

Africa in the Global Economy

The five short articles that follow have a common thread of 'Africa in the Global Economy'. They give an insight into the efforts made by Africa's equivalent of the European Union (COMESA and SADC), problems facing the continent (the Brain Drain Crisis and Green Gold) and a major initiative to help Africa (NEPAD). The issues raised in these articles

have other underlying elements which are a cause for concern. These include the continual foreign debt of African countries, the influence of multi-national companies, and various health issues - especially that of HIV/AIDS.

Information about SADC and COMESA is to be found on the centre spread of this issue, pages 16 and 17.

Further Sources of Information: Africa News Bulletin - Bulletin d'Information Africaine (ANB-BIA), Av. Charles Woeste 184, 1090 Brussel, Belgium.

Web site at <http://www.peacelink.it/anb-bia.html>, e-mail at anb-bia@village.uunet.be, tel: 0032-2420 3436 and fax: 0032-2420 0549;

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Various relevant items may be found in past issues of 'White Fathers - White Sisters'.

Here are some of the related main articles: Issue 302, Feb.-March, 1992, 'The African Debt Situation'; Issue 304, June-July, 1992, 'Aid and Development'; Issue 314, Feb.-March, 1994, 'Health at all costs!'; Issue 335, Aug.-Sept., 1997, 'Influences in Africa Pt. 4: water resources'; Issue 338, Feb.-March, 1998, 'Influences in Africa Pt. 5: Globalisation'; Issue 342, Oct.-Nov., 1998, 'The group of Eight and Debt - Part 1'; Issue 343, Dec.-Jan., 1999, 'The group of Eight and Debt - Part 2'; Issue 368, Feb.-March, 2003, 'WSSD -The Johannesburg World Conference'; Issue 370, June-July, 2003, 'Influences in Africa Pt. 6: Urbanization'.

NEPAD? Any use for Africa?

By Moses Chitendwe / ANB-BIA *

A critical analysis of what the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) is all about, together with its strengths and weaknesses.

ZAMBIA WITHIN NEPAD

Jubilee-Zambia is a national movement campaigning for the cancellation of all Zambia's foreign debt and that of other poorer countries. The main goal of the campaign is to achieve

effective and equitable debt cancellation that results in increased poverty eradication. In his special paper on the 'Strengths and Weakness of NEPAD', Jubilee-Zambia's economic and policy analyst, Jack Zulu, comments on NEPAD's relevance to Zambia. He says: "If Zambia is to benefit from new and economic and development initiatives such as NEPAD, it is imperative that the nation puts its house in order. By this,

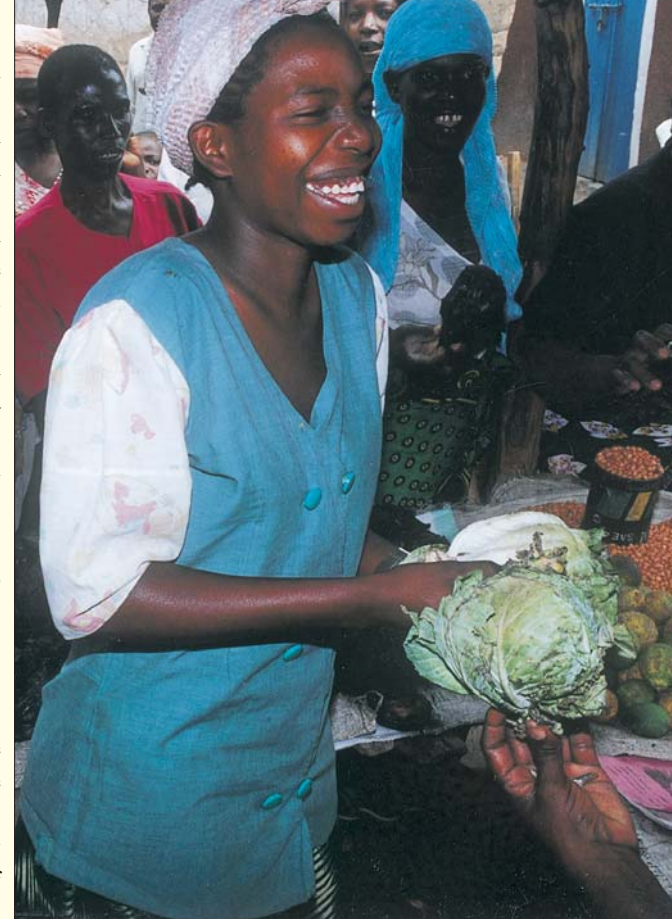
we mean that we need to come up with well-planned programmes and well-designed policies in a well-ordered manner. As a nation, Zambia should first identify her comparative advantages in the global markets. Corruption and similar vices must not be allowed to take root in the country's private and public institutions. It is in this light, therefore, that current government efforts aimed at fighting the vice (corruption) are a step in the right direction. One hopes that the fight against corruption will not be in words only, but in deeds."

