

EVERY YEAR when we prepare this report of our activities in the twelve months that ended on the preceding 31 March, a sense of doubt assails us. Are we giving a true account of ourselves? Are we glossing over the debits? Or, wary of being suspected of self-congratulation, are we erring on the other side? We have two safeguards against either pitfall. First is, we must say this; our own conviction, as a matter of strategy if you will, that honesty is the best course, "policy" if you again say so. Second is the fact that this report is published in both English and Bengali, and the latter is distributed widely in our work area, where for a week after this is done, it is the favourite reading of our workers and those associated with us, many of them our severest critics, and of many who will not let go of their substantial but unsubstantiated reservations about us. Any understatement of achievement, any undeserved emphasis, any unseemly justification and we have to answer questions. This is what ensures that our distant friends and supporters, the organizations and individuals who might be rendering us financial help without having come here or only after a brief visit and for whom this English version primarily is, get, as we said, a true rendering of events of the year.

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Every year we narrate these events in some careful detail and also try to give the philosophy behind our work and the justification for every specific programme. This year we have decided to have less of both, as otherwise a sense of deja vu creeps over the whole thing. Over the years we have tried various new things, or done things in a new way, but we have never believed that innovativeness as such has any special merit. There is nothing wrong in doing something in our area that someone else has done successfully elsewhere with good results. Path breakers are as important as those who keep the paths clean by treading carefully and firmly along them. The main thing is to reach the goal.

It is perhaps time for us, after years of sustained work in a geographical area certain selected spheres, to have an external evaluation. We must test our approach and achievement through other eyes. No matter how we are judged, there will be things to learn. For an organization as a whole and also for the individuals who comprise it, both re-examination and renewal are important for its and their health. We do not wish to give the impression that we are feeling jaded. The following account of our work will bear evidence that our enthusiasm has not been sheathed, our efficiency has not rusted.

Increase in the quantum and variety of work has meant a realignment of our sections. This year the heads, still overlapping despite the re-drawing of maps, will be Organization, Health, Agriculture, Nutrition gardens, Self-help groups and Income generation, Education (Primary and Pre-Primary), and Youth and Culture.

ORGANIZATION

The Swanirvar presence is now seen in 14 villages, though with varying emphases. Even the five “core” villages, the ones where we started in 1990, are now showing different levels of achievement. Chandalati has lagged behind in certain areas, and Andharmanik where we started later than the other four as a separate village unit, also has some catching up to do. In the 9 new villages, there are significant differences in what we do, mainly because the local units have varying strength and competence, but we provide the same guidance and supervision in whatever we do anywhere. Swanirvar gives all these local units some money every month to meet their stationery and essential needs, and provides for a newspaper.

Our supervisors have got a motor cycle now for their work. Considering that our villages are not contiguous, and we are not prepared to compromise on our insistence on regular and strict supervision and exchange of ideas and information, the need for easier and faster communication was getting imperative. We have also applied for a telephone connection in some villages and when we get them, our main administrative centre at Andharmanik will be easier to reach.

2 Every village has its own association of young people, who in many instances got together to do something for the people, and then got affiliated to us. Our faith in decentralization has, broadly speaking, been vindicated, so we do not interfere too much in their work, but since they are all using other people’s money, money for the proper utilization of which Swanirvar has the ultimate responsibility, we do keep an eye on what they are doing. We have a project committee which oversees work, reviews progress, and plans programmes. Many villages have their representatives on this (we do not have a member from every village only because that would make the committee too big and unwieldy) and when they meet once at least every month, there is both evaluation and revaluation.

The supreme decision making body is still the working committee, which meets about once in eight weeks, to decide on policy, and on matters referred to it by the project committee. This committee has as members only those actively involved in our day-to-day work. This is both a strength and a weakness. We get practical opinions from those in the thick of the task, but miss a long-term, unattached and dispassionate view.

We have not looked for new sources of funding, and our old donors have seen no reason to stop supporting us. The following is a list of our principal benefactors and the amount they have given.

1) Friends of Swanirvar, Worcester, England. (FoS)	Rs 797,216.00
2) National Lotteries Charity Board, England. (NLCB) through Friends of Swanirvar	Rs 764,178.00
3) Share and Care Foundation for India. (S & C) New Jersey, U.S.A. * .	Rs 163,778.00
4) Association for India's Development, (AID) Maryland, U.S.A. “”	Rs 70,288.00
5) Paul Bidinger, Arhus, Denmark	Rs 62,005.00
6) Child Relief and You, Bombay (CRY)	Rs 498,192.00
7) P Banerjea, Calcutta	Rs 235,000.00
8) Sundry individuals	Rs 30,113.50
Total	Rs 26,20,770.50

* A number of individuals in the USA and Canada, an overwhelming majority of them of Indian origin, send cheques marked for Swanirvar to this Foundaton run by agroup of US-based Indians. The amount thus received is doubled by S&C and a cheque sent to us. This year ASHA of Los Angeles, an organizatin of Indian students, was among the donors.

** This is also an organization of Indian students in the USA and has units on various campuses.

Apart from this we got from

1) Subscription	Rs 393.00
2) Sale of fish,	Rs 32,740.00
to make our revenue in the year altogether	Rs 26,53,903.50

We divide our expenses into three main heads, Capital, Administration and Programmes. The following gives a summary of what we spent on what, and the source of the money.

First capital expenses.

Buildings	Rs 598,441.65	(FoS) ,
TV set	Rs 20,000.00	“
Furniture, equipment	Rs, 35,980.00	FoS (NLCB)
Motorcycles,	Rs 102,735.00	“
	Rs 23,085.00	Domestic
Pre-primary schools	Rs 62,455.00	“
Cycles	Rs 14,424.00	“

Incubator	Rs 9,000.00	Foreign
Total	Rs 8,66,120.65	

Next, expenses on administration, which includes the following sub-heads Audit fees, Bank charges, Books and publications, Documentation, Kitchen, Meetings, Postage and Telephone, Printing and Stationery, Repairs, Salary of co-ordinator and accountant, Travel.

The total expenses were Rs 1,26,739.00 of which Rs 35,097.91 came from our own funds from abroad, Rs 55,579.49 came from CRY, and Rs 36,062.00 was from our own domestic funds. Programme expenses, their sub-heads, and source of funds are given below.

