YOUTH: AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE
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A QUESTION OF POLITICAL WILL

UNESCO’s mandate to promote peace and human rights is as relevant and vital today as when it was established some 50 years ago. And it will remain an absolute priority for tomorrow as well. That’s the message from the latest meeting of UNESCO’s Executive Board, in its work on the draft programme and budget for 2000-2001, and in its reflections on the profile the organization should adopt for the 21st century.

Less than two hours from the organization’s headquarters, war was raging in Europe for the first time in half a century. And another 100 or so armed conflicts continue to wreak havoc elsewhere in the world. Human rights abuses blithely continue, perhaps a little less now in the political and civil domains, but ever increasingly when it comes to economic and social rights. The Board is convinced that fundamental origins of these wars and violations, are firmly rooted in the ever-widening gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots”.

On the one hand, there are those who have training, a job, a roof, social protection and citizenship, and on the other, one and a half billion individuals who live in total deprivation.

This diagnosis was made by UNESCO several years ago. But the world’s other big international organizations, and notably financial institutions, are now beginning to share it. But will they reach the same conclusion as to the treatment required?

For some, the solution lies in further increasing the reach of the market, while refining and multiplying its mechanisms: in other words, introducing measures specifically targeting excluded parts of the population to help them back into the mainstream. It is primarily an economic approach, driven by forces external to the people it is destined to help.

The adversaries of this line of thinking are, however, convinced that the acceleration of these external economic mechanisms is largely to blame for the deepening of the gulf between rich and poor. Filling it, they counter, means empowering these people especially through democratization, education and the acquisition of scientific knowledge.

Only through such action will they cease to be the marginalized objects of a history written by others and become its veritable co-authors.

However, the Executive Board stressed that governments must not renege on the regulatory role they have to play in the market place. The political will to intervene is a condition sine qua non for success.

René Lefort
There are people who complete eight years of schooling and still can’t find a job, because there just are no jobs. Either you try and improve schooling so that it provides young people with the possibility of being an independent-minded person who can create his or her own job, or adapt to their circumstances.” So says Benedict Faccini, an assistant programme specialist for UNESCO’s Special Project for Youth. This is the problem in a nutshell: too many young people are leaving school with expectations that cannot be fulfilled. They face an extremely uncertain future: either due to inadequate or inappropriate education, physical handicaps, poverty, or social exclusion due to religious or racial factors.

Perched precariously between childhood and adulthood, youth occupies a difficult middle ground. UNESCO has various programmes that try to reach these young people, no matter what situation they find themselves in. Widely diverse projects - from the International Youth Campaign for a 21st century Free of Drugs, to the Options for Deaf Youth in Myanmar project - seek to shore up the banks of uncertainty faced by so many.

With more than one billion people currently aged 15-24, and the number of those under 15 growing rapidly, the question of their futures is pressing. What kind of chances do these kids face? Some 284 million children aged 12 to 17 are not in school systems, and this figure will rise to an estimated 324 million by the year 2010. Existing education systems are failing to meet students’ needs, but changing them is easier said than done. “No sector seems more conservative and chained to the past than that of education,” says Victor Ordonez, the director of

Young, willing and able - but no jobs to go to
UNESCO’s Bangkok bureau and a leading educationalist.

Recent statistics from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) show that youth suffers the highest level of unemployment in nearly every country in the world. In South Africa, 25% of people under 25 and looking for work are unemployed. In Mozambique, more than 50% of under 25s are unemployed.

Unemployment is just one of the problems though - disease and poverty are not far behind. In Africa, young people are failing to win the war against AIDS. In a recent Zambian study of 15-19 year olds, HIV infection was reported in 12.3% of the girls and 4.5% of the boys. In Rwanda, more than 4% of boys and girls aged 12-14 tested positive for HIV.

Across the globe, the picture is the same. Contemporary social ills hit young people hardest and most often. And young men and women are not dealing well with the plethora of problems before them. Youth suicide rates in industrialised countries remain consistently high — more than 20% of suicides in Australia are committed by men aged 18-24. Young people are also the biggest users and abusers of illicit drugs - 18% of young American adults are illicit drug users.

No work for everyone

Martine Bousquet, a programme specialist for the Special Youth Project believes that UNESCO must offer serious alternatives to formal education; that the future of education is in offering tangible projects that empower young people and allow them to survive in societies where nothing is a given.

"Nothing is being done for these young people," Bousquet says. "There is no education available for what they need. The fundamental problem is, of course, the simple fact that there is no work for everyone."

"With the marginalised, the question is one of empowerment," she says. "We say that they have to get themselves out of this: be active, not passive. UNESCO does not have recipes, we can’t simply tell you people what to do. But we can help you organise, we can help you manage."

Responsibility and self-esteem

Another way of empowering the young is by giving them access to micro-finance. UNESCO seeks to act as a facilitator in the field of micro credit by giving visibility to traditional skills, providing technical assistance, advocating microfinancial services and helping to provide access to markets.

"Poor youth is characterised by problems that go well beyond the lack of money," says Sayeeda Rahman, a programme specialist in UNESCO’s MicroCredits Unit.

"They suffer from a complex set of factors that include lack of access to education, poor health and nutrition, inadequate housing and sanitary activities, illiteracy and polluting environments," she says. "Microfinance institutions can reach these people and provide them with financial services in ways that promote responsibility, self-esteem and financial self-sufficiency."

Chloë Fox

French engineer Hervé Beaudet dreamt up the idea of sending alienated teenagers from rich countries to the Third World to help them regain a sense of purpose through discovering the way of life and the ingenuity at work there. What inspired him was coming across a group in India several years ago which he says was “applying Gandhi’s philosophy and building villages using cheap local materials.”

He and some friends founded a group called Wardha Development, named after a town of that name in Maharashtra state (wardha also means development in Hindi). The aim was to involve French youths who were unemployed, delinquents, school dropouts or had been sent to reformatories “in a programme to build earthen houses using Indian techniques.” The project, backed by UNESCO, was set up with a group called AVVEJ (Using

A helping hand

© HERVÉ BEAUDET

Kids from all over the world working together
Life to Educate Young People) and another called Pra-Barnier, which care for marginalised people in the Paris area and in the Auvergne region of France.

Identity

In 1995, 14 teenagers – three girls and 11 boys – began preparing for the trip to India. The goal, says Beaudet, was “to show them they are all important, because the first thing alienated youth lose is their identity – to tell them that Sébastien, Marie-Madeleine and Pascal are good people, even if not so long ago they’d been told they were nobodies.”

The aim was also to show them they were not going to do just any old job. That “they were going to help provide people with homes, that they were not going so they could give orders but so they could work alongside others in a project.”

For two years, they went mountain hiking at weekends to test their ability to live a communal life. At the same time, the people of Wardha were being prepared for the arrival of these “complicated and difficult” French adolescents whose lives had been scarred by things like drug abuse, violence, being abandoned and having babies at the age of 14. “Most of them were seriously damaged personalities,” says Beaudet.

In November 1996, they went to India for six weeks and built 14 houses (which cost between $600 and $700 each). They got up at six in the morning, did yoga and then went to work on the building site under the supervision of Indian masons and architects and put their knowledge into practice, making bricks and building walls, windows and roofs.

Rap, the art of rebellion

There’s rebellion in their words. Words as rough as the world they come from; that’s what rap is all about. It’s instant talent, the anti-hero from any street corner in any city. A plain, strong voice, not loud, not false, a voice which jolts you because it’s talking about unhappiness, about the private suffering of a whole generation, about a youth with no present and no future, whether they live in Rio de Janeiro, in Harlem, M anila or Bamako.

