



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

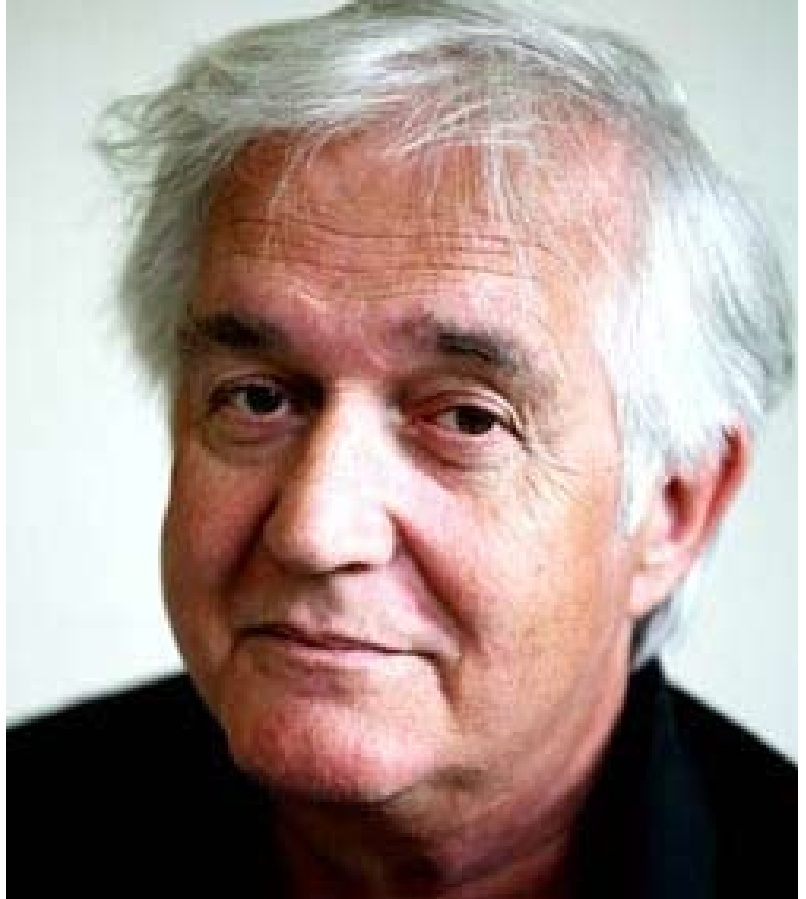
the UNESCO Courier

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The background of the cover is a dense, colorful grid of Korean alphabet blocks (Hangeul). Each block is a different color and contains a different Hangeul character. The colors include red, blue, green, yellow, orange, and pink. The blocks are arranged in a grid that is slightly offset, creating a sense of depth and movement.

**Literacy is
the best remedy**

It is enough to have finished primary school to multiply by five one's chances of being informed about HIV and AIDS. As for malaria, which takes a million lives annually, it is particularly deadly among illiterate populations. Literacy and good health are inseparable. This is the theme of International Literacy Day (8 September) and the 2008 UNESCO International Literacy Prizes, on which our latest issue focuses. The introduction is written by Henning Mankell, well-known Swedish author and AIDS activist.



Henning Mankell. © Lina Ikse Bergman

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THE ABC BOOK: THE ONLY IMPORTANT BOOK

World famous novelist, winner of the Academy of Swedish Crime Writers prize (1991 and 1995) and of the prestigious Litteris et Artibus award (2006), Henning Mankell has another less-publicized interest besides writing mysteries: health and education in Africa.

The Swedish author, 60, divides his time between Europe and Africa and is the volunteer director of the "Teatro Avenida" in Maputo (Mozambique).

All royalties from "I Die, but the Memory Lives on", the book he published in 2004 (Random House UK Ltd), are donated to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Henning Mankell agreed to share his main concerns with our readers in this issue's editorial, written specially for the UNESCO Courier.

Henning Mankell, Swedish novelist

The most fundamental challenge in the world today is poverty. I do not know of any major issue that is not connected to poverty and the increasing divide between those who have and those who are forced to look for food on the world's rubbish dumps.

This is also the case with AIDS. However, poverty is not an active virus. But the consequences of poverty are in a profound way linked with AIDS and the increasing hardships it constitutes for the poorest countries of the world.

The worst thing about poverty and the need that comes along with it is that so many of the problems involved are completely unnecessary. There is so much we could have prevented already and stopped yesterday – if we had had the will. We have the resources, we have the logistics. But still we live in the age of unnecessary problems.

Let me now talk about illiteracy. It is a disgrace for the whole world that we in the year 2008 have yet to eradicate illiteracy on

our planet. Still millions of children are forced to enter life without knowing how to read and write. The fact that we deny so many children these elementary tools means that we render them defenseless on so many issues related to AIDS. How can we expect a young person who lacks the ability to understand written information, who is unable to grasp the essence of vital knowledge, to protect her- or himself from becoming infected? Of course people talk, of course there is radio. There are also theatrical groups who travel the

country to inform people. But the fact remains that we live in a world where the ability to read is necessary to acquire information.

It is important to see this connection. One of the most crucial instruments for controlling the proliferation of AIDS in the future must be to make sure that every child is given the right to learn how to read and write.