WHAT NEPAD SEEKS TO ACHIEVE

Zulu notes that on paper at least, NEPAD provides hope for the African continent, in that African leaders say they will address many problems facing the continent. "NEPAD is anchored on the determination of Africans, to disentangle themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion from a world which increasingly must be viewed within the context of globalisation."

Looking at some of NEPAD's major strengths, Zulu points out that being an indigenous African idea, it marks a significant departure from past efforts, where individual African countries have pursued development initiatives on their own with little or no success.

Zulu feels that NEPAD's goals reflect "a bold attempt" by Africans to tackle poverty. He says: "NEPAD offers a rare window of opportunity to the peoples and governments of Africa, to understand that development is a process of empowerment and self-reliance. It attempts to help Africa find its place in the global economy, by encouraging African countries to form strong economic blocs for trading purposes."



Commenting on Africa's huge external debt currently standing at slightly over US\$300 billion, Zulu is happy to see that NEPAD strives to reduce the debt by at least by 10% of governments' revenue. Promotion of good governance in the areas of economic and political spheres is another positive development that needs to be nurtured.

Zulu is optimistic that despite the complex problems of donor funding, "so far donors have in principle expressed willingness to fund NEPAD, hoping that this is not just mere political rhetoric to appease Africans so they continue to provide the West with cheap raw materials for their industries."

Picture above: happy sales on a local market in Tanzania

NEPAD's WEAKNESSES

Zulu points out that while NEPAD takes into account that Africa has not been able to take advantage of globalisation, because of 'structural impediments' and unfavourable terms of trade, it is silent on what African countries might do to make a global system of trade and finance fairer and equitable.

Neither does NEPAD explain how 'structural impediments' might be removed, or how the adverse terms of trade might be reversed. NEPAD has opted to leave these to the international community to resolve.

NEPAD does not mention where the "massive" investment is to come from, given the fact that no foreign investor would risk his/her capital in a continent or country plagued with huge external debts. Zulu points out that "Africa continues to remain an unattractive destination of foreign investment because of its huge external debts. NEPAD will not go far in terms of implementation if its entire faith lies in the benevolence of the West for all its funding. One has just to look at the G8 meeting in Kananaskis in Canada where the donors barely scratched the surface of Africa's problems" (NEPAD had asked for US\$64 billion but only a paltry US\$6 billion was given to Africa, compared to US\$20 billion given to Russia).

Zulu points out that since the bulk of the needed resources (US\$64 billion) will have to be obtained from outside the continent, NEPAD is almost certain to fail in achieving its target of an estimated 7% annual growth rate needed to meet the Millennium Dev. Goals - particularly that of reducing by half the proportion of Africans living in poverty, by the year 2015.

NEPAD - AN IMPOSED CONCEPT

Father Joe Komakoma is the Catholic Centre for Justice, Development and Peace's (CCJDP) Executive Director. Speaking about the new

African action plan, he says: "As long as NEPAD is something that has been dictated and imposed on African leadership by the West, nothing is bound to change in the existing relationships of the southern poorer nations with the richer northern nations, who still stand to benefit in terms of the global trade."

"The terms of trade have to be questioned and change fundamentally if we have to have a new partnership that can work. Unfortunately, this partnership is a total failure from the beginning because it does not embrace the views of the ordinary people who were not consulted. The NEPAD document is just something that was discussed and adopted by the African leaders at the top, whereas the people at the bottom do not know what it is."

Bishop Paul Mususu is the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia's (EFZ) Executive Director. He doesn't have many kind words for the authors and signatories to the NEPAD action plan. "I do not see anything coming from NEPAD, since there is nothing new about it in terms of development. We Africans have had any number of Charters and Agreements which haven't borne fruit. And here we are, rushing in to substitute them with NEPAD. What about current African initiatives such as the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Were does NEPAD fit in with SADC and COMESA? The way things are at present, we shall end up having nothing".

Bishop Mususu says that NEPAD lacks specific targets, especially that it is totally silent on key issues such as human rights, globalisation in terms of present-day market forces, good governance which the international donor community are always on about, and most important, debt cancellation demanded by the burdened poor African nations.