Savings-credit, and youth	Rs 458,885.55	FoS (NLCB)
Income generation	Rs 38,181.50	S&C
	Rs 53,500.00	Domestic
Primary education	Rs 291,617.40	Govt of India (much of this is yet to Come)
	Rs 76,438.60	S&C
	Rs 29,800.00	Domestic
Pre-primary Education and Culture	Rs 3,55,577.69	CRY
Health	Rs 1,05,194.84	AID
	Rs 76,764.77	CRY
Agriculture	Rs 58,014.35	S&C.
Organisation	Rs 32,834.75	Foreign
Total	Rs 15,76,809.45	

A total of these three heads shows

Capital	Rs 8,66,120.65
Administration	Rs 1,26,739.60
Programme	Rs 15,76,809.45
Total	Rs 25,69,669.70

The table below gives our staff position and salary bill during the year 1997

Programme	No. of people employed	Total monthly salary
General	6	Rs 7,600.00
Health	7	Rs 5,950.00
Agriculture	10	Rs 8,975.00
Nutrition garden	8	Rs 3,400.00
Income generation	7	Rs 5,650.00
Primary education	13	Rs 12,275.00
Pre-primary education	31	Rs 19,425.00
Youth and culture	13	Rs 8,500.00
Total	95	Rs 71,775.00

HEALTH

There are reasons to fear that the involvement of governments, both at the Centre and in the States, in the provision of health services will decline. The Alternative Economic Survey, 1996-97 says investment in medical and public health has come down from 2 per cent in the 6th five-year plan to 1.75 per cent in the eighth. The Government of India's Economic Survey reveals that while in 1992-93 health accounted for .88 per cent of the budgetary allocations, in 96-97 this declined to .85 per cent. The vacuum is being filled by private investment in various health care services. These are naturally profit-oriented and so often terribly and impossibly expensive, but what is of more concern to us is that the vast majority of rural people have no physical access to them.

Our work in health may be divided into four major sections, though they naturally overlap. In mother and childcare, our six health workers, all women, look after immunization, nutrition, antenatal care, breast feeding, family planning. They also visit our schools to check the children's basic health, talk to women, in the company of or without our nutrition garden workers, about the need for such gardens at every home. These have all become routine work for them, either in their own village or in the neighbouring one where they have been gradually moving in for work in cooperation with the local group, and we are not giving details. The basic principle remains the same. There is a family health card which the workers follow and regularly update. In matters of immunization etc little prodding is now needed as people have become aware of their own needs and ways, and liaison with the government in setting up such camps and division of responsibility have become matters of easy habit now.

We give below a few tables to show progress in certain spheres. The first is on family welfare in 9

villages.

Village	No of eligible couples		Termination of pregnancy		Contraception			Condom
	Total	Quacks	Proper supervision	Sterilization	Loops	Pills		
Fatullyapur	493	14	6	8	14	18	1257C	13305P
Sarafrajpur	440	6	4	2	23	11	885C	6475P
Bhojpara	481	4	3	1	10	16	576C	6520P
Bajitpur	329	10	1	9	3	—	423C	2896P
Dweep Media	96	6	1	5	3	1	230C	1629P
Uttar Media	157	8	-	8	6	7	491C	5135P
Chandalati	275	4	2	2	4	4	802C	4017P
Parpatna	559	13	4	9	11	7	1323C	5342P
Beliyakhali	135	-	-	-	21	5	605C	4635P
Total	2965	65	21	44	95	69	6592C	49954P

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(C=cycles) (P=pieces)

In these 9 villages we also kept a record of births and deaths, but this is not totally accurate as many women go to their parents' house for the confinement, and some deaths may also take place outside the village. Incidentally, our health workers help all parents acquire a birth certificate of their new born child, according to law. A table gives a picture of births and deaths.

Village	Births		Sex	Deaths				
	Total	Still	Live	M	F	0-1yr	1-Syrs above	
Fatullyapur	60	1	59	31	28	1	2	19
Sarafrajpur	23	.2	21	14	7	-	-	11
Bhojpara	29	1	28	16	12	2	-	6
Bajitpur	76	5	71	37	34	4	-	18
Dweep Media	12	2	10	5	5	2	-	4
Uttar Media	23	-	23	15	8	4	-	8
Chandalati	26	-	26	15	11	-	-	12
Parpatna	45	-	45	21	24	6	2	10
Beliyakhali	15	-	15	9	6	1	2	1
Total	309	11	298	163	135	12	2	89

Of these 309 births, 202 were assisted by trained midwives, 76 by untrained ones, and 31 at health centres. As usual we provided various services to women during their pregnancy and, after the birth, to mother and child.

In the absence of a qualified medical person and also of equipment, our health check-ups in schools do not amount to much but our health workers do the best they can. Personal hygiene is checked; if anyone is ill and present, some sort of treatment is offered; chronic complaints are sought to be cured. Altogether 5843 check-ups (this figure is arrived at by multiplying the number of children by the off number of visits) were made in 14 schools and 579 cases were treated. We also made a survey of about 2600 children under 5 in 9 villages, and found that 100 and 272 of them suffered from severe and moderate malnutrition respectively. We kept a tab on the children throughout the year. Poverty, and the resultant lack of food, were the principal reasons behind the children's condition, but there were others like worm infestation, lack of awareness and information, and lack of care because the mother was away from home and/or too busy making a living. We could not do anything about the lack of food, or the mother's working habits, but we did tell the parents about the other matters and how to possibly overcome them. The nutrition gardens (please see in the section under that name), we hope, will make an impact on this in the coming years.

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In public hygiene and sanitation, we did not install any smokeless chullahs or make any low-cost toilets this year, but we disinfected 1303 tubewells in 9 villages with bleaching powder, as a preventive measure against contamination.

We had received some money for making a cement base for all tubewells in Belyakhali, as a further anti-contamination measure, but had to abandon the scheme as the arsenic menace made this irrelevant. Quite a few tubewells were closed for use as their water was found to contain arsenic much beyond the permitted level. We tested, with help from a Calcutta-based organization, Breakthrough Science, 102 samples from 13 villages and only 22 were found safe. (But there is no certainty that they would remain safe for any considerable period of time.) Of others 44 were unsafe to various extent and 36 were downright dangerous. One of the 8 samples from Belyakhali was found to be safe, and this is what persuaded us finally to divert the money for cementing the base to awareness campaigns against the largely and for long invisible dangers of arsenic. Apart from sample tests, one-to-one conversations and small informal meetings, we decided to hold a seminar on the problem. It was held at Rudrapur high school and was divided into two sessions, the first for selected participants, and the second open to all. We had made extensive campaigning and so 106 people from 16 villages had enrolled themselves for the first session where they were

addressed by, among others, one of the earliest scientists here to have identified and realised the danger and its extent, a representative from Breakthrough Science, and the secretary of the North 24 Parganas district arsenic prevention committee. The afternoon session was held in the large field of the school and there were a large number of people to watch slides etc to explain the problem.