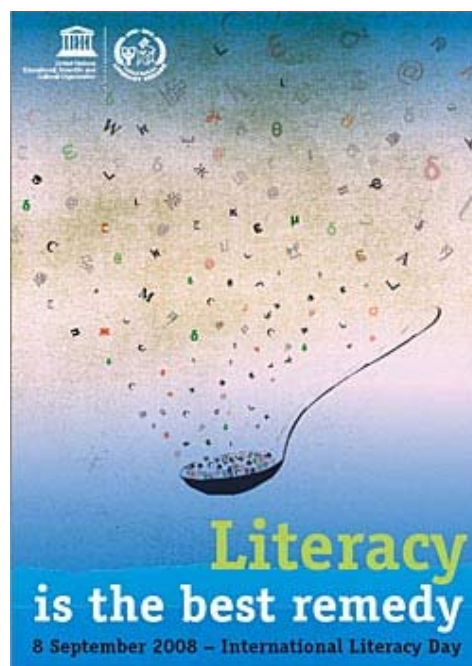
Being a writer myself I know that there is only one symbolic book that truly matters: the ABC-book. Whether it is written in a book or on a computer screen does not really matter.

Naturally, the fight against poverty is a war fought on many different levels simultaneously. And since we will be forced to make priorities I am convinced that to teach people how to read and write is decisive.

Poverty – AIDS – illiteracy. They all connect. And at least one of these issues we could have eradicated yesterday – illiteracy.

We did not.

Let us do it today. ■



From Literacy to Lifelong Learning

Irina Krivova

(UNESCO Courier)

Six major conferences on literacy have been organized by UNESCO since March 2007, to determine strategies to reinforce the fight against illiteracy. This pace is being maintained with the preparation of the next International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), which will be held in Brazil from 19 to 22 of May.

The last of the series of regional and sub-regional literacy conferences, serving Latin America and the Caribbean, is taking place in Mexico City this month. It comes at the heel of the Doha (Qatar) conference for the Arab States, March 2007; Beijing (China) for East and Southeast Asia and for the Pacific, July – August 2007; Bamako (Mali) for Africa, in September 2007; Delhi (India) for South, Southeast and Central Asia, November 2007; and Baku (Azerbaijan) for East and Central Europe and the Caucasus, May 2008.

These meetings follow the Conference on Global Literacy, organized by the White House in New York on 18 September 2006 under the aegis of Laura Bush within the framework of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) and of UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (Life, 2005 - 2015).

Laura Bush, Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations' Decade of Literacy, has set an example to other first ladies, ministers and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors who have followed in the footsteps of the First Lady of the United States of America, leading increasingly vigorous campaigns in favour of literacy.



But conferences are not enough, important though they may be. As Mark Richmond, Director of the Division for the Coordination of United Nations Priorities in Education explains: "It is capital that follow-up actions be undertaken in the aftermath of each conference." Only measures that have a real impact on people's lives can contribute to sustainable human development and to poverty reduction.

The theme of the forthcoming conference in Mexico - From Literacy to Lifelong Learning: Towards the Challenges of the 21st Century – blazes new trails. It will be matched by the first preparatory meeting for the next International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI).

Since their beginning, in Denmark in 1949, the CONFINTEA conferences have been among UNESCO's major initiatives concerning adult education and training, bringing together leaders and experts: Canada (1960), Japan (1972), France (1985) and Germany (1997).

Organized by UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg (Germany), CONFINTEA is an international forum for the promotion and development of strategies for non-formal learning and education for adults.

H AS IN HYGIENE, O AS IN OSTEOPOROSIS, A AS IN AIDS...

A good idea, positive social impact, multiple benefits: the equation sums up the success of the programme «Alfabetizando com Saúde». It received the UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy Prize this year. Its founders had intended for it to last only a short time!

Liliana Negrello,
Brazilian journalist

The project “Learning to read and write in good health”, launched in 2002 by the municipality of Curitiba, capital of the state of Paraná, in southern Brazil, is bringing literacy to adults in underprivileged neighbourhoods. The educational method combines alphabet and health: H as in Hygiene, O as in Osteoporosis, A as in AIDS...

This fight against illiteracy in adults that goes hand in hand with promoting their health is a result of the collaboration of two municipal sectors, Education and Health. Their experts produced photocopied lessons that they handed out to learners. They also set up a very simple mode of operation: volunteers sign up and undergo four hours of training, after being assigned to one of the city’s care centers. Since the launch of the programme, 163 volunteers have been trained in this way.



You can learn at any age. You can teach at any age. © UNESCO/Orlando Azevedo

Fernanda Portela, 23, a student in chemical engineering, is one of them and has been a facilitator for several months. “I discovered I enjoyed doing it,” she explains, on her way to the class where 12 students are waiting for her. “It’s fantastic, because I notice that all of them have already made progress.”

Following the first stage of volunteer training, it is the task of the community agents to rally the population concerned: people who can’t read. Bernadette de Sa, 63, mother of four and with four grandchildren, has been going to the Alvorada Center, where she recently learned the letters of the alphabet.

Proud of her success, she says that now she can read the price and names of the products in her neighbourhood

market, and she can even take the bus by herself – impossible for her until recently, because she couldn’t read the destination signs.

She has also learned to pay attention to possible symptoms of illnesses people in her age group are prone to. “As well as learning, one can pass on the information to others, she says, describing herself as a “chatterbox” who like to spend time talking to friends and neighbours and uses the opportunity to share what she has learned in class.

