

Nishtha Rural Health, Education & Environment Centre 2012-2013 Annual Report

NISHTHA is a Charitable Trust situated in Sidhbari, a small village in the Himalayan foothills of the North Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. The main objective for which the Trust has been established is to work for the benefit and development of society as a whole by improving the welfare of families with particular focus on women and children. This objective is served through activities in the fields of health, education and environment.

Our programmes include running a health clinic and health education programme, a village library and community centre which is the base for youth and environment programmes, and outreach programmes focusing on single women and children's health and education.



Nishtha Rural Health, Education & Environment Centre Village Rakkar, District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

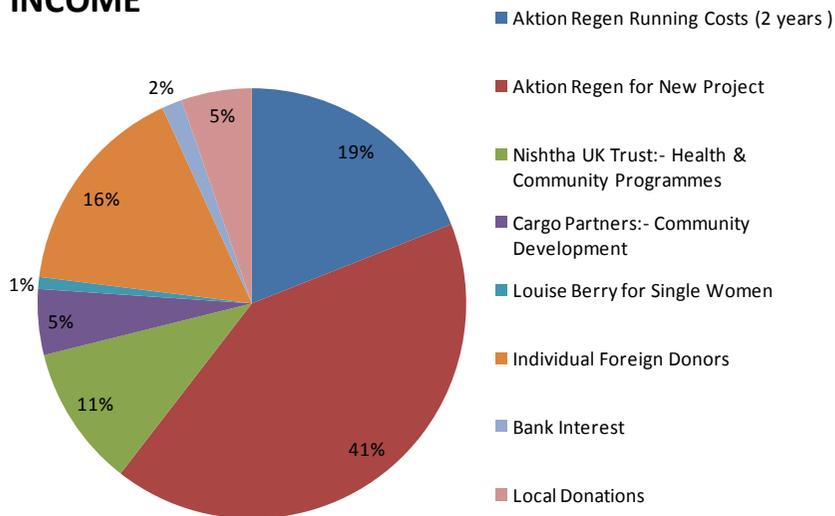
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ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013

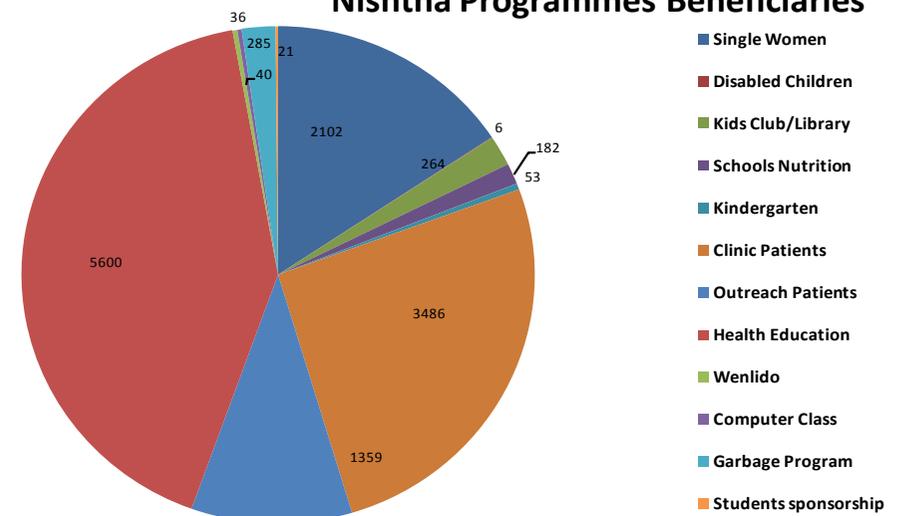
Nishtha's founder and manager is Dr. Barbara Nath-Wiser a general practitioner from Vienna, Austria who has been living in Sidhbari since 1984. The health centre is dedicated to the memory of her late husband Krishan Nath Baba, who was a respected spiritual personality in the area and was very concerned about the well-being of the local people.

The majority of our patients are the very poor from labouring and farming families. Many are widows or elderly people who depend on us for medical care which we provide free of charge to the very poor. Our approach is holistic and patients are diagnosed and treated utilising the disciplines of Allopathy, Homeopathy, Ayurveda and Acupuncture as appropriate for each individual patient.

INCOME



Nishtha Programmes Beneficiaries



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Nishtha Clinic in Rakkar Village

The clinic is open for outdoor patients 4 days a week and any time for emergencies. A total of 4,784 patients attended the Nishtha clinic this year, an increase from the 4,228 in 2011-12.