COMESA Block Pushes Intra-Regional Trade Drive

By Hobbs Gama / ANB-BIA *

Having put in place several institutions for boosting intra-regional trade, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is making every effort to remove fears of lost business and unfair competition among its members

The 20-member country trading block is the largest grouping in Africa now issuing its own certificate of origin. The block was established to embark on trade liberalisation, intra-regional trade integration, and a tariff reduction programme to boost trade and the free flow of capital, goods, services and labour among members. It fits in well with the concept of globalisation.

The removal of duty to ensure the smooth passage of goods, was deemed the practical way to boost trade in the region, while also enhancing competition and offering manufacturing companies a wider export market both within the region and internationally.

In October 2000, COMESA, which includes some countries from the 14-nation Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), launched the Free Trade Area (FTA) initiative to remove all tariff and non-tariff barriers for effective trading activities accompanied by tariff reduction, and ultimate zero tariff status.

Countries which have so far joined the FTA from COMESA's member countries, are: Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Those COMESA countries outside the FTA are Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Congo RDC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, and Uganda.



COMPLAINTS

The FTA's move has made many countries with nascent industries uncomfortable, as they complain that their countries are subject to an influx of cheap, low quality goods. They also claim that there is unfair competition, whereby richer countries with more developed industries, can benefit from favourable trading terms. They also fear for a loss in revenue, due to their own markets being taken over by more industrialised neighbour's products.

* This article first appeared in the 'ANB-BIA Supplement', issue/edition No. 442 - 15/10/2002. Hobbs Gama, Malawi, September 2002 © Reproduction authorised, with usual acknowledgment. ANB-BIA's Editor's note: The above article is an update of an article on the same subject published in the Supplement of ANB-BIA, number 432, 'Common Market doomed?' - <http://www.peacelink.it/anb-bia/nr432/e01.html>

Picture above: maize is the staple food in many African countries but the crop is often not as good as this one

COMESA's secretary-general is Dr Erastus Mwencha. He is based at the central office in Lusaka, Zambia. He is occupied with trying to persuade members of the SADC which are not COMESA members, to join COMESA. "After all", he says, "they have much to benefit from the larger market offered by COMESA". He is also trying to enlarge COMESA's Free Trade Area. "The FTA enhances efficient attraction of resources and fosters overall economic efficiency by promoting competition. It also offers opportunities for industries to tap into such sources as raw materials and other products." Since the launch of the FTA, trade has been boosted by 20%, according to figures from the Lusaka office.

At a consultative Workshop in Malawi, Charles Chanthunya, COMESA's director for trade and customs, quashed claims of lost revenue saying that so far, COMESA has not received any such reports from member countries. He advised Malawi which is planning to withdraw from COMESA, that the country is already benefiting from her opened-up sugar export markets to Kenya and Egypt. "The concern about lost revenue is baseless. And rather than duplicating SADC, both COMESA and the

SADC complement each other's roles. COMESA certificates of origin are currently the only ones issued in trading activities in Africa, which is a big incentive," he said.

Frequently cited as major achievements are the establishment of the Comesa Bankers Association, the PTA Bank which has a revolving fund of US\$50 million, and the Africa Trade Insurance Agency (ATIA) aimed at protecting investors from political risks and wars in Africa.

In another ambitious move, COMESA has announced plans to harmonise customs operations by means of the Regional Customs Bond Guarantee (RCBG). This is due to be launched next year. The RCBG is intended to facilitate the forwarding and transportation of goods across the region. The RCBG had already been mooted in 1990 but could not take off due to a lack of operational mechanisms.

Manufacturers in COMESA are urged to produce high quality goods. Governments must encourage the private sector and facilities must be established for the efficient production of high quality products to compete on the international market.

Southern Africa - Human Development in the SADC

By Wilcliff Sakala / ANB-BIA *

Living long, meaningful and healthy lives. But just how is Africa faring? A SADC report examines the situation in Southern Africa

Adult literacy and gender empowerment in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) increased in the last century, and infant mortality rate and poverty dropped, according to the 2000 SADC Human Development Report. Between 1970 and 1995, adult literacy rose from 48% to 71% due to increased school en-

rolment at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The gross combined enrolment ratio in the three categories jumped from 38% to 51.8% between 1980 and 1995, though the average SADC literacy rate was down to 67.32% by 1998.

The Report, entitled: 'Challenges and Opportunities for Regional Integration', says improvements in women's economic and political participation and decision-making, accounted

for more women getting into parliament in the region. South Africa, Mozambique and the Seychelles are singled out as countries where the number of women legislators particularly rose, placing these three nations among the world's top ten countries leading in women parliamentary representation.

At 17%, the SADC average for female representation in parliament is higher than that of most regional groupings in Africa.