Literacy and lucidity

The number of students per class varies and the duration of the learning period depends on each person’s capacity to learn. ● ● ●

• • • On the average, 400 people pass through some 30 city centres every year. In six years, more than 2000 people have learned to read thanks to this method. Their ages range from 48 to 80. Consequently the health information is mainly focused on the chronic or acute diseases that are most common at these ages. This year, 48 volunteers are working in 31 centres and 338 people are taking classes in Curitiba.



Being able to write one's name boosts self-esteem. © UNESCO/Orlando Azevedo

Project coordinator Marisa Giacomini says enthusiastically "We have succeeded in bringing a large number of people out of the darkness of illiteracy." Indeed, becoming literate is not only learning to read and write but also to look at the realities of life with greater lucidity. This is why many people are interested in the classes, simply to gain greater independence: take a bus, write a little note to a distant relative, read the label of a medication or just read the Bible.

The project is tailored to the adult learners' needs. Volunteers work on

the basis of the experiences and practical know-how of the learners themselves, taking into account their social position and worldview.

A committee of experts is responsible for monitoring the progress of activities by visiting centres monthly. Among the programme's greatest benefits can be cited improving the quality of life of learners and their families, disease prevention, and boosting people's self-esteem and reinforcing their sense of identity – notably when for

the first time the learner writes his own name.

The project is spreading to Africa

The project was launched in 2006 in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. Brazilian experts were invited to develop two courses – one for teachers and the other for students – with contents based on local epidemiological data.

In 2007, thanks to this partnership, 30 teachers and 1200 literacy agents were trained. The programme "Alfabetizando com Saúde" has taken root in four Cabo Delgado districts.

Luciano Ducci, now deputy mayor of Curitiba, was the head of the Health department when the programme was created. What's special about it, in his view, is its ability to provide significant benefits at little cost. "The founders' wish is that the programme last only as long as it is needed to wipe out illiteracy," he states. And it won't need to last very long, in his opinion. ■



Alfabetizando com Saúde has taught about 2000 adults to read and write in six years. © UNESCO/Orlando Azevedo

HOPE FOR A FORGOTTEN LAND

One of the two UNESCO Confucius Prizes for Literacy was awarded this year to the NGO Operation Upgrade (South Africa) for its Kwanibela project. Its innovative methods have proven effective in promoting rural women's literacy and empowerment. An example to follow.

Corrinne Louw,
South African journalist for the Durban-based weekly Kwana Newspaper



Literacy classes must fit the social context. © UNESCO/Operation Upgrade

For Jabu Sithole, a trip to the clinic was nothing less than traumatic. The soft-spoken mother of five could not read or write and her illiteracy had a profound impact on her children's health.

"I have five children. Each child has a clinic card bearing his or her name. But if one of the children got sick, I did not know which card to take. I had to take the sick child and all five cards and ask the clinic sister to find the right one. The nurses laughed at me. I would delay taking my children to clinic because I was embarrassed and ashamed."

But after just three months of attending literacy classes, Jabu could recognise each child's name – her life was beginning to change. Not only was Jabu learning to read and write, she was learning how to cope in a place called Kwanibela.

Kwanibela is an isolated area deep in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The closest town, Hluhluwe is over

50 kilometres away. No wonder some call it "God's forgotten land".

For the past eight years there has been little rain. Aside from a lack of water, there is no electricity or phone lines, maize is considered a luxury and only 26 percent of the population is literate.

Some people, usually men, leave their families and head for the big city in the hope of a job, while others try to eke out a living on the tribal land that is home to some 26 000 people.

Reading brings nourishment

However, over the past four years, there has been a glimmer of hope. Jabu, and many others like her, have joined The Kwanibela Project, an adult literacy project run by a non-governmental organization called Operation Upgrade, founded in 1996.

The new project, started in 2004, has had considerable impact on Kwanibela residents. It offers mother tongue, English and numeracy classes using interactive methods and theme-based lessons, integrating such issues as HIV and AIDS.

"Literacy classes must reflect the social context. So while English is an option for the learners, HIV and AIDS and food security are part of almost every lesson. You cannot be in a literacy class if you can't feed your children," says Pat Dean, director of Operation Upgrade and the Kwanibela Project. It's this approach that has resulted in 28 classes, facilitated by 18 educators and catering for over 400 adult literacy learners.

A major achievement of the project has been the establishment - by the learners themselves - of food tunnels using hydroponic methods. Every one of the 28 groups has a tunnel which not only offers some form of food security but also a source of income. In fact, so successful has it been that one of

• • • the groups has been given a contract to supply spinach to a major South African supermarket group.

Fighting back against AIDS

However, there are many challenges ahead, says training co-ordinator Itumeleng Petersen.: "It's sad to see the men who come back from working in big towns like Johannesburg and Durban. Many are infected with HIV and they return to sometimes four or five wives. They infect them all. But through our work the women are learning to protect themselves and to access medication when they are infected."

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AIDS education is a huge part of the project. The literacy educators are also trained to take the AIDS message out to the community and incorporate it into their literacy lessons.

The Kwanibela Project has even tackled the critical problem of water head on. Some learners have been provided with 'hippos' (a rolling device that makes water transportation easier) and others have had their homes fitted with rain water harvesting systems.

