

From Blindness to Cash

Malawi

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A product of a UNESCO-DANIDA workshop for the preparation
of post-literacy materials and radio programmes
for women and girls in Africa

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A product of a UNESCO-DANIDA workshop for the preparation
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Adapted from a booklet prepared at a regional workshop
organized by UNESCO

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INTRODUCTION

Political leaders and development specialists around the world have recognised that illiteracy – particularly among women – seriously undermines their education and development efforts. Many believe that literacy programmes need revision to render them relevant to women's lives in today's Africa. Relevant programmes determine whether women will stay in the programmes long enough to benefit fully from the information and skills they offer.

This post-literacy booklet is one of an ever-growing series of learning materials produced under UNESCO-DANIDA's *Special Project for Women and Girls in Africa*. The series presents some sample of the products of the UNESCO Regional and their follow-up National Workshops which took place between 1997 and 2000 in Africa.

During these two-week workshops, African women and men involved in literacy work were introduced to the concept of gender sensitivity and to addressing gender equity issues through basic education. They had, before the workshops began, selected their target communities and carried out needs assessments. The analyses of these assessments at the workshops served as the basis for identifying the priority issues to be addressed in the booklets. Each writer worked on their chosen topic with the support and advice from the entire group and resource persons. The texts were also illustrated with simple line drawings by local illustrators.

The Literacy and Non-formal Education Section, Division of Basic Education of UNESCO edited the text and prepared the design-layout for the final product which will be distributed world-wide.

Though the booklets are intended for use with neo-literate women and out-of-school girls, the messages in the stories and the radio programme scripts that accompany them are also relevant for use as supplementary reading materials in formal schools for readers of both sexes.

The subjects of the booklets, based on the needs assessments, reflect a wide range of needs and conditions of African women – from Senegal to Kenya, from Mali to South Africa, from Niger to Malawi. A list of common concerns has emerged. These include: HIV-AIDS, domestic violence, the exploitation of girls employed as domestic servants, the lack of positive role models for women and girls, the economic potential of women through small business development, the negative consequences of child marriage, and the need for a more equal division of labour between men and women in the home.

Each booklet describes one way of treating a subject of high priority to African women. In the process, the authors have attempted to render the material gender-sensitive. They have tried to present African women and girls and their families in the African context and view the issues and problems from their perspective.

We hope these booklets will inspire readers, as they did their authors, to reflect on some of life's common situations, problems and issues that ordinary women and men face every day. The questions accompanying each booklet will help readers ask questions and find answers to some of the issues which also touch their own lives. How the characters in these booklets cope with specific situations, their trials and tribulations, can serve as lessons for women and men living together in 21st Century Africa.

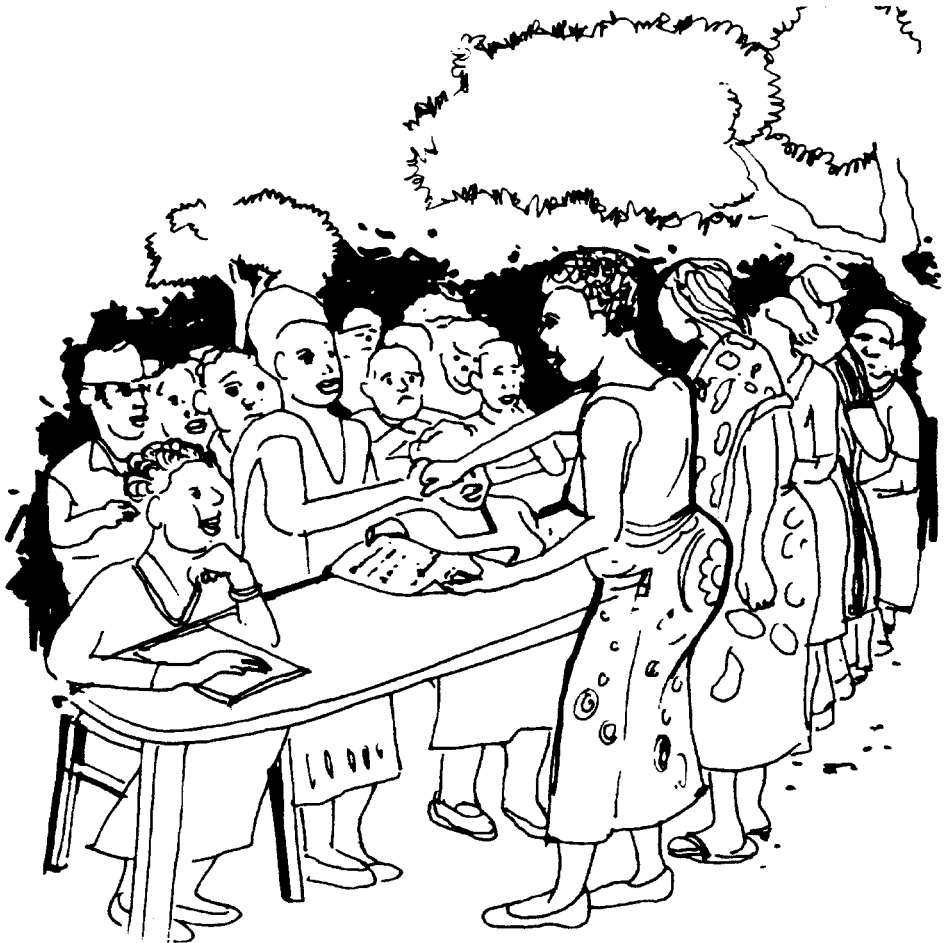
Graduation day at the literacy centre...