“The street gives you things and takes things from you. Right in front of the door, the fact of just being who you are, if it’s not that, it’s this, if it’s not the French team and five times national champion. He comes from a family of rap artists and defends “original rap,” the pure, raw version which comes from the street and changes as the street changes. It’s different from the “other” rap, which you find “in shows and which claims to be from the ghetto, sells its message of suffering and then once it’s made it forgets where it came from,” he says. Has money turned rap’s head? To counter this “deviation” and because he wants “to send a message of hope to young people having a bad time, to help them to get into something else,” Cool J set up a project two years ago to organise “underground” rappers to donate their royalties to help disadvantaged young people around the world. These rap artists are the “street-smart guys, the youths who fix how to get by in life and are always in a good, sharp mood.” Their numbers “come from their guts.” They talk about codes of honour, about their identity, about the solidarity with “brothers” which makes rappers into “one big family,” about pride and dignity, about sport as a healthy lifestyle. But they also talk about rebellion against a cruel and unjust world, full of inequalities which marginalise people. People are still being barred from night-clubs because they come from the suburbs, even though that’s where the music inside – their music – comes from. Sometimes luck has a lot to do with it. One of Cool J’s martial arts students works at UNESCO where he proposed Cool J’s project as part of the special youth programme. “Things just clicked,” says Cool J. UNESCO has sponsored an album (put out by the Da L’As label) “Lascars univers” which came out in April and sold 50,000 copies in the first month. The proceeds will go to a special UNESCO account for the world’s disadvantaged children, and one where Cool J can see how it’s being used. “It’s nice to be able to know exactly what can be done thanks to this money,” he says.

A series of rap concerts will also be held in Africa and Canada, in poor neighbourhoods and slums whose residents will benefit from some of the money. It’s one way for the rappers to show that “you shouldn’t wait until you’re a millionaire before being generous, before you help people out.”

Christina L’Homme
Banks the world over have the wrong idea about poor people. They are not considered dependable creditors,” says Sayeeda Rahman who works in the micro-finance unit of UNESCO. “It is a paradox because it is precisely the poor, self-employed to boot, who need loans to survive.” Even so, the banks continue to lend only to the rich. But a parallel informal system has now sprung up across the globe to cater to the needs of the poor (some 90 million of the world’s 1.3 billion poor are concerned), and in particular, youth who need a helping hand to construct and believe in their future.

In Bangladesh, UNESCO has set up several projects in the slums of Dhaka, the capital. One such project, Nari Mai Tree (the women’s alliance) has helped 300 adolescents to undergo training and obtain micro-financing. These adolescents “represent the most vulnerable section of the population,” stresses Sayeeda Rahman, “because they are threatened by forced marriages, sexual abuse and prostitution. By setting up their own little business, they can earn money and become a valued asset of their families.” A good example is the case of two girls who trained to drive scooters to transport girls and women (only) to school every morning. And the people accepted this, an indication that attitudes have changed.

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Things unimaginable only 25 years ago are considered normal today in the country which saw the world’s first bank for the poor, the famous Grameen bank (see inset). In fact, these adolescents can now knock on other doors. Poor youth in general have no time

Stéphane often talks about his experience, and is proud of what he did

© COSMOS/Serge Sibert

In the evening, they learned about Indian culture which they later recognised had “enriched” them. Today, Stéphane often talks about his experience with his friends and says he is “proud of what we did.” India changed him, he says: “I became a calmer person, less materialistic, less egotistical. I realised it was nicer working in a group than by myself and I learned how to trust people. I complained less about my life, because the people in India don’t have very much.” When the teenagers returned to France, they wanted to leave a record of their experience and put together a mobile exhibition which opened at UNESCO headquarters in June 1997. The idea of transferring technology from poor countries to richer ones and organising a human experience with alienated young people is catching on. Last year, UNESCO and Wardha Development set up a new project to build earthen houses using Indian methods, but this time it will be in the Crimea, with young Tartars at a camp at Sudak, on the Black Sea. The Tartar youths are the children of parents who were deported by Stalin to camps in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and who returned to be dumped in refugee camps in poverty-stricken Ukraine. The youths live lives of constant tension.

The culture shock and first impressions caused problems there too, but after a couple of months of toil, the interaction gave birth to a fine community centre.

Cristina L’Homme
Technology changes lives

S
o many aid networks seem to be nothing but hot air and paperwork: a great deal of talking and very little action. But Dr Boyan Radoykov, who is in charge of INFOYOUTH, is not interested in platitudes: he wants to provide a service to young people in the best and most practical way possible.

“Our main concern is to turn the knowledge available on this network into direct action for young people,” Dr Radoykov says. “I like to know that young people all around the world are doing something for themselves with the information provided by UNESCO.” The INFOYOUTH network is managed by UNESCO in cooperation with the French government working in close partnership with NGOs, governmental ministries and departments, communities and specialists.

Information is one of the most important tools young people can have. In the coming millenium, the information-rich will have distinct advantages over the information-poor. The gap between the countries of

IT STARTED IN BANGLADESH

The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh was one of the original sources of microfinance. In 1972, Professor Muhammad Yunus reacted to the draconian conditions imposed upon poor borrowers - including interest rates of up to 100 and 200% - and founded a bank for those living in poor rural areas. The idea was to trust in these peoples' capacity to create wealth, pay back the loans, and even to save. The bank lent small sums to many people, and gave them the chance to establish accounts, even if it was only one dollar.

Grameen’s interest rates are slightly higher than those of a commercial bank, but according to Sayeeda Rahman of UNESCO’s Microfinance Unit, this is understandable. “It is not the idea of profit that determines the interest rate but the fact that lending $100 to one person costs less than lending $100 to 10 people. And at Grameen, the clients are also shareholders.”

“The ‘normal’ banks thought that Professor Yunus was crazy to get involved in something like this,” says Rahman. “They were wrong - these days he has about two million clients, and the rate of repayments is 90% - which is much higher than any commercial bank’s figures,” she says. At the beginning of the 1980s, the Bangladeshi Parliament recognised Grameen as an official financial institution.

C.L.
the North and the South is growing in this respect: in the world, at the end of 1998, 147.8 million people are online. In the South, many people may never see, let alone use, a computer in their life time.

How can young people in the South begin to bridge that gap? The task is a mighty one, and it was with this in mind - even before the “explosion” of internet use in 1995 - that UNESCO set up its INFOYOUTH network in 1991.

**The largest network of its kind**

INFOYOUTH seeks to address two issues worldwide: the increasing fragmentation of information sources and networks on youth; and the urgent need to implement youth policies on a national and international level. Eight years after its inception the result is clear: a network that is the largest “umbrella” network of its kind, providing information services, communications equipment and training to young people all around the world.

One example of INFOYOUTH’s activities in the field is in Honduras, in the aftermath of the devastating Hurricane Mitch. While basic shelter and nutrition were on the top of the relief agencies’ list, other less urgent - but equally important issues - were left by the wayside.

“INFOYOUTH was in there straight away,” says Dr Radoykov. “We rebuilt training centres and got access to the computers up and running. Previous to the hurricane there had been a training course there for the most disadvantaged young people; the people who lived with less than $1 a day. In one of these towns, the mayor actually said that while housing and feeding the victims was undeniably important, the reconstruction of these training centres was crucial. He told me that locals had the feeling that something normal and positive about life was continuing as it did before the hurricane, and that was of inestimable psychological value.”

For many locals, these training centres represent a chance to learn skills that will help them to get better jobs and improve their lives.

Another programme that INFOYOUTH has just has approved is the computer recycling project. Instead of throwing away old computers, INFOYOUTH will be asking the private sector and the public who log onto its site (http://www.unesco.org/webworld/infoyouth) to give the old computers to the network itself; they will then be distributed to communities that can use them. But how will the computers be transported around the world?

“Well, we have had a lot of interest from people who want to give and receive these computers... so now all we have to do is find a very benevolent transport company,” smiles Dr Radoykov.

