

SWANIRVAR

ANDHARMANIK
NORTH 24 PARGANAS
WEST BENGAL

ANNUAL REPORT
2004-2005

LOOKING BACK

This is our 16th annual report. This was the year when our years of ground work; our patient and careful building up of alternate models; our preparations as trainers & motivators to play a larger – wider role beyond our own projects ----- all of these have now started bearing fruit. Although the process started a few years back, we feel that 2004-05 is like a break year. To illustrate, here are some of the important events and processes, which have started to gather momentum.

Swanirvar as the District Technical Agency (DTA) for the govt. SGSY programme

It was in the last month of the previous year i.e. March 2004 that an agreement was signed between Swanirvar and the District Rural Development Corporation through which Swanirvar was given the assignment to strengthen the government's delivery machinery for its massive Self Help Group project over a period of two years. In this district of North 24 Parganas, there are now approx. 10,000 groups in the govt. SGSY programme spread over 22 blocks compared to Swanirvar's own 480 groups. We shall report what we have been able to do this year.

This special project of assigning an NGO the task of DTA started simultaneously in 6 districts of West Bengal under the Panchayat & Rural Development department of Govt. of West Bengal which in turn had an understanding with CARE. So all the district based NGOs, including Swanirvar, are working under the guidance of CARE. This year (2005) 6 more districts have been added in this special project.

With govt. primary schools

It was again towards the end of last reporting year in February 2004 that we were able to hold, for the first time, a workshop with 25 teachers from 23 local govt. primary schools. This year we were able to continue this. On 13 March, 2005 another such workshop with 30 teachers was held. This was the culmination of years of gradual building of bridges through joint rakhi celebrations; involving them in joint "sahitya sabhas"; and numerous one to one interaction with teachers, their union leaders, their local supervisors known as SI etc. We are hoping that in 2005-06 we will make a decisive breakthrough here and start the process of building **model govt. primary schools**.

Teaching interventions in govt. high schools

This has been one of our toughest tasks. In 1999-2000 we were allowed to conduct a few classes on herbs in an activity based manner in two local govt. high schools. But this intervention was very short and was not allowed the next year. In 2001-02 we organized a three-day training on activity based physics teaching for 15 teachers from local high schools. Although a few teachers tried out one or two things, the effort soon evaporated.

This year from August-September, 2004 four of our Youth & Culture dept workers have been given regular teaching assignments in two govt. high schools (two workers in each school). We did not try any "experiments", but utilized the opportunity to dig ourselves in. We are hoping to introduce some of our ideas developed over the years with our Kishor Kishori Bahinis, into the secondary school teaching in this coming year 2005-06.

Training teachers of other NGOs

This was the first time that we were asked by other NGOs, rural and urban, to give them training for primary level teaching. So some of our Primary teachers and KKB workers gave training to 48 teachers and 4 supervisors of 8 NGOs from 4 districts, all funded by Save the Children Fund. The Primary wing gave another training to 13 teachers and 2 supervisors from an NGO Parivartan and a rural school run by the St. Xavier's College NSS programme.

Activating Village Education Committees (VEC)

These govt. stipulated “people’s” committees are mostly non functional. In 2002-03 we had started to give some inputs to 22 local VECs, but it was very short lived and those VECs were disbanded. This year 9 Swanirvar workers, mostly the Pre-primary teachers, were able to become members of 8 local newly formed VECs and give some preliminary inputs. In the coming year we hope to build some of these as Model VECs.

All India Organic Agriculture meet

For the first time two of our workers attended a big national meeting at Aurangabad in Maharashtra. Many farmers showed a lot of interest in 3 of our works --- (I) mulch potato (ii) poyra or relay cropping (iii) the rope pulling method of utilizing the dew in wheat cultivation

Our own Secondary School & Education Resource Centre in Kolkata

After years of dreaming about it and making sporadic attempts to get funding, we finally managed to start an Alternative Secondary School in Kolkata towards the end of the year. We are also hoping to set up an Education Resource Centre in the same premises. This will hopefully play a crucial role in wide ranging interventions in the larger school education system of the country in the coming years. This is also our first urban venture.

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

INCOME

Name of Donor / Donor Agency / Source of income	Rs.
Indienhilfe (IH), Herrsching, Germany	2,955,000.00
CARE – West Bengal	1,176,370.00
Friends of Swanirvar (FoS), England	940,517.21
CRY, Kolkata	752,175.00
ASHA for Education, USA, Seattle, Silicon Valley, Stanford	421,247.00
All India Institute of Hygiene & Public Health (ICEF)	396,125.00
District Rural Development Cell, N.24 Pgns (P&RD, WB govt)	268,000.00
Share & Care Foundation (S&C), NJ, USA (Friends in LA)	179,321.00
SARI/Q – AED, Delhi	134,500.00
Swagata Deb, USA	100,000.00
Lease of Pond	70,000.00
Bank Interest	41,863.35
Misc. (Donation, subscription, Rent of guest house etc)	27,315.00
TOTAL	7,462,433.56

Loans taken by Swanirvar for further lending to women SHGs	
West Bengal Minority Development & Finance Corporation	900,000.00
UCO Bank	16,491,500.00
Total Loans	17,391,500.00

EXPENDITURE

A. CAPITAL	Rs	SOURCE
Building	2,259,275.90	IH, FoS, Dom
Furniture	35,112.00	CARE, S&C
Equipment	107,185.00	CARE, FoS, S&C, SARI/Q
Motorcycle	40,905.00	FoS
Cycle	8,126.00	S&C
Sub-Total	2,450,603.90	
B. PROGRAMME		
Pre-primary education	736,653.50	CRY, S&C
Primary education	557,877.80	ASHA
Youth & Culture	443,717.25	FoS
Learning Centre	299,785.70	IH
School Partnership	70,041.50	IH
SHG – Microfinance	773,140.40	CARE, Dom
Microfinance Promotional Forum	219,371.50	CARE
District Technical Agency for SGSY	330,455.50	DRDC
Agriculture	386,774.65	FoS
Health & Arsenic	420,236.95	AIIH&PH, AID
Trafficking	104,615.10	SARI/Q
Organisation	33,882.70	S&C
Panchayat	23,383.00	S&C
Travel	192,076.75	All
Misc. Meeting, Training	124,732.00	S&C
Printing & Stationery	101,942.50	All
Publication & Documentation	50,882.85	S&C, FoS, ASHA
Relief	400.00	Oxfam
Sub-Total	4,869,970.00	
C. ADMINISTRATION & REFUND		
Salaries, Fees	177,290.00	S&C, CRY, CARE, SARI/Q
Electricity & Telephone	61,346.75	S&C, CARE, SARI/Q
Repairs	52,762.60	All
Bank Charges	3,592.00	S&C, Dom
CRY refund	104,282.50	CRY
Sub-Total	399,273.85	
TOTAL	77,19,847.75	

EDUCATION: Pre-primary (PP)

This year the 32 teachers and one supervisor, under the guidance of CRY, were quite engaged with the issue of Child Rights and how to propagate the concept to various actors and organized groups in the villages.

Our own 14 pre-primary centres for 3-5 year old children.

We ran these centres as usual with about 1000 children, using various teaching aids many of them made or finished by the teachers through workshops. The centres also celebrated 4 special days through children's cultural performances on Independence Day 15th August, Rakhi 30th August, Children's day 14th November and Netaji's birthday 23rd January. In the 3 centres where we have our Primary schools: Chandalati, Andharmanik, Fatullapur, the pre-primary children also participated in the sahitya sabhas held there.

Child Rights related preparations

The Pre-primary teachers formed a **Core Group** of 9 staff who met 12 times during the year for brainstorming on various wider development issues but chiefly on the issue of Child Rights and to draw up "training modules" for sensitizing various actors on this subject.

Child Rights orientation was held for all the 32 pre-primary staff over a 6-month period during their monthly review meetings. In a sense, after many years, the nature of this monthly review meeting changed. The focus shifted away from reviewing the running of our own pre-primary centres. Two special orientations on this subject were also conducted by CRY staff for two days each for all the PP staff.

Child Right related survey

Surveys were conducted in 14 booths (Panchayat constituency), where the Swanirvar PP centres are located, on four issues: school non-goers / dropouts; early marriage; birth registration; ration cards.

Propagating Child Rights

For SHG: A 12-hour training module over a period of 4 days for sensitizing SHG women was applied to 6 clusters consisting of 18-25 SHG leaders representing 15-20 SHGs. This sensitization was done during the monthly meeting of these clusters. During the annual big SHG federation conference attended by 3500 women and numerous political leaders, people were taken aback when two of the cluster leaders made an impassioned plea regarding child rights with facts and figures!