These days there is very little seasonal fluctuation, probably due to the reduction in monsoon gastrointestinal problems as people now use our filtered water which they collect from the three taps in the village.

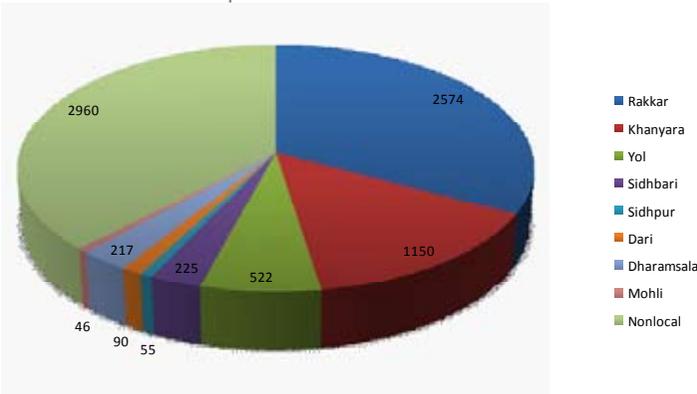
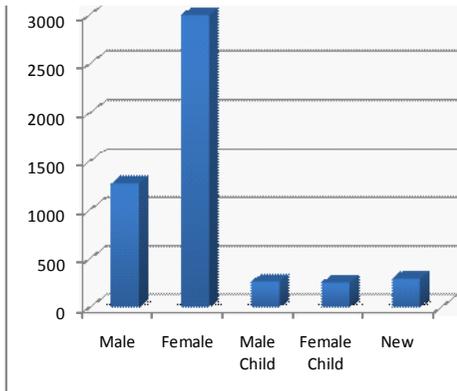
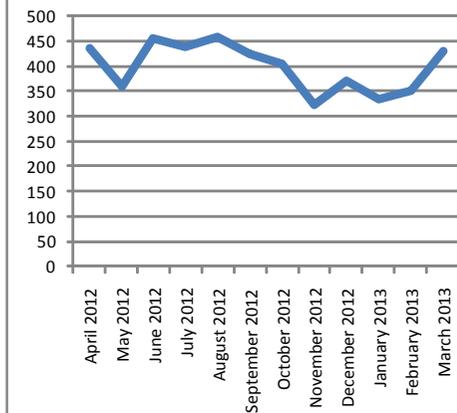
This has also impacted the use of our small inpatients facility which is mostly used for observation and cases who need daily care.

This chart (right) shows that we receive more than double the number of women as men as patients and almost equal male and female children.

Most of our patients are regulars with only 6% new patients in the clinic this year. Whilst some of the increase in women will be through contact with our Single Women's programme, it is clear from the following chart that most of our patients come from the immediate locality and that the proportion of men has decreased since last year.

Our main focus is therefore on the health and welfare of local disadvantaged women.

Nishtha Health Programme: Rakkar Clinic



Dr. Barbara Nath Wisner listening to a patient



Visiting medical students get practical experience during their internship at Nishtha.



We offer alternative treatments such as homeopathy, acupuncture and laser therapy

Destitute Patients Care

Nishtha's programme to provide effective assistance to long term patients who are unable to cover the costs and management of their medical problems is now legendary in the village. To some, such as a young women from a very poor family with a thyroid problem we provide treatment in the clinic and buy in the medicines for her. She is managing so well that she was able to get married this year. Several diabetic and psychiatric patients also receive treatment in this way.

Others such as a 45 year old local woman was suffering from calcified aneurysm and was admitted in the govt hospital for two weeks. Nishtha paid 50% of her medical expenses. She is now much better and able to work again.

Illiterate or semi-literate poor patients who attend our clinic and need to be referred to the Government hospital in Tanda, as well as emergency cases are transported and accompanied by our staff in order to provide the necessary assistance to enable them to manage the big hospital. In one particular case this year of a man who needed an operation but had no-one to help him, our staff voluntarily took turns to stay with and act as attendants to him.

Elderly people are often picked up from their homes by the Nishtha car to attend the Nishtha clinic and are then dropped home again. This is possible now we have 4 drivers on our staff and two vehicles.

Children with disabilities

Nishtha provides equipment and supervision for differently-abled children in our care and arranges transport to attend a local centre for the disabled.