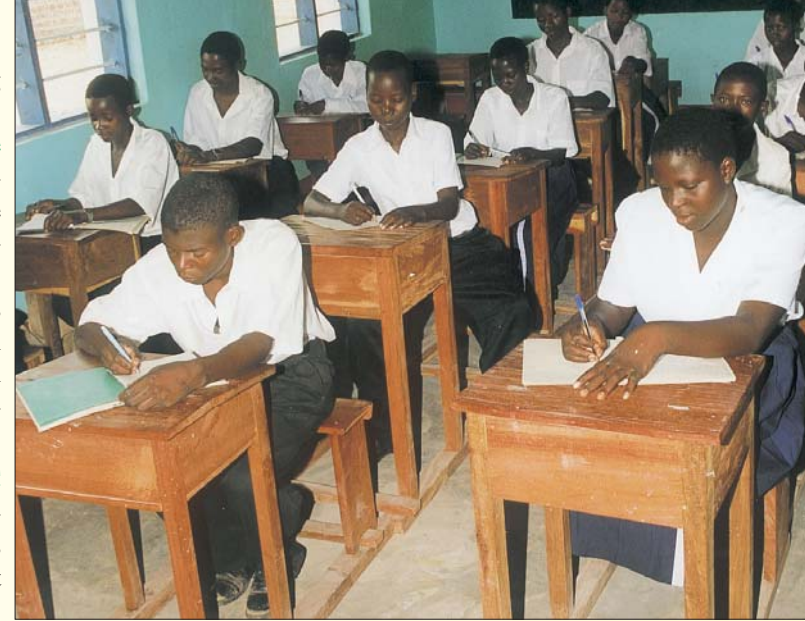
'The increases in the representation of women in political and decision-making positions following elections in five SADC countries in 1999 and 2000, shows that the Plan of Action for Gender of 1998 is starting to bear fruit', the Report says.

The 14 SADC member-states have targeted to reach an average of 30% women's presence in parliament by 2005. However, the Report reveals that although most SADC members have committed themselves towards this goal, half still fall below 15% level. Swaziland and Mauritius rank among the lowest in terms of women's parliamentary representation at 7% and 5.9%, respectively.

POVERTY

The number of people living in absolute poverty in the region, dropped from two-thirds in the mid 1990s to one-third by 1998. The decline was due to increased economic growth towards the end of the 1990s, averaging 2.6% between 1995 and 1998.

But, the Report adds, in the absence of a redistribution of growth in favour of the poor,



this economic growth rate was inadequate to prevent a significant increase in income poverty. Formal employment rate, estimated at 2.2% between 1991 and 1998, remained low, and has recently lagged behind the annual labour force growth rate of 2.4%.

Currently, the SADC has a regional unemployment rate of between 30-40%. The region has one of the world's most unequal distributions of wealth. Namibia is one of the countries with a highly skewed income distribution, based on class and race, with a national per capita income of US\$2,000 - far higher than the SADC average of US\$1,892.

The decisive fall in the infant mortality rate during the period 1970 to 1998, is attributed to improvements in the general health and nutrition of the population and in the education of women. However, in countries such as Angola, Congo RDC, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, infant mortality increased or remained high largely because of rising poverty and armed conflict.

The Report defines human development as 'a process of expanding people's choices

Picture above: education at all levels is a key factor in the development of Africa

by enabling them to live long, healthy and creative lives.' This is measured by the use of the Human Development Index (HDI), a standard scale of measuring levels of poverty. Introduced in 1990, the HDI is calculated by looking at the number of people in each country who are affected by deprivation in survival (life expectancy), knowledge (education) and economic provision (living standards). The scale is graded in low, medium and high ranges. Each country is given points according to the performance in each of the three components, namely -education, living standards and life expectancy.

Countries with low human development have an HDI lower than 0.500; medium countries have an HDI of between 0.500 and 0.799 while high development countries have an index equal to or above 0.800.

Following this categorisation, the Seychelles falls in the high HDI group, while Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Lesotho are in the medium HDI bracket. Generally, these eight countries appear to have relative political stability, strong economic reforms, relatively strong local governance institutions and a growing private sector-led market.

These factors were apparently missing in countries with low HDI, namely Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Congo RDC, Angola and Mozambique.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

Despite the successes scored by the SADC, the Report warns that the region still faces specifically six major challenges, some transitory and short-term, others structural and long-term that will take a long time to solve. The challenges are:

* **HIV/AIDS** - Life expectancy in most SADC countries fell during the early 1990s due to the pandemic. Nine countries have seen a

drastic reversal of their gains in life expectancy between 1990 and 1998. This has had a devastating effect particularly on national economies, especially because most those dying of AIDS are the economically productive members of society in the 25-48 age group. Part of the solution is to reduce the cost of anti-retroviral drugs to lessen the impact of the epidemic;

* **Armed conflict:** Civil wars in Angola and Congo RDC have had a terrible impact on these countries as well as on regional trade. To deal with these wars and prevent the occurrence of further armed conflicts, the SADC needs to vigorously pursue war-prevention and resolution measures, by strengthening regional collective peace and security initiatives such as the SADC Organ on Defence and Security.