For KKB: 150 KKB youths were given a child rights orientation over 3 days in 5 different batches

For Panchayat members: 20 Gram Panchayat (of 6 GPs), 3 Panchayat Samity and 2 Zilla Parishad members were sensitized about child rights through fairly intense one to one interactions

Parents / Villagers: They were oriented through small meetings and home visits focusing on specific issues like child marriage, birth certificate, VEC, ICDS, Panchayat system etc.

Village Notice Boards: 70 notice boards were set up / used in 14 villages to propagate the ideas of Child rights and also put up other relevant notices of the Panchayat, VECs etc.

ICDS (Integrated Child Development Service) survey

These centres known variously as anganwadis or balwadis or as "khichri centre" by local villagers for serving cooked rice-dal gruel to small kids (below 5 years age) are also supposed to give various other services to women, adolescents etc. But to kids they are supposed to impart pre-primary education, which in most cases they do not. Out of the 3 blocks where we work,

Swarupnagar has had ICDS for many years; Deganga started 2-3 years back; and Baduria in late 2004. The pre-primary teachers did a quick survey of 18 ICDS centres of all 3 blocks and some of their general findings were: i) Attendance of children was much lower than what the register showed ii) none had their own room, not even the very old ones in Swarupnagar iii) there is a 6 member ICDS committee but with no parent representation iv) none do any pre-primary teaching because of lack of space although teachers are well trained v) children are taught quite nice rhythm songs vi) even poor parents, in spite of food incentive, prefer to send their children to Swanirvar pre-primary centres (wherever we have such centres) and say that “learning” is more important than the food given in ICDS.

VEC Activation

There are 17 VECs in the 14 target villages. 7 pre-primary teachers have become members of 6 of these and the effect has been as follows: These 6 had regular meetings, a mean feat by itself. They have some records. Bhojpara VEC has a printed invitation letter for these meetings; Haiderpur VEC was able to decide to conduct annual exam in primary school as demanded by many parents and this VEC was able to convince the parents to pay a fees for printing question papers. But there is a lot that an active VEC can do to improve the quality of education and we hope to demonstrate this in the next 3 years.

WBEN: West Bengal Education Network

The Pre-primary supervisor had to devote a major chunk of his time to this state network. In the last few months WBEN has got substantial funds and has just recently hired quite a few staff. But in 2004-05 most of the membership expansion work, district level meetings, surveys, staff of member organizations like Swanirvar was doing campaigns purely voluntarily. So 5 of the other pre-primary staff have been quite involved in this work, even traveling outside the district whenever necessary.

EDUCATION: Primary

Children & the Education Process in our own schools:

Like last year we have 3 schools with Classes I to IV and one school with only Class I & II. The total enrolment at the end of the year was 514 with 89% attendance. This year there were 238 working days compared to 220 for the last few years in keeping with the new govt. school norms. In April 2005, 100 children have left to go to Class V in high schools.

Our evaluation system is quite well set with a formal half yearly and an annual exam, which has a written as well as oral and practical component. Then there is the yearlong classroom assessment.

In the year 2003-04 we translated the environment education series “Apne Aas Paas” of Digantar, Rajasthan into Bangla “Dekho, Bhabo, Karo, Shekho” and used Book I, II. This year i.e. 2004-05 we used Book III and the remaining 2 books of this 5 part series will start being used next year.

The Libraries in the 3 schools run by the children are doing quite well. This year there were 395 withdrawals and there are 115 regular readers. We bought 42 new titles for all the 3 libraries this year.

The children were taken for educational field visits. For Classes I & II, each school organized a trip to a nearby place. The two senior classes had joint trips i.e. all the three Class III together to Loknath Mandir in Kochua and all the Class IV together to Millennium Park, Kolkata.

Five special days were celebrated with children's cultural programmes. These were the four days mentioned in the Pre-primary section as well as 25th Baishakh (8th May) - Rabindranath Tagore's birthday. In each school a Sports day was celebrated with almost 95% participation of children.

Sahitya Sabha, the creativity show conducted by the children, was held twice in each school.

The four children's committees looking after cleaning of school premises, bathroom cleaning, games & sports, and sahitya sabha are doing excellently. Each of the schools has their own rules regarding the duration of the committees, their membership and class wise composition etc.

We supplied one set of uniform to all the children

The Teachers:

The 13 teachers and supervisor met for 12 monthly review meetings. There were two additional meetings; one in the beginning of academic session for planning and one at the end for annual review. But this year the monthly review meetings were also used to give inputs related to Child Rights, Panchayat system, and to review the overall aims of Swanirvar.

Four internal teacher's workshops were held. There were two for preparing the half yearly and annual exam papers. The other two were for the teachers' to prepare themselves as trainers to give training to other NGOs and also conduct workshops with govt. teachers.

Cross visits, where the other teachers go and spend a day in one school to evaluate the teachers and the school, were held twice for each school.

The supervisor made a total of 72 visits to the 4 schools.

Involvement of Parents & Community:

The parent's meeting held twice a year have become quite set now. One is held in the beginning of the academic year mostly for the new parents. Much of the inputs are given by the older parents of the Resource Group (see below). Another one is held at the end of the year where the exam results and overall performance of the children is discussed. The average attendance in these meetings this year was 65.

The teachers made a total of 750 home visits mostly to the homes of weaker, non attending children or children with some special problem.

Educational workshops with the parents, where they understand some of the teaching processes and actually make the teaching aids to be used in the classroom, have also become well set now. Workshops are held separately with parents of Class I, II children and Class III, IV children and these are held twice a year. Average attendance in these workshops this year was 48. The parents made many work cards for Bangla, Science, History and Geography.

Last year a Parents Resource Group was formed. This year also there was a special workshop with this group consisting of 16 mothers and 2 fathers on 18 Nov, 2004 (10 am – 3:30 pm) from all the four schools. This Resource Group is responsible for orienting the parents of new students, helping out in the parents' workshops, and actually taking classes in the school.

This time the group deliberated on what should be the role of Guardians and came up with a list of 9 things. They also discussed and wrote down what more they expect from the schools.

Some of the above resource parents are encouraged to help out in classes with actual teaching. This year a total of 29 classes were taken by 19 persons including a retired govt. primary school teacher.

Aiming at the mainstream:

This year rakhi was jointly celebrated with a total of 37 govt. schools: 25 with our Fatullapur school, 8 with Chandalati school, and 4 at Andharmanik.

Similarly Sahitya Sabha was also celebrated jointly with 28 govt. schools as follows: 15 primary and 1 SSK at Fatullapur; 7 primary and 1 SSK at Chandalati, and 4 primary at Andharmanik

Apart from this, one Sahitya sabha was organized by the govt. system with the help of Swanirvar at Katiahat school. This was held on 17th Feb, 2005. But the process started on 7th Dec, 2004 and over the next two months there were discussions with the SI (Baduria East), the respective secretaries of the two teacher's union – Pashchim Banga and Nikhil Banga Shikshak Samity and 70 headmasters. A small committee was formed for the Sahitya Sabha and they selected 31 schools. It was decided that (i) there would be 2 participants/entries from each school and in case of group performance more children would be allowed (ii) two more children to come as audience (iii) each school to ask one guardian to come (iv) a maximum of two teachers from each school (v) travel expenses and responsibility will be borne by respective teachers (vi) the names of the children and their written item should be sent to the SI office by 5th Feb, 2005. Invitation letters were sent to Gram Panchayats, Secondary schools, DI, ADI, BDO, and other SI s. *On an average, Swanirvar staff visited each of the 31 schools 3 times in 2.5 months.* On 17 Feb, 2005 the programme was held from 11:30 am till 3:30 pm

- 160 children, 70 teachers, 2 SIs, 1 ADI, 5 Resource Teachers were present
- 117 children participated
- 24 children read out their own compositions – poems, stories, letter to friends, travel composition, family episodes, first mid day meal at school etc.
- 30 children recited poems
- 3 groups performed “plays” on book fair, health, and communal harmony.
- There were 7 dance items

Newspaper reports appeared on 24 Feb “Evening Pratidin” and 4 March “Morning Pratidin”

So eventually 57 govt. schools were roped into Sahitya sabhas

The climax of all this was a one day workshop on 13th March, 2005 with 30 govt. teachers. Out of this 8 had attended the previous workshop a year back in Feb, 2004. These teachers were from 4 different circles (Katiahat 10, Berachampa 3, Chatra 2, Baduria main 15). Teachers worked in groups on defining the learning objectives, deciding how to teach and then making appropriate teaching aids. They worked on Bengali of Class I-IV, Science of Class IV, and Maths of Class I and II. This workshop was reported in the newspaper “Pratidin” on 22nd March, 2005. Many more local govt. teachers are showing interest and making inquiries.

