

# VILLAGE HEALTH WORKERS PROGRAMME

Dr. Sheila Zurbrigg has completed her work at the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre, Madurai Project, India for now. She will continue her studies at Berkeley University California in a Master's in Public Health programme.

After a sponsorship of a year jointly by FWIO/ACWW/CIDA, Dr. Zurbrigg was enthusiastic about the progress of the work.

The Village Health Worker (VHW) Programme was initiated in 1976 in the Thirubuvanam Block as an extension of the demonstration feeding programme being run by the village workers. Six women had been trained in Childhood Nutrition and treatment/prevention of common illnesses which formed the core of a two week training period.

Initial surveys of all children under 5 years have been taken by a supervisory team to obtain baseline data on Nutrition Status, including vitamin A deficiency, as well as a questionnaire regarding Mothers feeding practices and beliefs.

Enumeration by VHW's of members was conducted of all village households and completed into permanent village registers.

From the initial surveys the training sessions expanded to compiling family register information initial routine village visits of identification of nutritionally at-risk children and registration of ante-natal women. By October 84% of ante-natal mothers were receiving regular care.

As the programme moved forward training sessions were held for the VHW's to include administration of massive dose of Vitamin A to under fives of the severely Vitamin A deficient villages; teaching routine of Fe/Folic acid distribution to ante-natal and lactating women; also distribution routine for contraceptive pills.

By the end of 1976, one village had temporarily, dropped the plan.



Village Health Worker's inauguration. Dr. Zurbrigg chats with worker.

Statistics show the change in a one year period.

	1976	1977
Number of VHW's	6	12
Number of villages	5	15
Total population	4,370	19,000
Under 5 year olds	672	2,290
Change in Nutritional Status—original 5 villages		
Standard	9%	16%
Grade I	31%	30%
Grade II	42%	38%
Grade III	18%	16%
Immunization Status		
DPT 1st doze	86%	69%
2nd doze	31%	45%
Polio 1st doze	82%	73%
2nd doze	33%	57%
3rd doze	14%	35%
4th doze	8%	21%
5th doze	3%	14%

There is a proposal that the Village Health Worker Project will be approved and accepted by the Indian Council of Medical Research. Dr. Zurbrigg says "we have asked for funding for 2½ years beginning immediately. This would provide for expansion of the project to all the 45 major villages in the Block. It involves complete integration with the existing Primary Health Centre and Block Development staff."

The present staff is a dedicated and hard working lot including the new full time medical officer Dr. P. Venkataraman. If the Indian Council of Medical Research take over, it will be a pat on ACWW's back.

It should be noted FWIO's sponsorship in this project came from the Nutrition Education Trust Fund and not from FWIO's International Scholarship Fund as reported in the last issue.



Dr. Zurbrigg tells about Vitamin A deficiency. In one small village 7 out of 50 children under 5 years had night blindness. The Village Health Worker is now giving vitamin A solution. Dr. Zurbrigg with one of the under 5's.