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BOTSWANA:

'Return' to breast-feeding makes inroads

Sowa, January 3, 1994 (AIA/Caitlin Davies) — Mercy Manakedi Theetso is 29 and has four children. She breast-fed her first child for 18 months, her second for eight months, and she didn't breast-feed her third child at all.

"I was working and the baby stayed with my mother so we used a bottle for the first four months, then we used a cup," explains Theetso. "Myself, I like to breast-feed but I don't have the time."

In the 1960s Botswana's medical practitioners began giving new-born babies the bottle. Now, 30 years later, there is a concerted effort by the Botswana government to promote a return to breast-feeding. But as women have gone out of the home to work, reversing the trend is not an easy task.

However, breast-feeding does remain popular in Botswana. "It's a culturally acceptable norm," says Virkloti Morewane of UNICEF, and boys and girls are fed for the same amount of time.

According to a 1984 family health survey about 98 percent of women in Botswana breast-fed their babies for the first two

years. In 1988 this decreased slightly to about 91 percent because of the number of women who work away from the home and a general belief that milk substitutes are better.

"People use both breast-feeding and the bottle and they don't see the problem because they say they are still breast-feeding," explains Morewane.

Initially substitute milk products were marketed through nurses and doctors. Morewane, who trained as a nurse in the 1960s says: "In hospitals at that time we unintentionally promoted the bottle. It was a Western idea introduced by the elite."

She is quick to point out, however, that they weren't attacking breast-feeding. "Information wasn't just available at the time and companies took advantage of this."

Attractive packaging with pictures of beautiful babies compounded the problem. "This really swayed people, even if you couldn't read you, saw the picture," explains Morewane.

The most popular brands of formula milk are from South Africa (Nestle and Abbott), and Akromed (USA). Most contain a sentence in English or Afrikaans extolling the benefits of breast-feeding.

Foods Botswana in Serowe produce a product for the government and this is given out in clinics to babies aged four to 36 months.

Morewane is optimistic that the 'new' message of breast-feeding is getting across, thanks to the work of WHO and UNICEF and the present 'baby-friendly hospital' initiative which is linked to the overall health care services.

"In the end mothers are empowered," says Morewane, "We're teaching it aggressively now."

Theetso had all four children at hospital and breast-fed her last born for six months. "The nurses want us to breast-feed, they even force us. When you go there to deliver, if they see a bottle in your bag they get cross with you," she says.

Expressing milk for when the mother is away is now the agenda and health workers are trying to make it comfortable for women. "But culturally somehow we don't like to see human milk," admits Morewane.

According to the last family health survey, women in the rural areas breast-feed for up to 20 months. Urban women, who have lost the family support group, breast-feed for 15 months.

The whole structure of child care is undergoing rapid change and women often live away from their family members who traditionally looked after a new child. "Now we are getting very strange people to take care of our babies. In the African way of life we talk of the totem, people are related to you and they know your family's dos and don'ts. Now we hire strangers and our older children are away at school," explains Morewane.

"When you come back from work, you find your baby not looking nice, sometimes they even leave the child in the house and lock the door. It's dangerous," says Theetso.

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According to the labour laws, a woman can go on maternity leave six weeks before confinement. After her confinement she cannot return to work for six weeks, which can be increased to eight weeks in some circumstances.

Maternity pay is not less than a quarter of basic pay, or 50 thebe (US\$1.50) per day, whichever is more. The woman is entitled to two half-hour breaks with pay for up to six months after returning to work. However, employers do not always make it easy for women to take the breaks. The breaks do not include the time needed to get home.

"Many women take their breaks as an extended lunch hour, or leave early. If you stay far away then it's not adequate, but we haven't formed a position on this. It's a beginning and it's better than nothing," says one Ministry of Health official.

The government is, however, at the forefront of breast-feeding promotion. In 1983 a committee was formed which was later incorporated into the family health division of the ministry of health. "You could say it then became a real programme and in 1994 it changed to the food and nutrition unit," says Segametsi Maruapula, acting chief nutritionist.

At the moment there aren't any NGOs with specific breast-feeding programmes. Though the government committee incorporated some NGOs, "over the years their attendance dwindled", says Maruapula who would like to see a new association which covers the whole issue of infant feeding.

The unit's current focus is on training. In March, 1994, It ran a course for maternity service workers and in April a course to train trainers.

Although breast-feeding is not yet promoted as a method of birth-spacing, it is one of the advantages cited in the training programmes. Breast-feeding is also encouraged despite the high rate of HIV infection in Botswana.

There was celebration of international breast-feeding week in 1994. The issue of breast-feeding was also promoted at the recent trade fair held in Gaborone. In the southern town of Molepolole "we talked to shop managers and asked them for at least one day to halt the selling of milk substitutes and they did it willingly," says Morewane with some satisfaction.

950101.BOT (1034 words)

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MALAWI:

Breast-feeding popular despite men's stares

Blantyre, January 4, 1995 (AIA/Felix Mponda) — Esther Hamisi, a 36-year-old secretary who works for a commercial bank, is bitter with Malawian men when it comes to breast-feeding.

"They are not supportive and they should stop staring when women take out their breasts to feed babies in public," she says angrily.

Hamisi, a mother of four, says some women get embarrassed by the stares and often leave their homes armed with a bottle full of milk, which will be cold by the time it is given to the baby.

"We don't want to fear men and our husbands but feel free to breast-feed our babies any time and anywhere," Hamisi says.

Hamisi belongs to a country where many men feel ashamed to see their wives publicly breast-feed, or who curiously stare at women baring breasts in public to feed babies.

"My friend was forced to apologise to her husband for breast-feeding a baby in church. The man said his wife had embarrassed him by producing 'his' breast in a public place," adds township woman Sophie Phiri.