Our health workers run clinics where people receive both modern and herbal medicines for common diseases. We are sometimes asked if we should not totally abandon one of the two. Logically that might be a sensible course but why should there be a total contradiction between the two systems? We leave the choice to the patient, and since our quarrel is not with modern medicine as such but with its misuse and/or overuse, we do not provide anything but the simplest medicines with no known effects to worry about. Our efforts to popularise herbs work at several levels, as will be seen in various other parts of this report, and our sympathies may be said to be with the herbal system of treatment, but since we are not yet in a position to effectively treat every common complaint with herbs, we continue with our allopathic medicines also.

The following table gives the figures for our clinics.

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Village	Modern medicine section		Herbal section	
	No of patients	Cost of medicine supplied (Rs)	No of patients	No of those cured
Fatullyapur	655	1398.10	701	629
Sarafrajpur	-	-	367	331
Bhojpara	-	-	400	366
Bajitpur	990	1504.60	311	310
Dweep Media	84	134.80	60	60
Uttar Media	-	-	51	50
Chandalati	116	85.35	291	275
Parpatna	472	344.10	631	614
Beliyakhali	762	576.85	138	138
Gokulpur	14	32.25	-	-
10 Villages	3093	4076.05	2956	2773

We receive some medicines free of cost and often give these free, too, while other medicines are given at cost price. The number of those going in for herbal medicine is actually much larger, for not all of them come to our clinics and thus get recorded. Many have, on our advice, planted herbs at home and may at best consult our worker about what to use and how.

As in the last year we cooperated fully with the Government's Pulse Polio campaign in its second

phase this year. We campaigned for this, with our workers organizing walks and loudspeaker campaigns, our children performing street plays and puppetry shows. In general also our relations with the state health department are very good.

We held six blood donation camps, at Rudrapur, Bajitpur, Gokulpur, Andharmanik, Punra, and Kolsur, and altogether 390 units of blood were taken back by the Government blood banks. At places there were more donors waiting but the collecting team had not come prepared for that large a number.

Two cataract operation camps were the totally new things that we did this year. Out of the 266 people who came to the two screening camps 46 were selected for the operation but 10 of them did not turn up on the scheduled day. So 36 were taken to the district headquarters, Barasat, for the operation. There we took charge of 15 other patients who had been able to make no proper arrangements to look after themselves. Of these 51, one could not be operated upon because of last minute complications. We looked after all of them, both before and after the surgery, providing and administering medicine according to instructions and later; when we found that the Government was delaying with the supply of dark glasses, we got a pair of these for all, at our own cost, and followed this up with powered glasses, too, for everybody. The whole thing was a success and we received all cooperation from the local primary health centre, from the district hospital, and from the District Programme Manager, Health.

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Throughout the year we organised village level awareness camps (164 in 9 villages, with 3339 people participating, 3092 of them women) on various aspects of health. A meeting on nutrition was held in 10 villages, and the 216 people who attended these included 194 women. Our health workers met every month and also once every quarter. There were two joint meetings with the culture workers and 32 girls from the Kishore Kishori Vahini (see the section on Youth and Culture) were given two days' training on the special problems, physiological and psychological, of adolescence.

In cooperation with the Association of Voluntary Blood Donors, which helps us in organising every blood donation camp, a motivation training for blood donors was held over 3 days with 56 participants. Our health workers and their supervisor attended quite a few meetings and seminars outside our project area, on subjects as diverse as community health, sanitary marts, environment, arsenic pollution, etc.

In many ways the work of our health department has reached more people than at of others, and has led to more popular participation. In the matter of arsenic, where no one knows what to do

exactly, in one village a well has been dug to conserve surface water. A plan to keep one large pond apart in one village for water to be used in the kitchen and for drinking had to be given up because of many problems, but we shall try again, through our Kishore Kishori Vahinis, We were part of the popular movement that led to the reactivation of the Basirhat blood bank. This increase in people's awareness has meant that our health workers have now been freed of much routine work. They do not have to make too many home visits; the people now come to them and seek advice on sundry subjects.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture and allied activities are the principal means of livelihood of the overwhelming majority of people in Swanirvar's work area, so it is a good idea to remember a few specific features of this region before we talk about our agricultural work.

10 We are not part of the most populous area of our district but since it has a density of population more than 6.5 times that of India we are reasonably overpopulated. The soil is fertile and water is available for irrigation throughout the year, so agriculture is highly developed, with most lands under triple cropping, and none less than double. There is little fallow land. There is extensive, even indiscriminate, use of chemicals - fertilisers, pesticides, weedicides, etc. The soil receives no bio-inputs. Productivity peaked about 5 years ago, and has begun declining in many areas since then. There are no really big landowners. Most are middle farmers, and only 5-10 per cent of the landowners have sufficient agricultural land to get an income from it to make a comfortable living. Half or more of landowners have small plots of land and for them farming is not profitable. About 40% of families in the area have no land at all. The almost universal use of hybrid varieties has affected all sections of the rural people, particularly owner-farmers by adding to the cost of inputs, and consumers by the toxic residue in the produce. The environment has been badly affected by the over extensive use of water and application of chemicals.

In our efforts to popularise a programme of agriculture that will be economically as also ecologically sustainable and at the same time ensure food security, we have always worked as part of a State-level network with the Calcutta-based organisation better known by its abbreviated name of Service Centre as convenor. The network has a member organisation in almost every district and Swanirvar is one of the eight regional resource centres. The targets and the strategies to meet those targets are decided at meetings of the network.

Thus our agricultural work, while making adequate allowance for local needs and conditions, is part

of a larger movement. This year, after long deliberation in which the partners played a very important role, this Sustainable Agriculture , Network considerably modified its approach and methodology of work and we have been imbued with fresh enthusiasm. We quote below, in some cases in slightly altered language, the present key strategies of the network.