When Nishtha came to know about Arushi, a nine year old girl with severe cerebral palsy, who never left her dark and overcrowded room, we took expert advice how best to help her. Two years later, Arushi's quality of life has vastly improved and this programme has developed into a long term commitment to work with the differently-abled children from Rakkar Village, to give them a chance to lead the best possible lives.

Having tried and failed to find a helpful situation for Arushi in the local school with facilities for the disabled, we looked to Tapovan Trust who provide excellent physiotherapy and play facilities for children with disabilities in a caring and social atmosphere.



Nishtha Community Health Programme

Since April 2012 twice a week Arushi along with Samjholi, a 4 year old also with cerebral palsy, are picked up from their homes along with their mothers or helpers and taken to Tapovan Centre. They are again transported back



home after 3 hours of interaction with other children and exercises with special trained therapists. Both Arushi and Samjholi have already made very satisfactory improvements.

Arushi, has an attendant to assist her mother so she can work, part paid by her mother but additionally sup-



ported by Nishtha to enable her to work longer hours. Wooden house chairs and outdoor wheelchairs have been made for both Arushi and Samjholi which help to keep

the children in a good posture which is both strengthening and comfortable and makes it easier for them to eat and handle objects. Accessories for the chairs, such as straps and wood pieces, are produced in Nishtha itself.

Our programme now includes a child with severely defective hearing who has joined the group who go to Tapovan. Nishtha has assisted in part paying for a special hearing aid.

Recently three more young children with cerebral palsy have been identified, including Nishant. They are encouraged to join our group and we are planning to increase the number of visits the children make to Tapovan.

All the children are monitored by Dr. Kusum who visits them at home regularly and guides their parents and attendants how to care for them nicely and to keep them entertained.



Nishant with his mother

Our programme includes a young teenage girl from Zanskar who also has cerebral palsy and who has for several years received payment for her medical bills through Nishtha sponsorship.



Subhash, Nishtha driver along with Vijay and Raju our community workers take particular care and interest in our special children. Here with Samjholi who is being fitted with her new wheelchair.

Nishtha Health Education Outreach

Nishtha health Education outreach programme which takes the clinic out into the villages to venues organised by the Single Women Activists has become a regular twice a week programme. Dr Kusum who runs the programme feels that it is going well and helping a huge number of people in a very positive way. She says: “People respond well and ask lots of questions. I feel we help lots of people in this way, empowering them to look after themselves. It is amazing how little people know about their bodies, not even how their digestive system works, where is their heart, how many kidneys they have, really so very little. Therefore they are like small children learning the very basics about themselves and it is very exciting to give them this information.”

We visit each village three times enabling people to get used to the team and time to open up to asking questions. The single woman activist in the area prepares the local women for the visit and organises the venue. In some areas which are more agricultural we get good attendance because the women are able to take time off field work during the day to attend the clinic. In less agricultural areas like Khanyara, Rakkar and Yol where people have little or no land, the women go off to work in people's houses or they work as labourers and so they have no time to come to a clinic in the day time. We are considering holding evening clinics in this area to enable the women to come.

Between 25 and 60 women attend the health education sessions and those who need medical attention and are unlikely to be able to access it otherwise are seen by our medical team



Dr Kusum explains that the most common problems people have are anaemia, gastric problems, constipation, joints problems, vaginal discharge and prolapses. “Every woman has a lot of work and after work they have no time – they buy heavy painkillers such as IP brufen and diclofenac which result in gastric acidity – this results in loss of appetite and therefore they become anaemic. I tell them why they shouldn't take painkillers, that they cause the gastric discomfort and teach them how to do exercises and relaxation for their pain and to drink hot water and chew well.



The most significant cost of running this programme is the fuel for the vehicle which was donated by Cargo Partners in 2011. Other costs are small: materials for advertising and running the programs, and expenses for refreshments. We try to dispense only essential medicines and nutritional supplements such as iron and calcium tablets and the medicine and equipment comes from the clinic. Therefore our running costs are small but our impact is huge.

Nishtha Single Women’s Group - Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan

Nishtha Single Women’s group works in 3 Blocks in Himachal Pradesh – Kangra, Nagrota and Rait. We have three teams of activists and assistant activists who work in a total of 89 village areas, with a membership of over 2,000 women.



