

BARI MOTHERS: HOME BASED "EXPERTS" FOR  
HOME-PREPARED ORAL REHYDRATION SOLUTION

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For the ICDDR, B 1979-80 field trial of oral rehydration solution (ORS) used in the home, it was necessary that ORS be easily and quickly available from people whom the community trusted. These criteria of accessibility were problematic since because of purdah many women rarely leave their bari - a cluster of patrilineally related households around a courtyard. In addition, community health workers visit households regularly only every other week. The idea of training one "expert" in each household - more than 10,000 - was rejected because of the size of the task and because of logistic problems concerned with supplies. An intermediate solution was chosen: training and giving supplies (bottles and either WHO formula packets or a measuring spoon, sugar and salt, to one woman in each bari.

Approximately 1,400 bari mothers were trained and have been working voluntarily since 1979, supported and supplied by community health workers. While there has been some problem with "leakage" of the supplied sugar, the bari mothers have been successful in preparing ORS accurately and in persuading people to use it for diarrhoea.

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