Crop diversification can be a way of solving the twin problems of seasonal problems of shortage of food and of unremunerative employment. This diversity can be obtained by (i) introduction of plants suitable for marginal soils and specific agro-climatic conditions; (ii) reintroduction of traditional plants which have been rejected by farmers because of their low market price but which have high nutritional value and/or can better withstand periodic stresses; (iii) working out various plant combinations/rotations/relays. Periodic and/or emergency shortages can be met with the cultivation of beans, roots and tubers. There can be other strategic foods also.

The problems of soil erosion and the resultant decline in productivity are to be tackled mainly through increased production and use of green manures, biofertilisers, and cover crops. Also, perennial shrubs and trees have to be integrated into the agricultural system. A number of soil and water conservation techniques will have to be given field trials.

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Even middle aged people can easily remember the varieties of rice they had grown and eaten, but the introduction of hybrid varieties as an essential constitute of the green revolution and their quick popularisation have led to a loss of these traditional varieties. This is true of many fruits also. This problem of genetic resource erosion can be addressed through seed saving and seed exchange activities and through seed multiplication programmes. We shall have to involve farmers, research institutions, and specialised resource centres in this work.

The ever increasing use of toxic chemicals in farming affects the health of both grower and user but it is dangerous in other ways also. It reduces the population of many beneficial insects and micro organisms, interferes in the retention of a proper pest-predator balance, and thus leads to pest resurgence and crop losses. Farmers have to be taught about selection of more suitable crops and varieties, cultural practices, and botanical compounds that they themselves can prepare easily.

For all this work it is imperative to make local resource surveys and to revive traditional knowledge and practices. Extensive documentation is an essential step if much is not to be forever lost, as the use of many herbs may already have been.

With the present change of emphases, our agricultural workers are now primarily extension

workers and they also collect data on various things. They have formed 14 farmers' groups in 12 villages with an average membership of 22, and are expected to be in constant touch with these small or marginal farmers during all stages of agriculture. For this our workers should be abreast of new developments and findings. Selected workers visited experimental farms in other districts and attended training courses to learn more about new methods of paddy cultivation, residual moisture crops and how to become more effective extension workers. We so had resource persons coming to Swanirvar to talk to our workers and, in some cases, to selected farmers too.

The farmers in our group are the spearhead of our programme but our workers also move from village to village to hold 2/3-hour-long sessions with other farmers on various techniques and methods of sustainable agriculture, and to answer questions. We call these study circles. In our area the annual agricultural calendar is divided into three parts -Kharif, Rabi and pre-Kharif - and obviously there are seasonal modifications to every such technique or method. Another very important function of these meetings is to make it possible for our workers in their turn to gain knowledge and ideas from farmers, who are repositories of traditional lore and handed-down wisdom. Altogether 204 such study circles were held, with 16 farmers present on an average at each.

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Not all who come to such meetings are converted. Some, like the eggplant grower whose body shows scars from the pesticides he sprays on his crop, may be convinced but cannot afford to give up their short-term gains. Some would like to wait and watch what happens to those who change their ways. Some would adopt some of our recommendations, and hold out on others. But all in all, things are changing. We shall not give as we used to in the previous years, figures of how many farmers used what in how much land but the number of innovative farmers and the number of experiments are both growing. There is obviously a very long way to go before any overall change can be discerned but nobody ever went a mile without taking a first small step.

As nutrients we recommended and farmers used Dhaincha, azolla, compost, liquid compost, rock phosphate, rhizobium, azotabactor, and PSB. These last three are made in our own laboratory. Altogether 21.75 kg of rhizobium, 85.6 kg of azotabactor, and 72.3 kg of PSB were supplied, for use in approximately 8,32, and 27 acres of land respectively. To conserve water and soil, we carried on a campaign against water-guzzling Boro rice, recommending instead wheat, various legumes, and pulses. A short-duration paddy was introduced, and a deep-water paddy popularised. Soyabean and groundnut were grown as oilseeds. Rice seeds were "treated" for better conservation. For plant protection, many types of botanical pesticides were used. Integrated pest management became more popular. After being taught how to select and properly preserve seeds, farmers are depending less on nurseries, and as their skill and self-confidence grow, this

dependence might become totally unnecessary. Grafting of fruit trees is leading to better quality yields, and our workers have gone to Purulia to teach the method there.

In 1992-93 we had demonstrated in local marketplaces a pedal pump to lift ground water but this did not sell well. This year another NGO came to us with an improved design of this pump and sought our help in taking this to farmers. This we did and the pump, priced at Rs 410; was bought by 10 farmers who all report that they made a good choice.

NUTRITION GARDEN

There are altogether 333 of them in 10 villages but we still do not know what unequivocally intelligible and at the same time comprehensively descriptive name to give to these sources of food and medicine that we want all families to have. Kitchen garden does not indicate the innovative planning that lies behind every such garden; home garden is vague; nutrition garden does not encompass herbs. But our workers seem to prefer this last term, so we shall call these plots, cultivated to provide year-round nutrition from vegetables grown without any chemical aid and accommodating certain herbs needed to tackle the usual illnesses in a family, by that name. Our target groups are families who do not have any land and, almost certainly because of that, never have enough money to buy vegetables from the market. The ill effects are obvious; in ten villages we surveyed we found 372 children in various stages of malnutrition. This also makes them less resistant to the sundry agents of illness, and so we also encourage the cultivation of both prophylactic and remedial herbs.

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So far this programme had been a part of our larger set-up in agriculture, but this year we wanted to give more emphasis to this and a separate section was formed with a new team of workers. A three-day residential training was given to them in July. Even from earlier our workers had been talking to women in various villages at meetings which we call study circles and 222 such meetings were held this year, with 2933 women participating.

Not that all of them joined the programme. As a matter of fact, response could have been better. There are two reasons why this was so. First, having a worthwhile nutrition garden calls for some hard physical labour, if not daily then quite regularly. Second, people prefer ready cash to benefit in kind, and women are no exception to today's money-oriented motivation. They would rather do something elsewhere to savour the feel of money in a knot in the sari, than work at home to save the later spending of that money. Study circles and constant home visits try to convince them of, among other things, the possibility that the birds in the bush may be plumper than the one in hand. The other things about which we talk to them include the need to utilise all unused land near a

house to grow vegetables, using domestic waste as irrigation and fertiliser, to plant according to a schedule that will give something to the kitchen throughout the year, to tell them of the medicinal properties of plants that are already around us and to grow these or new ones when we supply the seeds or plants, some of these new ones being those that were once plentiful here.