* **Migration, displaced populations and refugees:** Unequal development of colonial capitalism in Southern Africa led to the emergence of white settler states (South Africa and Zimbabwe) with the rest of the countries in the region relegated to cheap labour suppliers. The effects on the supplying countries include deeper rural poverty, destabilised social structures and intensified rural-urban migration. The Report says SADC member states need to revisit the regional protocol on the movement of people to develop a common regional labour market and migration policies.

* **Economic development:** The SADC needs to increase and sustain economic growth rates at between 6-8% per year to significantly reduce poverty. Increasing the investment rates to between 25-30% of GDP would help achieve the desired levels of economic development. Between 1991 and 1998, only two countries reached an average annual growth rate above 5%;

* **Mobilising natural resources for human development:** Most SADC economies are

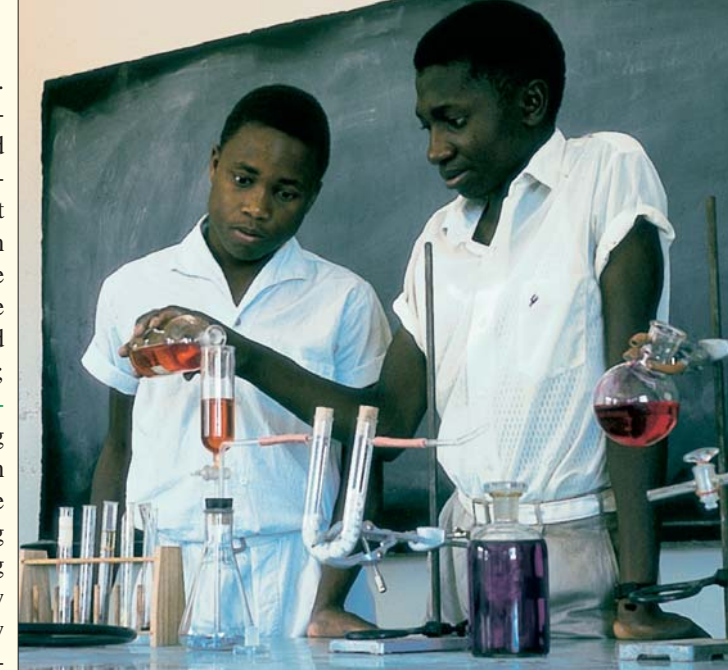
dependent on natural resources. Such a high dependence underlies the growing competition and conflict over environmental resources in the region, the Report says. Regional integration can improve mutual access and use through projects that coordinate resource management and sound exploitation of natural resources;

* **Promoting deep regional integration:** There are emerging opportunities in the SADC region to meet the above challenges. The opportunities include increasing intra-regional trade, improving physical infrastructure, new development initiatives, new investment and monetary harmonisation.

For the SADC to translate these opportunities into benefits, it needs to replace shallow integration with deep integration.

'Shallow integration refers to eliminating border restrictions such as tariff and quotas leaving internal barriers intact. Deep integra-

tion refers to eliminating both border restrictions and constraints that operate within countries', the Report says, concluding that the greatest challenge towards achieving fuller regional integration is the lack of capacity to develop political consensus among SADC member states.



Africa's Brain Drain Crisis

By Hobbs Gama / ANB-BIA *

Since achieving independence, many African countries have made enormous investments in educating and training their young people so that they can assist in their respective country's development. However, thousands of skilled young Africans are drifting to Western nations.

Current figures are alarming. Experts at a recent forum in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, heard that out of 1,000 young people going abroad for further studies annually, only 35 return home. African countries are now claiming compensation from the West.

However, African governments cannot escape the blame; bad governance, unstable political situations, unfavourable labour relations, meagre salaries and lack of information about furthering their careers, scare away skilled people from returning to their countries.

The University of South Africa has also released a report painting a gloomy picture of what is happening. Skilled young people from Africa are continually migrating to such countries as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA, the United Kingdom, in search of a better

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Picture above: where are these students now? Perhaps they have joined 'Africa's brain drain'.

life. The survey indicates that 100,000 people have left South Africa during the past three years, while 70% of the skilled labour force are said to be contemplating similar action. The survey also reveals that in 1999, 39,000 South Africans left the country to join the 1.6 million living abroad.