Such is the commitment to the project that the majority of learners walk for hours to their literacy classes – it's not uncommon to walk 20 kilometres a day just to learn. But clearly the rewards far outweigh the efforts. Says Petersen, "When they start stringing a sentence or two together you can see their eyes light up. To them it's like striking gold."

Nomonde Diko, a Kwanibela Project trainer, adds that nothing can



Kwanibela "pupils" have greenhouses that ensure food security and provide revenue.
© UNESCO/Operation Upgrade

compare with driving into the area to start work: "Even though they cannot read 'Operation Upgrade' written on the car they know it's us, and their warm welcome brings a smile to my face." ■



HIV and AIDS information are an integral part of the Kwanibela project.
© UNESCO/Operation Upgrade

READING THE WORLD

The UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize was awarded this year to the People's Action Forum in Zambia for its programme "Reflect and HIV/AIDS" that empowers communities through literacy education to tackle issues linked to the pandemic. The programme uses local languages and cultural activities in its innovative strategy.

Andrew Mulenga,
The Post (Lusaka, Zambia)
and Cathy Nolan
(UNESCO Courier)

A social gathering under a tree – an image easily dismissed as a relic of old-time African societies. Yet this traditional model, far from being outmoded, is proving effective to improve the lives of thousands of villagers in three of Zambia's nine provinces, thanks to the work of the Peoples' Action Forum (PAF), a non-



Education increases people's self-confidence. © UNESCO/People's Action Forum

governmental organisation providing non formal adult literacy education in rural areas. Undeterred by lack of conventional infrastructure, throngs of people are getting together in the shade of trees, with makeshift blackboards, to receive instruction and discuss issues of importance to the community, including HIV and AIDS.

For the past eight years, PAF has preached literacy as reading not merely the word, but the world. Working with whole communities, especially with women and children, PAF's approach is to help local groups realise that their development is not some abstract body's responsibility, but their own.

To this end, PAF applies an educational approach known as REFLECT, based on a method developed by Brazilian education expert Paulo Freire. It stresses dialogue and action, awareness-raising, cooperation and empowerment. Adult learners explore development challenges and find ways to overcome them. The approach not only upholds the old



The REFLECT method operates in groups that form circles. © UNESCO/People's Action Forum

African adage that two heads are better than one, but also borrows methods typical of an African village. REFLECT takes place in "Circle" groups whose philosophy is that no one comes to the learning process empty handed. Facilitators are members of the community who have received training.

"It is one of the most effective participatory approaches to adult learning for social change and transformation," explains PAF's energetic executive director Jennipher Chiwela. Prior to founding PAF, she spent over 20 years in the civil service, rising to the position of Zambia Teaching Service Commission chairperson before retiring in 2003.

Theatre for raising awareness

Early on, PAF decided to pay particular attention to the crucial issue of HIV and AIDS, a major obstacle to any progress a community can make. "We provide education to communities in rural areas

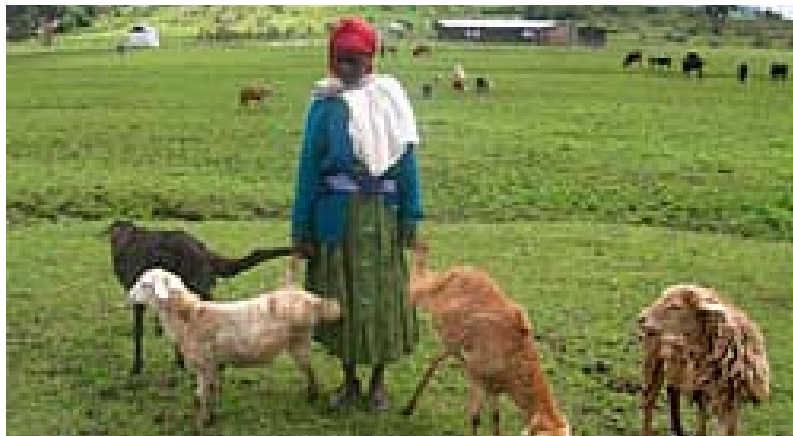


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WOMEN ARE THE FUTURE OF MANKIND

Writing workshops, business management and disease prevention – all are classes offered by the “Literacy Plus” programme launched by the Adult and Non-Formal Education Association in Ethiopia (ANFEAE), for which the NGO received one of the two 2008 UNESCO Confucius Prizes for Literacy.

Tsigue Shiferaw,
BBC correspondent in Ethiopia



“Before, we knew nothing about sheep...”
© UNESCO/ANFEAE

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“Before, we knew nothing about sheep, poultry, different kinds of vegetables, and even less about family planning. It was ANFEAE who taught us all that,” explains Workenesh Getachew, a 39-year-old farmer and mother of six children.

Since she signed up for the “Literacy Plus” programme, Workenesh earns as much as 300 birr a month (about US\$30) selling eggs from imported hens (which lay more than local hens) as well as vegetables she grows in her kitchen garden with seeds provided by ANFEAE. This income supplements earnings from the village’s annual grain harvest. It may seem a paltry sum, but her family is now able to make ends meet.

Workenesh is even able to save money, instead of being completely dependent on her husband like before, as women in her village generally are. Though at first her husband was hard to convince– he thought spending two hours in class twice a week was a waste of time!

Read, write and succeed

Women are the future of mankind, the saying goes. True, they run the household, raise the children and till the soil alongside their spouses. This is why ANFEAE made them the priority. The association addresses mainly women in Ethiopia’s more remote regions, stressing literacy and family planning.