In 10 villages we have formed 28 groups, with an average of 14 women in each, to popularise the concept through mutual discussion. They have been able to reach even families who have no land at all to spare, but are now growing something or the other on roofs or on machans. Every regular garden will have some leafy vegetable, papaya or plantain, drumsticks, tubers, beans, legumes, eggplant, chilli. Among the new varieties we have helped introduce are a type of spinach, beans, cassava, long white eggplant etc. Once these new crops grow, their seeds are used in the next season by more people. Various techniques of preparing natural fertilisers and pesticides are used with success.

The members of the women's groups treated 318 people with herbs for toothache, dysentery, common cold, diabetes, dysmenorrhea and other menstrual problems, mumps, insect bites, old wounds, burns and cuts, gastro intestinal malfunctioning, etc.

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With our own laboratory producing spawn, mushroom cultivation took off this year in a big way, after quite a few false starts in the previous years. Altogether 153 women and 64 men grew mushrooms, and in their 8 villages the total production was 197.375 kg, individual production varying from 200 gm to 1.4 kg. This followed 13 training sessions of between 30 minutes and 90 minutes, with 284 trainees, not all of whom took or could be given spawn. Some had two good crops, some an indifferent third, and in our climate we could not hope for more. The most encouraging feature of the mushroom crop was that new material was experimented with as bed for the spawn and in most cases they proved successful, This means costs will further come down and, what is more, stuff that is locally and easily available will now be used. These were, straw from the Aman crop, bark from supari trees, a mixture of Aman straw and dried water hyacinth, a mix of Aman straw and dried banana stalk.

In the course of all work, certain things always happen that are a surprise. Happily there are no unpleasant surprises to report, but among those in the pleasant variety are the enthusiasm women showed in learning grafting techniques to improve the quality of a fruit tree's yield, the wide acceptance of herb-based remedies, mapping and planning of the better-performing gardens, and a survey of all plants and trees in these gardens.

Since the women's groups are spreading out to unexpected areas we have asked them to do a study of two things that might prove to be very useful. One is to make an exhaustive list of all the

plants whose leaves are eaten. Many of these do not come to the market and there may be some which are used in a very restricted area within a district. Most of these plants are not grown, they grow by themselves and with extension of cultivation some of them are dying out. We would like seeds to be preserved. Who knows what hidden sources of nutrition these may possess and what they can yield if produced on a large scale?

Similarly, many very poor people, among them the tribals who can be found in certain villages of our area, have been used to surviving in lean seasons, when they have the money to buy very little, on a variety of tubers and such things that grow in the wild and are often not known as edible by the general population. Can it be that these have reserves of nutrition? Our workers have learnt that many of these uncommon foods have been lost over the decades and we would like to have a compendium before it is too late.

INCOME GENERATION

15 Many of our well-wishers often ask us just how much our eight years' work has improved the financial condition of those for and among whom we run our programmes. And often it is only politeness that keeps them from expressing disappointment when we answer, and this without an apologetic lowering of eyelids, "Not much." A community's standard of life is not to be judged only by the amount of money it makes. There are other indices of human development. As a country's real strength lies in its happy and healthy citizenry, and not in the number of nuclear devices it can target on its neighbour, so does the true measure of its development lie not in its GDP, but in things like the rate of infant mortality, of school enrolment, of adult literacy, or average life expectancy, etc. Since Swanirvar's charter enjoins us to work for integrated development, we have always placed more emphasis on these than on provision of credit.

There was another reason for our decision. We did not have enough money. The small savings schemes that we ran in our villages had reached their optimum and the loans that we could and did give from their funds were for small sums and could not make any real change in a family's fortunes. These had served the limited purpose of helping a family tide over an emergency shortage of funds or a short term capital crunch. In 1993 we received some money from a German school teachers' association for the empowerment of women and that has been well utilized but its quantum was too little to make any real impact.

Things changed this year. The National Lotteries Charity Board in Britain agreed to give us, through Friends of Swanirvar in that country, a substantial sum of money over five years to be used, among other things, to set up a revolving fund for lending to women entrepreneurs.

The first instalment was received in August 1997. We then decided to restrict the scope of our existing savings schemes. Loans in our books will remain until they are repaid but no new loans will be offered from these savings. People will continue to have their accounts, deposit and withdraw money but that will be all. We shall encourage the savings habit, provide a secure place to keep the money safe from prying husbands and mothers-in-law (a majority of our account holders have always been women), and allow account holders access to their own money whenever the need arises, but no loans. Those seeking credit will have to come another way.

Five women, preferably close neighbours of the same age and with similar financial situations, form a group. They meet between three and five times a week, among themselves and with our workers, to learn what is expected of them. To develop the savings habit they contribute a sum fixed by themselves to a group fund every week. One of them becomes the group leader. These regular meetings bring them closer to our organization and a bond is established among the members.

16 Once we are convinced they have understood the modality and morality of the scheme - the time this takes will vary from group to group, depending on the growth of awareness among the members, this in turn often depending on the level of literacy - one member of the group becomes entitled to a loan for some productive work: Repayment begins from the next week, and the whole amount may be repaid after the 12th week, but certainly by the 52nd. Other members of the group become eligible for a loan within this time, but not all members want one. The meetings continue as regularly as before but less frequently; now the women, some of whom may have learnt to read and write by this time, talk about nutrition gardens, adult literacy, herbal medicine, the status of women and domestic violence, hygiene etc. Between 2 and 4 groups together make a centre. At the end of the year the number of centres stood at 17 and that of groups at 48. Things have not been easy. Many of the poorest women spend the whole day working in the field or in brick kilns during the season, and the evening doing housework. Their lack of formal education is also a demotivating factor as far as attending group meetings is concerned. Many husbands do not favour their wives participating in these programmes; they would rather we dealt with them. And there are always neighbours, with or without an axe to grind, who will keep telling the women what a trap is being laid for them. Swanirvar has been credited with plotting many a sin, from petty larceny to selling these women abroad. The groups have flourished.

The following table gives a summary of our progress.