Despite such negative attitudes perpetrated by men, 97 percent of Malawian mothers breast-feed their babies, according to a demographic and health survey in 1992.

"The survey showed that 57 percent of children were breast-fed within an hour of birth and 90 percent within the first day," said Thereza Banda, a nutritionist with the ministry of health.

The government promotes breast-feeding and the campaign becomes more prominent during the international breast-feeding week in August.

Posters encouraging mothers to breast-feed are pasted up in all hospitals and clinics. Talks on breast-feeding are also held at health institutions and commercials are aired on radio.

Only one non-governmental organisation is vigorously promoting breast-feeding — the International Eye Foundation. The foundation is undertaking a project on primary eye care which places more emphasis on increased intake of vitamin A-rich foods.

Health officials however say Malawi has a problem of early weaning, which involves mothers giving extra food or water to their infants in addition to breast-feeding.

Frequency of feeding after weaning is limited due to time constraints on the mother and, children's mealtimes are tied to those of adults.

The type of food introduced at weaning (porridge from white flour) is of low calorie density for infants and even with plentiful staple foods available, the child is unable to eat sufficient amounts needed for growth, said the nutritionist.

Breast milk substitutes commonly used are milk products produced by multinationals and imported into Malawi.

Most of the milk products — like Lactogen, SMA and S26 and children's food like Nestum — come from South Africa and Kenya. Prices are generally high, with a 250 grammes tin of Lactogen selling for K17.50 (about US\$1.2) and a box of Nestum selling at K14 (US\$1).

"The high cost of such products helps us to promote breast milk because mothers have no choice but to breast-feed," says nurse Stella Kawinga of Malawi's biggest hospital in Blantyre. The government says bottle feeding is not common, with only five percent of babies up to one month given a bottle and a teat in addition to breast-feeding.

"These findings are encouraging since neonates are particularly vulnerable to infection and use of unsterilised bottles and teats are a prime source of infection," said Kawinga.

Exclusive breast-feeding is uncommon in Malawi. Statistics show that only five percent of children under two months are fed breast milk only.

"Fifty-six percent of children under two months are given water in addition to breast milk and by five months 96 percent have received supplements," said the nutritionist.

Only women civil servants enjoy three months paid maternity leave. The private sector allows one month only.

Malawi does not have labour laws that allow women time to feed their babies.

However, the Malawi Commission of Women in Development is negotiating with the government to pass laws that would allow mothers time off to feed their babies.

"We are hopeful that this will be possible," says a member of the commission.

Domestic workers often look after infants while mothers are at work. Young mothers usually give infants to grandmothers in order to continue with school or work.

A 1989 study by the government revealed that 38 percent of urban women stopped breast-feeding because of another pregnancy.

Breast-feeding used to be encouraged as a method of spacing babies in Malawi's culture. This has changed dramatically with the emphasis shifting to modern family planning methods.

Interval between births in Malawi is short. Records show that 24 percent of births have an interval of less than 24 months.

"Only 40 percent of births occur with an interval of more than three years.

"This reflects the pro-natal nature of Malawian society where having many children is a form of socio-economic security and insurance for old age," says John Chiwembe, a university social researcher.

However, mothers in Malawi have one big disadvantage: as the main producers of food, they are kept busy and have little time to devote to child care.

"Many mothers are nutritionally depleted by overwork, inadequate food, and, too many and too close pregnancies," concludes a government report.

950102.MAL (867 words)

ZAMBIA:

Breast-feeding set to become policy

Lusaka, January 4, 1995 (AIA/Zarina Geloo) — Breast-feeding is set to become policy in Zambia. La Leche, the Zambian branch of a pro-breast-feeding NGO, is working on a national policy to give women four months leave after confinement and time off to nurse their babies when they resume work.

The law now gives women three months maternity leave. Mothers are left to make their own arrangements with their employers for time off to feed babies. More often than not, employers are unwilling to make such allowances and sometimes give the woman an option to quit if she is unable to devote all her time to her work.

Chris Ndlovu, a furniture businessman, says his policy is not to hire newly married women or mothers of infants because they often ask for time off to see to their children. "Maternity leave and time to breast-feed encroach on my business. I do not like that. If I employ someone I don't expect to become part of their domestic problems or arrangements."

Some mothers feel that taking time off work outside the lunch hour, is inconvenient, costly and, at times, vindicates attitudes like Ndlovu's.

"You can imagine a situation where you are competing for promotion with a male colleague, you will lose out by your inability assure that you will be there when you are needed in the office," says Rejoice Nsofwa, a secretary. She believes that women are often sidelined for promotion or even extra responsibility because they cannot give their whole-hearted attention to the job.

When she had the last of her three children two years ago, she had her fallopian tubes tied so she could apply all her efforts to reaching her goal — managing director's secretary.

Anne Nyirenda of La Leche says once the policy is in effect employers will be obliged to abide by its principles as they will be enshrined in the labour laws.

"There is no question of government rejecting or modifying our policy which will be out soon," says Nyirenda. "Government signed a world declaration, committing itself to the promotion of breast-feeding and knows what we are working on."

La Leche, which was established in 1981, has about 200 members country wide with four support groups. It is the only NGO which deals exclusively with breast-feeding and aligns its programmes to primary health care.

The group's programme is triple-pronged. The first part teaches the advantages of breast-feeding, the second, overcoming problems in breast-feeding and the third phase weaning and nutrition. The mothers meet in each others' homes and act as support groups.

So far, La Leche has managed to make some hospitals into being more baby-friendly. Instead of taking the baby away from the mother at birth and feeding it on glucose, the mother keeps the baby and breast-feeds right away. This forces even reluctant or first-time mothers to breast-feed.

Breast-feeding in general is still popular in Zambia, but in the case of urban mothers, only until it is time to go back to work. Women in the rural areas and those who are poor and uneducated continue to feed their babies until two years, or until the baby voluntarily rejects the breast.