It’s easy to talk about youth participating in the formation of national youth policies - but how easy is it to carry out? Most governments do not have direct access to young people’s opinions and attitudes. INFOYOUTH has helped Latin American governments tap directly into the minds of young people by founding and maintaining a website called Boletín Latinoamericano de Informaciones sobre Juventud (Latin-American Youth Information Bulletin). This website (http://www.icd.org.uy/juventud/) contains a wealth of information including editorials, bulletin boards, opinions and commentaries. Online since March 1999, the Boletín Latinoamericano is the only site of its kind in Latin America.

**Competing in the market**

The INFOYOUTH network helps improve awareness and understanding of the problems and expectations of young people in different types of societies; it backs innovative projects aimed at stimulating young people’s participation in the political, economic and cultural aspects of society. And perhaps most importantly, it organises computer training activities for underprivileged young people in order to improve their access to information, and give them a chance to compete in tomorrow’s information-rich world.

Chloë Fox
Voice for deaf youth in Myanmar

One child in ten is born with a serious impairment - and those who are born healthy may well acquire such an impairment during their childhood. So at least 10% children in both the North and South enter their teens marked by “something different.” They may be blind or deaf; they may have dyslexia or autism; they may have lost a limb after stepping on a landmine or falling from a swing. Whatever their special needs, most education systems around the world are not well-equipped to deal with these differences. A lack of inclusion within their societies and education systems leads to further exclusion and less hope for the future.

Changing attitudes

The Special Needs Education Unit of UNESCO encourages governments, schools and communities to include young people with special needs in the mainstream of everyday life. As Lena Saleh, chief of the unit says, “the thrust of our work is reaching out so that this group of people come into the mainstream. We want to make education systems all inclusive. We would like society and education systems to accept difference as normal, as part of life; to live with and embrace these differences.”

One country where a UNESCO project has recently managed to change government attitudes is Myanmar. In April this year, UNESCO consultant Dr Owen Wrigley went to Myanmar under the auspices of the Special Needs Education Unit to launch the “Improving Life Options for Deaf Youth in Myanmar Project.” With approval from the Department of Social Welfare, Dr Wrigley was able to conduct a workshop on deafness; invite an expert mission of deaf Thais to provide very little to these young people,” he wrote in a report on the project, “but the formation of Deaf Clubs has emerged, somewhat surprisingly, as an acceptable activity. I consider this decision to be a real “output” of this consultancy.”

The Deaf Clubs will include five focus group subjects that will seek to improve the lives of those who can participate. The five subjects are all particularly relevant to youth: personal life, home life, life after school, work life and job opportunities. All the discussions will be conducted in Myanmar sign language, with Thai sign language where needed. Clubs will try and help participants to look for work, as well as helping with work experience placement.

“The prospect of establishing a National Association of the Deaf in Myanmar is not yet an option due to political restrictions,” he said in a report on the project, “but the formation of Deaf Clubs has emerged, somewhat surprisingly, as an acceptable activity. I consider this decision to be a real “output” of this consultancy.”

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“The tendency is for developing countries to provide very little to these young people,” says UNESCO programme specialist Sai Väyrynen. “It gets especially difficult after primary school: anything that is offered is offered by NGOs. In all countries there are good and bad practices. Inclusion is connected to values; and in some countries these values are not appreciated.” She and her colleagues are more than pleased with Dr Wrigley’s outcome in Myanmar.

Information poor

“The presentations were of great interest to the deaf, as no such information had ever been made available before,” Dr Wrigley said. “The groups I spoke to would be best described as information-poor.”

With no previous government support for the deaf in either the Myanmar education system or society at large, Dr Wrigley was delighted with the outcome of his visit: government permission to establish “Deaf Clubs.”

Talking about drugs

Young people blame inertia and indifference. They explain the need to escape the world through drugs. They talk about the death of a brother, of a close friend, the pain indelibly etched in their skin.

“This tamed evil leaves no corner of the world untouched/ from Bogota to Panama/ hashish, dope, ecstasy/corroding fragile spirits, so-called civilised countries, the third world /all in the same boat.”

Drugs can take everything from their lives, and these young people know it. So an anti-drugs charter has been prepared by UNESCO, drawn up following a youth conference at Headquarters in 1998. The International Youth Campaign for a 21st Century Free of Drugs is a contract-like document that has already been signed by more than 1.5 million young people worldwide. The signatories agree to adhere to 12 principles, and work towards a drug-free world. The campaign has been picked up by media and schools all over the world.

*Extract from the CD Free of Drugs, a song inspired by the campaign and produced at the initiative of Environnement Sans Frontière with UNESCO and the UNDCP (United Nations International Drug Control Program).
Imagine a world without legends; where ancient tales of epic voyages, battles and seductions just didn’t exist. Where there were no performing arts, no folk festivals, no sacred sites. No carnivals, no craft. Where piped muzak was the norm, and the inhabitants wore clothes cut from the same machine-made cloth, spoke the one language and ate the same food. A poor world it would be indeed.

Some would say we are already there: that the West’s economic dominance has brought about its cultural dominance, and cultural uniformity.

Few would dispute that there is some truth in this. However, scratch the surface, look beyond the frequently cited clichés used to describe this “global culture” - the Coca Cola, Big Macs, blue jeans and the Spice Girls, and there remain whole worlds within worlds on our supposedly shrinking planet.

Their “identifying marks” come under the somewhat fuzzy label of “intangible cultural heritage,” which covers all kinds of traditional and popular knowledge, languages, oral traditions, customs, music, dance, rituals, festivals, traditional medicine, table arts, together with handicraft and architecture.

For many populations this heritage is the essential source of their identity, the foundations and lifeblood of their communities. It could also be considered a wellspring for their development. Traditional knowledge, for example, has much to contribute to environmental protection and species conservation, and, for the performing arts, traditional cultural expression is an invaluable source of creativity and economic growth. The success of “world” music or the acrylic art of Australia’s aborigines are both outstanding examples of this.

But unlike monuments of stone, “these generally sound or visual events may be heard, perceived (only) while they last,” says J.H. Kwabena Nketia of the International Centre for African Music and Dance in Ghana. “They cannot be touched or handled like objects outside their contexts or the memory of those who create or perform them.” In other words, there can be no “folklore” without the folk, and no traditional culture without living practitioners and participants in a tradition. Linguists estimate, for example, that 500 years ago there were some 15% more languages than the 5,000 to 7,000 spoken today, and that over the next century another 6% to 11% will become extinct.

In Africa, says Professor Nketia, the downhill slide begun with colonization has since accelerated under the pressure of rural-urban migrations, the impact of the media and global economics. “Accordingly while traditional cultural forms still exist in some communities, there are others in which such traditions have been eroded, weakened or replaced.”

And where “folklore” has been promoted, says Vlaska Ondrupova of the Institute for Folk Culture in the Czech Republic, it has often been for commercial ends, such as

Intangible heritage goes beyond the monuments. It includes traditions, languages, dance, handicrafts and music, carried in the hearts and minds of people. UNESCO working to safeguard this fragile patrimony and give it a new lease on life.

HIDDEN TREASURE

A skill learned and refined down the centuries should not be relegated to history’s dustbins.
Victor Randrianary has been collecting examples of traditional music in his native Madagascar for the past 15 years. He has made a CD of it for the UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World. How did you become interested in this?

I trained as a classical guitarist, sang in churches and played the Madagascan zither, which we call the valiha. One day in 1984, among the Bara people in southern Madagascar, I discovered some musical instruments which fascinated me. First there was a set of flutes and drums, called the paritakyo. I also came across xylophones on legs and a set of whistles, the kiloloky, which produced a very rich and varied sound and rhythm, which you hardly ever find these days.

Each instrument has one sound and to make a tune the notes have to follow one after the other - you make a doh, I make a ray, as if the whole tune was controlled by a central brain: it's very difficult.

When the kiloloky accompanies a female choir, it's amazing. They play voice games, they whistle, they dance. It's a kind of musical ecstasy, where you lose track of time — a very powerful experience of sharing with other people.

