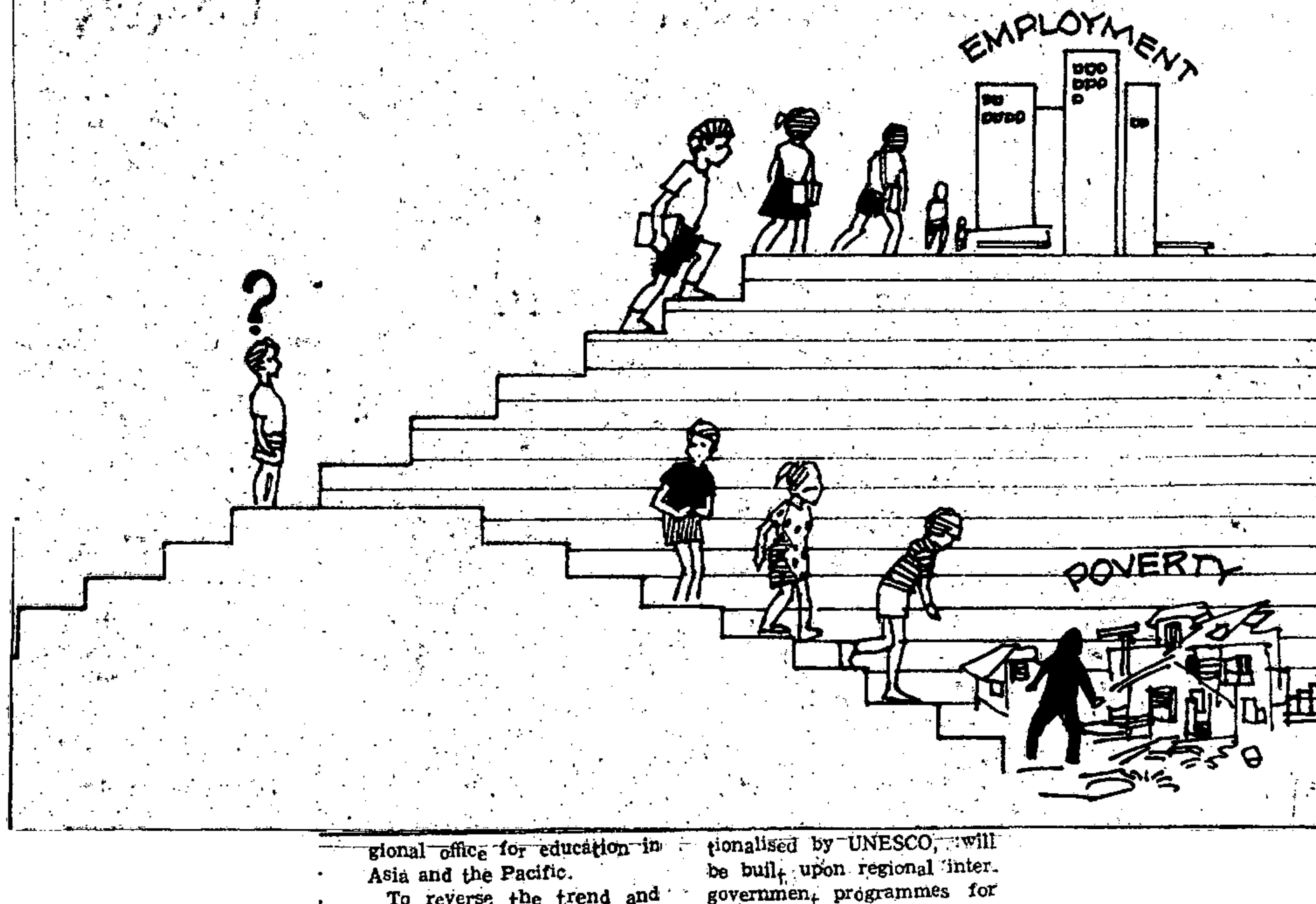


JUL 170

The number of illiterates increasing



gional office for education in

Asia and the Pacific.

To reverse the trend and

hopefully boost efforts of gov-

ernments to provide education

for all by the year 2000, the

United Nations General As-

sembly adopted last Decem-

ber a resolution proclaiming

1990 as International Litera-

cy Year.

One objectives is to create

favourable favourable condi-

tions for launching a decade-

long Plan of Action by mobi-

lising international public op-

inion in support of literacy ef-

forts by governments and or-

ganisations.