Before, families in Beke – a small community 56 km north of Addis Ababa, where ANFEAE established a centre for adults in 2003 – were very large, despite their meager incomes. In Ethiopia, notably in rural areas, having many children is considered genuine wealth, even without the means to raise them.

Today in Beke, thanks to ANFEAE’s non-formal education programmes, 20 women aged 28 to 65 have succeeded in finding their place in the economic system and thus become independent. They are gaining men’s

respect with their learning. The association is bridging the gap left by the formal educational system.

Founded in 1995 and operational since 1997, ANFEAE aims to educate the least privileged, mainly in rural areas. According to a survey conducted by the Ethiopian Ministry of National Education in 2001, illiteracy concerns 30% of the population, living mostly in the countryside. Public spending on education increased by 26% in 2000-2001 to face the problem. And primary school enrolment increased from 61% in 2001 to 68.4% in 2004. Enrolment of girls in the same period rose from 41 to 59.1%.

ANFEAE is active in only three regions within the country (Oromiya, Amhara and Gambella) but the “Literacy Plus” project is an undeniable success. “We have reached about 8000 adults in the country,” says NGO director Alemayehu Haily Gebre. According to a survey his group conducted of 3000 women, out of the total of 6200 that took part

• • •

• • • in the literacy programme, “Half of them, or 1500, increased their revenues by 25%,” he explains.

He is proud of the results, though one concern remains: “Our goal was to enable these women to have access to microcredit, but NGOs are not allowed to engage in savings or lending activities.”

“We have five centres and we can provide basic education, particularly to the poorest women,” the director adds. “We have also trained 1200 civil servants in different districts and published 17 training manuals translated into four national languages.”

Educational material is developed by a group consisting of teachers, learners and representatives from health and agriculture organizations. The training course lasts two years (300 hours of instruction in all) in classes of 25 participants, and costs a total of US\$240,000, or less than US\$40 per pupil. Funds come from USAID and SIDA via Pact Ethiopia, and the Addis Abeba World Bank Small Grant Programme as well as donations from ANFEAE members.



Workenesh Getachew, surrounded by children. © UNESCO/Tsigue Shiferaw

Some former learners become teachers, after a month’s training. Each is responsible for 50 pupils and receives a monthly salary of US\$45.

Customized education

Education for all in Africa, particularly for women and young people, is a major challenge that demands resolute action on the part of

African leaders to meet the development goals they have set themselves. Education is crucial for integrating the new realities imposed by globalization, in order to understand them and develop an African adaptation. It is the essential tool African societies can use to stop the progress of HIV and AIDS, generate responses to global business challenges and above all, win the fight against poverty.



Non-formal education is a godsend for Ethiopian women. © UNESCO/ANFEAE

Yet despite efforts made in recent years, girls are those who suffer the most from exclusion in the traditional educational system, which is furthermore unable to meet the diversity of educational needs. Non-formal education in this context represents a godsend. It provides customized solutions for a population that is often deprived by the formal system’s failures and deficiencies. ■

READING AND FUN

More than 12 million people have difficulty with reading and writing in the United Kingdom. The BBC decided to come to their aid by launching the programme RaW (Reading and Writing), which has just received an Honourable Mention in this year's UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize awards.

Olivier Rey
(UNESCO Courier)



© BBC

Launched in January 2007, the RaW programme provides, among other material, story books that parents can read to their children while at the same time improving their own literacy skills with puzzles and quizzes.

During the summer in 2007 and 2008, RaW went on tour to areas in the United Kingdom where literacy is low. A circus-like environment was set up to incite families to participate in story-telling festivals.



© BBC

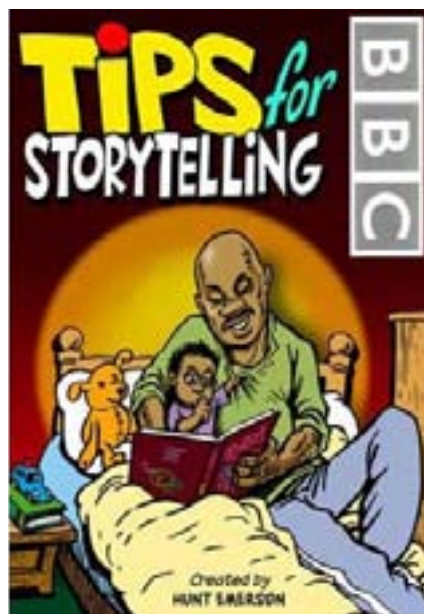
One of the festival's high points was a storytelling performance from Sidney Sloane (above, left), children's television presenter for the BBC. Telling stories to children is an art, on which the BBC has published some handy "Tips" (above, right).



© BBC



© BBC



© BBC

On hand were the characters Max and Lara from the children's stories created by RaW.

Besides the events it organizes - reading clubs, quiz groups in pubs, travelling circus with readings and shows - RaW also makes available free programmes for mobile phones and even free half-hour telephone consultations with a teacher. ■

HONOURABLE MENTION FOR LITERACY PROGRAMME

“Intégration”, an NGO working with the visually handicapped in and around the Moroccan city of Marrakech, has been awarded an Honourable Mention by UNESCO and the International Reading Association.