I said to myself: “This is wonderful! How come I've never seen any of this when I only live 100 km away? I have to do something to catalogue and preserve it all.”

REVIEWING THE RECOMMENDATION

In 1995, UNESCO launched a series of regional surveys to systematically assess the implementation of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore. The results of these surveys will be presented at a conference of experts in the domain of intangible heritage, to be held in Washington from June 27-30, organized by UNESCO and the Smithsonian Institution and sponsored by the Japanese government, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts (U.S.A), and the World Bank.

How can we protect the wealth of cultural diversity from being swamped by the huge social, economic and political changes transforming the planet, and ensure that they not only survive but prosper? What must be done to prevent local communities from becoming mere consumers of culture rather than its makers?

“It's not a question of ‘freezing' culture,” says Noriko Aikawa, the director of UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Section. “Culture is not static, it evolves and we need to remain aware of this. Nor must we try to preserve all the traditional and popular cultures. They cover too vast a domain for that to be possible. Unhappy examples of traditional cultures which fail to respect human rights, democracy and justice also exist.”

UNESCO's 1989 Recommendation for the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore sets guidelines for policies on the preservation, protection and promotion of intangible heritage. However, a growing body of opinion feels that it needs updating, in view of the changes that have reshaped the world since the end of the Cold War in 1989, including the emergence of groups seeking their genuine cultural identity, and, in particular, the incredible technological progress that has taken place.

Sue Williams

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Madagascar: where music is life

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I trained as a classical guitarist, sang in churches and played the Madagascan zither, which we call the valiha. One day in 1984, among the Bara people in southern Madagascar, I discovered some musical instruments which fascinated me. First there was a set of flutes and drums, called the paritakyo. I also came across xylophones on legs and a set of whistles, the kiloloky, which produced a very rich and varied sound and rhythm, which you hardly ever find these days.

Each instrument has one sound and to make a tune the notes have to follow one after the other - you make a doh, I make a ray, as if the whole tune was controlled by a central brain: it's very difficult.

When the kiloloky accompanies a female choir, it's amazing. They play voice games, they whistle, they dance. It's a kind of musical ecstasy, where you lose track of time — a very powerful experience of sharing with other people.

I said to myself: “This is wonderful! How come I've never seen any of this when I only live 100 km away? I have to do something to catalogue and preserve it all.”

Sue Williams

In 1995, UNESCO launched a series of regional surveys to systematically assess the implementation of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore. The results of these surveys will be presented at a conference of experts in the domain of intangible heritage, to be held in Washington from June 27-30, organized by UNESCO and the Smithsonian Institution and sponsored by the Japanese government, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts (U.S.A), and the World Bank.

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What are you working on right now?

Music is ever-present in Madagascar, especially among the Antandoy people. There's rhythm, melody and tone in everything they do. The women are always singing, whether they're going to fetch water or busy cooking. When they're pounding grain, there's music. When they're weaving mats, they sing accompanied by the sound of the rustling straw. All ceremonies start and end with music. It's part of every game, every leisure activity.

The full moon's a big occasion for music too. Under the light of the moon, children and grown-ups start coming out of their houses and interacting through music until everyone's outside making music. The valiha players can be heard, along with the special noises of the frogs and the cicadas. It's an incredible panorama of sound.

Right now, I'm interested in a kind of music played by children, called the galeha. They hit or pinch their throats to make sudden sounds or a yodelling noise. The galeha has very rich roots. It's a sort of vocal contest between two people or two groups - though never from the same family - who hurl insults at each other. The words are very studied. The children call out the names of body parts of their opponents' relatives, touch each other and sometimes physically fight.

They learn about the tradition of honour by defending the honour of the insulted family and their own. It's also a kind of initiation ceremony. Only those children who can perform the galeha and verbally defend themselves are considered fit to be shepherds: you can't entrust a herd of oxen to someone who doesn't know how to defend themselves.

Are these traditions in danger of dying out?

Not really, but they're changing. The Bara people told me the names of famous valiha players, of great musicians, yet in their territory, there are only two valihas left, when once it was the national instrument. Xylophones on legs are becoming scarce. Antandoy children don't yodel much any more.

But maybe they've created something else. For example, among the Sakalava people, the galeha didn't exist. But the Antandoy brought it with them when they migrated and Sakalava children do it now.

How can people be made aware of traditional music in a country where several ethnic groups live together?

You're not necessarily going to like music if you've never heard it before. But if the music of a xylophone on legs is heard on the radio, the villagers who are used to hearing it will be moved and delighted. Nowadays, Malagasy like Céline Dion. She's someone they're not familiar with but they've gradually got used to her. After hearing the sound of the xylophone from the south, the people from the north will likewise eventually get accustomed to it. If traditional music was broadcast, I think people would get used to it too. It's a political decision, really, to broadcast it.

Are you optimistic about the future of music in Madagascar?

The kind of thing that makes me hopeful is when I go to villages where no-one's played the xylophone on legs for 30 years, and they start making these instruments again and the kids ask "what's that?" and begin playing them. Ethno-musicology isn't just about studying music, it's about making people aware and helping to revive forgotten customs.

Sending musicians abroad helps. When there's no-one to listen to you playing, you get discouraged. When musicians know they can be appreciated helps them to keep going. When a group I sent to Europe got back from their trip, all their friends said: "We're going to start playing music again."

What kind of recording equipment do you have?

I've got a portable DAT (digital audio tape) and I record on cassettes. I'd've liked to have three or four microphones, or at least two, and a mixing panel. But I've only got very basic equipment and I have to work to get a good quality recording. That's where a musical ear is very important.

Interview by Nadia Khouri-Dagher

A pioneering collection

Created in 1961 by Alain Danielou, a French specialist of Indian cultures, it set out to introduce the popular and learned musical traditions from different cultural areas to a broad public. The UNESCO collection was a pioneer in the field, preceding the boom during the 70s for the music of Asia and, in the 80s the rise of African music. The recordings, most of which were made in-situ provide an invaluable resource for today's creators, musicologists and traditional music lovers, especially as some of the music recorded in the Collection no longer exists. It is the third best-selling collection of its type in the world, and has received several major international awards in recognition of its achievements.
Takeshi Kitamura: modesty and patience

In the summer of 1972, archaeologists in Ma Wang Tui, in China's Hunan province, dug up the mumified body of a young noblewoman who lived at the time of the Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD). Her corpse was dressed in silk and in ra, a kind of intricate gauze material which was very fashionable in Japan until the 15th century.

Takeshi Kitamura, a Japanese master weaver, saw these examples of ra in an exhibition in Kyoto the following year. “The secret of its manufacture had been lost and it could not be made using modern techniques,” he said. “I studied the antique fragments in depth and eventually managed to reproduce them with new equipment.” In recognition of his skills, the government gave Kitamura, already acclaimed as one of Japan’s greatest weavers and the winner of several prizes, the title of “living human treasure,” a category which Japan invented in 1955 and which UNESCO would like to see all countries adopt (see box).

Fabrics in Japan, as everywhere else in Asia, have a value which textiles have lost in the West. “In ancient times, textiles were distributed through what is often called the Silk Road. They were as highly esteemed as precious stones or gold,” says Ken Kirihata, who teaches at Otemae College, near Kobe (Japan). Kitamura managed not only to restore ancient pieces of ra but also revived a craft using a wooden loom to once more produce ra.

“The loom setting used by Kitamura is complicated beyond all imagination,” says Kirihata. “The delicacy of the finished silk gauze inspires images of the tradition of ancient China and at the same time elicits a fresh and modern impression.” Kitamura has also mastered another difficult technique from the Han period: tate-nishiki (wrap-patterned brocades), “which no-one else could hope to imitate.”

Kitamura, who has more the modesty of a craftsman than the vanity of an artist, says he has “continued to work in weaving without really liking it.” Because Kitamura is a professional craftsman and weaving is nothing more than his job, he doesn’t say: ‘I can’t wait to weave,” says Ruiko Kato, a former senior curator of the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto.

