how to evaluate that option. In this respect it may be worth exploring what specialist or technical or advisory services exist locally — in research centres, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, etc. — or even outside the country — other trade union contacts, international trade unions, UN agencies, for instance.

People need information on such areas as:

- ◆ The state of urban air, fresh water, land resources (including forests and rangeland), desertification, soil degradation, biodiversity, oceans, the upper atmosphere...
- ◆ population, urbanisation, poverty, health, rights of access to resources...
- ◆ the relationships of groups such as women, indigenous peoples, children and young people, the disabled, migrants, etc. with environment and development issues...

Agenda 21

There is a wealth of information available that could be used for the management of sustainable development, but many people have trouble finding what they need when they need it. (Booklet 6 "Resources and Glossary" in the ILO "Workers' Education and Environment" series has a list of international organizations that could be of interest. Many of these have catalogues of their publications that they will be only too pleased to send to you, or otherwise help with your enquiries. Perhaps the most useful are the International Trade Secretariats, international federations of unions by sector.)

In many countries the information that exists remains hidden from use because of a lack of awareness of its value and availability, because of the demands of more pressing problems, a lack of information technology or trained specialists, etc. This is especially true in the developing world, and the gap in availability, quality and access to data between the industrialized and developing countries is widening. Workers all over the world may find it useful to have access to, and training to use, the environmental and other data increasingly available on world wide computer connections.

Information on sustainable development issues needs to be provided to people who need it, when they need it and in a form they can understand. Commonly used indicators of development, such as GNP and measurements of individual resources or pollution do not provide enough information about sustainability. We need information on all the issues discussed in this booklet — environmental, social, political development, etc. — and more, if we want to produce indicators that show us if we are creating a more sustainable world.

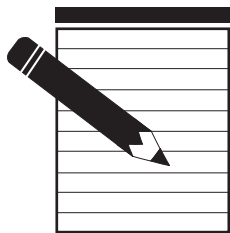
ACTIVITY: Finding and using information

AIMS:

- ◆ to find information and make priorities based on real problems
- ◆ to use this information to run an awareness campaign

TASKS:

- ◆ Find out your members' problems, through a simple survey, and make a list of the priority development issues as they affect your members.
- ◆ List some environmental problems as they are affected by, and affect, your workplace/living surroundings.
- ◆ Once you have a list, think about how and where to get local and national information on your priority issues.
- ◆ Think about possible groups to join up with for your campaign.
- ◆ Using the information you have obtained outline a simple information campaign — posters, leaflets, meetings, for example — for local use in awareness raising.



Notes

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FURTHER READING

- ◆ Labour Education. Published four times per year in English, French and Spanish, by the Bureau for Workers' Activities, ILO.
- ◆ Earth Summit Agenda 21, the United Nations Programme of Action From Rio.
- ◆ Human Development Report. 1993 and 1995. United Nations Development Programme.
- ◆ The World's Women: Trends and Statistics 1970-1990, UN.
- ◆ The Practical Role of Trade Unions in Improving Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development: Background paper for the ILO Symposium on Workers' Education and the Environment, Geneva, 6-8 October 1993.
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