Olivier Rey
(UNESCO Courier)



© UNESCO/Association internationale pour la lecture

Visually handicapped learners are introduced to computers which help them experience the joy of reading and writing. The internet furthermore provides them with a window to the world and increases their independent in accessing information and learning resources.

The NGO gives computer and Braille classes (above right and left).

“Intégration” helps the visually handicapped maximize the use of whatever eyesight they have and of their other senses. It also helps the visually handicapped, particularly those struck late in life, make the most of the white cane.

Created in 1999, “Intégration” works for the social and professional inclusion of people with special needs. Since 2004, the NGO has extended its support the visually handicapped and to children with reduced mobility. It also uses digital technology

to help visually handicapped students who have no access to tailor-made educational material. It has furthermore established a computer centre at the Law Faculty of Marrakech which provides specific computer training to law students

and publishes books in Braille or audio format. The project has since been extended to other educational contexts where the need is equally great. ■



© UNESCO/Association internationale pour la lecture



© UNESCO/Association internationale pour la lecture



THE RETURN OF THE AKSUM OBELISK

Aksum, Ethiopian site listed as World Heritage since 1980, regains its status as a hub of African culture this month. A number of eminent personalities from culture and politics are converging on it - as they did at the beginning of our era when the Kingdom of Aksum rivalled Rome, Persia and China - to pay tribute not to a king, this time, but to an obelisk! The 24-metre, 152-ton monolith sculpted in Aksum 17 centuries ago, which has become a symbol of the Ethiopian people's identity, has returned to its original home after 70 years of exile.

Jasmina Šopova

The inauguration ceremony for the Aksum Obelisk (or Stele 2 for the experts) coincides, give or take a few days, with the end of the second Ethiopian millennium. The year 2001

begins on 12 September in Ethiopia, which still uses the Julian calendar replaced in the West by the Gregorian in the 16th century. The African Union has decided to make the new

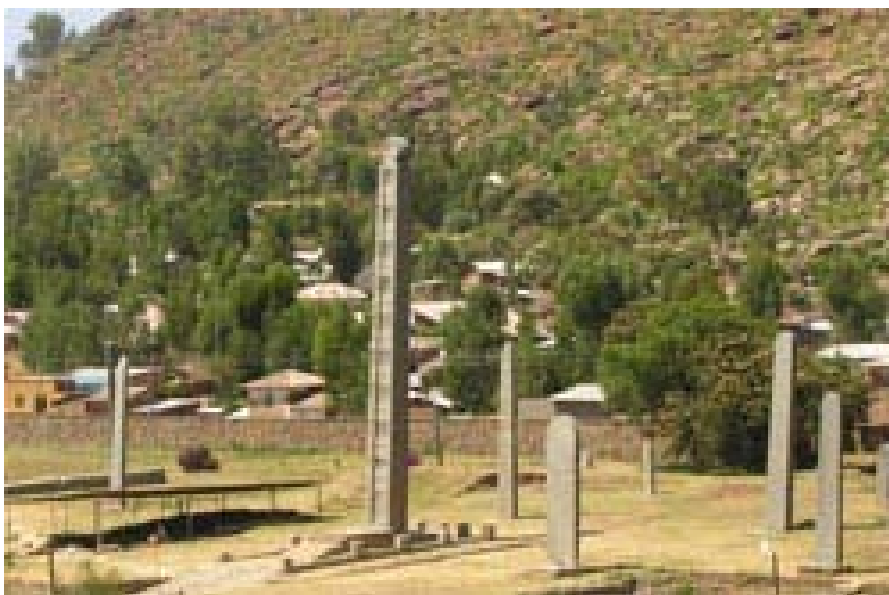
Ethiopian millennium a "millennium for all Africa", in tribute to a country that was never colonized.

In March 2005, UNESCO announced to the world the return to Ethiopia of the Aksum Obelisk, in Rome since 1937. Mussolini's troops had found it lying on the ground, broken into three pieces, and hauled it back to the Italian capital.

It took extensive negotiation to bring about the stele's return, called for by the peace accords in 1947. The largest aircraft in the world, the Antonov, had to be hired to transport the three enormous granite sections in three stages. The Aksum airport had to be modernized and two bridges reinforced for the convoy to reach its destination. Above all, what had to be ensured was that Stele 2's reinstallation would



Aksum, July 2008: the steel tower waiting for its obelisk. © UNESCO/Michel Ravassard



Partial view of the main stele site; start of the work to reinstall the Aksum Obelisk. © UNESCO/F. Bandarin

• • • not damage the archaeological site, which comprises a royal necropolis from several pre-Christian dynasties. (The UNESCO team carried out “non-destructive” remote sensing exploration that makes it possible to see what is underground without digging.) Finally, it was necessary to consolidate Stele 3, standing not far from its famous neighbour. Among the decorated monoliths in situ (most of them are not engraved), Stele 3 is the only one still standing. It leans slightly, however, like the Tower of Pisa.

A technological feat

In short, after two years of work, UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre signed an agreement in June 2007 with the construction company

Lattanzi for the reinstallation of the obelisk. It executed the engineering project designed by the Italian firm Croci Associati, in collaboration with Ethiopian experts, notably the archaeologist Teclé Hagos and the engineer Messele Haile Mariam.

A platform with rails was installed, in order to slide the three pieces of the stele up to an immense steel structure, only one-tenth the size of the Eiffel Tower but equally impressive. Using a hemispheric hinge and a mobile crane, the first block was hauled up the tower then dropped inside it, on top of its new eight-metre reinforced concrete foundation.