He started working as an apprentice when he was 15, to help his family, in the textile industry of Kyoto’s Nishijin-ori district. However, he set about the arduous task of mastering the various techniques and worked in several workshops. “It takes a long time to acquire the requisite experience,” he says. “Creativity cannot come until later.”

Kitamura is pessimistic about the future of craftsmanship in Japan. “In a consumer society, it is very difficult to make traditional crafts pay,” he says. “Weaving, for example, is a difficult trade. It’s not very remunerative and it continues to need support.”

The Japanese Traditional Handicrafts Association has launched a training programme for 10 young weavers to learn the ra technique from Kitamura. “Once, techniques and styles were passed on to just one person within the family, and it was important to preserve the secret,” he says. “But there are drawbacks to the new scheme. It is restrictive to confine the learning experience to just one technique. Also, weaving is a skill you learn by doing, and the time available for that may be too short.”

But the man who illustrates the craftsman’s humility and patience is not above a touch of professional jealousy. One of the ra kimonos he made is on display at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum and other examples of his work can be seen in museums in Japan. “It would be a good idea to devise some form of patent,” he says, “otherwise one’s work can be copied.” But to copy them, you would have to have spent, like Kitamura, more than 50 years learning various complex weaving techniques.

Nadia Khouri-Dagher, with Lidia Panzeri in Venice

LIVING HUMAN TREASURES

UNESCO is hoping every country in the world will take up the idea of “living human treasures”. Member-states adopted a resolution to that effect in 1993. As with the World Heritage List, which picks out exceptional sites, the list of “human treasures” will seek exceptional craftsmen and women. This statute would qualify them for grants to train talented young people. Japan, came up with the idea in 1955, and South Korea, adopted it in 1962. France introduced the category of “master craftsman” in 1994 and many other countries actively support craft activities.

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A living human treasure
A storyteller’s universe

The Square of Djemaa el Fna in Marrakesh is a monument. Not a vast stone edifice that has weathered the centuries, but rather a “cultural space”, whose ever-changing inhabitants serve as keepers of a tradition that enchants all those who enter within: a monument to humanity’s oral heritage, argues Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo.

Its bards, performers, acrobats, comedians, story-tellers are, more or less, equal in number and quality as the day I arrived...If we compare its appearance with photographs taken at the beginning of the Protectorate (1912-1930), the differences are few: buildings are more solid, still modest; an increase in wheeled transport; a vertiginous proliferation of bicycles; identical hackney carriages and traps. The groups around horse-traders still mix with those story-tellers, framed by the steam wafting hospitality from the cooking pots. The immovable minaret of the Koutubia surveys the glories of the dead and the ever-changing inhabitants serve as keepers of a tradition that enchants all those who enter within: a monument to humanity’s oral heritage, argues Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo.

Death brought natural losses to the ranks of its most distinguished offspring. First went Bakshish the clown with the tassled bonnet, whose daily performances drew to the insu-...sary closing down of café Matich: Djemaa el Fna has yet to come to terms with the blow. Its strategic position on the busiest corner of the Square made it the hub of hubs, its real heart. An eagle eye from there encompassed the whole realm and treasured its secrets: quarrels, encounters, greetings, con-tricks, furtive groping or gleeful poking, tale-telling, insults, itinerant hum of the blind, gestures of charity, jostling of crowds, immediacy of bodies, space in perpetual movement comprising the boundless plot of a film without end. Seeded from America, a clothes-peg were the daily diet of the addicted...

Like nostalgic emigrés

Once the café closed down, we habitués scattered like a diaspora of insects deprived of their nest. The gnaua gather at night on the inhospitable asphalt or meet up in the backroom of an old fonduk on Derb Dabachi. The rest of us come to terms as best we can, reliving episodes and moments of its mythical past, like nostalgic emigrés in the makeshift shelters of exile.

But Djemaa el Fna resists the combined onslaught of time and an obtuse grubby modernity. New talents emerge and an audience hungry for stories crowds gleefully around its bards and performers. The space’s incredible vitality and digestive capacity glues together what is scattered, temporarily suspends differences of class or hierarchy. This year the nights of Ramadan assembled tens of thousands in its centre and roadways, around the portable cookers, and raucous bargaining over shoes, clothes, toys and bric-a-brac. In the glow of the oil lamps, I thought I noticed the presence of Juan Ruiz, Chaucer, Ibn Zayid, Al Hariri, as well as countless goliads and dervishes. The dazzling incandescence of the word prolongs its miraculous reign. But sometimes I am worried by the vulnerability of it all and my lips tremble fearfully with a single question: “For how long?”

Extracts from Xema-el Fna, Patrimonio oral de la humanidad by Juan Goytisolo (Galaxia Gutenberg/Circulo de Lectores, 1997)
IN BRIEF IN BRIEF IN BRIEF IN BRIEF IN BRIEF IN BRIEF IN BRIEF

TO SAVE THE BOLSHOI

UNESCO launched an international campaign on May 13 to save the renowned but crumbling Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. The organization has been working with the Bolshoi since 1993, when the Russian government asked for help to modernize it. A steering committee headed by Greek patron Alexandra C. Vovolini-Laskaridis and comprising representatives of the Bolshoi, the Russian government, the city of Moscow and the directors of several of the world’s grand opera houses, has been set up to guide the campaign. A honorary committee has also been established to promote the Bolshoi’s cause, bringing together personalities from the arts such as Maurice Béjart, Montserrat Caballé, Caroline Carlson, Carlo Fontana, J ames Galway, J ohn Neumeier and Sir Peter Ustinov.

An exhibition on the famous theatre will be inaugurated in the U.K in July and will travel with the Bolshoi troupe wh ever it goes on tour, in a bid to alert public opinion and mobi lise funds for the theatre’s restor ation and repair.

Literature’s future?

Writers Philippe Sollers (France), Vassilis Vassilikos (Greece) and Ramakanta Rath (India) discussed the role of literature in tomorrow’s world in a debate What Future for Literature? - the 7th in the series of 21st Century Talks - at Headquarters on May 20. Philippe Sollers, author of Femmes, Portrait du joueur, and Les Surprises de Fragonard, warned of a possible “alliance between harsh, brutal censorship which leads to the courtroom, to death sentences, to the assassination of writers, and the censorship practised in the so-called developed countries and which strikes not at books but at the alleged absence of readers.”

For Rath, the author of Kate Dinara and Shri Radha, the writer has become totally irrelevant to society. Particularly damaging to literature, he said, is the fact that language is parting company with the way it was traditionally used by the community and is “being used to express not what you believe in but what you would like others to believe in.”

Vassilis Vassilikos, who wrote Z and Rêves diurnes, pointed out that “As long as human beings will speak they will want to express themselves through the word” but expressed concern that “our technological civiliza-

30 years later...

“The temples of Abu Simbel have become a lighthouse...we all have managed by our care and sympathy towards human heritage to save something more than mere stones. Stones are meaningless without our creativity,” said Sarwat Okasha, former minister for culture in Egypt, on June 2 at an event held at headquarters commemorating the 30th anniversary of the International Campaign for the Safeguarding of the Nubian Temples.

This campaign, which resulted in the temples being dismantled and reassembled out of the reach of the Aswan Dam, was the first major world heritage preservation campaign conducted under the aegis of UNESCO, and resulted largely from the determination of Okasha and French Egyptologist Christiane Deroches Noblecourt. “If UNESCO’s reputation was made on the occasion of this campaign, it owes this to personalities such as yourselves,” said Federico Mayor, UNESCO’s Director-General, in a special tribute to them. “You have enough enthusiasm to move mountains - as has been proven.”

What is Peace?

“Peace is much more than the absence of conflict. It involves, above all, democracy and development.” These were the words of UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor at the opening of a culture of peace conference in Moscow this May.