Abit Ali is a new graduate.

Her friends come to congratulate her.

She has learned to read, write and do some simple accounting.

Not bad for a start, Abit Ali says to herself!



That night...

I think I should go into business. I learned a lot at the literacy centre. I could put it to good use.

Business! What are you talking about? Business costs money. Where are you going to get the money?

I think you should do it mama. I'll help you after school.

Not me! It sounds like a lot of hard work.



Abit Ali thinks more and more about setting up her own business. She finds many good reasons to go through with the idea. Slowly, Mr. Saidi starts to see her point.

If you can come up with a good business plan, I'll lend you the little bit of money I have.

Am I dreaming? Did I hear him right? He thinks I can do it!



Abit Ali dreams of her plan for growing and marketing vegetables.

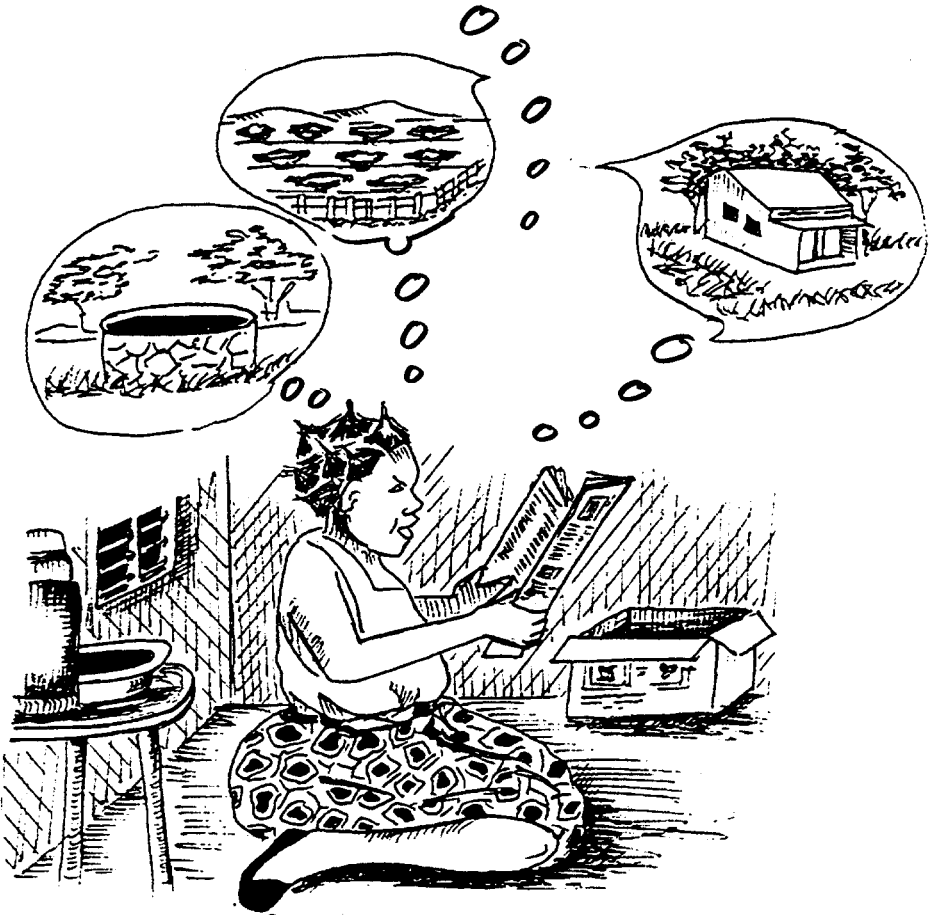
I'll talk to my literacy instructor.
She'll come with me
to talk with the CDA.