Name of village	No. of groups	No. of loanees	Total amount lent (Rs)	Total amount repaid (Rs)	No. of full repayments
Andharmanik	5	25	62,500.00	14,450.00	-
Fatullyapur	17	85	2,18,000.00	93,826	20
Kolsur	16	94	2,12,700.00	91,896.00	27
Bajitpur	10	62	1,49,250.00	79,145.00	17
Total	48	266	6,42,450.00	2,79,317.00	64

The loans have been taken for purposes as varied as animal husbandry, trade in agricultural produce, tailoring, weaving, pisciculture, making fishing nets, incense sticks, buying and running non-motorised transport vehicles, setting up groceries or other shops, working with cane, mat, etc. We confess readily that though the loans are in the name of a woman, the work is not always done by her, or her alone. We had to be flexible about this, as entrepreneurship skills among women are not yet so well developed in our area. But even if the man uses the loan, himself or jointly with the woman, the fact that it is only the woman who can claim the loan, and this not just as matter of form but only after attending and participating in group meetings regularly for sometime and also the fact that the onus for repayment is on her, give her a status and prestige in the household that is also empowerment of no mean sort. Of course it would be better to have only women spending the loan with profit, and this may be achieved soon enough. We notice that in meetings of both the groups and the centres, the women now talk about more entrepreneurial options; possible sources of information and assistance, and they also seek details of government training schemes. At the same time there are regular demands that Swanirvar provide training on various aspects of self-employment so that they can do without male help.

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We are quite thrilled with how the programme has progressed in its first eight months. At many homes we visit, the smiles that greet us now are ones of achievement, partnership, and busy-ness, not just of polite despair. A sense of purpose has entered where despondency ruled. All this is good, but we have no illusion that this is good enough or that this is all there is to it. We have lent without collateral and yet the rate of recovery has been excellent. But a microcredit arrangement like that can never hope to create any permanent asset. When the national economy is sluggish, or worse as now, under the present system even remote villages will provide limited opportunities to run groceries or to sell mats. The credit will help the beneficiary, as one set of entrepreneurs replaces another, but will not benefit the economy in any significant way, for there will be no real increase in GDR In Bangladesh microcredit societies have provided small loans to no fewer than 6 million people, almost all of them poor villagers and over 90% of whom are women, and there has

been very little default in repayment so the money must have been properly used (though there are allegations that some beneficiaries become money lenders, and not entrepreneurs), yet Bangladesh remains a very poor nation. So we keep our fingers crossed about the long-term impact of this programme on the community's wider economics, but there can be no reservations about its other, social benefits. Illiterate chattels rising up to challenge men as entrepreneurs and beating them on their unfriendly turf, is what development is all about. And for those who look for other benefits, such female empowerment is bound to reduce fertility. This will not make the GDP growth chart race upwards, but will certainly contribute to the per capita income. And to the health of other indices of human development.

Apart from individual loans, we gave Rs 35000 to a group of men at Chandalati to lease a few ponds and grow fish there. The final results will not be known until 12 months are over, but they seemed to be doing well.

We shall conclude this section with two case studies. Giribala Parui had been a widow for some years with a son and a daughter, and with uncertain calls for work on other people's land as her only source of some income. The daughter "could contribute nothing and was a mouth to feed" so Giribala married her off, Her son is mentally handicapped. So Giribala is still the sole breadwinner in her family. She joined a group, was entitled to a loan and took Rs 2500 on 27.9.97 to trade in vegetables. She returned the money in regular instalments and at the end of the year was only one instalment away from total freedom from debt. She said her savings would give her enough capital to carry on for sometime.

Jharna Parui had a husband, Dulal, and three children. Both worked as day labourers and life was indeed a daily drudgery because there was nothing to make them look forward to the morrow. She joined a group and took a loan of Rs 1500 from us on 19.6.97 to lease a small pond and to grow fish. Dulal showed symptoms of insanity which kept growing; water full of pesticide from a nearby vegetable plot entered her pond and all the fish died. Jhama did not lose her head; she went back to working on others' fields, used the rest of her loan judiciously, took her husband for treatment and once the loan is repaid-she has not defaulted on a single instalment-would apply for a fresh loan. She says it was cooperation of the other members of her group and the feelings of solidarity that kept her sane and strong.

EDUCATION

Modern communications technology has brought with it hints of the global village. But so far the only inhabitants of that village have been the transnational elites, those who live in the industrialized North and those in the South who have access to the global communications

network. The current pattern of communication and transportation, to say nothing of the commercial culture imparted chiefly by the mass media, has helped create a new stratification of the world's people into two classes that share little information, experience, or common concern. The wealthy transnational class is assimilated into a universe of communication and information that is out of bounds for the majority of mankind. The psychological-distance between these two strata is in imminent danger of reaching a point where the only form of discourse between the top and the bottom is violence, punctuated by occasional spasms of charity.

The profound irony of the situation cannot escape us. The very communications and information technologies that have the potential to knit humankind together in ways never before possible are now contributing to its fragmentation. Similarly, while these technologies have the capacity to contribute to democratization, to the decentralization of power, they are often used thoughtlessly in ways that centralize power. We flatter ourselves at Swanirvar - maybe we deceive ourselves too - in thinking that the geographical boundaries of our project area do not shut out our wider concerns, and that we do not lose sight of the massive wheel in which we arms a tiny part. Thus we are challenged to consider the ways in which the poor and the marginalised people of the world can be brought to a position of easy and independent access to modern knowledge. They, too, are decision makers in the development process. The aggregate of millions of decisions and choices by individuals and households can make or break population policies, maintain or exhaust the carrying capacity of specific environments, ensure or undermine the stability of a political or social system.

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This long, but we hope not long-winded, introduction to an account of our year's work in the field of education is necessary for a proper understanding of what we are trying to achieve. The key to everything everything is in education, even simple schooling, and we wish people paused and pondered how much valuable energy is being expended on pointless debates on the correct age to start teaching English, to the exclusion of any meaningful effort to improve quality in everything to do with mass education. Mindless literacy in English is as empty as mindless literacy without it. We now run a pre-primary school in 14 villages. The total enrolment is 721, of whom 371 are girls. Quite a few of these have no proper building, no access road, and no toilet facilities. In some, a really rainy day is a compulsory holiday. Our usual cover-up for our inability to provide better facilities for the children is to sate that their enthusiasm transcends such inadequacies. Happily and luckily this enthusiasm is shared by the parents/guardians, as is evidenced by the ever-increasing demand for admission to the schools and the growing interest that they take in their wards' progress and the working of the school. Our teachers and supervisor constantly make home visits (altogether 4462 this year) and regular parents' meetings are held (69 this year with

1503 parents, often mothers, attending).

Opinions are exchanged, questions are answered. The net result has been that we have succeeded to a great extent in convincing parents, including those who are themselves illiterate or barely literate, that their responsibility to their children does not cease with sending them to school and in convincing our teachers that they must not feel that they know best. In certain villages we have gone further and have set in motion a process to form education committees for the whole village, with representation from teachers in other schools and parents of children who go to these besides our own teachers and our students' parents. The community as a whole will not benefit if the community as a whole is not involved.