“That way it won’t fall down again!” jokes the Italian technician Mauro Cristini, who emphasizes he’s no expert on “obelisk erection”. How’s that? He’s the head of the project team! “Have you seen many obelisks erected recently?” he says with a smile. True, the subject is no longer taught in schools.

Much more seriously, he explains how each block is attached to the other: “At the end of the 1930s, the three parts of the stele were patched back together using metal bars 18 cm in diameter. This time we’ve added four perforations in each block that are only 5 cm in diameter, and inserted synthetic fibre bars to improve the stele’s seismic resistance.”

When the second block was placed within the tower on top of the first one, the synthetic fibres – Kevlar bars – were inserted in the new holes before the surfaces of the two blocks were sealed by a resin-based mortar. Same procedure for the third block. A technological feat, to say the least.

Ancestral grandeur

The scale of this operation led by UNESCO is reminiscent of its first world heritage safeguarding campaign 50 years ago in Nubia. At that time, the Abu Simbel and Philae Egyptian temples were cut up into blocks and moved to a new location to avoid their being submerged after the construction of the great Aswan Dam.

This latest project cost close to five million dollars, just for the studies and construction. The funding, also covering the dismantling of the obelisk in Rome and its transport back to Aksum, is entirely provided by the Italian government.

Aksum is thus recovering little by little its ancestral grandeur, lost for the first 1000 years of our era. The obelisk is majestically enthroned in the middle of this little town, once the capital of an empire and a centre of Christianity. Aksum’s cultural wealth belies the town’s small size: a labyrinth of royal tombs, ruins of ancient palaces likely to include the Queen of Sheba’s, ruins of 4th century churches...Aksum’s fabulous treasures will be revealed in our next issue, devoted to the Ethiopian sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. ■



Mauro Cristini, head of the technical team, responsible for the obelisk’s reinstallation. © UNESCO/Jasmina Šopova

What an adventure!

The 2005 return of the Aksum Obelisk to its original site in northern Ethiopia is a highly symbolic event. Its reinstallation this summer (2008) is a genuine technical feat.

The second segment approaches the first. The technicians insert the Kevlar bars in the new holes, to increase the stele's seismic resistance.

Before and after: one of the metal bars (18 cm diameter) inserted in the stele in the late 1930s, in Italy, and one of the new ones (5 cm diameter) made of synthetic fibres inserted in Ethiopia.



© UNESCO/Michel Ravassard

A risky operation: temporary metal reinforcements used during the stele's transport were replaced with new ones, making it possible to lift the granite blocks and place them inside the tower.



© UNESCO/Michel Ravassard



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continued from page 9

• • • where HIV and AIDS is rife. In the course of counseling and testing people, we realized that the major gap was ignorance, so we moved in with literacy programmes," explains Chiwela. "Non-formal education opens up the minds of communities to be more assertive."

PAF's work to raise HIV and AIDS awareness, in cooperation with other

organizations, includes not only training people to be community facilitators but also teaching drama and performance skills to members of Anti-AIDS Clubs, who then put on shows. Theatre is a way to get the locals, particularly young people, involved in spreading the message. While performances are going on, HIV and AIDS counseling, testing and information distribution also take place.

"This approach has broken silence around sexuality and HIV and AIDS, dispelling myths and making way for communities to seek solutions to the numerous related problems," says Chiwela. "And through learning basic and essential literacy skills, people come to understand the nature of this pandemic and share the messages of prevention, care and mitigation." ■

CESARE PAVESE: UNDER THE SIGN OF SATURN

A man's existence does not follow a straight line; it is accelerator and brake, suspense and motion. It is as fragile and shifting as mirages in the desert. The life of novelist, translator and poet Cesare Pavese, entirely devoted to literature, is no exception.

Abdourahman A. Waberi,
Djiboutian author

To celebrate the anniversary of his birth, the UNESCO Courier pays tribute to this writer, who belongs to the "Saturnian tribe", those great melancholic artists, victims of incurable wounds, making their way on the edge of madness and death.

Born 9 September 1908 in Santo Stefano Belbo, in the Piedmont region, the poet committed suicide on 26 August 1950 in Turin. A short and mournful life, under the sign of Saturn. His deeply-rooted pessimism is easier to understand when we know he lost his father at the age of six and was brought up by a very strict mother. A colourless childhood between the authoritarian mother and an older sister he would never leave. Ancient pain: "There is on your face a silence that oppresses / the heart, dully, and distils an ancient pain / like the nectar of fruits fallen in those days." ("Morning")

Cesare Pavese attended a Jesuit school in Turin. At university, he developed a passion for English language literature, particularly poetry. In 1930, he undertook a thesis on the works of Walt Whitman. Bridging wide cultural gaps, he translated into his mother tongue the most demanding Anglo-American authors, the likes of Herman Melville, John Dos Passos, Daniel Defoe, James Joyce or



Turin, where Cesare Pavese lived and suffered. © All rights reserved

Charles Dickens. In 1930 he became very naturally an English teacher.