Bottle-feeding became popular soon after independence when, for some reason, it became chic to identify with the colonisers and bottle-feeding was a mark of 'civilisation'. And, with more women joining the formal employment sector, bottle feeding replaced the breast after three months.

Zambia does not produce her own milk formula. The imported brands are from South Africa with S26 going for K6,000 (US\$10) a tin and Lactogen from Zimbabwe for K2

500 (US\$4). This is too expensive even for two-income families, where average salaries are around US\$100. The tins last one week, and babies are only breast-fed at night.

UNICEF, WHO and the government have capitalised on the high cost of milk formulae to encourage mothers to breast-feed, citing all the advantages of breast milk. Mothers are being told to breast-feed exclusively for "at least six months".

There have been a few televised programmes and articles in the daily papers advertising that 'breast is best' but this has had little impact on women who have no quarrel with breast-feeding in as far as it suits them.

"If the milk formula is too expensive, then we turn to dairy milk which is equally good after it is boiled and a little sugar is added," says Namataa Sitwala on how she manages to afford formula for her children.

There are a few mothers who have been talked into expressing milk before they go to work. These are few because it is taboo in Zambian culture. It is believed that breast milk, when not in the breast, turns to blood. And in the words of Tisha Banda, "It is the most tedious and cumbersome process I have ever heard of to get the quantity of milk that your baby needs. Give me formula or dairy milk any time."

Banda, like many pro-bottle feeders says the risks associated with formula-fed babies are the same as those with expressed milk because unhygienic surroundings can allow germs to get into a container. "Of course the danger of incorrect milk preparation is removed, but if you prepare the formula yourself, you should have no problem."

Banda practices the norm. She breast-fed her baby until a few weeks before resuming work when she introduced light porridge into her baby's diet. The baby food usually used is "Cerelac" imported from Zimbabwe, which sells for just under US\$1. (Zambia does not manufacture baby food any more since the imported one is cheaper).

Most women combine their annual leave and any other days owing to them with their maternity leave so it is not unusual to find women staying at home for five to six months by which time the child is eating off the family table.

Doctors are discouraging this practice as they claim that many digestive problems that bedevil children are a result of giving them solids before six months.

Mothers have objected, citing personal experiences where their children have cried from hunger, not being satisfied with breast milk at around two months.

Nurses and doctors who are following the dictates of WHO, which is funding breast-feeding campaigns in developing countries, have developed an uneasy relationship with working mothers.

"We are made to feel guilty when we bottle feed, but we cannot help it. We work and have to make some sacrifices for the betterment of the whole family," says Given Malumo who only breast-feeds her two-month old baby at night. She is a self-employed dressmaker.

The emergence of HIV/AIDS transmission through breast milk has had little significance on mothers as it is believed here that if at birth neither you nor your baby show signs of infection then you are not infected. As a result, mothers continue feeding whether they are infected or not.

The same goes for the "little impact" the breast-feeding week, usually held in the first week of August, has. It receives

lukewarm response save for a few token articles sponsored by the Ministry of Health.

It is the opinion of many mothers, who have condemned the week as a waste of time, that it should be held in societies where the breast is a sex symbol, to desexualize it.

Nyirenda says while it is true that breast-feeding has taken a downward trend, it is not as serious as it sounds. The whole concept of breast-feeding is cultural and, is an important traditional method of child-spacing.

"We just want to reinforce the obvious lest we allow mothers to sink further into their money-making and forget these little things that matter. Of course we also want to show mothers how to cope with breast-feeding while being employed."

La Leche has its work cut out. The last woman who was courageous enough to go public about allowing her sister to breast-feed her child while she is at work lives to regret her announcement. She has been hounded by people who consider allowing your baby to suckle at another woman's breast an affront to motherhood. Such are the double standards La Leche will have to deal with.

950103.ZAM (1416 Words)

NAMIBIA: Labour law not 'breast-feeding friendly'

Namibia, January 5, 1995 (AIA/Joshua Amupadhi)— As the campaign "breast milk is best for baby" rages on, Namibian women keen on breast-feeding are battling to strike a balance between a successful career and ideal motherhood.

The only benefit for mothers in the labour law enacted in 1992 is maternity leave, but promoters of breast-feeding feel that women are not given the chance to balance their careers and motherhood.

However, a Social Security Bill is being debated in parliament, aimed at, among other things, providing women on maternity leave with allowances. If the bill becomes law, government, employers and employees will contribute to a social security fund on a monthly basis.

Nelago Amadhila, a health worker in the Ministry of Health and Social Services who is in charge of the breast-feeding campaign, says the labour law allows three months' unpaid maternity leave.

Recommended time for exclusive breast-feeding is between four and six months. Amadhila says the maternity leave provided in the law discourages breast-feeding.

"Many women cannot afford not to have any income for three months. Some mothers reason that the baby should get used to the bottle before they return to work," she says.

The Namibian government began the breast-feeding crusade in 1991, but only declared a breast-feeding week two years later. In 1994, the breast-feeding week was held from August 1-7 and will become an annual event.

A breast-feeding policy has been instituted and health facilities which are 'breast-feeding friendly' are being put in place.

The breast-feeding campaign follows the pattern advocated by UN agencies in the 1980s. In the 1992, government banned

free distribution of formula milk in hospitals. Baby milk marked "low-cost" is also banned. Amadhila says formula milk is only distributed under doctors' recommendations.

Formula milk, mainly Nestle products, is imported from South Africa. A kilogram of formula milk powder sells for N27 (US\$7.72), and a 250 kilogram cereal box costs US\$1.42. A box of instant food for babies less than six months goes for N1.99 (US\$0.57). A box of the same variety intended for older babies, costs N2.50 (US\$0.74).

Breast-feeding is popular in rural areas and among older women. Urban women often have to concentrate on their careers while young mothers feel breast-feeding spoils the figure.

