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Health

In September 1991 we sent two women workers to Bengal Rural Welfare Society (BRWS) in Calcutta for a fortnight's training, mostly in mother and child care and in general health and hygiene. In November, the two, Tulsi Sardar at Fatullyapur and Hafiza Begum at Chandalati, started a door-to-door campaign, including a comprehensive family health survey.

Simultaneously Prasanta Mandal at Fatullyapur and Abdul Hannan at Chandalati initiated discussions with the Government primary health subcentres, supervisors and village level health workers on how to utilize best the Government's resources. In both villages there were a large number of families, especially in poor localities, who, for various reasons, did not get their children immunized. Our groups persuaded the Government staff to hold immunization camps at places which they had never visited before. Soon the Bajitpur youth club also joined the programme, although there was no trained health worker there. Following is a list of camps held from November onwards where our health workers were the motivators behind those who went there to immunize their children and also the main helpers to the Government staff.

Date	Place of camp	Number of cases
Nov 27	Fatullyapur Kalitala	72
Dec 12	Fatullyapur Kalitala	93
Jan 7	Chandalati	61
13	Fatullyapur Hatkhola	33
13	Bajitpur No. 4 Primary School	73
15	Sarfarazpur	70
16	Bajitpur Tofaitkoti	43
20	Fatullyapur Kalitala	42
24	Bajitpur No. 1 Primary School	38
Feb 14	Bajitput Rajbanshipam	56
15	Fatullyapur Hatkhola	39
17	Sarfarazpur	65
17	Bajitpur No: I Primary School	62
20	Fatullyapur Kalitala	70
Mar 6	Chandalati	50
16	Bajitpur Rajbanshipara	25
17	Fatullyapur Hatkhola	38
20	Sarfarazpur	45
20	Bajitpur No. 4 Primary School	65

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23 . Fatullyapur Kalitala	70
20 camps	1,110

A continuous barrage of publicity and persuasion by our workers has had its effect. Most mothers now realise the need for immunization and are eager, not just willing, to take their children to the regular Immunization camps. The need to hold special immunization camps will thus decrease in the coming months. The demand for and distribution of birth control pills and condoms have increased substantially since our health workers started discussing the importance of family planning. Both workers are now well known health resource persons in their respective villages.

In February 1992 we established contact with West Bengal Voluntary Health Association (WBVHA) and got posters on various aspects of health which we have displayed, in our villages. In February, our Health Coordinator, Abdul Hannan, visited "Ma O Sishu", a well-known health NGO at Helancha, 50 km from our project area. Its director, Dr. Samar Sen, has agreed to train our workers so that they can give injections and first aid, and treat common diseases. This year we plan to have in every village a first aid box and a paramedic able to treat common ailments. We shall soon start analysing the data thrown up by ~ our health surveys to get a clearer picture of the health status of the people, and to see what more we can do. A full-time general practitioner or a child specialist will be of great help.