Every month we hold meetings in which The Block Leader meets with all the 15-20 village area groups under her jurisdiction. In these meetings upcoming events and activates of the Sangathan are planned. We present and encourage discussion on government schemes and problems which arise when single women try to access these schemes. Personal issues are also talked about: family situations and the public response to their situation. The meetings explain and discuss the Sangathan’s role and aims and how to take action. If there are new members to be registered, then this work is also done during the Monthly Meeting. These meetings are an essential way to bind the group together and create a social forum for isolated women in the wider village area.

“Block Meetings” are held once every 6 months in each block. Leaders from all 15 villages (panchayats) gather. Very often representatives from Sutra (the Himachal Pradesh nodal agency for the single women’s movement in the state) attend. These meetings have a very important role to play in passing information from centre to grass roots, and back, keeping the central agency aware of the issues and concerns of the people in the villages.



This year the sangathan held a full calendar of events:

- *participating in the national campaign to improve pensions,
- *supporting other groups such as the Una group who have established a single women’s house in their area,



- *visiting local officials to inform them of the work of the sangathan,
- * holding a rally on International Widow’s Day
- *Attending the sangathan H.P. State Level meeting in Shimla.
- *Holding Wenlido Self-Defense Training with daughters of single women



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Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan - Kangra district

- * attending Single Women Leadership Trainings In Sutra
- * Attending The National Forum Meeting in ISI, Delhi
- *organizing a public hearing with the ADM and Welfare Officer in the Lions Club Hall, Dharamshala. 360 single women from all over the District attended this event.



- * holding yoga classes for single women
- * holding First Aid Training in Nishtha during which 7 single women participated.
- *Attending the International Conference on Widowhood in Kathmandu, Nepal and discussing child marriages.
- * Attending an Aam Sabha Meeting in Delhi during which a plan for controlling social violence in the form of verbal abuse, physical violence and social pressure was worked on.

Achievements:



The One Billion Rising International Campaign against violence held on 14th February, was supported by Nishtha Single Women along with the rest of the Nishtha team and local people. A series of rallies were held in Rakkar, Fatehpur, Sokhni da Kot, Khaniyara, Dharamshala and McLeod Ganj. Single Women and volunteers marched carrying boards, shouting slogans and singing songs for women's rights and against violence.

State Level registration of our Organisation as Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan, District Kangra.



On the 8th of March Nishtha carried out an entertainment and information program on the Mahila Divas (International Women's Day). In this program 268 women, single and married, participated. The Rakkar Single Women's Group prepared and performed an informative play on dowry, violence and culture.



Acknowledgement from government officials of single women's concerns regarding pensions, widows land rights, the rights of women undergoing divorce proceedings and social violence.



The Lions Club Dharamshala gave sewing machines to six daughters of single women's from different blocks for their weddings and 25 women received interest free loans of Rs.15,000 each.

School Nutrition Programme

In order to promote healthy bodies leading to fit minds capable of learning and doing well in school, Nishtha has for the past 18 years conducted a nutrition programme in the local village school.



This year, the number of children attending the local Rakkar Schools (Primary and Middle) has reduced to a total of 90-100 children; 60-70 in the Middle School and 30 in the Primary School.



Every family who can afford it are sending their children to private schools in the area. Therefore the Government schools are only

receiving the poorest children with the least chance of good nutrition at home and success in school.

Our attention has also been drawn to the more deprived primary schools on the hill above our village where the families are very poor slate miners or farmers and their access to fresh fruit and vegetables is poor.

Therefore we have undertaken to supply supplementary food and fruits to the 60 children at Chakvan School and to the 25 children at Samlekhar Nag School once a week to be distributed over the following 4 days.

In addition the children in the three kindergartens which are near the primary schools at Samlekarnath, Lunta and Chakvan also receive fruit as hardly any of these children will ever be given a piece of fruit by their families.



In total Nishtha has delivered fruits and supplements for lunch to over 200 children regularly throughout the year.

The children who attend Nishtha's "Kids Club" from 3 to 5 o'clock every afternoon also receive a piece of fruit as a snack, mostly bananas and oranges.

This helps them concentrate in their computer and tutorial classes.

The range of fruits and vegetables distributed to the schools varies seasonally. This year oranges, apples, bananas, guavas, chikus (sapodilla), pears, grapes, water melons and carrots have been provided. For lunch tomatoes, potatoes, onions, beans, cauliflower, cucumber, squash (lauki and ghiya), carrots and coconut along with lentils (daal), chickpeas (chana and kala chana), groundnuts, coriander, tofu, soya nuggets and spices. Nishtha was also giving oil to

the school kitchens but recently we stopped since the government now supplies 5gms a day for each child in the school which should be adequate.