However, 21-year old Emily Shigwedha, a mother of a three-month-old baby says she likes to breast-feed her child. She is not worried about her figure because she has been assured that the fear of loosing it through breast-feeding, is only a myth.

Shigwedha says the campaign by government has made her realise the importance of breast-feeding. Breast milk is more nutritious than formula and immunities can be passed from mother to child.

Tracy Mbunyu, another youthful mother, says she had refused to breast-feed her baby (now one year old) because of fear of losing her figure.

Says Mbunyu: "Breast-feeding makes young girls look like old aunties." Mbunyu, who lives in Windhoek, sent her daughter to a grandmother who lives in the rural area where she was fed on formula food.

Working mothers who are aware of breast-feeding complain that they are not given a chance to feed their babies at work.

Government has been running an advertisement in the media for provision of "baby-friendly corners" at work places to allow mothers to breast-feed.

Amadhila says only her ministry is known to have set up such facilities. "Most of the time employers refer the mothers to the toilets for breast-feeding. There is no law to force them to have such facilities at work."

The Ministry of Health and Social Services intends to introduce amendments to the labour law to give longer and paid maternity leave as well as provide an atmosphere for breast-feeding at work.

950104.NAM (629 words)

TANZANIA: Breast-feeding 'battle' continues

Dar es Salaam, January 5, 1995 (AIA/Jeff Shellembi) — Promotion of breast-feeding in Tanzania goes alongside the battle against breast milk substitutes, widely accepted by many mothers as a result of appealing advertising.

A national code on marketing of breast milk substitutes and designated products (1994), was put in place last August and incorporated in the Food (Quality Control) Act 1978.

The code sets rules for industries, health workers and government. It encourages and protects breast-feeding by regulating marketing practices used in selling artificial feeding products.

The code is dubbed the final step in the implementation of an international one developed between 1974-1978 by WHO and UNICEF. The World Health Assembly approved and recommended it in 1981 for adoption by governments in their own settings.

Focusing on the world resolution on breast-feeding, Tanzania organised her first national workshop in 1987. Dr Wilbald Lorri, managing director at the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC), says his country code, "does not ban imports but rather controls extras of breast milk substitutes among other things".

He observes, with concern that only two percent of the 500 000 imported tons of baby formula is needed and the rest only wastes foreign currency. The code restricts advertising and free distribution of any breast milk substitutes and samples to the public, or their promotion at health care centres.

It also bans pictures or labels with words idealising artificial feeding on infant milk containers except scientific and factual information to health workers. It stresses usage of Kiswahili language on labels.

In addition to the stiff penalties meted on manufacturers and distributors who violate the code, the government may have to take other steps in order to achieve more realistic results. The market is already saturated with breast milk substitutes.

Lorri says drugstores and shops will continue to sell the substitutes — on doctors prescription — to customers with proven cases of inability to breast-feed and other valid reasons.

The 1994 breast-feeding week stressed increasing world awareness of breast-feeding benefits to mother and child. Tanzania's Deputy Minister of Health Zakia Meghji officially inaugurated the code during that week.

One of the week's events, was a symposium which drew participants from different sectors, institutions, NGOs and religious groups. Meghji underscored the need for government effort to ensure that the legislation works. She charged participants to monitor the code's enforcement.

Breast milk's advantages which include the prevention of disease and a saving on cash used to buy infant formulae and feeding bottles were discussed.

Health facilities in Tanzania are known to delay initiating babies to the breast within the first crucial hours after birth. This has hatched a 'baby-friendly hospitals' campaign which encourages breast-feeding.

The exclusive breast-feeding duration, has been cited as another snag. Most working mothers breast-feed exclusively for only one-and-half months instead of the recommended four to six months. Some mothers are also known to give babies water or other foods too early or too late.

A number of bottle-fed babies end up with diarrhoea. Also, poor families cannot afford regular purchases of the expensive infant formulae. They end up violating recommended strengths, especially where milk is concerned. This leads to malnutrition and in some cases, death.

Empowering all women to exclusively breast-feed their babies for four to six months, adding other foods gradually as recommended, is one of the goals for the 1990s.

The majority of women in Tanzania who know the benefits of breast-feeding do so, some going up to 18 months. However, mothers who work outside their homes, lack support. There

are no day care centres or other suitable facilities at their work places. On the other hand some young mothers refrain from breast-feeding because they fear 'loosing their figure'.

50105.TAN (611 words)

ZIMBABWE: Breast-feeding considered a human right

Harare, January 6, 1995 (AIA/Tariro Moyo)— Breast-feeding is increasingly being recognised as a basic human right and a pivot in primary health care for children in Zimbabwe.

As a result, breast-feeding is encouraged as early as possible in the baby's life. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) enhances breast-feeding beginning in the hospital as follows:

- all maternity facilities should have a clear breast-feeding policy and well-trained health care staff; all expectant mothers are educated on the benefits of breast-feeding while new mothers are helped to breast-feed; mothers are taught how to maintain lactation even if they are separated from their babies and are discouraged from giving substitutes unless recommended; mothers keep their infants for 24 hours a day and are encouraged to breast-feed on demand; mothers are discouraged from giving breast-feeding children dummies or pacifiers; hospitals should form breast-feeding support groups even for discharged mothers.

The labour law in Zimbabwe provides for three months maternity leave with 75 percent of normal salary. When women resume work, there is a one-hour breast-feeding allowance from work. The government has initiated moves to enable women to receive their full salary while on maternity leave.

The Minister of Health and Child Welfare, Dr Timothy Stamps, suggests that the leave be increased to four months. But some working women do not feel that a longer maternity leave is the answer. Leslie Makombe, a women's rights activist, feels that breast-feeding women should have flexible working times. They should be able to go and breast-feed their children and draw up their own work programmes. She says longer leave might interfere with their jobs — especially where constant practice is necessary.

