

Jill Cook's verbal Report for 1963, Okhaldhunga Dist.

Anne Avis joined our team in Okhaldhunga in March of 1963, and that made us two Sisters in the dispensary there; and at that time we also had Hastiman and Mariam Rai, so that we were all of a sudden fairly well staffed, and we did not have as many patients and as much work to do as we had anticipated. And so it was that I was able to begin some of the public health work around the villages. This is what I had been hoping to do, but I had not thought I would be able to start until 1964. As so during this past year it has been a sort of an experimental year in this work, and I would like to tell you something about it.

Altogether I made eight different treks in different directions. Some of these treks lasted just a few days if it was to nearer villages, whereas some of them lasted two or three weeks to villages further afield. I tried to go to villages where there were schools as much as possible, and also to villages where we had contacts with ex-patients. Altogether I visited 25 different schools (you will understand that there are just village schools where in the smallest ones there are perhaps just 20 or 30 children, and the bigger ones 100 or 120 children, but mostly with an average of about 50 or 60), and altogether some 35 different villages. I tried to give health talks at every school I visited, and on the whole found the teachers, such as they were, very cooperative. And then I would ask if I could give the children vaccinations: not in every place, but if, for instance, we had had cases of typhoid in a certain direction, we would give TABC injections to those children, and to the adults too, if possible.

But when I was working up north amongst the Sherpas, I was doing the anti-TB work, and giving Mantoux tests, and later BCG injections. Altogether over 2,000 TABC vaccinations have been done, and the Mantoux tests 614, and of those who were negative 408 have been given BCG vaccinations. Unfortunately I have not been able to go back to every village where they have had BCG vaccinations to find out whether they were effective or not; but in those villages where I was able to go back, I worked out that about 98% of these BCG vaccinations took, so I was very pleased about this. Perhaps you may wonder where I obtained the Mantoux tuberculin and BCG. Well, this all happened at the same time as Anne arrived, and it really seemed to be of the Lord, and especially as I had wanted so badly to go up and work amongst the Sherpas who are especially susceptible to TB. This vaccine was given to us by the Swiss Red Cross people who are working amongst the Tibetan refugees at Jhelsa, which is a good day's journey to the north of us in Okhaldhunga. They had more than they could use, and they didn't want it to waste, and so they gave all this stuff to us, and I've been able to use it amongst the Sherpas. I've been in Sherpa villages rather more than other villages.

Then, after visiting the schools, which of course is in the daytime, wherever the people are willing and happy about it, I try and arrange a meeting in the evening, either in the school, or sometimes outside if the weather was good, or sometimes in the houses of Sherpas, because they have very large rooms in their houses; and at these meetings I have been showing filmstrips with a kerosene projector. First of all I show health filmstrips, and then I have got one on abstinence. Drink is a great scourge there in Okhaldhunga District - there is a terrible lot of drunkenness. And then I gradually work on and show Gospel filmstrips, but not without asking permission first. But I've never had anyone who has objected to it; infact they have al ways been keen to see the Gospel filmstrips as well, or Bible filmstrips.

Then I usually take along agricultural and health and Gospel literature, and distribute this to interested people; not just ad lib., but to people who would value it and use it, and I've been taking seeds of vegetables to some of the places where I have been. I am anxious to do more on this line, because there has been a lot of famine in the area, and the people on the whole have a very poor diet. I am trying to introduce new kinds of vegetables, especially those that are rich in vitamins A and B and C, and they are usually pretty keen about this. At one school I distributed carrot seeds to all the children over the age of 12, and I told them I would come back in some months time and give a prize to those who raised the best carrots. I have not been able to get back yet, but just as soon as I get back now to Okhaldhunga I hope to visit that school and judge the carrots.