Nishtha also supplies a ration of soap to each school in order to encourage both children and cooks to wash their hands.



During the saff visits to the schools the water filtration systems Nishtha has installed there are checked to make sure they are supplying good clean water to the children, teachers, and local residents.

Community Outreach - Pre-school Children

Each village has a small baby crèche (anganwari) with a room and staff provided by the government. In most cases the infrastructure is lamentable with poor ventilation, lighting and little or no water or sanitation provided. Out of concern for the poor start this gives young children, Nishtha has taken on 4 creches in our area and has worked to improve the very poor infrastructure for the children by painting the walls, providing cupboards and



carpets, bowls, mugs and various kitchen cooking equipment as required

Nishtha has also installed water filters at Luntha and Samlekar-nath anganwaris to ensure a safe clean water supply for the children. These are checked every week and cleaned and the filters changed as necessary.



Twice a week our community activists Raju and Vijay along with our Austrian civil servant volunteers and Subhash our driver visit the Anganwaris. One day a week the visit concentrates on deliveries of nutritious snacks and fruits to the nearby schools as well as to the Anganwari children, and once a week, on Thursdays, the visit is specifically to work with Anganwari children. The boys try out exercises with the children taken from the Fun learning book which is now available and show the Anganwari teachers how to use it. They are very



happy with this book and seem to use it themselves even when we are not there.



Raj, our kids club programme officer has taken a keen interest in the needs of the children and recently put together book and toy boxes for the 4 anganwaris. These contain a good selection of balls, soft dolls and hard plastic animals as well as puzzles, crayons and games and lots of simple books suitable for young children.



Public Health and Environment Programmes

Water Filtration

Providing filtered water in as many places in the village as we can is an important contribution to the health of the village. This year we had very few patients in the clinic with gastroenteritis whereas it is still very common elsewhere. The 3 water filters in Rakkar Village: in the clinic which also supplies the community centre, in the school and in the lower village by Tara Centre, are managed by Suresh who cleans and checks them every week and makes sure that they are being used properly. It is now habitual for the local villagers to come to the various tapping points to collect their water. The two new ones at the upper schools, which have been put in in the last year are managed by Raj and Vijay



Dogs clinic



This project was launched in response to the increasing number of dogs in the area and the frequent outbreaks of rabies that are being experienced locally – last year at least 3 outbreaks were reported in the area and already this year one has occurred in Moli village in spring 2013. This is a serious threat to the lives and safety of the local people, particularly children.



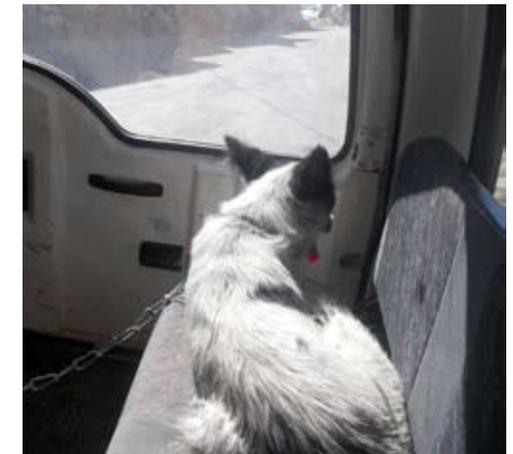
We therefore aim to reduce the dog population, ensuring that all the dogs in the locality are 'known' to local families and to vaccinate as many dogs as possible against rabies.



After a lot of organisation setbacks to do with the closing down of the dog rescue centre in Dharamsala and organising an alternative arrangement with Tibet Charity which has itself re-located its clinic up the hill near Dal lake, Arun Sharma, a young local man

engaged for the purpose launched the programme of dog sterilisations on the 28th of February 2013 with the aim to complete 50 sterilisations before October. Since then 2 local female dogs have been sterilised a week. They are taken up to the clinic one Thursday and picked up again the following Thursday when the next two dogs are taken up. All are returned to their areas in good shape and are surviving. The local people are pleased to have them back and look after them.

If each of 50 dogs would have produced an average of 12 puppies a year, and if only 10% of those puppies were to survive, then we will have saved the local area 60 stray dogs by the end of one year and ensure that to 50 sterilised dogs lead happier, healthier lives!