There are various NGOs which promote breast-feeding including the Zimbabwe Infant Nutrition Network and La Leche League. Their programmes include group meetings for mothers and pregnant women on health, telephone counselling, correspondence, provision of relevant literature and workshops. All the channels emphasise the advantages of breast milk over breast milk substitutes (BMS). Other activities include visiting maternity hospitals and advising new mothers. Before the advent of BMS some mothers stopped work to look after their babies. Where the mother had to work, babies were fed on maize meal gruel by whoever looked after them.

Bottle-feeding is known to confuse babies in some cases — the mother's breast versus the teat. Some end up preferring the latter.

Various BMS are used in present-day Zimbabwe. Some are produced locally, while others are imported. All infant formulae carry labels advising that breast milk is the best choice.

Nestle, a local multinational company, produces infant formulae such as Nan, Neslac and Lactogen. Of the local products, the cost for a 500 gram can is about Z\$25 (US\$3) and that of a kilogram is about Z\$48 (US\$6).

Imported formulae cost more, perhaps due to increased transport costs from countries such as the USA and South Africa. Formulae such as S26 and ISOMIL are usually found in pharmacies and their cost is in the region of Z\$52 (US\$6.50) for 500 grammes.

Since the 1960s the breast-feeding duration has decreased over the years from well over two years to about a year now. Breast-feeding is lower in urban areas. It seems the more educated the women become, the less time they breast-feed. Perhaps this is more so because they tend to have jobs outside their homes.

However, women sometimes show a marked reluctance to breast-feed, as demonstrated by Sabelo Ncube from Bulawayo. "Breast-feeding is so inconvenient and I have other things that require my attention and the sooner the baby gets used to that the better," she said.

Statistics provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations' Children's Fund (Unicef) reveal that educated women prefer artificial feeding. Women who breast-feed for longer periods are those from poor families — only because they cannot afford artificial feeding.

Some women do not breast-feed for fear of losing their figures. Katie Chaduka, a young mother of two, did not breast-feed her first child, believing that it would make her breasts sag. Pauline Kuzwayo, a South African author of the book "Infant and Child Nutrition", however, says that it is during pregnancy that breasts expand and sag and not during breast-feeding.

"I do not like breast-feeding because it is so messy, you are always dripping and it can be embarrassing," said one young woman.

Women have been advised how to avoid the discomfort of breast engorgement by expressing the milk when they cannot breast-feed the baby. 'Dripping' breasts can also be overcome by using breast caps or sanitary towels.

Expressing breast milk can also be done if the mother has to go to work and leave the baby to be fed later from a cup. Expressed milk should be handled under sterile conditions to avoid infection and women without refrigerators are discouraged from using this method as the milk can turn sour.

While it does not provide fool proof contraception, breast-feeding inhibits ovulation and is also being promoted as a birth spacing method. Kuzwayo says that in developing countries, many family planning programmes recognize lactation as contraception.

In rural areas breast-feeding is determined by cultural beliefs. For example, it is believed that if a breast-fed child dies, the mother's milk is 'poisoned', and that one should not breast-feed or have sexual intercourse while pregnant.

The recent scourge of AIDS/HIV has also changed beliefs on breast-feeding as some mothers inclined to breast-feed now fear infecting their infants.

In some instances breast-feeding is not recommended as when a breast-feeding mother becomes mentally disturbed and cannot be trusted with the welfare of her baby, or mothers who have crippling illnesses such as cancer, heart ailments

and others. Mothers who are taking drugs likely to harm the infant or are suffering from infectious diseases are discouraged from breast-feeding. Sometimes a baby may be too small or weak to feed from the breast and requires the mother to express the milk into a cup and then feed it by spoon.

Zimbabwe recognises the World Breast-Feeding Week.
950106.ZIM (1025 words)

SOUTH AFRICA: Pollution in South Africa

Johannesburg, January 9, 1995 (AIA/Alan Morris)—Pollution in South Africa is an issue deeply embedded in the historical distribution of power and resources. Not surprisingly, those most affected have historically been black and poor.

A large part of South Africa's black population live in localities where there are high levels of air pollution, where drinking water is often impure and where garbage and human waste is inadequately disposed of.

Even in the Pretoria/Johannesburg (PWV) region, the richest in the country, there are millions who live in highly unhygienic conditions. A study by the PWV transitional regional authority found that only about half of the PWV's nine million people had piped water and about 40 percent had little or no access to any decent form of sanitation.

In Johannesburg's Alexandra township (which borders Sandton, one of the world's wealthiest suburbs) about a quarter of a million people live in an area overflowing with garbage and pervaded by the smell of human excrement from the bucket system on which part of the population still depends.

Some rural areas are far worse. For example, in the informal settlements of the Winterveld area, about 60km north of Pretoria, a survey found that only about four percent of the population of about 250,000 people had access to a formal, purified water supply and 0.01 percent had access to proper sanitation. The water from boreholes is often polluted as the water table is close to the surface. Lack of availability of clean water was the main reason residents gave for disliking the locality.

Formal refuse removal in the area hardly exists, according to a study carried by the University of Pretoria, and is so bad that it is even difficult to gain access to some properties.

Although South Africa generates about two-thirds of the electricity on the continent, it is estimated that about 20 million South Africans do not have access to electricity. They are therefore dependent on other fuel sources, mainly coal and wood. In high-density areas this creates a tremendous amount of air pollution, especially in winter. Even in townships where there is electricity, pollution is still a major problem as there are a large amount of make-shift dwellings that do not have it.

In most of South Africa's townships there are now more informal houses than formal. In a 1990 study by the urban research group, The Urban Foundation, estimated that in the PWV area, 2,260,000 million people were living in backyard shacks or squatting. This represented 43 percent of the black population in the region. Most of these households do not have electricity.