Those leaving were found to be engineers, accountants and bankers. 60% left because of the rising crime rate (reckoned to be 10 times higher than in the USA). The **HIV/AIDS** epidemic is also pinpointed as another reason for people leaving. And the fact of the ever-increasing unemployment rate (now standing at 30%), scarcely encourages people to stay on at home.

THE EXAMPLE OF MALAWI

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in Southern Africa. The country's newly nominated representative to the international assembly of the Association of Chartered Accountants (ACCA), Olive Bakili, says the brain drain is **wrecking havoc** in the accountancy sector. Because companies are frequently going into liquidation, the availability of accountancy jobs is decreasing, so a number of ACCA members have relocated to wealthier countries of the sub-region such as South Africa, Botswana and Namibia for better wages. Only 20% of qualified accountants trained by the government, are working in the public sector. 80% are in the predominantly private commerce and industry sector.

The **health sector** is also affected by the brain drain. Records show that at least five qualified and experienced doctors leave the public health sector in Malawi every year. It's significant that the life expectancy for the average citizen has dropped from 52 years in 1998 to 46 in 2001.

Lilian Ng'oma is Malawi's controller of nursing services. She is worried that her members are **leaving in droves** either for the UK or

for the private sector. About 5% of the total number of nurses working in government hospitals are reported to be leaving.

There is a positive note, however, as the government is **making efforts** to alleviate the situation. The shortage of nurses will be eased in the near future, promises Ng'oma, saying the government has embarked on a training programme using German Technical Corporation (GTZ) assistance and funds accruing from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.

Last year, the government recruited 245 nurses for a two-year general nursing training after obtaining GTZ help. It is to recruit another 250 for training. Ng'oma says: "Should the training scheme continue to get support, it will mitigate the shortage of nurses. At least our government is not sitting idle!"

Malawi's health ministry has announced it is to establish a Special Health Service Commission to solve the problems created by the exodus of doctors and paramedics from public institutions. The exodus and frequent industrial action among health personnel in government hospitals has spurred the Government on to take positive steps.

Health Minister Yusufu Mwawa explains: "The Health Ministry has formulated a National Human Resource Development Plan. This is a six-year **emergency training programme** to produce 1,000 health professionals each year. The Ministry has already received the go-ahead from the Cabinet Committee on **HIV/AIDS** for this initiative, and is to present to Parliament documents outlining the function and modus operandi of the commission, so that a Draft Act can be prepared. Once the Special Commission for the Health Sector is established, it will enable the ministry to respond to a wide array of personnel matters, including that of looking into salary increases".

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

Following a consultative meeting in Ethiopia, the World Bank and the World Health Organisation, later joined by UNESCO, the Rockefeller Foundation and USAID, launched a task force to tackle Africa's brain drain. The initial meeting was attended by delegates from 17 African countries, and participants included deans of schools of medicine and nursing, representatives of professional associations, representatives from the ministries of health, education, planning, finance, local government and labour as well as services commissions.

Resolutions taken included the **urgent need** for African governments to improve the environment in which healthcare providers work in Africa; i.e. remuneration, deployment and skilled human resource planning.

But, unless Africans themselves take up the challenge, the task force might just end up as another public relations exercise from international organisations.



A Scramble for Africa's Green Gold

By Fr. Wolfgang Schonecke WF. *

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) wants to introduce a very strict patenting system by 2005 which will harm severely African small holderfarmers in many a ways. Some 325 NGOs worldwide lobbied to get an alternative patents system recognized at the Earth Summit 2002 in Johannesburg. AEFJN here in Brussels, our national groups in Europe and Africa, and AFJN in Washington are fully involved in this battle. They advocate that the WTO recognize a very good African Model Legislation for Intellectual Property Rights that was accepted by the OAU in 2001. It is a very important issue, but as usual, very little is known about it, and guess who will gain by that WTO regulation? We need all publicity we can, so Fr. Wolfgang

Schonecke, who runs the German branch of AEFJN, has written the following article which puts things quite clearly. More information can be obtained from AEFJN- Brussels, 174, rue Joseph II B-1000 Brussels, Belgium or via our email: aefjn@village.uunet. be - Fr. Luc Coppejans WF.

The first Europeans who came to Africa used to pay for ivory and gold as well as for the 'black gold' of slaves with cheap coloured beads. Multinational companies today try to get hold of the 'green gold' of Africa, the huge biological richness of the continent, through patents. Once again they pay next to nothing. Missionaries in Europe promote an Africa

* This article first appeared in the 'Petit Echo' 2002/5 N. 931, Fr. Wolfgang Schonecke WF works for the AEFJN Network Africa Germany.