Training teachers of other NGOs

Save The Children Fund, Kolkata (STCF) funds a programme of running schools for Child Domestic Workers (CDW) in Kolkata through 3 NGOs; and for ex-CDWs or potential CDWs in rural areas through 6 NGOs. In June STCF requested Swanirvar to give training to the teachers. Swanirvar staff visited two of the urban NGOs and one rural NGO in June to talk to the children, teachers, and supervisors and then started formulating a detailed 4-day training course.

48 teachers and 4 supervisors came from the 6 rural NGOs (districts - Midnapur, South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas) and 2 Kolkata NGOs to Swanirvar's Andharmanik centre on 23rd July. Out

of this, 15 were men and rest women. With 60 persons staying for 5 nights, our bedding - classroom - food - water arrangements were stretched to the limit.

The training was mainly targeted for 9-14 age group children. Subjects covered were language, math, and history-geography with some local studies, singing-dancing-games, and a little bit of science. Sessions would start at 9 am and continue till 9 pm with appropriate breaks. Training sessions were very interactive, lots of group and hands on work, lots of action. The pre-training module was constantly modified as the training progressed. This was done as the demands, as well as the capacities, of the various NGOs and teachers were quite varied -- urban vs. rural, below 9 vs. above 9 age group children etc. Apart from the two supervisors, 4 Swanirvar primary teachers and 3 KKB teachers acted as substantial trainers. 4 more gave a helping hand.

At the end of 4 days the trainees were very happy for two reasons: they felt that they had got a lot of hands on practical ideas for teaching their students for the next three months; they also felt that this had been their most “friendly” training with trainers and other persons at Swanirvar always happy to help and serve.

This was the first such big training for teachers teaching at the primary and post primary level handled by Swanirvar.

Another training followed this for 13 teachers and two coordinators of the NGO Parivartan from Barrakpur and the rural school run by the St. Xavier's College NSS wing in August and this was much smoother than the 1st training.

EDUCATION: Youth & Culture (KKB)

Since 1997 we have continued to work with about 250 adolescents in 7 villages whom we call Kishor-Kishori Bahinis literally meaning Boys' & Girls' Groups . From last year the senior KKBs have formed additional groups in outlying areas of these villages. We call these new ones as Eco Groups and about 170 more youths are involved in them.

Our dream is to create a more relevant hands on secondary education curriculum suited to rural India and in conformity with the ideals of creating a just, peaceful, sustainable world society. So with these KKBs we have continued doing activities, which really educate them and are of use to them, their families and their village.

Adding school text books to the KKB Libraries

Since many children in the village are quite poor and cannot afford to buy the secondary school textbooks, the KKB decided to stock their library with several sets of textbooks of Classes V, VI, VII, and VIII, which poor children could borrow with a “nominal rent”. 355 schoolbooks were bought; there were 52 borrowers who gave a rent of Rs.400. This has been quite popular and next year there are plans to increase the number of sets.

The 7 libraries together have a total of 1415 books and a membership of 994. This year there were 1796 borrowings. The KKB do the regular job of stamping new books, numbering them, making the entry in the proper registers. This year they repaired and bound 41 books.

Plant Propagation: Nursery, Grafting, Seed & Seedling Distribution

This work is done throughout the year. This year their nurseries grew and distributed 8 vegetables (Lao, pumpkin, sheem, spinach, chilli, Papaya, okra, cucumber); 11 trees (Jafran, Chatka, Bokful, Shirish, Selecton, Arjun, Mahogany, Lombu, Sishu, Joba, Mehendi) ; 3 fruit tress (Coconut, betel nut ,jackfruit). And the KKB did grafting in 9 kinds of fruit trees (Jamrul, Batabi, Kagji lemon, guava, Kamranga, Tej pata, Mango, Leechu, Safeda)

Disinfection of Tube wells with Bleaching powder & Village cleaning

399 tube wells in 6 villages were disinfected between 9th and 24th May, 2004

On 15th August, 2nd October, 14th November, and 3rd week of January 2005 --- 553 KKB members, 93 Swanirvar workers, and 190 other villagers together did the following kind of work

- ◆ Repairing of roads with mud, bricks, sand
- ◆ Cleaning the sides of the roads ; uprooting parthenium, applying bleaching – phenyl wherever necessary
- ◆ Making drainage channel
- ◆ Cleaning and applying bleaching powder at the base of tube wells
- ◆ Repairing pond bathing ghats
- ◆ Cleaning of school rooms and playgrounds
- ◆ Cleaning of Eidgah

Seeing this work, a primary school teacher from village Golda, Taherul Islam, got his students involved in cleaning parthenium in his village

Animal Vaccination

2189 chicken were immunized three times in the year in 6 villages; 357 ducks twice a year in 3 villages; 304 cows twice a year in 3 villages; 93 goats once in 2 villages.

This year we found out that the vaccination for Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) previously available in a vial containing 10 doses is now available in only 50 dose vials. Apparently the govt. field staffs had objected to this increase in size but was overruled by the state authorities. The govt. staffs give an injection with a subsidy at Rs.4. The staff told Swanirvar that they will come to camps organized by Swanirvar only if we agree to pay for the balance medicine left. So if 70 cows come then we have to pay for the remaining 30 as they have opened two vials!! The staffs normally organize camps with Gram Panchayats (GP) on fixed days. But not all Panchayats are so active. So some camps have reasonable attendance but others are poorly attended. Moreover a GP area is quite large. So only the village around the GP office benefits from these camps. Each GP now have a govt. approved volunteer called Prani Bondhu. They do not get a salary; are supposed to generate own income; and are still not uniformly active.

Our experience is that actual treatment of cow goat disease cannot be done by high school youths only by studying textbooks. This would require a more intensive training. But the school textbooks can talk about the common diseases, their symptoms, basic diagnosis, and what govt. services are supposed to be available. That itself can be quite useful.

Earning through veterinary services

For the last 5 years the KKB youths have been vaccinating the poultry of their village. Initially it was done free and then the KKB started charging for it. The service is so useful that the villagers willingly pay for this.

In Fatullapur village Mamul Hasan Gazi, Akbar Dafadar, Haripada Mondol and Chottu Mondol are KKB members and come from poor families. They have been doing various village development activities as part of KKB work like village road repair & cleaning, tube well disinfecting, organizing cow-goat vaccination camps etc. But their parents have a tough time managing their secondary school expenses. So whenever they get the scope these children work in the fields as agricultural labourers.

They also have been doing the poultry immunization in their village. Recently they asked if they could keep the “profit”. So this year they were given the money for buying the vaccination medicine. They have vaccinated the poultry of the households in their hamlet every three months. They do this one day in the month and charge Rs.1 per chicken out of which the profit is about half

i.e. 50 paise. So every 3 months they are able to earn approx Rs.100 and with this they are able to partially pay for their own education.

Training, Meeting, Camps, Excursions

DRCSC continues to guide our KKB who are part of the network Ecology & Natural Resource Education (ENRE). They organised three **camps** this year: at Shyamnagar, Hooghly in May attended by 6 boys and 2 girls; at Kajla, Midnapur in August attended by the same numbers; at Bolpur, Birbhum in October attended by 5 boys and 2 girls. Activities included nursery, grafting, solar cooker, compost, library, home garden, making chart-posters etc.

There were several **in house training** of the youths on Home garden and Herbals; First Aid; Integrated Pest Management (by Swanirvar agricultural staff); Life Education (with assistance of Health staff); Child Rights (by Pre-primary staff)

On 21st Dec, 2005 KKB youths from 6 villages, 12 workers went to Hasnabad Machhranga island. Each child contributed Rs.20. They toured the island, did a survey of birds using binoculars; did a survey of trees of the Sundarbans.

Seven meetings were held of the **KKB network** consisting of 3 youths from each of the 7 villages along with KKB workers. The agenda consists of presentation of work done and next quarter's plan, problems faced, wall magazine, report of Eco –group's work, etc.

Every village KKB has started its own **wall magazine** consisting of their own literary compositions and village news. Each village produced two issues of this magazine this year.