As a result, says Jasmin von Schirnding, director of the Johannesburg city council's environmental health, acute

respiratory infections are becoming the biggest killer of young black children in the PWV. According to Eskom, the state electricity company, pollution levels in Soweto are 2.5 times greater than elsewhere in South Africa.

Eskom itself is responsible for some of the worst pollution. Its coal-burning power stations in the Eastern Transvaal emit sulphur dioxide in such large quantities that the area is estimated to have the highest sulphur dioxide levels in the world.

Waste from Eskom's Koeberg nuclear power station is disposed of in Vaalputs in Namaqualand. Although the area is sparsely populated there are communities that have been there for generations. Doctor David Fig, of the Group for Environmental Monitoring (GEM), says that the waste disposal facility was carefully chosen to ensure that no white towns were within a 50 kilometre range.

Pollution in South Africa is not only function of government policy. Private corporations have also played an important role. Many have displayed scant regard for the safety of their workers or preservation of the environment. One of the most notorious cases is that of the British chemical company, Thor Chemicals, in the Natal midlands. Thor processes imported mercury.

In July 1993, Peter Cele, 22, died from mercury poisoning after having been in a coma for 16 months. Another worker, Engelbert Ngcobo, 54, is in hospital in a permanent coma. Three executives of the firm have been charged with culpable homicide and causing mercury poisoning in at least 28 other workers. A river near the plant has mercury levels hundreds of times above the recommended safety levels.

Asbestos mining has taken the lives of thousands of workers over the decades. A study conducted in 1989 found that South Africa has the highest level of mesothelioma, a degeneration of the lung caused by the inhaling of asbestos fibres, in the world.

On the farms, hundreds of thousands of workers are regularly exposed to pesticides. Many of these are banned for use in their countries of origin but are liberally applied on South African farms by workers generally untrained in their usage and not provided with adequate protection. The International Labour Federation estimates that 1,600 South Africans die from pesticide-related incidents each year.

The pressure on companies to apply strict pollution control is minimal. For example, in September 1989 the Sappi paper mill in the Eastern Transvaal was responsible for the death of over 100 tonnes of fish when sulphate was released from its paper mill near Nelspruit into the Elands River. The company was fined R6 000.

Pollution is a legacy of the old regime which will continue to weigh heavily. Clearly, the new government has an uphill battle to stem pollution, however it needs to address the problem in earnest before it becomes insurmountable.

950107.SAF (899 words)

ZIMBABWE: Rush to register marriages under civil law

Harare, January 10, 1994 (AIA/Juliana Zhanje)—Rutendo is angry at her husband and herself for not adequately catering for her future when they married in the early '80s.

As she ponders her plight in her rural area home, she realises life could be better — she could still be living in Harare with her family.

After they wed, in what is known as a customary unregistered marriage, Rutendo and her husband bought a home which was registered in the husband's name.

A mother of five, Rutendo's nightmare began some five years ago when she returned to Harare to discover her husband had sold the family house. He had never even told her. Later, she could not even find out where the cash had gone.

As soon as she heard of the news from neighbours, she rushed to the area superintendent but because she did not have a marriage certificate the officer was unable to help. "The superintendent told me that in the absence of a marriage certificate, he could not do much to help me."

She was so desperate that she went to the new owner's work place, demanding to see him and tell him she was not consulted about the sale of the house. "That was the most humiliating incident of my life. The buyer refused to see me. Instead, he talked to me on the phone and told me that he had never heard of me."

Rutendo is now living in the rural areas with the children while her husband is staying in company accommodation elsewhere, visiting her only at month-ends.

Her case is just one of many in which women who enter into unregistered marriages have lost property to husbands and relatives. Such cases have resulted in more and more women insisting that their marriages be registered, and officials have described the current rise in the number of couples coming forward to register as unprecedented. Some have to book three weeks in advance.

There are three types of marriages — the civil, the customary and the unregistered customary marriages. The civil marriage has become the most popular because a man is permitted to marry only one woman, whereas the others allow the man to have more than one wife.

The number of women a man decides to marry has a strong bearing on property distribution in case of death or divorce. The more wives the man has, the less property each wife will get.

The government is aware of the problem and has released proposed legislation on marriage and inheritance, which is already being viewed with hostility, particularly by men.

Cases have frequently been reported in which bereaved spouses, almost all women, have lost most of the family property to greedy in-laws soon after the funeral. These are sad and tragic incidents which have left widows and children homeless and often penniless.

Not only is the widow left mourning, homeless and poor, but she often has to contend with government officials who expect her to pay death duties, depending on her late spouse's wealth.

In such cases, some women have sold off household goods to raise money for estate duty. But if relatives have already grabbed the property, it becomes a struggle for survival because if she fails to raise the money the only alternative is for the house to be sold.

The situation becomes even worse for women who refuse to marry into the husband's family after the death of their spouse.

"Once a woman has refused to marry one of her late

husband's relatives, she is viewed as an outcast. The relatives from both her family and her late husband's family accuse her of going against tradition. The man she refuses to marry makes life as uncomfortable for her as possible," says Evelyn Magwenzi of Harare.

Some of the tactics used to put pressure on the woman to comply include seizing her property, including bank books. During these scuffles, a lot of valuable property goes missing.

"Actually, the men in the husband's family feel humiliated if a woman refuses to accept any of them as a husband. They then hide behind the tradition and start abusing the poor woman. It's shameless," says Magwenzi.

"It's not just death which gives rise to all sorts of problems involving property. If a couple divorces, there is often a tug-of-war about who should get what piece of furniture, including the house and the car. These are usually vicious struggles which leave both parties bitter.

"A marriage certificate gives the courts jurisdiction on property distribution," she says.

Some men feel that their wives are plotting against them when they ask to have their marriages registered. Men are particularly against a clause in the Marriage Act which stipulates that they can only have one wife.

