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**YOUTH & CULTURE**

THIS is in a way an extension of our education programme for here too we work with children, both small and older, in matters that teach them things which are beyond books but very much a part of real life, life as they live it, not life as described in the printed word. This section has two distinct divisions. The first deals with children in our schools and with others of a similar age but from elsewhere in the village. This year 1,893 of them in 14 villages were taught Bratachari, yoga, small games, songs, dance items, puppetry, acting skills, physical exercises, etc. Eight special commemorative days were observed in 15 villages and altogether 10,551 children performed before a total of 11,185 persons. We organized a sports meet in ten villages, not so much to test athletic prowess as to give children and adults a chance to have a day in the sun, to meet children from other villages, and as a break from routine. The number of participants - children, parents, other adults having something to do with us - was 2,534 and that of spectators 5,600. The children put up 22 cultural shows which were appreciated by an audience of 8,500.

Our culture section is much in demand now. The Bajitpur panchayat sought its help at times of meetings of the Gram Sansad so that people would stay for the whole duration of the meeting. Local clubs frequently ask them to come and train their members. Sometimes they receive some money also and this is used to buy costumes for their various shows.

The trainers themselves underwent training on many occasions. There were two workshops, one on puppetry, and another on production of street plays on current issues like arsenic pollution, chemical agriculture etc. There were monthly meetings and group visits as well, though the latter was not possible in three villages because of the floods.

Our Kishor Kishori Bahini, comprising older children, continues to work well. It now has 223 members in 8 villages. We can organize trainings for them only during the two long vacations in summer and autumn, but this year the second was lost because of the floods, so we ended up with only two trainings for them. The first was on first aid, with 87 boys and 76 girls coming to a one-day training in different centres, and the second was on nutrition and kitchen garden, where two-day trainings were given to 60 boys and 66 girls.

We give below a summary of what the KKB did during the year. In eight villages they vaccinated 727 ducks, 3,845 hens, 599 heads of cattle, and 234 goats. This work is in great demand, and villages where we have no presence are contacting the KKB in their nearest village to go and vaccinate their animals and birds. They grew saplings and made grafts in 8 villages and these were distributed to people who were selected after a village-wide survey of which household had what.

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In 8 villages some untarred roads were cleaned and repairs, minor but adequate to make a real difference to users, were made three times in the year. A rough estimate found that altogether around 17 km of roads was kept in usable condition throughout the year because of these efforts. They looked after 65 tubewells; minor repairs were done, the bases were cleaned, and a channel for drainage dug and kept in order.

They grew and nurtured 62 kitchen gardens in 8 villages after receiving training in this, and keeping in close touch with workers in that section. After receiving training in first aid, they helped 399 persons in 8 villages. They conducted house-to-house surveys on the incidence of diarrhoea and worm infestation and presented their findings through charts and tables. They kept a daily record of temperature and rainfall and presented the information through graphs. These data will be of use mainly to workers in the agriculture section when they talk to farmers about introducing new crops in the area or changing the existing crop pattern.

They made rough but handy maps of some villages showing the land use pattern. They talked to local groceries to find out what things they stock in what quantities now, in comparison with past years, thus trying to gauge the extent of changes in food habits and general consumer behaviour.

They helped our older workers as much as they could during the flood relief operations. They worked long and hard hours with disinfectants to keep the affected areas disease-free. They did practical work in environmental studies by noting down their observations on various aspects of water, insects, birds, trees, herbs, and sources of domestic fuel.

They worked with children in our primary schools, and in 23 Government primary schools, to produce 7000 "rakhis" to make Rakhi Bandhan Day a huge success. They were encouraged by panchayat members and local teachers. Sketch maps were made of small areas, basic information provided on the panchayat, banking, and postal services available locally, our older workers assisted in preparing for blood donation camps, and help given to donors there. 210 of them went on an educational trip to Sanhati Park at Ashoknagar. In January, 120 of them were divided into two groups and each held a central conference for an evaluation of the year's work.

After the previous year's success with our work on medicinal herbs in two high schools, this year we changed the subject into environmental studies and allied things. It needed time to get off the ground but the children had started doing some surveys of the sanitation scene in their areas and then the floods changed everything. When academic work resumed so much time had been lost that neither teachers nor students wanted to do anything other than finishing the syllabus. So that programme had to be abandoned.

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In February we held a meeting at Swanirvar with 25 teachers from 20 local high schools. We told them about our work with and hopes from the Kishor Kishori Bahini and wanted them to consider if they could not start such a movement in their schools. We also explored the possibility of their attending a training session on activity-based science teaching if we brought a well-known resource person as trainer.