Public Health and Environment Programmes

Clean and Green Rakkar

Felix, our Austrian civil servant describes the project as it is running: “The problem of garbage in India is a long and tedious one which we at Nishtha have been working on continuously for many years. Originally we set up dustbins all over the village, emptied by Nishtha staff members and we ran clean up campaigns with the children. However, this was not enough because the villagers, being used to burning plastic, if they at all put the plastics into the bins would then set the bins on fire damaging the bin.



Therefore the Clean and Green Rakkar Project aims not only to have garbage collectors who collect the plastic from the houses but they also train the people how to segregate and teach them about the dangers of throwing plastic waste mindlessly and of burning it. “



Since March 2012 Nishtha has employed two young boys from the village Raju and Vijay. With the extra staff to help, in May we started making house to house visits, particularly to meet and talk to women and girls because they are the ones who are dealing with the household waste and when it collects it becomes quite a hard job to sort it all out.



Hand outs were distributed. The whole village of Rakkar has 267 households and is quite spread out so we targeted the 100 households in the upper section of the village

which we have then sub-divided into 5 sections. After one month of active mobilization, a local young boy Arun was trained how to run the programme. Since then, Arun has visited each section of the village every fifteen days and collects the clean plastic waste from the households in a large bag and brings it to a Nishtha collection store.



In one month we collect a Jeep load of plastic - about 80 kg which we take to the Public Works Department who are using it to make roads.

Most of the waste collected consists of plastic bottles, food supply packages such as biscuit & chip wrappers, packets from oil, soap powder, bread – all now in plastic. An average local household produces about half a kilo of ‘soft’ plastic waste a month and middle class households who

are often the most difficult to get to segregate and collect their waste, produce much more.

People are getting used to Arun coming regularly and are much better now at keeping their waste. They also pick up the plastic garbage that is washed down in the water channels which otherwise blocks the fields.



In June 2012 Nishtha staff put up a stall at the Rakkar Fete to advertise our work and encourage the local people to join our programmes.



Youth Sports Programme

Protection of the Village Ground

Nishtha Sports and Environment Club members have put a great deal of energy into protecting the sports ground from being enclosed by the local school. They conducted an effective signature campaign and approached the Panchayat to prevent this encroachment which some people had to be persuaded was not a good thing for the village.

The school wanted to enclose the ground in order to prevent animals from grazing and fouling the land but in so doing they would have excluded the young people for using the ground as a playing field. A resolution was passed in the public meeting to prevent this loss to the village. This has now been passed to the DC who has forwarded the matter to the revenue dept and the work on the school wall was stopped. We now await a final decision by the authorities.

Significant encroachment of the sports ground is also taking place which needs to be addressed in order to save the open space and vehicular access to the ground needs to be stopped for the safety of the children playing there.

Winter Sports Programmes:

In November we held a very full one day sports programme with the Rakkar primary and middle school children in preparation for the upcoming tournament to be held in December. The aim was to motivate our schoolchildren, especially the girls to participate in track and athletic sports as well as cricket and indoor games such as carom and chess and drawing. Nishtha distributed fruits as snacks and provided the play materials, and six of our community staff to organise the events.



The following month the children joined our organised sports practice sessions every afternoon after school on the sports ground so that by December when the main festival started they were really familiar with the rules of the games and well practiced. In the meantime Vandana

and Vijay trained the girls to perform dances and songs which they performed at the end of the programme



Four local government schools and 2 private schools were invited to attend the 2 day sports and cultural programme held in the first week of December. More than 250 children took part. Everybody was given a chance to try their hand at whatever sport they wanted: cricket, athletics, football, volleyball, badminton and indoor games and everyone received prizes.



The cricket tournament took place in December from 15th to January 13th (Lori festival). A total of 24 teams from the surrounding villages, Govt colleges and 2 computer academy teams took part.



The tournament was won by a mixed local team of the best players. The award ceremony was held on 13th and the mementos and Nishtha calendars were given to the winning teams and the man of the match by Dr Barbara and Philippa. It was a real source of interest for the local people who would turn up whenever there was a match going on and watch and cheer, bringing the village to life.



Cultural Awareness Programme

Tri Lok, our Indian classical music teacher has been training 2 children and some volunteers twice a week in classical singing, tabla and harmonium. Vandhana and Vijay, our local folk artistes have worked with our dancers and the young girls to prepare them for special occasions. However, a regular training programme is starting only now with our group of sponsored girl students – this will take place every Sunday from 3-5pm. After losing many of our good participants to marriages and jobs out of the village, we are working to build a good dance team again this year.