Making Nutrition Training Effective (Training of mothers)

For several years KKB wing has been giving nutrition training to the KKB youths. This training is quite interesting. The youths learn about different food categories – carbohydrate, protean, fats; essential components like vitamins and minerals; how to calculate food value; list the food that they have consumed lately at home and do the calculations with them; deficiency diseases; how to add new things to increase nutritional value; cooking methods which will not destroy the food value etc. Finally the youths are broken into groups and given a certain amount of money with which they have to go to the bazaar, buy raw materials, cook and then their food are judged with respect to nutritional value per unit money. The children have really enjoyed themselves.

But most often, the things that they learn are not accepted at home by their parents.

So this year the training was discontinued. Instead the KKB workers decided to give training to the mothers to see if that will have any effect.

In Bajitpur village 18 mothers agreed to come to a training. This was held on 9th October, 2004 from 11:15 am till 3:30 pm.

Most of the things that were done with their children as stated above were also done with them in an abridged form, minus the repeated exercises and calculations (which was quite important in the case of children), and minus the shopping part. The training with youths is normally a two day almost 12 hour affair whereas here it was 4 hours with the mothers. But it included everyone eating together and discussing the food.

A printed leaflet was also given explaining the main ideas.

It was most interesting that many of the mothers went home and did start doing some of the things, which they had learnt. In one case the father became very upset at his lifelong habit being changed. But overall, as far as the use of newly learnt ideas & skills was concerned, it was a successful effort.

Environmental Studies (ENRE) & Books

This work has been continuing for the past few years. It consists of collecting information from diverse sources and using various methods; organizing that information; making presentations, and it also involves doing hands on practical work. Each work is done in 2-3 villages at a time. Each item runs over 3-6 months.

This year also the topics covered by some village KKB or the other were: Rice, Garbage, Herbals, Fish, Birds, Fuel, Vegetables, Soil Nutrients, Occupations, Social Work, Making Awareness Posters

Based on the actual experience of the KKB, final books on Environmental Studies are being written by DRCSC this year two new books were published on "Rice" and "Birds". Till last year, four books on "Water", "Herbals", "Insect" and "Trees" were produced.

Cultural Work

The KKB youths continue to practice Bratachari, Rhyme dances, Yogasanas, Small games, Theatre, Puppetry, Songs, Folk Dances.

The adult KKB workers theatre group performed the play on "Globalisation" in 8 places in and around our project area during April-May 2004 and in 3 places in December 2004 on the invitation of an NGO in South 24 Parganas district. They also performed a play on the theme of "Trafficking" in our area in December, and one on "Arsenic" at Jamuna Mela in Charghat on 1st March 2005.

The KKB youths performed publicly doing theatre, puppetry, folk dances, anti superstition shows etc. on 14 different occasions in different villages including at the huge SHG federation annual conference and at Katiahat sahitya sabha

Meeting with Parents

The KKB staff held discussions regarding the work done by KKB; displaying and explaining the charts – posters made by them; showing how all this is related to actual educational competencies and to their school syllabus; and finally showing some of the films made on the.

This was done in 4 villages with 95 parents attending them.

Intervention into Govt. System:

The question is – how do we penetrate the mainstream government education system so that learning through such useful hands on activities is practiced by many schools all over the state?

We would like to report on two interesting developments this year

1. On 22nd June, 2004 and again on 9th July 2004, our KKB supervisor was asked to make a presentation of this work to the Block level education "Ministers" (Shiksha Karmadhyakshas) training at the State Institute for Panchayat & Rural Development .A block is the lowest govt. administrative unit in India roughly consisting of 100 villages and about 100,000 to 250,000 population and has a local elected govt. called Panchayat Samity. There were representatives from 4 districts. In the 9th July training senior KKB member studying in 9th grade were taken to do the talking. These elected officials were quite amazed with the activities, which our KKB did. But they rued the fact that actually the education bureaucracy is totally controlled by the state; districts and blocks and local people have no say in curricular matters. But for us this was a big breakthrough and in the next few years we have to devise strategies to push the idea in some areas. Also local governments from district downwards may soon have more decision-making and financial powers and there might be more takers for our ideas and experience.
2. We were looking around for a govt. secondary school in our area, which even "unofficially" would allow us to introduce some of these ideas in their school. Two schools (Atghara Zakir Husain High School and Kolsur Boys High School) which are short of teachers asked us to give them some volunteers. In each school two of our KKB staff have been teaching Physical and

Work Education in both schools and additionally Bangla, Geography and History in Atghara School for the last 6 months. The situation is terrible. There are more than 100 students in a class. Most of these students come from poor families; the ones in Class V and VI have the competencies of Class II and III. The curriculum is just a huge mass of information to be memorized for the exams. In spite of all these our workers were able to bring some life into these classes, although so far they have not able to “introduce our agenda” as they had joined in the middle of the term. But next year starting April, 2005 it is quite likely that some of “our contents” will be part of this school’s curriculum.

Food Processing Business

Last year we had reported that some of the senior KKB had just started producing **mango and lemon squash, tomato sauce, and mango jelly**. Local marketing from processing of local produce is our goal. This year they were able to sell about double the quantity as last year. A group of senior KKB has also started processing and selling **honey**. In this venture so far one of them is the Sales person and there are 5-6 producers.

Waste & Recycling

In January 2004 the KKB had carried out a public campaign against extremely harmful thin plastic bags and throwing away of plastic waste in general. Several special garbage bins for plastic waste were erected publicly and in schools. What is interesting is that many KKBs have persuaded their own families to set up a separate plastic garbage bin at home and this idea is spreading. Some of this is also bought by the recycling industry. Recently the KKB workers have done a thorough study of battery recycling which is done in our area. We might soon do some intervention in this area.

Media Attention

BBC Bengali news service recently broadcast the KKBs effort in the village Gokulpur in re-awakening the villagers’ interest in taking measures to see that the number and varieties of birds which were dwindling should again be restored.

The leading Bengali newspaper Anandabazar Patrika published a report on the KKBs food processing business in Feb, 2005

The national TV channel DD1 broadcast the KKB’s work related to agriculture and poultry vaccination on October 5, 2004

EDUCATION: Shikshamitra (LC & ERC)

Learning Centre (An Alternate Secondary School) & Education Resource Centre in Kolkata

This is a big new step for Swanirvar. For the first time we are starting an urban project. In 1998 we had initiated a dialogue with some NGOs in Kolkata about the idea of setting up an Education Resource Centre (ERC) but nothing came out of it. In 1999 the funding agency Action Aid had approached Swanirvar with the idea of funding such an ERC, but after months of dialogue it fizzled out. In 2001 we had applied for setting up such a venture in Andharmanik to Community Fund (NLCB at that time) of England through “Friends of Swanirvar”. But our application was rejected. In early 2002 there was a short lived dialogue with UNICEF for funding. Finally in early 2004 Indienhilfe, Germany agreed to give Swanirvar a one year fund to draw a full scale proposal and search for suitable premises in Kolkata for ERC as well as an alternative secondary school (Learning Centre or LC).

The main features of the Learning Centre will be

- ◆ Students will be initially slum and lower middle class children of 9+ age group
- ◆ The school will be Bengali medium to start with ; teach very good functional English ; make everyone familiar with computers
- ◆ Have aptitude determining facility and very good pre-vocational education
- ◆ Will have much broader Social Studies curriculum including Economics, Sociology, Politics, Governance, Development, and Life Education.
- ◆ Process will include lot of Self Learning ; Peer Learning ; Group Activities ; Action Learning ; Participatory methods ; Integrated Learning of - Language-Social Studies-Sciences ; inputs from Visiting Teachers -- both conventional experts and from the Community
- ◆ Will use various pedagogic tools like Theatre, Audiovisuals, Music, Dance, Yoga, Martial Arts, and Crafts etc.
- ◆ Will have Ecology-Environment as one of focal themes in the Sciences.
- ◆ Have Career Counselling Services and counselling for psychological - personal problems
- ◆ Have Placement Services into jobs, apprenticeships, and further studies by networking with vocational and higher learning centres as well as by providing space to potential employers.

The Education Resource Centre will

- ◆ Be a Resource Centre for teachers, supervisors, researchers, educationists, media persons, govt. policy makers, NGOs, academicians with a good *education library, documentation service, arrangements for meeting-seminar-workshops-training, study-research wing and publication division*. Hardly anything of this nature exists in Kolkata, West Bengal or eastern India for school education and more so for secondary education.
- Have Linkages with other innovative teachers, schools, education NGOs, teachers associations, research bodies in the state, nationally and internationally. It will also have close links with the municipality, state govt. and central govt. departments, banks, judiciary,

2004-05 was the pre-project phase of this venture.