CULTURE

Representatives of Russia’s cultural and scientific community as well as guest personalities and 59 mayors from different parts of the world attended the International Forum “For a Culture of Peace and Dialogue among Civilizations in the Third Millenium.”

The forum aimed to draw the attention of public opinion to the fact that a culture of peace and dialogue between different cultures and civilizations requires the acquisition of a general culture - cultural, civic and social awareness - and civil society therefore plays a pr imordial role in establishing the conditions allowing for the development of this culture of peace and dialogue.

Philippe Sollers

Moscow’s Red Square

CULTURE OF PEACE
IN BRIEF

Statistics Make a Difference

Education reform in the Arab States has been slowed down in the past by a lack of reliable education statistics. A new UNESCO project in Beirut is providing the region’s education ministries with systems to collect, store and analyse data, and subsequently use that data to make informed decisions.

“The lack of sound databases of reliable statistics is compromising the reform of education systems,” says Victor Billeh, director of UNESCO Beirut office. “It could well compromise economic growth.” To combat the problem, the office has launched a new initiative to provide education ministers with systems to collect store and analyse easy-to-understand information.

The initiative was recently presented to decision-makers and technicians from 13 Arab States in a regional training workshop using educational information systems developed in Jordan, Lebanon and Oman. During the four-day meeting, they analysed their systems in detail and compared their own practices with those of other countries. All were exposed to modern technologies for data management and reporting.

A NEW RAPID RESPONSE FORCE

UNESCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Norwegian Refugee Council on May 28, which gives the organization access to the NRC’s standby emergency force of over 600 professionals available to go into crisis areas at 72 hours notice.

With a budget of over $37.5 million, the NRC is one of Norway’s largest private aid organizations, specialising in humanitarian relief for people displaced by human-made crises.

“We are working in four continents very closely with United Nations agencies,” said Ola Meliaas, the secretary-general of the NRC at the signing ceremony. “We are looking forward to working with you in the Balkans.”

While UNESCO’s mission does not include provision of food, shelter or medical aid, it is heavily involved in providing education for refugees (see Sources No. 113), and has already worked closely with the NRC in relief operations in Somalia, Rwanda, Tanzania and Angola.

UNESCO and Papua New Guinea

On May 7 UNESCO and Papua New Guinea signed an agreement to reinforce their cooperation. Papua New Guinea will reinforce its participation in various education and scientific programmes. The education side includes: Associated Schools, education for women and children, Learning Without Frontiers, literacy programmes, projects about population and the environment, and teacher training. On the science agenda Papua New Guinea will play a greater role in UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere programme, intergovernmental geological programmes, hydrology programmes and on Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. Two UNESCO chairs will also be created, in engineering and anthropology. Papua New Guinea, situated north of Australia, has a population of four million.

LATIN AMERICAN ART

One of the largest exhibitions of Latin American and Caribbean contemporary art ever held in Paris took place at Headquarters in June. “On the threshold of the 21st Century: The Plastic Arts in Latin America and the Caribbean,” included paintings, sculptures and installations by 94 artists from 23 countries.

The exhibition, organised by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Member States of UNESCO (GRULAC), paid tribute to renowned artists such as Wifredo Lam, Oswaldo Guayasamin, Fernando Botero, Cicero Dias, Roberto Matta, Armando Morales, Jesús Soto, and Antonio Seguí. It also featured the new generation of artists active in the region.

Vincent Mosco, professor of Communications, University of Carleton, Canada in his Point of View, available at http://www.unesco.org/ webworld

Michael Kirby, Australian on accepting the 1999 Human Rights Education Prize

“More than any other social institution education is fundamentally about knowledge, information and communication. Although it certainly makes use of material tools and sometimes results in the production of material goods, these are ancillary to the fundamental process of education: people using knowledge to create more knowledgeable people.”

“People are exploited only because they are not conscious of their own power... Only people who are aware can provide the dynamism for change”

Federico Mayor, the director-general of UNESCO

“Human Rights Education is a struggle for change”

Federico Mayor, the director-general of UNESCO

“The most important thing UNESCO means to me is courage, because it has always seemed to me to be the one United Nations organization that will take up issues that others are afraid to touch”

Michael Kirby, Australian on accepting the 1999 Human Rights Education Prize

“I have been always to get support for peace building, while it is so easy to raise billions of dollars for destruction”

Federico Mayor, the director-general of UNESCO

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Federico Mayor, the director-general of UNESCO
Cultural Rights and Wrongs
Edited by Halina Niec
UNESCO Publishing 1998
pp 206 price FF150
"The 'global village' is actually closed; it is a circle of the affluent." So says Kishore Singh, a specialist on the Culture of Peace programme at UNESCO. He is just one of twelve people who have contributed to Cultural Rights and Wrongs. This book reflects a wide range of opinions on the current state and future development of cultural rights. Released to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this volume addresses matters of the gravest concern for indigenous peoples, authors and artists, speakers of minority languages and others. What are cultural rights? Would their better definition and enforcement improve the lot of human beings in many prejudicial situations, beyond the protection they already have from existing human rights instruments? Why are "cultural" rights so much more difficult to define than other human rights? This collection of essays by distinguished authors representing all five continents shows the differences in views of cultural rights, and the different approaches taken to them by scholars, legislators and citizens. Biodiversity, the freedom of the artist and linguistic rights are just some of the very different subjects tackled.

OPERAS AND GAMELANS OF INDONESIA

Indonesia. Java.
Music of the Theatre.
Recorded by Jacques Brunet, Auvidis
UNESCO, 91 FF
The Javanese culture is renowned for the incredible diversity of performing arts, from dance to shadow-puppets. The 19th century was a particularly productive period. The Sultans, stripped of their political powers by the Dutch colonial rulers, focused their attention on the cultural and artistic domains. The poetry, dance and music of this period is still greatly appreciated today. Music of the Theatre offers two works from the end of the 19th century: an opera - The Demons of Ramayana, written by composer, Prince Darnuredjo VII; and an operetta, Diversions of the Heart, created by Prince Mangkunagara IV. This latter recording includes an operetta which focuses on the performing arts, from dance to shadow-puppets.

MAILBOX

MAJOR UNESCO ACTIVITIES LACK LINKAGE
Charles M. Gottschalk U.S.A.
As a retired UNESCO staff member and currently a free-lance consultant in energy, I regularly read your very useful monthly UNESCO Sources. I was surprised, after reading the March 1999 issue, to find an article by Prof. Inge Johansen entitled The Full Cost of Energy to find an expert on energy failing to mention one of the major and most widely recognized global renewable energy programs initiated and supported by UNESCO through its Div. of Engineering and Technology, viz. the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (WSP). This programme which focuses on the developing countries, could have provided much more accurate statistics on renewables than those cited by Prof. Johansen. The WSP governing body, the World Solar Commission, has its Secretariat at UNESCO. The WSP has dealt with ethical issues of applying and promoting renewable energies, as well as with cultural and sociological ones. I sincerely hope that the new UNESCO World Commission on the Ethics of Science and Technology (COMEST) which was mandated to detect early signs of risk situations in the domain of energy, among others, was better informed at its first meeting in April '99 of UNESCO's own energy involvement.

SOUND AND VISION

In its April edition (No.111), Sources wrongly indicated that one of the winners of the 1998 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize - the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasena Wazed - was a man, who had been awarded the prize for "bringing about national conflict in his country". Our apologies to Sheikh Hasena, a woman who has contributed immesurably to the resolution of conflict and the restoration of peace in her country.

INDONESIA

GAMELANS OF INDONESIA

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In its April edition (No.111), Sources wrongly indicated that one of the winners of the 1998 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize - the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasena Wazed - was a man, who had been awarded the prize for "bringing about national conflict in his country". Our apologies to Sheikh Hasena, a woman who has contributed immesurably to the resolution of conflict and the restoration of peace in her country.
“OUR EARTH - OUR FUTURE - JUST SAVE IT!”
...is the theme adopted to celebrate this year's World Environment Day on June 5. To mark the occasion, Federico Mayor, UNESCO's Director-General urged people everywhere “take action now to protect and clean up our air, land and water - then we will set in motion the only process which can really ensure that present and future generations enjoy a healthy environment: a process of active, responsible, personal and collective stewardship.