We have not in any way relaxed our emphasis on regular supervision (232 visits to the 14 schools) and the supervisor's evaluation was supplemented by that of other visitors from outside (112 in all), including from CRY and Vikramshila, the two organizations that are our resource centres. The teachers met at monthly meetings, at workshops, at internal trainings and during group visits to one school by teachers of some others. Each gets to know how the others are doing, and uses interaction with peers to improve or modify his own performance, neither of which can boast of an optimum point. They also go for external trainings, but this year unfortunately there was no exposure visit to any other NGO.

20

In villages where we run a primary school the children from our pre-primary schools join these but where they have to join Government primary schools in Class I it has by now become common to find our alumni doing much better than others. This is only as it should be and what is more fulfilling is an experience like the following. One of our pre-primary schools one day had a group of unscheduled visitors; a holiday had been declared at the local primary school and some of our old students had then come to see what their successors were doing. They were asked to mix with the present group of children. This they did with the innocuous superiority of "seniors" and when the teacher asked them if they were not being exasperated by the "ignorance" of their juniors, they said with one voice, "Not at all. It must be our fault that we cannot explain things to them in a manner that they can understand. After all, they are too small."

Until last year there was some resistance to and misgiving about the method of "bookless" learning that we followed in our schools and some parents could not understand how a school could supplant "serious education" with "fun and games". Happily this is now a thing of the past. In one village one father wanted to take his daughter out of our school but relented when he discovered that the child of 5 had developed better reading abilities than her sister of 8 who was in Class II of the local primary Government school.

Our three primary schools, which we run on behalf of Vikramshila Education Resource Society, Calcutta with money from the Central Government under the NFE 2000 scheme, completed their second year this year. At the end of the year we had 272 students in all, 140 of them girls. At the Andharmanik school 21 children had left us for the local Government schools, because of some misunderstanding which was exploited somewhat unfairly. These local schools were worried by the preference among guardians for our school, and there was a word of mouth campaign that no high school would accept the children from our school when they go for admission to Class V there. We could not counter this as our contacts with the parents here were at that time not very well developed. We hope next year there will be no repetition of this.

Home visits (1433 in the three villages) and parent-teacher meetings (12, with an average attendance of 48 parents) continue, but a very welcome change has been that more and more parents are coming to meet the teachers or the supervisor to talk about many things. Earlier we had to visit homes to collect the fees, but now parents come of their own to pay. It is also good to find that personal hygiene and cleanliness are now accepted as their responsibility by the parents. Many of them have now understood our methods and, at least some have realised that at home if the child needs any help, they can and should give it, and not go for a private tutor, who has become an essential adornment, regardless of his efficacy.

21

It is not merely parents who have become more involved and demanding. Teachers of neighbouring Government schools and some school inspectors also have expressed interest in our methods. By next year we should be having an education committee in all villages where we run a school, and this will bring together parents, panchayat members, Government school teachers and our workers. Our teachers and the supervisor held regular monthly meetings, workshops and group visits to exchange ideas on teaching; lesson planning, preparation of work cards and work sheets etc. One such workshop was addressed by a teacher from Santiniketan. The supervisor made 106 visits to the three schools to acquaint himself with the teachers problems first hand. We are still unsure about what to do with slow learners or children who persist in being indifferent for reasons about which we can do nothing.

At Andharmanik there is a group of children who miss school for a number of weeks at a stretch because they have to go with their parents who work as agricultural labourers in other districts: What do we do with them when they come back and cannot catch up with the lost days? Four teachers this year attended a 2-phase training course run by Vikramshila, and three teachers and the supervisor went for an Education Leadership Training. On various occasions we had visitors who spoke to us at informal meetings and usually these were very profitable.

We did not visit any other NGO this year but two groups visited us. A 13 member team from Santi Sadhana Ashram in Guwahati spent three days visiting our schools and other projects and there were 8 people from NKJK in South 24 Parganas.

Last year's exhibition of details of our educational experiment could not be repeated this year but we did set up a stall displaying our various educational materials at the venues of our four sports meets. Headmasters and teachers of quite a few primary and secondary schools have visited our pre-primary and primary schools and expressed keen interest in our work, and we look forward to meaningful cooperation with them in the coming years, beyond the joint cultural activities that took place quite a few times this year.

22 One new thing we started this year is literacy classes for adult women. Over the years we have often been asked by such women to arrange these classes and we specially remember two such instances. Once a few mothers lamented that their children, who were going to our schools, made fun of them because they had now learnt to read and write, so we must do something about it, and in the other case, a woman explained her predicament thus. She was maltreated by her in-laws, but if she wanted succour from her parents she had to ask one of these in-laws to write to them and any advice the parents gave could not be kept secret as she would need somebody to read their letter to her. We did not have the resources for one thing, and for another, we wondered if it would be wise to do something that the Government was doing with so much fanfare, for we did not wish the impression to be created that the literacy mission was incapable of achieving its target without help. However, by now it is quite clear that public assertions notwithstanding, there is a very big gap between claims and reality and so we decided to begin the work in a small way. Our pre-primary teachers in some places began to run some centres and then in December there was a three-day training for all teachers where a representative from the All India Council for Mass Education and Development gave them theoretical and practical input on adult literacy. Nine centres were opened this year and response has been very good. They run at various times according to the convenience of the women. At some places, these women go home and teach their husbands the alphabet and other things they have learnt. In one village some boys in their late teens come to the classes. At Matiya where we run a school which began for children of sex workers, two sex workers come to the class. Enthusiasm has been followed by performance. In our own schools we do manage to conduct several experiments with methods of teaching, relating curricula with daily life, innovative ways of uncovering hidden creative skills etc., but we are in no position to address the larger issues that have made a mockery of education in general in our country, particularly in the rural areas, in that we are merely producing competence in storing information. For this k #1k we need larger forums and inputs from various sources, particularly

from people and organisations that specialize in education. We have thus joined several networks to work in cooperation with others.

The first of these comprises about 15 NGOs all of which have their school programme funded by CRY. These partners and CRY meet every 3 months and this year we had three meetings. The agenda generally has been exchange of experience and ideas and mutual evaluation, a review of general conditions in education, propagation of our views to a wider audience through interaction with other NGOs and by forming alliances with government and other private schools and panchayats in our own project areas. In the coming meetings we hope to move on to wider national issues, and the practical fall-out of Government policies and our efforts.