Search for building

The maximum time was spent in searching for suitable location and premises. Since many Corporation schools in Kolkata have already closed down and many others are supposedly on the verge of closure, we spent a lot of time meeting or trying to meet various state and city govt. officials, the Mayor of Kolkata, the Chairperson of neighbouring Baranagar municipality. But far from getting a school building, it was very difficult to even get the basic information about the status of city schools.

We also advertised in the papers and made many visits to check out the advertisement responses and also other locations referred to by friends. Finally when we were on the verge of abandoning the search we found suitable premises through friends in January, 2005.

Collection of education related information and data analysis

We visited 18 different govt. institutions many times to find out and collect whatever school education and related city data. This was quite an experience. But eventually we did manage to get many things, which would be very useful for the future ERC. This included census data, statistical handbooks, annual reports & reviews, maps, govt. journals, commission reports, basic school data, exam results etc. We also did some data analysis to understand the overall scenario.

Meeting & Consultations

We carried out dialogue locally and made outstation visits to establish contacts with various persons and institutions. Visit to Delhi was fairly productive. Swanirvar coordinator was able to

visit some very innovative schools in USA during a two month trip there. Eventually an advisory body consisting of well experienced education experimenters was formed and had its first meeting in February, 2005.

Other preparatory work

Some basic curricular documents were made related to overall syllabus, language, history and broad social studies. Information was collected on all kinds of vocational facilities. A preliminary compilation of various lists: books, publishers, NGOs, innovative schools, govt. institutions, resource centres, funding agencies, and various children related services etc. were done.

Final preparations

From January the following activities were done: The chosen premises were legally rented from the owner .The building was outfitted with the minimum necessary furniture and basic utilities like electricity, telephone, gas. The necessary teachers were interviewed and hired. Intensive teachers' orientations, both in-house and with the help of external resource persons, have started in March and will continue. Preliminary survey of the locality; more intensive survey of the surrounding slums; and eventually awareness meetings in the local clubs were held in January-February. Towards the end of March, evaluations of prospective students have started. It is clear that there are going to be two kinds of students as we had anticipated: morning full time students and afternoon-evening part timers .A separate meeting was held with the older part timers to understand their needs and desires. At the end of the year preparations were in full swing so that the full time morning school may start from 18th April, 2005.

This is quite a daring venture for us and next year we hope to report all kinds of interesting things about this experiment. We also have not been able to get full funding for this venture. So far there is nothing for the ERC and we also have about 2/3rd funds for the school.

EDUCATION: Indo German School Partnership

The Partnership concept

The basic idea behind such partnership is that (a) it should lead to better understanding, acceptance and appreciation of diversity. (b) At the next stage it should lead to an understanding of how we are all connected and affecting each other in various crucial ways.

(c) Finally it could lead to all kinds of actions via learning and cooperating with each other; actions which will resist harmful changes and enhance the beneficial ones.

The Partners

Indienhilfe, Herrsching initiated this partnership project. The oldest partnership between Dakshin Chatra Boys High School and Volksschule Herrsching started in 1996. From 2003, the Chatra school also got linked with Christoph Probst Gymnasium, Gilching. The second Indian school to get involved was Loreto Day School, Sealdah with Dante Gymnasium, and Munchen from November, 2003. And during this year Atghara High School got linked to Carl Spitzweg Gymnasium, Germering.

The Exchanges

Atghara school being new into the partnership, they had only one batch of letter exchange in which 7 letters were sent from here. The break-up was Class X – 2, VIII – 3, VII – 2 and the writers were two boys and five girls.

Quite a large number of letters were exchanged by Chatra. The 7-9 year old children of Anandaniketan school sent 31 letters to Volksschule Herrsching. From the Chatra Boys High school, 52 letters were sent by the 13-14 age group children; and another 10 letters by the 15+ age group. A lot of hand painted cards, friendship bands, and photos of favourite players was some of the items, which went along with the letters.

Resource Team

In Feb 2004 Swanirvar coordinator was entrusted the task of steering this partnership with one assistant from Indienhilfe –Kolkata office.

A Resource Team was formed in India with teachers from the three schools. So far this Resource team has met 4 times at Loreto Sealdah on 27 Feb 2004; 16 April 2004; 6 August 2004; and 4 Dec 2004 to plan and review.

The Book on Germany

The Partnership Coordinator commissioned a book to be written in Bengali about Germany. This is mainly for the students of the rural schools (Chatra and Atghara) as generally their ambiance and exposure is such that they will have a lot of difficulty in getting to know about Germany in a proper perspective and without this the partnership will not rise above a mundane personal level. A draft book has been circulated to the partners in India and the English translation in Germany.

Fun Meeting of students from 3 partner schools

A two-day fun meeting for 45 students of the 3 Indian partner schools was organized at Loreto school on 14-15 January, 2005. Seventeen students from Loreto Day School (LDS), 12 students from Dakshin Chatra High School (DCHS) and 16 from Atghara High School (AHS) attended this workshop. Mr. Ajoy Ghosh, a Bengali settled in Germany for many years, entertained the children with interesting description of Germany and also comparing with India for better understanding. In the next session the children, in mixed school groups, used various supplied pictures to show something about their image of Germany. In the evening there was a very interesting Germany related quiz using an information filled map. The day ended with film shows on Germany. The next day, again in groups, the children made very colourful charts on some aspect of Indian life to be sent to their German friends. Outstation children were taken for a ride on Metro and then to the museum briefly.

Indo-German joint workshop

A mini workshop was held on 29 March, 2005 at Loreto school in the presence of Anja Finckh and 5 of her students from Dante Gymnasium, Munchen. This was about how to celebrate a Germany Day in each of the 3 Indian schools on Feb 6, 2006. The students of Loreto, Chatra and Dante Gymnasium broke up into 6 groups and came up with a whole set of ideas.

Dakshin Chatra Boys High School Building

This is one of the most reputed high schools of our area. Established in 1922 with a total land area of 7.8 acres, it also has a hostel. Currently there are about 1770 students, 34 teachers, 9 non-teaching staff, and 5 hostel staff. There were 30 rooms in the school, 10 in the hostel and there is separate auditorium and gymnasium. But a large portion of the building was in quite bad shape. Indienhilfe supported the dismantling and reconstruction of a large section of the building. The total construction carried out was of 14 rooms covering a total 10,200 square feet, with 6 rooms each in

the ground floor and 1st floor and 2 rooms on the 2nd floor. Out of this Indienhilfe supported the construction of 11 rooms and the school got funds form various sources including from M.P. fund for the remaining 3 rooms.

Cycle Stand at Atghara High School

A German friend gave some money for doing something useful at Atghara High School. They decided to utilize the fund for making a cycle stand for the students and accordingly a stand with a capacity for holding 50 cycles has been built.

MICROFINANCE

We are giving the figures for the last 3 years to show the changes very clearly.

Sl No.	Particulars	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
1	No. of village	45	54	54
2	No. of groups	360	463	485
3	Total Members	4926	6017	6060
4	Total savings of the groups	Rs. 21,76,766	Rs. 36,53,374	Rs. 52,93,768
5	Repayment rate	91%	93%	93%
6	No. of new groups formed	78	116	34
7	No. of new members	862	1328	421
8	No. of groups disbanded	21	13	12
9	No. of members leaving	754	237	378
10	No. of loans	1923	2799	3924
11	Total loans from Swanirvar's revolving fund	56,72,500	1,22,41,500	1,72,06,500
12	Interest rate paid by groups	12%	12%	12%/14%
13	Loans given by groups from their own savings	Rs. 21,92,206	Rs. 35,00,247	Rs. 53,80,461
14	Interest income earned by Swanirvar	Rs. 3,04,788	Rs. 6,87,888	Rs. 11,72,522
15	"Service charge" earned by Swanirvar	Rs. 53,530	Rs. 1,22,370	Rs. 1,72,065
16	Loans taken by Swanirvar for revolving fund	Rs. 18,38,000	From CARE Rs. 18,55,000 From WBMDFC Rs. 1,00,000 From UCO Bank Rs.50,00,000 in the form of cash/credit Total Rs. 69,55,000	From WBMDFC Rs. 9,00,000 From UCO Bank Rs.80,00,000 in the form of cash/credit Total Rs. 1,64,91,500
17	Interest paid on loans and savings by Swanirvar	Rs.41,061	Rs.3,60,286	Rs.5,41,413
18	Loan loss provision	Rs.1,13,450	Rs.2,44,830	Rs. 3,44,130

19	Human resource, administrative and CB expenses	Rs.6,99,363	Rs.7,71,945	Rs. 10,28,276
20	Total Income(14+15)	Rs. 3,58,318	Rs. 8,10,258	Rs. 13,44,587
21	Total expenditure(17+18+19)	Rs. 8,53,874	Rs. 13,77,061	Rs. 19,13,819
22	Financial Sustainability(20/21)	42%	59%	70%