Picture above: palm trees part of Africa's varied vegetation

Model of patent legislation that wants to protect traditional communities against bio-pirates.

The European Patent Office in Munich Germany, 10th. May, 2000. A small group of Indian peasants have tears of joy in their eyes as the judge pronounces the verdict. They have just won a lawsuit against the American chemical company W.R. Grace and the US Ministry of Agriculture. The US company had applied for a patent to use the oil of the Neem trees as a pesticide against fungus. For centuries Indians have used the Neem tree for all kinds of medical purposes and the effectiveness of Neem oil in suppressing fungus was well known. The company simply tried to claim for its exclusive commercial use what was common knowledge in India.

Two American scientists of Indian origin tried to get a patent on the medical properties of the tumerik (turmeric) plant, which is used for many purposes. India protested and won the case. The medicinal properties of the plant are already documented in ancient Sanskrit manuscripts. A medical research team of the National Institute of Health went one step further. They found out that the Hagahai people of Papua New Guinea showed a strong resistance against leukaemia. They promptly went to claim a patent on the t-cells of their immune system without even asking the people concerned.

Why this great world-wide chase for genetic material, for the 'green gold'? Because it carries the promise of profits, big profits. The biotechnological advances offer the possibility of huge profits with new medicines and new genetically manipulated crops. It also involves a struggle for power. If things go on the way they do, a handful of multinationals could control seed production, and thereby farmers worldwide, in a few years from now.

What happens today resembles the way colonial Europe conquered Africa. Then, the

aim was gold and raw materials, the white ivory of elephants and the black ivory of slaves. In the place of explorers who mapped mountains and rivers, scientists now roam around Africa in search of rare plants and organisms. The biological exploitation is no longer enforced through soldiers and guns, but through lawyers and paragraphs. The main weapon is the 'Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights', calls TRIPS. It is an international agreement of the World Trade Organisation to have patent rights respected everywhere in the world, including the right to take out patents on living organisms.

Patents are not new. They grant an inventor the right to make profits with the new idea for some time. The purpose is to encourage creative invention. So far, so good. Filing a patent on life is something quite different and highly questionable. Can you put a patent on something that was already there, that was part of nature, part of what God created for the good of all? Is it fair to claim exclusive use of the traditional knowledge of other people, of the secrets of nature which they discovered and developed long ago - without compensating them? People who do that are rightly called bio-pirates.

Pharmaceutical, chemical and agricultural multinationals are fascinated with the possibility of profits through patents. Few people consider the long-term consequences of such policies. The genetic exploitation of Africa will widen the intolerable gap between the rich and the poor. As far back as 1995 experts of the UN calculated that every year the south loses about US\$5.4 billion through the theft of biological resources. Even more disastrous would be the loss of biological diversity through the commercialisation of genetically manipulated plants. The so called developed countries have already destroyed much of their biolog-

ical richness at home. They are now in the process of destroying it in the rest of the world. The traditional communities around the world who up to now developed and protected the biodiversity of their environment are being robbed of their richness through patent rights.

The motor of this dangerous development is the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the great promoter of Globalisation. It also wants to globalise intellectual property rights. By the end of 2005 all countries have to pass a national legislation. Most African countries do not have such laws. They could use three models: the American, the European and the African model, which has been worked out by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) - now renamed the African Union. The main difference lies in the possibility to patent living organisms.

In the African Model Legislation patents on life are prohibited as contrary to African culture and mentality. In African communities, knowledge about the secret powers of nature was either common knowledge and was passed on from generation to generation, or it was the secret of a herbalist who would give it to one of his children before death. To traditional African thinking, to place a patent on nature is simply absurd.

The African Model Legislation also stipulates that companies intending to use genetic material coming from Africa have to pay an adequate compensation. This had been already decided ten years ago in Rio de Janeiro in the Convention on Biological Diversity, but was never put into practice. Even in places where official contracts for the exploitation of biological resources have been signed, the payments are ludicrous. The Canadian organisation RAFI has calculated that at the present rates paid for genetic material, all the resources of the South could be bought for a mere US\$10 Million per year. The pharmaceutical industry alone makes



a yearly profit of some US\$30 billion with plants coming from the Third World. It is the same trick as during the colonisation 150 years ago: worthless beads for precious gold.

Many lobby groups all over the world protest against this form of exploitation. The missionaries who are aware of the problems of Africa want to stop this new phase of colonisation of the African continent. Through the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) in Brussels and the Africa Faith and Justice Network in Washington and through the national lobby offices they make a campaign throughout Europe, America and Africa to promote the African Model Legislation.