“Protecting the environment is first and foremost a matter of awareness and commitment,” he said. “We have to adopt attitudes and policies which drastically limit pollution and the many other forms of damage which threaten natural resources, biodiversity and the climate... Together, we can make the new century a new start for the environment.”

World Heritage Review

“With ten life zones ranging from low montane dry forest to the snowline, the ecology of the sanctuary of Machu Picchu is highly diverse and complex.” Issue 11 of this quarterly magazine focuses on Machu Picchu, the Lost City of the Incas in Peru. Discovered in this century in 1911, this exceptional pre-Hispanic site is now the greatest tourist attraction in South America, and was included on the World Heritage List in 1983. The article contains some stunning photographs that illustrate the magnificence and beauty of both the city and its surrounding landscape. Other articles in the issue cover New Zealand’s Tongariro National Park; the Royal Palace of Abomey in Benin; and the Grande Île of Strasbourg.

THE UNESCO COURIER

The number of people living in cities has doubled since 1975 and will double again between now and the year 2015. This month's issue of the UNESCO Courier takes a look at this unprecedented urban revolution, which mainly affects the Third World and is not just a question of numbers. The appearance, organisation, and even the function of cities have been revolutionised. Traditionally, cities have been places of meeting and exchange, but now they are splitting up into enclaves divided by walls built by the well-off, and by social and ethnic barriers. Demographics, migrations, globalisation and street children form just a part of this wide subject. Other features in this issue include laws in space and a feature on the rice revolution.

Regional Conflicts and Globalisation

The Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST) has launched the first issue of its Journal on Cultural Pluralism. Dedicated to the question of religious pluralism, it notably includes contributions concerning the rise of religious conflicts around the world. The upcoming numbers of this new quarterly will be focus on successful examples of religious pluralism in certain regions. The MOST Journal on Cultural Pluralism welcomes experts’ ideas and contributions for future publication.

Prospects

The major subject for discussion in this issue of Prospects is technical and vocational education. In a world where the demand for education increasingly finds expression in terms of qualifications and skills that are recognized by the labour market, technical education has become a strategic component of educational policy. Nine articles in this issue look at the challenge facing TVE, in nine very different ways. Reforms, training, economics and infrastructure are just some of the subjects which are touched upon.

“Technical and vocational education is the component of education most directly concerned with the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required by all citizens and workers in most manufacturing and service industries. Although there is debate about whether TVE creates jobs, it is undisputed that it can provide people with skills required to give them better opportunities for employment and re-employment and to function in modern societies,” writes Colin Power, UNESCO’s assistant director-general for education in an article about TVE in the twenty-first century.

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To find out more
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A new kit on the history of the slave trade aims to open students’ eyes to one of humanity’s darkest chapters

SLAVERY: BREAKING THE SILENCE IN THE CLASSROOMS

Until lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt will always glorify the hunter,” says a Nigerian proverb. This is why UNESCO’s ground-breaking General History of Africa and General History of the Caribbean have been included in a new educational resource kit relating to the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

The kit – which includes books, periodicals, posters and project publications - has recently arrived in more than 100 UNESCO Associated Schools around the world. In the absence of textbooks, teachers and students will use this kit as raw material to develop new approaches to the complex and sensitive subject of slavery.

RESTORING THE MEMORY

Printed on the kitbags in large white letters are the words “Breaking the Silence,” the slogan of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (TST) Education project which involves both UNESCO’s education and culture sectors.

“The hope is that by being studied, the topic will acquire a universal quality and feature in the history books of every country,” explains Doudou Diene, the director of Intercultural Projects including the Slave Route programme (see Sources No. 99, March 1998). “Through education, the memory of the slave trade was erased. Through education, it can be restored again.”

“The three key words of the project are causes, consequences and contributions,” explains Elizabeth Khawajkie, international co-ordinator of the Associated Schools Project Network. “By studying the TST, young people learn about the root causes of this tragedy and its multiple consequences - both the racism it generated and the vast contribution made by the African diaspora to the societies where they and their descendants settled, from music to architecture to traditional medicine.”

The resource kits will be used initially by teachers and their 14-16-year-old students in over 100 secondary schools at the three points of the “triangle” - Africa, the Americas/Caribbean and Europe.

The material they will study includes an anthology of works by slaves themselves, compiled by Professor Hilary Beckles, Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, and one of the experts who advised UNESCO on the project, with his colleague Dr Verene Shepherd.

“Slaves not only fought back; they wrote and spoke back,” says Beckles. “They understood and critiqued the dominant European scientific and intellectual dogma on the subject of slavery and race. Africans wrote important treatises, dictated autobiographical accounts, presented critical oral testimony to Commissions of Inquiry, and made arrangements for the recording and publication of a wide body of opinion.”

With the kits as a solid foundation for study, another aim of the project is to establish a dialogue between students and teachers in Africa, the Americas/Caribbean and Europe. A directory of participants will enable schools to create a new triangle of cooperation, to share the results of their work and undertake projects in common.

PILGRIMAGE

Project activities underway include a triangular exchange on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights between students at three Associated Schools in Ghana, Norway and Trinidad, who have been studying how the different articles are applied in each of their countries.

“This is the first of many TST-related projects in our little triangle of partnership,” remarks Jon Moller, the Norwegian teacher co-ordinating the project. “We won’t stop until all the articles are covered.” Two other schools, in Dakar (Senegal) and Tenerife (Spain) have also shared their work on the theme of slavery.

Despite using internet sites and email, there is no more valuable experience than meeting each other face to face. The opportunity for this will arise at the TST/World Heritage Youth Forum in Dakar, Senegal from 21 to 27 August. Together, students, teachers and experts will participate in the commemorative ceremonies on 23 August, the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition. A highlight will be the pil-
The world has to come up with a “new vision” of technical and professional education. So concluded the 715 delegates to the second UNESCO-sponsored congress on the subject, held in Seoul (Republic of Korea) from April 26-30.

“So far, we have tended to develop special subjects within classic school and university structures,” says Qian Tang, the director of UNESCO’s Section for Technical and Vocational Education. “We now realise we must take a very much broader approach. We still need technical and professional education, but we need it everywhere and at all stages of a person’s life. Economics and society require us to constantly adapt to often brutal changes and it is the spread of this kind of training which will help us meet that challenge.”

University students in poor countries routinely find themselves unemployed after graduating, or else take a job for which they are overqualified or which is outside their field. In some African countries, the jobless rate in this group is as high as 50%. These days, young people in rich Western countries are not spared this fate either. The time when higher education, which was reserved for an elite, guaranteed work, security and a prestigious job has long passed. Young Westerners are now victims of this economic breakdown, which is made worse by the theoretical nature of courses and the race to obtain social status.

In countries like France, unemployment is higher than 10% of the workforce, but industry sometimes has trouble finding technicians with suitable qualifications. “In Australia,” notes Qian Tang, “more and more graduates are turning to technical and professional colleges to get qualifications which will help them get a job.”

This gives hope that vocational education will get a better reputation in Western countries, where it still has a low status. Not many families are keen on their children becoming plumbers even though plumbers can always find work and earn a decent living.

Also, in this changing world, you have to have a changing education, one where people do not get put off and drop out, and one which can help wage-earners learn new techniques and adjust to ever more rapid changes in the nature of work. If this is not done, after 10, 20 or 30 years people will find themselves out of the picture at an age when firms are unenthusiastic about hiring them. For this, education itself must change and become less academic.