Notes:

1. The number of villages is the same as last year; there is a marginal increase in the number of groups and total members. So we were in the consolidation phase this year. Some groups (~2.5%) and members (~6%) still keep on disappearing.
2. The members' savings is going up at a very steady rate and the total savings has crossed Rs.50 lakhs. Average savings per member is Rs.870. The highest savings group has each member's savings above Rs.5000.
3. But the loan repayment rate has got stuck at 93%
4. The number of loans as well as the total loan amount has gone up substantially --- an increase of ~40% over last year. This was helped by the fact that UCO bank increased our cash credit limit from Rs.50 lakhs to Rs. 80 lakhs.
5. Our income increased by approximately 66% and our expenditure by ~40% and so the financial sustainability of the whole operation has shown a decent increase. But it is clear that we have still a lot to do to become sustainable or the price of the loans that we take has to decrease.
6. For the first time we have two loan products with different interest rates. The 6 month agriculture loan carrying an interest of 14% was started from September 2004 .This year almost 60% of the loans are agriculture loans and only ~2% loans are consumption loans. So the rest are non-agri productive loans. The average loan size is Rs.4400 and the maximum single loan so far is Rs.20,000

SHG women orienting bank officers

On 8th June, 2004 twenty-two officers of UCO bank from Howrah Region came to Swanirvar for a day long orientation on SHGs and Microfinance. They were given a one hour talk on Swanirvar's microfinance operations followed by 1.5 hours of question-answer session. The questions ranged from repayments, loan rules, procedures, monitoring, aging, loan defaults etc.

After that came the highlight of the day's programme. The bank officers broke up into pairs and each pair sat for a one and half hour discussion with two women members of a SHG. The subjects ranged from group formation, problems, conflict resolution, time taken for group maturity, political pressures, kinds of loans taken, incomes etc. It was a wonderful experience for the visiting officers as well as for the women facing the questions.

The visitors were quite pleased with the day and went away happy. Hopefully they will be better promoters of SHGs and collaborators of NGOs in their respective areas.

Capacity Building

The key workers underwent numerous training like delinquency management, financial analysis, gender issues, product development, livelihood etc. There were various workshops for the 25 Social Animators including one on PME (Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation). There were training for 321 group cashiers in 10 batches; leadership training for 155 group leaders in 5 batches; 25 group leaders were trained as trainers for handholding in 3 phases.

Sensitization of SHG leaders on some govt. programmes and Panchayat systems

Three meetings were organised for SHG leaders in December 2004 at Kolsur, Katiahat and Fatullapur where local Panchayat pradhans, medical officer, school teachers etc were present. This was a 2 hour interaction with more than 100 SHG leaders present in each place

Grading

The group grading system started in October 2003, but it was during this year that it has become stable. It is done every 6 months by the SAs. 25% are counterchecked by the supervisors. So far there has not been any large-scale manipulation by any individual SA. A few mistakes were corrected by the supervisors.

Clusters

The groups are divided into 23 clusters, the smallest with 12 groups and largest with 30 groups. There is a cluster committee, which has to meet every month. By early 2005, only 10 of the 23 clusters and their committees have become stable and active.

This year we have given a lot of inputs to these cluster leaders including cluster-to-cluster exposures and each cluster had a conference of its own.

In the active clusters, each group comes with a chart showing its monthly performance and it is evaluated by the others. Problems are discussed and plans are made to visit groups, which are defaulters or have some other problems. These committees deliberate over the loan demand of each group and make the recommendations. Seeing the performance of these, we are attempting to build the capacity of all the clusters as soon as possible.

SHG Federation Meetings & Annual Conference

For the last six months the 10 member Federation Committee representing all the four area offices started meeting regularly on the 10th of every month.

Their annual conference was held at Katiahat on 10 Feb, 2005 with about 3500 women attending. Throughout the day there were reports presented by cluster leaders. There were encouraging speeches by various guests, which included Panchayat leaders, MLA, bank and other govt. officials. There were cultural performances by our KKB youths and the women themselves. Towards the end the new Federation committee was elected and they announced the major thrusts for the next year.

The last item of the day was the prize distribution to the best group from each of the 4 area offices and 2nd prizes to two more groups from each of the four areas.

SGSY INTERVENTION

Swanirvar as DTA (District Technical Agency) to the DRDC, North 24 Parganas district

The Objective

The project envisages strengthening of Grade-1 passed SHGs under the govt. SGSY programme through a comprehensive capacity building support so that the groups attain self-management capacity. This includes prospective SHGs that would pass Grade-1 test in the next one year.

To achieve the above, the following sub-objectives have been identified:

- a) To provide facilitation supports to the existing SGSY delivery structures (DRDC officials, Block level officials, Panchayat office bearers and members, NGO & its staff and other individuals, etc.) operational in the designated areas on:
 - SHG formation, nurturing, system development, all leading to the self management capacity of the SHGs
 - Establishing linkages with Banks, government and Panchayat offices on the issues being faced by the SHG members
- b) To ensure implementation of proper M&E systems for the SHG members, SHGs and SHG based higher level structures
- c) To provide hand holding supports to the SHG members, SHGs and SHG based higher level structures on:
 - self management capacity
 - social sector participation.

We set up a 4-person DTA team at district headquarters Barasat. Only one team member was Swanirvar senior worker. Rest three were outsiders, out of which we have known the two from other NGOs for many years. DTA head was a retired senior bank official.

This project is our first big attempt at fairly comprehensive collaboration with the state govt. Needless to say it has been a very mixed experience. The initial resentment and incomprehension of district officials, suspicion by elected officials, summary rejection of what appeared to us as the most effective modus operandi by state officials, difficulty in getting simple office accommodation & telephone connection, delays in getting payments, controversies and rigidities on accounting methods etc. --- all of these occurred as expected. And yet attitudes have changed, working relations have been forged, new capacity building methods have been introduced and appreciated by many ground level officials, procedures are evolving to settle and solve glitches.

CARE has been guiding and coordinating this effort of 5 NGOs, all partners of CARE, in 6 districts and also doing the liaison with state govt. A monthly review at the state govt. level is in place. The DTA NGOs and CARE have also had separate brainstorming session.

Activities

The DTA team has been able to do the following things so far

1. The work started with an introduction of the idea behind the DTA at the District SGSY Committee meeting on 3 August 2004 where there were 60 participants.
2. This was followed by a 3-day residential training of the Block Level Trainers Team from 22 blocks with a total of 220 participants, consisting mostly of govt. officials, in 7 batches. The first training started on 16 Aug 2004 and the last batch ended on 29 Sep 2004. The training was supposed to be for 5 days, but due to reluctance of district authorities we could do only 3 days and so the total training, specially the handholding part, could not be completed.
3. A one-day workshop was organized by the DM at his conference hall to sensitize many other officials on the DTA intervention and SGSY programme on 28 August 2004 where there were 80 participants.
4. A one-day orientation meeting for the bankers was held in each of the four subdivisions between 16 and 25 November 2004 where the total participation was 197.
5. From December the "trained" BLTT in each block started holding sensitization meetings for rest of the block officials and selected Panchayat members. In most cases this meeting was very poorly organized. 18 out of the 22 blocks held such meetings with a total participation of 730 and DTA members were present

6. In the meantime the district SGSY committee decided to hold Gram Panchayat level workshops for creating a GP monitoring team. This also started in December and 54 of the 200 GPs in the district have held such workshops. DTA team member was present at 9 of these in the month of December, mostly in Habra-1 block.
7. A one-day workshop was organized on 20 December 2004 for the NGOs of the district who are attached to the DRDC as SHPIs (Self Help Group Promoting Institutions) in which 28 out of the 33 NGOs participated.
8. The district organized a massive one-day SHG convention at Barasat on 23 Jan 2005. It was attended by more than 20,000 women and DTA members had to assist the district officials in organizing this event.
9. DTA was entrusted the task of “grading” the SHPI NGOs of the district. They started the work in the last week of February 2005 and were able to complete the grading of 23 out of the 33 official SHPIs.
10. The unfinished handholding part of the BLTT training (see item 2 above) – a residential training of another 3 days started on 23 February and ended on 11 March 2005.
11. Finally the handholding training of SHGs by the trained BLTT has started in March and DTA members were present in two such trainings.