It is even more important that Justice and Peace Commissions in Africa know the issues at stake and push their governments to resist pressures from outside governments and bribes of companies to protect the last great source of richness of Africa for future generations.

Picture above: will Africa's children ever have a good future to look forward to? A question which faces this young girl from Uganda.

COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

THE PRESENT 20 MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COMESA) ARE: Angola, Burundi, Comoros, D.R. Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

ORIGINAL NAME: The Preferential Trade Area of Eastern and Southern Africa States (PTA)

FOUNDED: The PTA was founded in 1981 with the aim of eliminating customs duties and tariff barriers between member states. The PTA gradually developed and its place was taken by the present-day Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (set up, and ratified, by the PTA members in November, 1993) beginning in December, 1994. The aims had grown to include co-operation in the development of natural and human resources, peace and security in order to the national economies of the region. The COMESA Headquarters are in Lusaka, Zambia.

THE MAJOR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES ARE TO PROMOTE AMONG MEMBER STATES:

- internal (regional) and external trade, trade liberalisation and customs co-operation;
- the development of basic industries and productivity;
- cooperation in agricultural development, production and food security,

- improvement in the administration of transport and communications infrastructure;
- technical and professional skills;
- an environment and legal framework to encourage the growth of the private sector, the establishment of secure investment, and the adoption of common standards;
- a wider, harmonised and more competitive market;
- rational exploitation of natural resources; and
- harmonising macro-economics, financial institutions and policies.

COMESA INSTITUTIONS: Several institutions have been created to promote sub-regional co-operation and development. These include: the COMESA Trade and Development Bank (Nairobi, Kenya); the COMESA Clearing House (Harare, Zimbabwe); the COMESA Association of Commercial Banks (Harare, Zimbabwe); the COMESA Leather Institute (Ethiopia); the COMESA Re-Insurance Company (ZEP-RE) (Nairobi, Kenya); and the COMESA Court of Justice.

RELATED ORGANISATIONS: COMESA has an interest in the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank (includes 21 members: Angola, Burundi, Comoros, D.R. Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

Information on the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) from various sources including their web site at <http://www.comesa.int/business/hometest1.htm> and the Mbendi web site at <http://www.mbendi.co.za/orgs/co4s.htm>.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

THE PRESENT 14 MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) ARE: Angola, Botswana, D.R. Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

ORIGINAL NAME: The Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). SADCC (SADC) began as a way to reduce these countries' economic dependence on South Africa and so South Africa was excluded in the early days (at the time of the Apartheid regime).

FOUNDED: The first meeting was on the 3rd. July, 1979, at Arusha, Tanzania, where the then President of Botswana (Seretse Khama) called for the formation of the Community. Those who attended were: Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. They were later joined by: D.R. Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

SADCC was founded at the regional economic summit in Lusaka, Zambia on the 1st. April, 1980, following the adoption of the 'Lusaka Declaration' ('Southern Africa: Towards Economic Liberation'). It was in an attempt to harmonise economic development among the member countries. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), which replaced the **Coordination Conference**, came into being at the Summit of Heads of State or Government on the 17th. August, 1992, held in Windhoek, Namibia. SADC's Headquarters are in Gaborone, Botswana, and its working languages are English and Portuguese.

THE MAJOR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES ARE TO PROMOTE AMONG MEMBER STATES:

- a common political system, democratic government, economic and development;
- to strengthen historical, social and cultural ties;
- defend peace and security;
- the free movement of capital and labour, goods and services, and of the peoples of the region;
- the development of human resources, employment, technology;
- achieve self-sustaining development and economic growth based on self-reliance, alleviate poverty, raise the standard of living;
- mobilise the inflow of public and private resources in the region; and
- sustainable utilisation of natural resources and effective protection of the environment.

THE SECTORAL RESPONSIBILITIES: Each of the SADC member States has 'Sectoral Responsibilities', they are as follows: Angola for energy; Botswana for agricultural research, livestock production and animal disease control; Lesotho for tourism, environment and land management; Malawi for inland fisheries, forestry and wildlife; Mauritius for tourism; Mozambique for culture, information and sport, transport, communications and meteorology; Namibia for marine fisheries and resources, legal affairs; South Africa for finance and investment, health; Swaziland for human resources development; Tanzania for industry and trade; Zambia for employment and labour, mining; Zimbabwe for food, agriculture and natural resources, crop production.

Information on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) from various sources including their web site at <http://www.sadc-sqam.org/Default.htm> and the Mbendi web site at <http://www.mbendi.co.za/orsadc.htm>.