Our costumes are used on many occasions to demonstrate the culture of the region and attract attention, including during the International One Billion Rising Rally against violence in February.

Jewellery purchase



Because it is becoming increasingly difficult to find the traditional silver jewellery to borrow for our programmes from local families who sell it in order to buy gold for weddings, we have been looking for good quality items. Mohinder located a good source in Baijnath and, having checked out the local market he went to buy 4 head pieces and 2 necklaces. These items were then used on women's Day and looked wonderful.



Computer Training

In 2012-13 we continued to hold computer classes with the children from the local villages of Rakkar, Mohli, Tillu etc. We give preference to the government school children where they do not have computers so students are disadvantaged by having no knowledge about computers. Our aim is that every student should have at least basic computer knowledge which will definitely help their future career prospects.

This year we have had 4 batches of computer classes and in every batch there are 36 students. Every batch takes three months. We taught them basic computer programmes including word, excel, painting and the rapid typing tutor since it is such an asset to be able to type properly.

We try to use different and interesting teaching techniques and have also introduced using headphones so the students get the full benefit of the typing programme, including the music to make their fingers dance across the keyboard.

Although the room was set up in formal teaching style with the teacher and a whiteboard in front, we decided to turn the classroom round so the two rows of desks face each other and

look to the teacher who is managing a projector on one side and the screen with the projected lesson on the other. This is a very effective way of teaching and saves a lot of teacher time writing things up on the board.

Indu and Lakshmi taught the classes up until November when they both left to get married and a new girl, Marvee was appointed to teach along with Vijay our Community Centre activist who is turning into a very good teacher. The students enjoy their classes and in 3 months master how to handle the computer.



In addition to the regular computer classes going on in the afternoons, we have some college students who come during their exam period to download their study materials and also to learn about the computer. We help those students who are keen to improve their typing skills as we have such nice programmes.

Nishtha Kids Programme

Throughout this year the Community Centre has been alive with the sound of children's voices during the 3-5 pm after school period when the children from the nearby government school and sometimes those from the local private school come to engage in our programmes for children.

The Library is the main focus of the Community Centre for the children with its boxes full of books for the children to select and read here or borrow and take home. This year we had 88 boys and 68 girls who actively used the library and borrowed books. We came to notice about the striking difference in the number of books read by girls and by boys. Boys appear to read almost double the number of books that girls read - the reasons for this need to be investigated and we need to find ways to



encourage girls to read more and to confidently borrow books. The children who actively use our library are almost all between 7 and 17 years old with much the greatest number in the 11-13 age range. After 17 very few youngsters use the library though not because we don't have suitable books - the books sit on the shelf without being read. Our volunteers and staff assist the



children in selecting suitable books and check whether they are really reading them or just borrowing them for the pictures. They estimate by asking them questions about the story when they return the book that about half are properly read. In order to encourage the children to enjoy stories we look for people who will tell stories to the group from time to time. These events are always a lot



of fun and lead to story writing and play acting activities.

Sports and Games

Many children run directly to the games cupboards and select a box game or the sports equipment and play happily for much of the session, giving free outlet to the bottled up energy they leave school with. Our staff are available to give them guidance and play with them, encouraging them in expanding their choices and experience. This way the children have learned a remarkable number of games including Memory, Dominos, Halli Galli, tombola, Ligretto and Mikado. Halli Galli and Mikado, require quickness of thought and calmness of fine motor skills, and are particularly popular.

Our sports equipment includes badminton rackets and shuttle cocks, skipping ropes, soccer and volleyballs

and cricket sets. When things get too boisterous around the centre, Raj or the volunteers will take them off to the ground to play.



Story book Distribution

Through the inspiration of Nishtha Trustee Radhika Shaunik, Nishtha assisted in a programme to distribute environment based story books to the school children. Each child got to take home at least one book while all participating in group story sessions and raising their awareness of environment issues.



Educational Sponsorship Programme

School children's Tuition:

This year Nishtha offered tuition for 1st to 10th class students between September 2012 and March 2013 in preparation for their important exams. For this we appointed two teachers Aryan and Deepshikha to teach English, Maths and Science, subjects that the students have the most difficulty with. Aryan has been teaching in our tuition programme for four years.