"Some men feel that once the marriage has been registered, the wife might plot to kill them for property gain," says Dennis Ndawana. He says some agreed to registration only to keep the peace in the home. "We often hear of such stories in the pubs. Many men would rather not register their marriages that tie themselves to one woman. They know that under customary law, they can have more than one wife," says Ndawana.

On the other hand, women feel more secure when their marriages are registered under the marriage Act because of the prohibition of more than one spouse.

Although a marriage certificate helps in property distribution, some abuse it and are believed to have gone ahead with the ceremony only to divorce a short while later. In some cases, it is said, this demonstrates that one of the spouses knew what they stood to gain from having such a certificate.

Despite the impression given by some couples that they are taking their vows at the courts to ensure that their marriages are strengthened, the issue of property distribution seems to be the underlying factor in the haste for registration.

The issue has become particularly important now, when more women are earning money and contributing to the family wealth. They want to ensure that their property will not be grabbed by someone else if there is a breakdown.

950108.ZIM (1036 words)

ZAMBIA:

Return of the youth work volunteer spirit

Lusaka, December 17, 1995 (AIA/Rosalyn Muchindu) — The youth of Southern Africa — disillusioned by the apparent inability of the politicians to bring about significant change — seem to have decided to take a few steps of their own.

One could not go so far as to call them an emergence of the frontier spirit, but there seems to be a new willingness to volunteer to get things done.

They believe that by pooling their physical and mental

powers they can help take development to even the remotest and neglected parts of their nations.

Tilda Gosa of South Africa is fascinated by the "new work ethic". "It is nice to share experiences with others," she says, adding that she is more than determined to work for the poor in society without pay.

Mireille Raharinjaka of Madagascar echoes her, stressing that, for many, "money does not matter that much".

"Our pay is the pleasure of seeing that a project is completed and that you are part of that success story," she says.

Tilda and Mireille are but two of the 36 young people who met in Zambia in mid-December to participate in a two-week International Workcamp in the small town of Kafue on the banks of the river of the same name.

The camp was attended by representatives from Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Madagascar, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Britain. Zambia has its own organisation, the Zambia Voluntary Work Camp Association (ZAVWCA), modelled on the lines of the volunteer American Peace Corps.

Camp leader Nobert Matadi, a second year history student at the University of Zimbabwe, spoke of the high morale among participants from so many countries.

His team renovated a dormitory at Kafue Secondary School, up-graded the kitchen and laundry at Kafue Mission clinic, rebuilt a semi-detached staff house at Mudhuto Primary School and dug trenches for water pipes.

This was the first international labour camp to be held in Zambia and it raised unforeseen expectations among villagers near the school. Eighteen-year-old Victor Chabinga recalls how on the first day "when the group arrived we attracted attention. Men besieged us looking for work. But they were disappointed when they heard that the work available was for no pay."

Chabinga was part of a group of young men of the Zambian chapter of the young Men's Christian Association, seven of whom attended.

"The time has come for the people to realise that neither governments nor NGOs can do everything for them. The needy must realise that they have to contribute their own welfare," said Alan Mulenga, chairman of the ZAVWCA.

Such strong sentiments were not considered a rebuke by the villagers. Muchute primary school PTA chairman Douglas Phiri fully endorsed the ZAVWCA programme and he immediately contributed 463 of his own concrete building blocks.

Zeria Sakala, 18, who successfully completed secondary school education at the end of last year, recalls how it has been possible for her to gain practical skills, such as building and plastering.

But even though the importance of money is being relegated nothing much would have to come out of the efforts of the youth without it.

ZAVWCA was started three months ago by social worker and co-founder Henry Kabula who is now its national coordinator and Nigel Watt of the Coordinating Committee for the International Volunteer Service in France (CCIVS).

Apart from CCIVS help, the Zambian volunteer organisation was able to carry out its first project with the help of money which came from the Danish Donor agency, Danida, and the German Volunteer Service (GVS).

Richard Mutumbe of Uganda said he was disappointed at the low turn-out of local people prepared to work without pay

on self-help projects. Mutumba, of the Uganda Voluntary Development Association, noted this was not the way such matters were handled in his country.

There, he said, several villagers usually participate in the projects and that was why his organisation was able to build classroom blocks, dispensaries and other community buildings.

ZAVWCA is to sign a two-year contract with Danida, GVW and CCIVS to the end of 1996 and during its tenure it is expected that ZAVWCA will be able to organise work camps on a regular basis — possibly monthly.

Previous self-help projects have been allowed to die a natural death but many observers are confident that the rekindled spirit will persist and assume even greater overtones. They hope the projects will set an example for millions in the sub-region who are now wondering if what they are being told by their politicians will ever become reality.

As Kafue member of parliament Dr Yusuf Badat says: "Voluntary work is the only way forward in development, not only for Zambia but for the rest of the sub-region."

950109.SAD (799 words)

MALAWI:

Banda's trial a "test case" for the judiciary

Blantyre, January 12, 1995 (AIA/Felix Mponda) — Legal experts say the trial of ex-president Banda and his top aide John Tembo for murder will be a test case for the judiciary, which has a history of being circumvented by the government.

"This will be a trial to test the independence of the judiciary," says lawyer Zangaphee Phiri.

The judiciary will try the two, together with two retired policemen, under Malawi's new constitution which came into effect last year after Banda's defeat at the polls by President Bakili Muluzi.

Banda, who ruled with an iron fist for almost three decades, aided by Tembo, were found by an inquiry to have ordered the murder of four prominent politicians in 1983. Dick Matenje, secretary general of the then ruling Malawi Congress Party, ministers Aaron Gadama and John Sangala and parliamentarian David Chigwanga had opposed Tembo's appointment as caretaker president while Banda was to go on vacation.