The Plan of Action, as ra-

tionalised by UNESCO, will

be built upon regional inter-

government programmes for

promoting illiteracy. APPEAL

is a case in point.

The idea is to proud coun-

tries with illiteracy or func-

tional illiteracy problems to

eliminate these handicaps by

providing education for all.

Part of the thrust in the

coming decade is to increase

opportunities for women's

education. As Dr. Namlik

Aksornkool, UNESCO pro-

gramme specialist in literacy

training in Asia, put it 'Edu-

cate a girl and you educate a

nation.'

— DEPTHNEWS

The Bangladesh Times

অবিষ 11. SEP 1988

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The rate at which adult population is gaining literacy is outstripped by the rate of population growth. Primary school dropouts add to the number of illiterates.

Nestor Cervantes writes

As in much of the Third World, increasing numbers of adults in industrialised countries also labour under severe handicaps in reading and writing.

Surveys by the United Na-

tions Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organisation

(UNESCO) indicate that in

some of these economically ad-

vanced countries the number of people hardly able to read

and write has reached 5 per

cent or more of the popula-

tion. A far larger proportion

of the population suffer from

less serious literacy-related

difficulties.

Because of these handicaps,

the 'functionally illiterate'

find it increasingly difficult to

land jobs in a modern eco-

nomy. Those holding low-

paying, menial jobs see little

or no prospect at all for pro-

motion in pay and work status

and thus remain underem-
ployed. Too often, they retire

early in their own limited

world, unable to participate

effectively in increasingly

complex societies,' notes

UNESCO.

A phenomenon in industria-

lised societies, functional illi-

teracy has been traced to al-

armingly high dropout rates.

With only a few years of for-

mal schooling, many have

been lured out of school by

the prospect of making easy

money in sweatshops and fa-

ctories. Poverty is also a ma-

ior reason, and peer group is

a contributing factor.

The dropout problem be-

comes twice compounded in

developing countries, observ-

es UNESCO. In Sri Lanka, for

example, almost 30 per cent

leave school before complet-

ing their primary cycle.

With a relatively high lite-

racy rate, the Philippines also

has a largely unremedied dro-

out problem. A study by the

Fund for Assistance to Pri-

ivate Education places school

dropouts at 9.6 million or

nearly 20 per cent of the na-

tional population. Only 62 out

of every 100 first grades fin-

ish the elementary course or

reach the fifth grade, accord-

ing to the study.

The situation is no better in

other developing Asia-Pacific

countries. And concerned offi-

cials have come up with non-

formal education programmes

to rescue school dropouts who

have lapsed back into illitera-

cy.

In Sri Lanka, the Education

Ministry conducts literacy

classes in state schools and

in other suitable locations.

A parallel programme is the

setting up of Learning Acti-

ivity Centres in remote and

sparingly populated areas to

provide alternative basic edu-

cation to children.

In the Philippines, the live-

lihood-oriented University of

Life is being eyed as the nu-

cleus of activities for deve-

loping non-formal education

programmes nationwide.

China has spare-time prima-

ry schools for peasants who

have attained literacy, dro-

outs from primary schools,

youth, and middle-aged indi-

viduals.

Indonesia boasts a compre-

hensive programme of litera-

cy for primary school dropouts

and those who have never

had any formal schooling.

Vietnam has full-time edu-

cation for various levels of

learners and evening classes

for the illiterates.

UNESCO itself has launch-

ed innovative programmes to

stem the tide of illiteracy in

Asia and the Pacific. Only a

year old, its Asia-Pacific Pro-

gramme of Education for All

or APPEAL is now generating

tremendous enthusiasm among

member states. Also in place

is its Asian Programme of

Educational Innovation for

Development, or APEID.

But for all these program-

mes for continuing education,

the illiteracy problem re-

mains daunting.

The dropout problem is just

one gray area in the global

literacy picture. Worldwide,

the number of illiterates has

increased despite an improve-

ment in the aggregate litera-

cy rate of developing coun-

tries over the last 15 years.

By UNESCO's estimates, the

number of illiterates world-

wide had increased by 97 mil-

lion from 760 million in 1970

to 357 million in 1985. Asia

and the Pacific accounted for

618 million or an increase by

81 million from 537 million in

1970.

'Clearly, the rate at which

adult population is gaining li-

teracy is outstripped by the

rate of population growth

while primary school dropouts

add to the number of illite-

rates,' notes the UNESCO re-