Conclusions

- It has been difficult to make the govt. officials realize that capacity building of poor women cannot be done through one or two formal training “events”; and that it is a continuous process.
- Since the block officials are busy with all kinds of duties, it is not possible for them to give this continuous input. Therefore “handholding”, which by its very name implies teaching someone hands on over an extended period, might also get reduced to a single event input thus defeating its very purpose.
- The only persons who can do this are the SHPI – NGO workers. But the state had and the district still is refusing to allow these workers to get handholding inputs from DTA.
- This has resulted in two things : a) the handholding input to SHGs has started very late b) the other tasks of DTA like streamlining the grading system; designing and putting in place a proper M&E system ; ensuring the coordination between Panchayat structures, SHGs, govt. departments and banks --- all this has got pushed out.

Now we have to draw up a proper strategy to see that the groundwork done is really put to proper use in the 2nd year.

HEALTH & ARSENIC

The Three Phases

This year was partly the 2nd phase and mostly (June 2004 onwards) the 3rd phase of the “ Community Based Project To Mitigate Arsenic Pollution in West Bengal” under the guidance of AIH&PH (All India Institute of Hygiene & Public Health). The 1st MOU was signed on 27 November 2000 under which we set up 11 Arsenic Removal Plants (ARPs) in 10 villages and also distributed 30 domestic filters on an experimental basis in 6 villages. The 2nd MOU was signed on 13 December 2002 under which we set up 10 ARPs in 10 villages and gave 111 domestic filters in 6 villages. Through these 21 ARPs, approximately 700 families and 6000 persons have been benefited. The **Community Management Groups (CMGs)** looking after these plants have been able to collect a total subscription of Rs.43, 316 till 31 March 2005. Out of these 21 ARPs, 12 are Oxide India model and the rest AIH&PH model.

The 3rd MOU was signed on 3 June 2004 and this is the final phase of this project with AIIH&PH and is likely to end on 31 March 2006.

Nadia district

This year we were asked by AIIH&PH to work in adjacent Nadia district that has severe Arsenic affected areas and where there are no local NGOs. This is the first time that Swanirvar started working in another district and in an area where we have no presence. We had to rent premises for temporary residence of our workers and it has been predictably quite tough. We had to inspect 62 villages and test the waters of 135 govt. tube wells and the final 9 villages were selected by AIIH&PH after many months of testing and visiting.

All these villages are in the Block KALIGANJ of the subdivision KRISHNANAGAR

	VILLAGE	MOUZA & JL No.	GRAM PANCHAYAT
1.	Pathargona	Debogram , 60	Debogram
2.	Gohorapota	Do	Do
3.	Chandpur	Paka Chandpur , 62	Do
4.	Panighata	Panighata , 36	Panighata
5.	Radhakantopur	Radhakantopur, 34	Do
6.	Dhojapukur	Dhojapukur, 35	Do
7.	Hazrapota	Hazrapota , 99	Faridpur
8.	Doulipur	Gharaikhetra , 115	Rajarampur
9.	Kamalbati	Kamalbati , 65	Palitbaghia

North 24 Parganas district

5 villages were selected in our own district as follows

	VILLAGE	MOUZE , JL No.	GRAM PANCHAYAT	BLOCK
1.	Sreerampur	Sreerampur, 27	Soguna	Swarupnagar
2.	Purbo Simulia	Atghara , 40	Atghara-Jasaikati	Baduria
3.	Bayerghata	Kumro Kashipur ,151	Kumro Kashipur	Habra
4.	Baheragachhi	Marafpur, 128	Prithiba	Do
5.	Raikhola	Raikhola , 54	Chakla	Deganga

Awareness & Preliminary works in these new villages

Tube wells tested			Patients in health Camps			Community Meeting		Home Visits
Total	Govt	Pvt.	Total	Arsenicosis	Other skin disease	No.	Attendance	
District : Nadia , 9 villages								
408	65	343	390	38	352	24	499	1751
District : North 24 Parganas , 5 villages								
193	30	163	294	29	265	14	238	833

Near the village Sreerampur, there is an annual village fair known as Deyara-Jamuna Mela. Swanirvar theatre group performed a play on Arsenic in that fair.

The Old Villages and ARPs

This year we had two central meetings at Swanirvar with the representatives of the CMGs. On 20 May 2004 we had a day long meeting to discuss the various problems being faced by them and was attended by 21 members from 15 villages.

We had a second meeting on 22 July 2004 where 36 members from 10 villages attended. In this **prizes were given based on an evaluation carried by us on the stability, functioning and effectiveness of the CMGs.** Uttar Kolsur Bhabak para got the first prize (cash prize of Rs.500 and an umbrella to all the subscribers); 2nd prize went to Teghoria (an umbrella to all the subscribers); and the 3rd prize to Dakshin Kolsur Munshipara (cash Rs.500).

We held a meeting with the CMGs in 18 of these old villages where the total attendance was 288. We also made 537 home visits including the ones with domestic filters. Apart from this we held three special village meetings where we were facing problems: Fatullapur, Piyara and Aturia. In these 3 the total attendance was 191.

Survey of ARPs set up by PHED (Public Health Engineering Dept)

There were sporadic reports that the many ARPs set up by the govt. were not working. So in December 2004 we decided to do a thorough survey and checked out 55 plants (28 in Baduria, 21 in Basirhat –1, 6 in Deganga. The result was quite shocking to us. **43 of these (80%) were not being used for drinking water purposes.** The reasons range between: plant totally broken or removed (11); tube well removed, plant just sitting (6); water not fit for drinking (14); broken plant, no repairs (7); water used but not for drinking (4); and other miscellaneous reasons. But the main thing we found out by talking to the community was that they were not consulted at the time of installation, nor were they informed about maintenance arrangements. No one knows if the water is tested, by whom, and if it is safe. So even in cases where the plant seems to be all right, people are not using it for drinking water purpose.

Miscellaneous.

Water testing with field kits was done at Swanirvar on 324 samples: 17 of govt. tube wells, 7 of govt. ARPs, 173 of our ARPs, 12 of dug wells, 35 of private tube wells, 80 of domestic filters.

On 7 Dec 2004, Asit Nema of Foundation for Greentech Environmental Systems, who had come to evaluate this project, made a day long visit along with Prof Majumdar, Prof Kahali and other staff from AIIH&PH.

Other Health related work

Over the last few years we have cut down on our Mother & Child Care – RCH related work. This year we also decided to cut down on our efforts at holding or supporting voluntary blood donation camps as it has become fairly popular in our area. So this year we organized 5 camps with a total of 376 donors which is 1/3rd of our normal output for the last 6-7 years.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE:

We are not elaborating the normal events like the various trainings given to farmers; the trainings received by our workers through Service Centre; the seminars attended; the visitors who came to see our work; all the trials and extension work with seeds, crop varieties, soil nutrients, botanical pest controllers; the use of village notice boards made by us etc.

Here we are going to describe only the highlights for 2004-05

Crops, Varieties & New Practices

1. Trials with Rice: In order to preserve the varieties that are getting lost and to find out the ones that are suitable for our area we did trials with 29 different varieties of rice by 31 farmers in 10 villages. 15 varieties were locally grown before and the rest we got from Service Centre out of which 4 were scented varieties. We found that 4 of them have quite high production. And one of them is quite unique where two rice grains grow within one shell
2. Mushroom: The demand for mushroom is growing very fast and there is a lot of pressure on us to expand our spawn producing facility. This year we sold 945 packets of 200 gm spawn whereas the number last year was 415. Till last year one could get about 1 kg of mushroom from this 200 gm spawn packet. Now with better spawn and better production methods the produce is close to 2 kg. We have recently bought an autoclave and are restructuring our lab and hope to produce and sell at least 2000 packets next year.
3. Herbals: We continued the use of herbs for treating common diseases like cough-cold, fever, skin, diarrhoea, arthritis, worms, toothache etc. But our trials with 11 more complicated ailments were also fairly successful this year. In an area called Chatra that was affected by floods we treated 400 people suffering from cold and skin problems quite successfully with herbals. We also gave an orientation to 160 persons in 8 villages on herbal treatment through 12 trainings
4. Potato with Mulch: Last year we had done only 3 trials. This year 20 farmers tried this out in 4 villages and the results were very good. Normally 150 kg of chemical fertilizer is used per Katha (720 square feet) for potato cultivation. Our method was ---- no ploughing, 15-20 kg of chemical fertilizer, some compost, and mulch consisting of rice stubble and water hyacinth. The production was as good as the purely chemical method and costs much lower. We are sure that more farmers are going to switchover to this method in the coming years.
5. Use of Dew in wheat cultivation: This year the winter was very mild and we had less dew. Yet 10 farmers in 4 villages tried this out compared to 3 farmers last year. In other fields where 3 irrigations were required, the fields with dew treatment required only one. The method of pulling the rope across the field to shake the dew on to the roots has reduced pest and mice attack also.
6. Poyra or Relay Cropping: This technique of broadcasting the seeds of the winter crops among the rainy season crop just before harvesting which requires no ploughing has become really popular. 447 farmers in 13 villages tried this out with legumes, oilseeds, wheat, coriander, even jute. This time several mixed cropping like mustard + lentil, wheat + coriander etc. were also successfully tried.