Imagine!
My very own business.



For weeks, Abit Ali looks for information. She reads. She listens to the programmes for farmers. She talks with her literacy instructor and the community development assistant. She says to herself...

I have a chance.
I will see this through!



At home, Abit Ali's husband, Mr Saidi, is happy with the idea of a vegetable garden. He gets the children to help in the garden. Mr. Saidi buys the seedlings for Abit Ali from the agriculturist.



The CDA helps Abit Ali apply for a loan from a non-governmental organisation. Then they go to see Mr. Kanyama, a restaurant owner. After several visits, Mr. Kanyama agrees to buy from Abit Ali.

We could start with a small order and see how it goes.

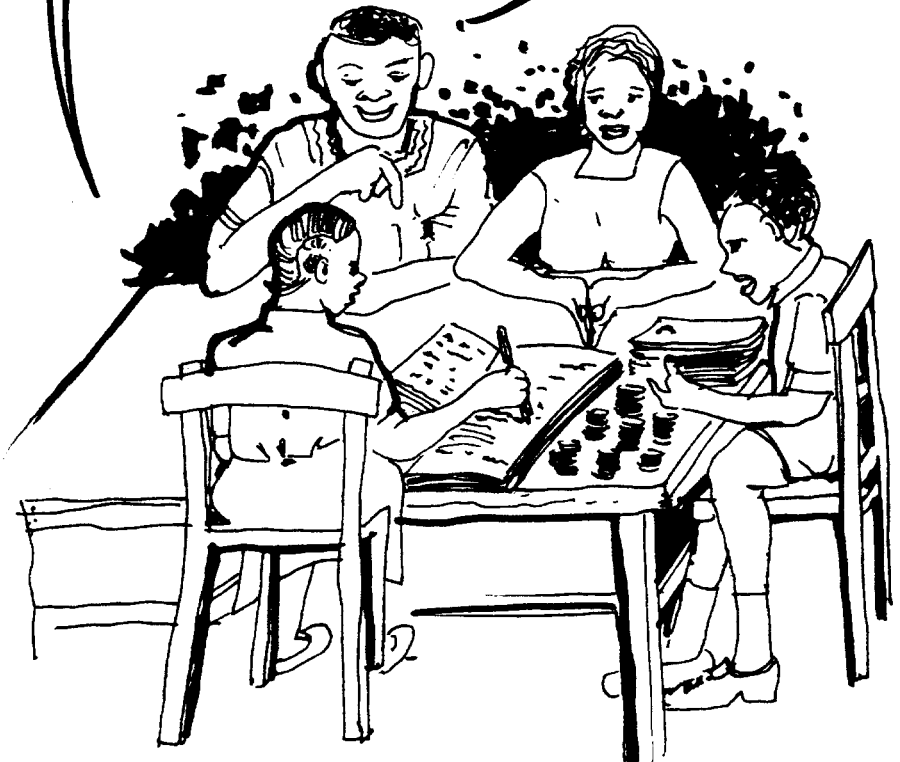
Thanks! You won't be disappointed, I promise.



Abit Ali, Mr. Saidi and the children are happy. They count their daily earnings together. The money is ready to be put in the bank the next day. The children learn about business by helping their mother.

When I grow up,
I'll go into food catering.

Like mother,
like daughter!



News of Abit Ali's business spreads. Many holiday resort owners begin to buy her vegetables. She makes plenty of money, and spends it the way she wants to.

Money must grow on trees at your house, Mrs. Saidi.



Abit Ali keeps coming up with new ideas.
Soon, another dream comes true.
She opens a small restaurant.
She calls it Nzeru Nkupangua--
'Knowledge needs to be shared.'

Abit Ali has come a long way.
Good luck, Abit Ali!



Questions

1. What do you think of Abit Ali's ambition?
2. Can women dream of having a serious job outside the home when they have so much to do at home?
3. Why does Abit Ali need a business plan?
4. What kinds of difficulties would you expect Abit Ali to have? How could she overcome them?
5. Why was Abit Ali successful?
6. What did Abit Ali's education do for her family?
7. What could more education do for you and your family?
8. Make up a plan for starting a business of your own.

Written by Africans for Africans, this booklet is part of a growing series of booklets prepared during training workshops to produce gender-sensitive materials organized in the context of the DANIDA-UNESCO Special Project for Education of Girls And Women in Africa.

The workshops have been hailed as a great success by organizers and participants alike. They are an effort to respond to urgent issues and problems facing African women and men today. These booklets reflect the language, images, customs, social norms, attitudes and beliefs of real people whether they be nomads or villagers. They particularly try to help readers raise issues and find their own answers to their pressing needs.