Tembo was said in the inquiry's report to have given the police the first order to have the four killed, which happened when the police faked a car accident.

They were not given state funerals and were hurriedly buried in their home areas, raising suspicions that their deaths were politically motivated.

A decade later before a referendum on multi-partyism, Muluzi made the deaths into a campaign issue and promised that once voted into power he would institute an inquiry. "Malawians are entitled to know the truth about their deaths," Muluzi said.

The findings of a 13-member independent inquiry appointed in June 1994 revealed that the four did not die in a car accident, but were murdered on the instructions of the authorities, obviously meaning the Banda regime.

"There is no doubt that the four were murdered by police on instructions from the authorities," high court judge Michael Mtegha said when he presented the report in January to

Muluji, who said the law would be allowed take its course.

If convicted, the four face the death penalty.

They are each being charged with conspiracy to commit murder. Many Malawians have celebrated that Banda and Tembo have finally been brought to justice after, over the years, sending many people to prison on trumped-up charges, without a chance of legal representation.

"They are lucky because things have changed in Malawi and they have legal representation. They should also been tried under traditional courts," said Richard Manyumba, a Blantyre resident. Banda often used the traditional courts — dubbed kangaroo courts by critics — to try opponents.

They were abolished last year and often-illiterate, traditional chiefs, who had presided as judges over murder and sedition trials, were retired.

Opposition leader Orton Chirwa and his wife Vera — abducted in Zambia and tried on treason charges by a traditional court — were denied legal representation and were sentenced to death but this was commuted to life imprisonment by Banda following an international outcry for their unconditional release. Chirwa died of illness in jail.

George Kaliwo, legal advisor of Banda's Malawi Congress Party (MCP), who is representing the four, fought to get bail for Banda and the others but it was denied. Banda is under house detention.

In an editorial in the Malawi News — owned by Banda — the paper said "let justice be seen to be done". It is said the events were a sad beginning to the year and for Malawi's budding democracy "which if not nipped in the bud will be catastrophic for the country".

It said that once it was announced that Banda had originally been put under house arrest and Tembo arrested following the release of the probe, officials of the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) went on the rampage in Blantyre and Lilongwe, destroying offices and property belonging to the MCP.

"It cannot be completely ruled out that the UDF hierarchy was very much involved directly and indirectly."

It praised Muluji for being quick to condemn the "barbarism perpetrated by his party's cohorts and politically immature functionaries".

What many Malawians are now waiting to see is whether the judiciary will assert its allegedly new-found independence from the executive and if it is prepared to hand down judgements unpopular with the government.

950110. MAL (692 words)

TANZANIA:

Agricultural targets not met

Dares Salaam, December 6, 1995 (AIA/Lawrence Kilimwiko) — The agriculture sector has failed to attain targets set under the structural adjustment programme (SAP) which has just entered its eighth year.

Experts at the economic research bureau and the economic department at the University of Dar es Salaam say production has been affected by the low price of exports and the high costs of imported inputs due to the removal of subsidies and the devaluation of the Tanzanian shilling.

Economists F P Madembine and J S Lugaganya told a seminar on national economic policy that the use of fertiliser had also declined due to its higher cost, and less donor aid.

During the 1970s, Tanzania experienced an increase in fertiliser-use mainly due to huge government subsidies. Likewise, up to mid-1980s donors provided fertiliser grants in the form of commodity aid.

Before the liberalisation of the economy, fertiliser prices were set by the government, offering a subsidy of 50 percent. However, the government decontrolled the fertiliser market in 1990 and gradually phased out the subsidies this year.

According to Madembine and Lugaganya, the removal of the subsidies has coincided with devaluation of the shilling, thus raising prices to farmers between 275 percent and 716 percent in two years.

Studies show, for example, that while at Lulanzi village, a farming settlement 60 kilometres west of Iringa in the southern highlands, 80 percent of the farmers used fertiliser in 1992, by 1994 fertiliser was used by only 30 percent.

"The planned elimination of fertiliser subsidies appears to be resulting in reduced fertiliser use which could lead to lower crop yield per unit of land and aggravate encroachment to new areas with disastrous consequences on the environment," say Dr F Shechambo and K Kulindwa, both of the university research bureau.

According to their findings, 30 percent of farmers who did not use fertilisers found the costs too high. "However, even for the 70 percent who used fertilisers, the quantity used dropped 20 kilogrammes per hectare, or more," they said.

Forty-nine percent of those who used fertilisers, according to Shechambo and Kulindwa, qualified their replies by pointing out that fertiliser use has declined since 1985.

In the liberalised atmosphere, private individuals and companies are willing to enter into the fertiliser trade, but they are constrained by limited access to bank finance.

Private traders charge up to 50 percent above average prices for fertilisers, notes Madembine and Lugaganya.

Despite production incentives such as duty-free entry for equipment and machinery, agricultural mechanisation is still low. The economists say only 10 percent of acreage is handled by mechanical ploughs, while handhoes remain the dominant method.

Most agricultural producer factories are operating below capacity because of the slow pace of privatisation.

The economists say lack of private sector investment in agriculture and devaluation are the main causes of non-satisfactory performance of the agricultural sector.

Agricultural expenditure in budget allocations has not increased substantially since 1986, they say. While the allocation for agriculture stood at 16.9 percent of the budget in 1986 it dropped to only nine percent last year.

The economists stress the importance of agriculture in employment creation, food production and export earnings. Some 84 percent of the country's labour force is engaged in agriculture, which contributes 60 percent of the GDP.

They are optimistic however that in the long-term, the liberalisation of input supply, if accompanied by increased real producer prices, will lead to more widespread use of fertilisers.

Until now — while the government has decontrolled farm input prices, except for cash crops — it still sets prices for food crops which render farmers powerless. The outcome has been to abandonment of food crop farming which will probably lead to importation of food.

950111. TAN (words)