His era's bad conscience

Italy at the time was in the throes of reactionary ecstasy. Members of his family pushed him into the clutches of the National Fascist Party, of which he was a member between 1932 and 1935. Yet the poet's little clay lamp did not go out in the turmoil. On the contrary. Not content to be merely his era's bad conscience, as another poet of high lineage, the Frenchman Saint-John Perse, had predicted, he turned to concrete action. He was arrested in 1935 for anti-Fascist activities linked to the political movement *Giustizia e Libertà* founded in Paris in 1929 by a mili-

tant anti-Fascist group. Expelled from the party, Pavese was exiled in Calabria for eight months. His first collection of poems ("Work's Tiring") dates from this period: a sort of subtle autobiography where silence is rich with various echoes. Obscure and ancestral earthly passions surface here and there: "The silence forever / is quiet, calm and hoarse in past memory." ("The Voice")

The spirit of the past is never far away. "A day will come when the young god will be a man / Without suffering, with the dead smile / of the man who has understood. The sun too glides in the distance / reddening the beaches. A day will come when the god will no longer know where were yesterday's beaches..." ("Myth")



• • • In 1939, he wrote his first prose text, "The Fine Summer", published only ten years later in a volume including two other novellas, "The Devil on the Hills" and "Women on Their Own". They are, in the author's own words, "Three urban stories, three stories about discovering the city and society, three stories of juvenile enthusiasm and disappointed passion." The third novella was turned into a film in 1955 by Michelangelo Antonioni, entitled *Le Amiche*.

Disappointment is a theme that runs throughout his work. The late 1930s, experienced as an artistic and psychological crisis, also mark the start of his "new meditations on his work", springing from the same soil as his personal diaries, "The business of living", found and published after his death.

Following World War II, Pavese joined the Italian Communist party. He worked for the Einaudi publishing house while continuing his writing career. In 1949 he published the novel "The Moon and the Bonfires", which won him the prestigious Strega prize.

Death will have your eyes

A moody, solitary and tormented soul, Pavese thought he had finally found the love of his life in Constance Dowling, American actress he met in Rome, only a few weeks before she abandoned him. The height of despair: the poet committed suicide in a Turin hotel room with an overdose of sleeping pills during the night of 26-27 August 1950, when his fame had reached its peak. He left on his work table the poems that today constitute his last – and most acclaimed – collection of poems: "Death will come and it will have your eyes". Suicide, for most a final act of desperation, had been for him an obsession, a magnet, almost a companion. In 1936, fourteen years before he killed himself, he confessed in his diary: "And I know I am doomed forever to think of suicide at

every trouble or pain. That's what terrifies me: suicide is my principle, never consummated, that I will never consummate, but which soothes my sensibility."

The writer from Turin belongs, with Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Benjamin and a number of others, to the "Saturnian tribe"- those great melancholic artists, exceptionally gifted, victims of incurable wounds from childhood, making their way on the edge of madness and death.

Cesare Pavese was certainly one of the most influential and talked-about post-war authors. In turn poet, novelist, critic, magazine editor, talent scout, cultural go-between and publisher, he spent his life in the service of literature. Real life and theoretical issues are never disassociated. The first task is living, of course. Sealed by failure, denied glory, it becomes all the more fascinating. ■



"The business of living"; detail of the book's cover illustration (in French). © All rights reserved



Since the Renaissance, the planet Saturn has been associated in the West with melancholy. © HST/STSCI

Next month

EXPEDITION TO ETHIOPIA

The official inauguration of the Aksum Obelisk, recently reinstalled on its original site in northern Ethiopia (see Focus), marks the end of the Ethiopian millennium, proclaimed by the African Union “a millennium for all Africa”.

In Ethiopia, which still follows the Julian calendar (replaced in the West by the Gregorian version), the year 2001 begins on 12 September.

The *UNESCO Courier* joins in the celebration of the Ethiopian millennium with a special issue on a few Ethiopian cultural sites: Lalibela, Tiya, Gondar, Bahir Da... and Aksum, of course. Places to dream about.



Baskets on sale near the new Aksum Museum (Ethiopia).
© UNESCO/Jasmina Šopova

PARTNERS

The Government of the People's Republic of China generously funds the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy, established in 2005 in honour of the great Chinese philosopher Confucius.

The Prize rewards the activities of outstanding individuals, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in literacy serving rural adults and out-of-school youth, particularly women and girls. The prize gives concrete support to the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) demonstrating China's commitment to literacy and the long and established tradition of supporting lifelong learning.

In addition to two annual awards of US\$20,000 each, the Confucius Prize also offers a study visit to literacy project sites in China.

The Government of the Republic of Korea supports the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize since 1989, through the generous funding of the Ministry of Culture. The Prize honours the outstanding contribution made to literacy over 500 years ago by King Sejong, who created the native Korean alphabet 'Hangul', still a valuable model and reference for the world today.

The UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize rewards the activities of governments or governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) displaying merit and achieving particularly effective results in the creation, development and dissemination of mother-tongue languages in developing countries.

The Prize consists of US\$20,000, a silver medal and a certificate for the prizewinner.

The International Reading Association (IRA) a nonprofit professional organization founded in 1956, is involved in teaching reading to learners of all ages and promoting literacy. Its members disseminate research and information about reading and encourage the lifetime reading habit.

IRA has been funding the UNESCO International Literacy Prize for almost 30 years. Since it was first established in 1979, this Prize has rewarded the work of a large number of institutions, organizations or individuals displaying outstanding merit and achieving particularly effective results in the promotion of literacy for youth and adults.

The Prize consists of US\$20,000, a silver medal and a certificate for the prizewinner.

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