Even in Japan, which has always encouraged fierce competition and extremely rigid education (which has pushed some schoolchildren to suicide after getting bad marks), things are changing. A new
**KOREAN CASE STUDY**

**During the Seoul Congress, Korea's astounding rate of economic growth and industrial development in past decades was showcased as an example of the results which can be achieved through education, notably vocational education which was hailed as playing a major role in the country's transition from an agrarian society to a highly competitive industrial economy with a strong performance in high technology industries.**

Despite last year's economic crisis in South East Asia, the Korean economy is clearly picking up. None of this could have been achieved without an efficient workforce, well prepared to meet the needs of production.

Vocational education in Korea (total 1997 population 45.9 million) begins at high school. The schools provide general education as well as vocational education in agriculture, technology, commerce, marine and fisheries. Vocational education is also provided at a higher level by specialised universities and polytechnics. The Korean government has also initiated a university “Credit Bank System” which recognises learning and experience acquired outside full-time education with a view of obtaining a college degree. This system is, however, only open to high school graduates. Programmes are also operated jointly with industry to enable industrial workers to obtain academic degrees.

Another alternative to full time higher education is offered by the self study system which provides exams and degrees to independent students. The government of Korea has enacted legislation promoting and regulating access to life-long education and non-formal education, particularly destined to help people in employment acquire qualification they were unable to acquire in their formal education.

The government of Korea has enacted legislation promoting and regulating access to life-long education and non-formal education, particularly destined to help people in employment acquire qualification they were unable to acquire in their formal education. K.W.

An approach to secondary education is being tried out with course modules which allow students to devise their own curricula by attending courses which interest them in different schools, and even to study outside schools for a while.

**CURIOSITY**

Some 43,500 young Japanese signed up last year for this programme, which started out in 1994 with fewer than 1,500 participants. The scheme is not a dead-end however because it does not exclude going to university. Everything is done to help students develop the skills they will need in their chosen profession. The aim is to allow teenagers to build their own future and map out their needs depending on what they want to do.

“Curiosity is the origin of study,” says a Japanese education ministry brochure which praises these “upper secondary schools of a new type” that allow young people to “select subjects (they) want to study and develop (their) personality and dreams.”

Other countries are unfortunately still far from this situation. Dr Tazako Pantalev, the director of the Bulgarian National Observatory, painted a gloomy picture of the state of technical and professional schools in the countries of Eastern Europe, which are locked in a system that does not train young people or help them to avoid unemployment. The educational setup is so rigid that at the age of 13, children have to make subject choices which are irreversible and will govern the rest of their lives, he says.

“Students are taught specific isolated skills which offer them little chance of horizontal mobility, either within education or in the job market once they graduate. Students do not have the skills really required by employers,” says Dr Pantalev. But this is true in a few Western countries too.

After a massive drive to introduce computer skills to all students at all levels during the 1980s and 1990s, Israel has succeeded in most schools, with an average of one computer per ten students. But Dr Ami Ze'evi, the educationalist behind the drive, says that there is still a pressing need to integrate technological education into the mainstream education system.

“When students are located in separate frameworks, such as academic and vocational schools, the weaker students are generally directed to the vocational schools resulting in their acquiring a stigma as inferiors, which then demolishes their motivation to learn,” he says.

**OVERHAUL**

Several of the delegates, who attended the congress from all over the world also stressed the role of technical and professional education in drawing into society groups like young people, women and marginalised people.

Among the resolutions passed by the congress were ones stating the need to encourage a healthier environment, world peace and the inclusion of minorities in society. But achieving this, the delegates stressed, requires a dynamic overhaul of technical and professional education by opening it up to society and life in general.

Karl Wertzberg

Seoul

***For more information:***

www.unesco.org/opi/seoul/seoul.htm

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Learning to work with his head and his hands...
The importance of education is not reflected in media coverage of the issue,” says Martin Granovsky, deputy director of the Argentinean daily Pagina 12. He was speaking at the seminar on media and education organised by UNESCO’s International Institute of Education Planning (IIIEP) in Buenos Aires, is that it is not considered a priority topic. “The recurrence of problems without solutions is incompatible with the element of novelty, seen as indispensable to stimulate audience interest,” says Nora Veiras of Pagina 12. Topics dealing with education are equally neglected because “specialising in education is not a lucrative option in the highly competitive journalism market,” she adds. Hence the “vast heterogeneity” of journalists covering the sector.

Another problem is the difficulty of access to information. “We do give top billing to reportages and eyewitness accounts,” says Andrea Castillo Calderon of Peru’s El Comercio, “but often and for different reasons - lack of personnel, the editorial line, lack of funds - the press doesn’t go beyond the official version.”

The issue of transparency and control of information also sparked heated debate during a session with parents and teachers. “Why don’t we have more information in newspapers?” queried one parent. “When surveys are carried out, the results are not published.”

Nonetheless, regional newspapers have made great strides in recent years to improve coverage of an issue considered to be “strategic for development and democracy.” Argentina’s La Nación recently published a series of ten articles called “An X-ray of Education in Argentina” with contributions from experts and global comparisons. For the last six years, the Colombian daily El Tiempo and Chile’s El Mercurio have run education sections with specialised journalists. In Brazil, the news that secondary education concerns only 17% of the active population provoked enormous debate in the press.

Several newspapers have chosen to intervene more directly in the education process. Nueva Provincia (Argentina) has set up a network of young readers and apart from distributing copies in schools, also publishes a newspaper produced by children from 5 to 14 years of age. Last year, El Tiempo (Colombia), the University of the Andes and the Corona Foundation, launched the project “Education, a compromise for everybody,” aimed at making education accessible to the poorest. The Hoy Foundation set up by the Ecuadorian daily Hoy was awarded the Inter-american Press Society Prize for its work: pedagogical workshops, teacher training, introduction to reading. “In Paraguay, where books have become almost luxury items, the newspaper can become a tool for studying different subjects and can help set up a community of newspaper readers,” says Natalia Daporta of ABC Color (Paraguay).

Can the media help tackle the region’s education crisis? One-fourth of Latin American children drop out before completing primary school. In Bolivia, half a million children under the age of 12 work. In Venezuela, 52% of the 15-18 age group are not in school. The reasons for this crisis are beyond the control of the media: poverty, low teacher’s wages, and political instability.

POLITICALLY CHARGED

“In the 40s in Mexico, education shared the front page along with news of the war in Europe and the Pacific. The reason was that Mexico was implementing a profound reform of its education system and the government’s ambition was to wipe out illiteracy. Debates on education were politically charged,” says Hector Davalos of the Mexican daily Novedades. At a time when states in Latin America are allowing the private sector to take over education and education itself is seen more in terms of its job potential rather than as a school of citizenship, it is the responsibility of the press to, in Hector Davalos’ words, “rehabilitate the concept” in the public eye.

Mariano de Vedia in Buenos Aires with Nadia Khouri Dagher
next month’s issue:

WOMEN AND A CULTURE OF PEACE

HIGH TECHNOLOGY FOR GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

on UNESCO’s calendar

12 July

AUSTRALIAN SITE ENDANGERED?
The World Heritage Committee will meet at headquarters to discuss whether the Kakadu National Park in Australia’s Northern Territory should be inscribed on the list of sites in danger.

12 to 16 July

DISTANCE LEARNING
How can distance learning change communities? Experts from around the world gather in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) to attend a conference on transforming community schools into open learning communities.

12 to 30 July

LESSONS IN THE SUN
The Engineering and Technology Division of UNESCO welcomes fifty technicians and engineers to their summer school, Solar Electricity for Rural and Remote Areas.

20 July

TALKING ABOUT YOUTH
A meeting held at Headquarters, where permanent delegations from UNESCO’s member states will exchange information and ideas with observers from the youth sectors, the UNESCO Clubs and the Associated Schools Project.

9 August

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

15 to 19 August

ORAL HERITAGE
In Khon Kaen, (Thailand), more than 100 cultural heritage experts will attend an international satellite meeting, Collecting and Safeguarding Oral Traditions.