Soil Nutrients

1. Vermicompost: Till last year only a handful of farmers had attempted to make vermicompost. This time it really caught on. 83 farmers in 14 villages have started producing vermicompost in earthen vessels (called mechhla) and bamboo cages. A few farmers are also going in for bigger cement chambers.
2. Normal Compost: Even this had been difficult to popularize. But this year 65 farmers in 13 villages have started making a proper compost at home. And what is most heartening and potentially most useful is that 141 farmers in 8 villages were persuaded to make compost in the fields itself using water hyacinth and all kinds of vegetable waste mixed with a little urea.
3. Bacterial fertilizers: Here also the sales have increased. Last year the total sales of Azotobacter, PSB and Rhizobium were about 80 packets of 300 gms each. This year we sold 117 packets of PSB, 111 packets of Azotobacter and 19 packets of Rhizobium. This was almost 3 times of last year.

Plant Protection

1. Integrated Pest Management in Rice: (i) In the village Jasaikati we had guided the farmers last year with the assistance of Govt. of India's Plant Protection scientists. This year that same set of farmers is doing it themselves. (ii) In another village one of our workers practiced it in his own field this year and there was a lot of interest from farmers. The pheromone trap that he used attracted a lot of attention. Many farmers have requested him to guide them next year. (iii) In the village of Papila, 30 farmers are doing it this year with our assistance and the govt's guidance.
2. Integrated Pest Management in vegetables: In the village of Paschim Simulia 30 farmers are trying this out with the help of govt. experts and our guidance starting from the winter season of 2004-05 with very encouraging results. This is quite significant as ours is a massive vegetable growing belt.
3. Trichoderma viridae (TDV): We started using this last year for particular fungal and other plant diseases and it has remained popular and we sold 50 kg this year.

System Plots (Integrated Models)

1. Home Garden: We have currently 16 gardens in 9 villages and 7 are "A" grade and 9 are "B" grade.
2. High Land (Field): We have 18 models of mixed vegetables in 11 villages out of which 7 are classified "A" and 11 "B".
3. Low Land (Field): We have 4 models where land shaping has been done and an integration of rice, pond, fish, trees, and vegetables has been possible. These are in 3 villages and 1 is "A" and 3 are "B" grade.

Training / Awareness

1. Our workers get trained: 4 workers underwent 25 week (one day/week) training in the sub-divisional govt. farm where they learnt about future trends, govt. policies, bio nutrients, seeds, soil conservation, proper use of chemicals, interesting crop management techniques. All of them felt that they learnt many useful things.
2. We give training in another district: 2 workers went to neighbouring district Nadia to give an orientation on Home garden to an NGO Sindrani Sarahati Mahila Samity in two batches.
3. Training to KKB youths: The 10-16 year old youths involved in our Youth & Culture programme were given a theoretical and practical training on Integrated Pest Management. 235 youths were trained in 14 batches. We are hoping that many will be using or persuading their families to use these techniques.
4. Dakshin Chatra Village Fair: We set up a stall here. About 500 farmers came and spoke to us. All the books (supplied by Service Centre) on sustainable agriculture were sold and so was all the vermicompost which we had taken.
5. NABARD Farmers Club: These are clubs promoted by National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development. We gave training to 54 farmers of these clubs on mushroom cultivation and Soil & Water conservation.

Documentation, Publicity

1. Film: 3 field models and one home garden model have finally been filmed and are currently being edited. We hope to use them as training-awareness materials.
2. Written Documents: The data of 4 of the field models and 5 home garden models has been collected and is being analyzed.
3. All India Organic Farming Conference: Two of our workers attended this in Aurangabad in Maharashtra. Many farmers showed a lot of interest in 3 of our work --- (I) mulch potato (ii) poyra or relay cropping (iii) use of dew in wheat cultivation

Farmers Organization

1. Field farmers groups: 4 of the 23 groups are doing excellently. They are not only doing many of the trials , but are also trying to persuade other farmers
2. Home Gardeners Groups: There are 24 women’s groups out of which two are managing a village Community Rice Storage Unit.
3. Farmer Trainers: We are grooming 4 men and 1 woman from among these groups as trainers.
4. Organic Marketing: One group had made plans to set up a shop for selling Organic Vegetables in the local towns of Rudrapur and Baduria. But for all kinds of reasons it did not take off. They will make another attempt this year.
5. Group Joint Activity: Four groups have taken up joint business related to buying-selling, one group has made a nursery, three groups have a grain store, two have got involved in social work --- road repairing and holding a blood donation camp.
6. Organic Network: The agriculture university in West Bengal had initiated an Organic Network. But this year the network has remained quite dormant.

Wider Role

1. Secondary Schools: We have not been able to make any breakthrough in introducing sustainable agriculture theory and practical in local govt. secondary schools.
2. Village local govt. (Panchayat): In the coming year the Panchayats are supposed to be restructured with more powers and responsibilities. It is likely that Swanirvar Agriculture department will be asked to help out in Natural Resource Management planning and training.

TRAFFICKING

The phenomenon of women and children being lured into hazardous situations is assuming alarming proportions and West Bengal seems to be one of the biggest supply points. One of our village organisations in Matia has been working in a sex worker colony running a pre-primary centre and a primary school till Class II for quite a few years. This year they decided to start a project on “Preventive Action to Stem Trafficking in Persons in the Indo Bangladesh Border Areas”. This project funded through SARI/Q of Delhi is supported by US Aid and started on 1st July, 2004.

A set of counsellors and volunteers have been trained intensively on various aspects of trafficking ; two vigilance centres have been set up at the Indo- Bangladesh border at Panitar and Bankra; a series of awareness and training events have been held for various kinds of actors --- general villagers , local clubs, women’s SHG (Self help Groups), police , BSF (Border Security Force) , and Panchayats ; these training – awareness camps have been reported in the local papers; a big campaign was mounted during Durga Pujas in October,2004 ; contacts have been established with Bangladeshi NGOs doing similar work .

As a result of all this there have been 28 cases of interception before the actual trafficking could take place. Women were being enticed to go to Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai etc. There have been 32 cases of rescue of women who were trafficked. In all cases the women, their families are properly counselled. What is heartening is that in many cases it is the SHGs, gram sansads, community clubs which have played the lead role in the interception and in confronting the traffickers. Some of the traffickers have been arrested and cases initiated against them. Increasingly the police and BSF are cooperating.

MAIN OFFICE

Vill & P.O. Andharmanik ,Via – Baduria , Dist. North 24 Parganas
West Bengal 743401 , Phone 953217-237446
Email: swanirvar@vsnl.net
Website : www.swanirvarbengal.org

CITY PROJECT : SHIKSHAMITRA

62 B Alipore Road , Kolkata 700027 , Phone 033-2479-9271

KOLKATA CITY CONTACTS

Sujit Sinha , 7H (or 5G) , Ananda , 116 Southern Avenue , Kolkata 700029
Phone 033-2465-6783 , 2466-4733
Email: sujit568@vsnl.com

Tirthankar Mukherjee , E-5, 60/67 B.T.Road , Kolkata 700002
Phone 033- 2556-6409
Email: bhulutmu@vsnl.net

DTA OFFICE , BARASAT

Phone 033-3957-9338
Abdul Hannan , Phone 99327-23285
Subroto Banerjee , Phone 94333-20266

VILLAGE CENTRES

Kolsur	953216-241261
Chandalati	953216-220110
Magurkhali	953217-238347
Fatullapur	953217-243017
Bajitpur	953217-243296

OTHER CONTACT PHONES

Sandhya Mondol , Agriculture supervisor, Andharmanik, 953217-238543
Niranjan Paik , MF-SHG supervisor, Kolsur , 953216-220276
Swapn Bhattacharya, Treasurer, Andharmanik, 953217-237925
Samir Biswas, KKB supervisor , Andharmanik, 953217-238054
Salauddin Sardar , Preprimary supervisor , Bajitpur , 953217-243530
Anup Ray , Preprimary teacher , Bhojpara , 953217-243595
Abdul Mannan , Arsenic supervisor , Dakshin Kolsur , 953216-220286