Action Aid organised a meeting in Calcutta in August where NGOs active in education met to discuss the possibility of free and compulsory primary education and what we can do to create pressure on the authorities.

23 In October we were among the four organisers of a three-day workshop at Badu near Calcutta where several West Bengal NGOs, representatives of the State Government, several specialist individuals, representatives of path-breaking NGOs from other States, like Eklavya and Digantar, had a very meaningful interaction. Various aspects of education in general in India were discussed, and special emphasis was placed on the special needs of rural learners. Universalization of elementary education was also discussed. Some follow-up measures were taken, but we need give more time to it. All the CRY partners and three other NGOs met in December at a seminar on curriculum development organised by Vikramshila. Our two supervisors and some teachers attended this meeting. Another such seminar was held in February to discuss exclusively what sort of evaluation/examination techniques we should adopt in our schools.

YOUTH & CULTURE

The children at our schools, both pre-primary and primary, have access to various forms of creative activity and just plain fun, and it would be parochial to keep other children in a village out of all this. Naturally all school-related activity has to be out of bounds for these children, but altogether between 1200 and 1500 of them participated in physical training, games, action recitation, Bratachari, yoga, song and dance, etc for which we provide trainers. Progress is uneven, but speaking very generally all these children this year learnt 36 Bratachari items, 26 brief games, 37 action recitations, 14 small plays, 28 songs of various type, and 16 yoga asanas. Obviously all this is not mere entertainment. Apart from the apparent physical and intellectual benefits, we would like to believe that we are inculcating a sense of values that will remain with them when they are later faced with the strong onslaught of standardised means of entertainment,

vulgarised by its total divorce from Indian rural reality. Thus we are not overly concerned with individual brilliance in any sphere. Not that we do not feel proud when one of the children who come to us does well at the subdivisional level, but we measure our success by the smiling faces of the children in their daily sessions, with no spectators present but themselves. They are also stern critics of their own performance and a deliberate shirker faces peer wrath. No wonder there are so few of them.

Their involvement is its own reward certainly, but there have been other more tangible gestures of recognition. Local clubs and other organizations called them over for a show, Government schools invited them to perform a few items at their functions, the Government health department used them to spread awareness about the pulse polio campaign. In the course of the year our children were invited to 13 places for a Bratachari show, to 20 places to stage a play, and performed puppetry at 4 places. We went to a Bal Mela organised by partners of a large funding NGO, Sahay, even though we are not-one of them.

24

Our adult theatre group has not ended its repertory, but even then it was invited to perform at 13 places during the year. It seems people still want to have some message besides the entertainment.

All this work with children demands constant practice and honing of skills. Our trainers met two or three times every month at a central place for a day's refresher session of rehearsals. Apart from this there were six theatre workshops. There were group visits to 10 villages by our workers to make on-the-spot assessments of how well the children were doing, and for a mutual evaluation and exchange of ideas.

Our trainers have themselves gone to different places for their own training. The Bratachari Society of Bengal trained nine of them in the full Bratachari course and two others in folk dances. Two of our workers who had received the first training earlier were used this year by the society as its trainers. An NGO in Purulia and another in South 24 Parganas sought our help in training their future trainers. This was given gladly, and received with benefit for there was a repeat invitation. We have divided our 15 villages, into 4 zones and each zone had its own annual athletic sports meet. The meets had their usual quota of races and jumps but these were interspersed with many games where participation was more fun than winning or being placed. The winners received prizes, but so did all the also-rans in all the events. Not a single child among the 1020 "competitors" in the four meets went home empty-handed, much to the appreciative surprise of the over 3500 spectators. To emphasise the value we place on sharing and cooperation, some zones

organised cultural functions in the evening where the day's competitors performed together. Birthdays of national figures, other important days in our modern history, and some secular significant occasions were celebrated in our schools. These annual events tend to be repetitive, with suspicion that the packet of sweets at the end is a major incentive for attendance, and there is also a limit to which children under ten can be told about the importance of our- Independence Day. Thus we add something or the other to each of these Days, not of any apparent relevance maybe but all part of the larger mosaic that represents a national spirit. Thus the children plant trees, disinfect tubewells with bleaching powder, clean roads etc. on these Days but on Children's Day they are given no tasks, except to enjoy themselves as only children should do, and as children in underprivileged communities never can. Observance of such days is not restricted to the children in our schools only; there is much wider participation, with as many as 2500 people; children and adults, sharing in the day's programme if we take all our villages together.

All this is continuation of our earlier work, with shifts in emphases, a few new ideas thrown in, another few given up as unsuitable or unworkable or as having served their purpose. What has been new this year is our formation of Kishore Kishori Vahinis where we involve high school students in the age group 10-16 in experiments with curriculum-based village activities which will help the students really learn their subject, instead of just becoming expectorant memorisers, assist the process of rural development, and make the children socially aware, responsible citizens, and sensible and sensitive human beings.

25

Our first batch comprised 46 children from 5 villages, divided into two groups, both of which received a three-day training at Swanirvar during the summer recess. This initial training told them about agriculture, health and education, and later they received short trainings on vaccinating animals and such practical -work. They have already completed a few surveys of their respective village's resources, and, say, of the state of sanitation and public hygiene there. They have been taught to present the data they have obtained in tabular form, through charts and diagrams, and the next step is to evaluate the collated data, decide on a course of action, work on a post-action evaluation, etc: The government's Animal Resource Department has already sought their help in vaccinating cattle and goats in one village, and in four others, they have on their own vaccinated poultry birds. A film has been made of our Kishore Kishorei Vahini (The Early Teen Brigade, so to say) to be telecast over the UGC slot in the national network.

CONCLUSION

Development is not merely an economic concept but is essentially a moral idea. It has its basis-and justification in a humane conception of life, in- a deep concern for the quality with which it is lived: Such a concern must imply a universal standard of evaluation, or it is meaningless: The ethics that

govern international relations at present, or international relations too for that matter, if we look at our own country, do not lead to the establishment of such a standard. This is where the principle of rationality that underlies a true scientific model can be of assistance. 3s We want to think that in India, class-transcending cooperation in the pursuit of knowledge, -based on a disinterested pursuit of a common ideal of the scientific understanding of the country we all inhabit, is possible. We at Swanirvar should all be working for this understanding that will give India a framework for the emergence of a new ethics in the relations between its citizens.