30 students from different standards regularly attended the daily after-school classes from nearby poor villages, most of whom go to the local government schools. Last year seven of our students stood first in their class. We are hoping for even better results this year.



Nishtha also sponsors a few select children to enable them to go to school. Rupa is doing very well with her private tuition to enable her to keep up in school.

Students Sponsorship

Higher Education Sponsorship for high school and BA college students from depressed families: We are currently sponsoring 6 boys and 9 girls to continue their education, primarily in the government schools though there are two exceptions. One girl is taking her 10th grade course from a private school as her father pulled her out of school after 6th grade but she was determined to study so did so at home and so has to take the course towards the exam in a private school. 9 students are studying their Plus 1 or 2 (high school courses) and 5 students are studying at college level BA or Bcom while two girls are studying law, one in Shimla.



The students are expected to attend the community Centre at least once a month and programmes have been organised throughout the year for



them to develop their skills and personalities with a view to their being able to take on active social roles in their communities. This monthly meeting was scheduled every 2nd Saturday the students when Mohinder Kumar addressed various topics related to education and environment prior to paying their tuition, transport and books bills. One of his major topics has been waste management. He has motivated the students to participate in Nishtha's household level garbage management programme in their own areas, training them how to segregate waste and to bring the non-salable plastic waste in clean condition to the ongoing Nishtha's clean village programme collection point. During these meetings and attendance at Nishtha Community Centre the students were introduced to and encouraged to use Nishtha's

village library. All the students now have book borrowing cards and they borrow books on a regular basis. The library stocks dictionaries, lots of books on science, literature and general knowledge as well as magazines and publications such as Competition Success which help them to prepare for their exams.

During the monsoon – every Sunday for three months from August to October a young Indian volunteer ran an interesting and inspiring theatre workshop. This was well attended by the students and as a result several of the students have taken public speaking and leadership roles in their schools and colleges.

The students have also been very helpful in actively participating in Nishtha's various events such as the children's sports programme and the women's day programme.



First Aid Training

In November a First Aid Training was held at Nishtha by the St. John's Ambulance team from Wales, UK. who have been coming regularly for the past 5 years. This time our Sponsorship Students were able to take part. Mohinder Kumar later held a half day follow up first aid training to remind the students what they had learned and to answer their questions. The students have all taken their exams and are awaiting their results and will apply for re-admission into Nishtha Sponsorship programme.



Girls in Wenlido Training Session



Wenlido Training

Organising Wenlido trainings this year has been difficult because Deepa has resigned from Nishtha following her marriage and Ravindra had her first baby in August. Although both Deepa and Ravindra assure us that they will be ready to step in to hold Wenlido training for us, we have for a long time intended to introduce other people into the programme and so increase the number of trained trainers available. We therefore invited Priti who is one of the original batch of young women trained by the Gitta who introduced this method of self defence. She is now a fully qualified trainers trainer and was able to come up from Bangalore to start training Radha and several of the other single women's activists. We had to incur not only her more expensive fees but also the cost of her travel from and back to Bangalore. Deepa also took on the role of trainer during the two workshops held back to back in July while Ravindra sat on the side and participated in the discussions. No Wenlido trainings were carried out between October and March but the programme will re-open in April with Priti coming for two more sessions to select new potential trainers.

New Land Project



The aim of this new project is to create a demonstration farm to train single women in organic kitchen and herb gardening.

Through our work in the clinic and with the Single Women we have come to understand that there is particular need for a community programme providing training in a sustainable income generating activity for destitute single women. Many single women suffer great hardship and indignity in their villages where they are very often resented by the relatives of their deceased or estranged husbands. Their chances of living a decent life with a worthwhile mission are limited and most have little option but to work as drudges in the family fields. There is therefore urgent

need to provide a means for them to become financially independent. Matching this with the need for locally grown organic vegetables and herbs, we have arranged to purchase half an acre of good clean land behind the Nishtha Clinic and Community Centre which we will plant as a demonstration farm. This will enable us to plant both large and small plots of vegetables and herbs as well as large trees such as bera and amla which have very good medicinal fruits and seeds.

The process of land registration is likely to take up to two years to complete as we will need to get the land properly registered in the name of the Trust. We have also arranged a 2 meter wide pathway through the fields to the land. Fencing and establishing the demonstration garden along with setting up training programmes in cultivating and forming a women's co-operative will follow.

Nishtha Staff enjoying their outing to Pong Dam.

