



निष्ठा
 n i s h t h a
 20th Anniversary
 ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15





Nishtha depends on individual donors to continue our health and community work. We are very grateful to all those who provide support through Nishtha Austria and Nishtha UK Trust as well as to those who contribute directly and to our local supporters.

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Nishtha UK Trust

Charities Commission
 Registration No: 1118248
 IR charity status ref No: XT2400
 e-mail: uktrust@nishtha-hp.org

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Nishtha UK Trust
 P O Box 203 Totnes,
 Devon TQ9 9BS

or paid directly to:

Nishtha UK Trust
 sort code: 30 97 41
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Nishtha Rural Health, Education & Environment Centre

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 Registration No: 51 1/4/98
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MESSAGE FROM NISHTHA DIRECTOR DR. BARBARA NATH WISER

APRIL 2015

This year is a very special year for us as we complete 20 years working here in Rakkar running the Rural Health Clinic inspired by my late husband Kishan Nath Baba. It gave us great joy that His Excellency the Austrian Ambassador along with his family and so many of our wonderful friends and loyal supporters joined us here in Rakkar to celebrate this occasion with us.

I am very honoured and grateful to receive this Austrian Golden Cross award from the Austrian Government for the social service Nishtha has been doing in the rural areas of Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh over the years. It is both motivating and I feel a great responsibility to carry on the work for which I have been recognised. Our achievements here at Nishtha are due to the hard work and commitment of our whole team. I would like to recognise the enormous input of those who have worked with me right from the beginning – Ram, Dr. Kusum and Suresh who joined me when we were only a very small simple clinic. Mohinder, who came in as project manager and then gradually over the years the ancillary and community centre staff who joined as our very small flower grew and blossomed into the widespread project you see here today. I also want to thank our loyal Trustees who help us with great dedication and concern and without whom we could not survive.

Our work at Nishtha has been totally dependent on the generosity of our donors, many of whom could not be with us on the great day but who we recognise and thank from the bottom of our hearts. I hope that in the years to come we will be able to welcome many more of you to see the work we are doing in the villages – reaching out into the rural communities with health education and

care for the most needy, fostering the programme to empower single women and working to encourage young girls and students to study and grow into people who can take on the challenges of the future with understanding and compassion. Our community centre work with the children and young people of the village, providing still needed nutritional supplements and joyful educational facilities, activities and sports. And of course our environment programme which is taking on the challenge of plastic waste management in our village and organic agriculture.

Our 2014-15 annual report is presented as a souvenir of our 20th anniversary. We hope you will find it inspiring and continue to support our work. Please also keep in touch with our website and facebook page where we post all

our programmes and activities as they occur.

Thank you all!



NISHTHA 20TH ANNIVE



Dr. Barbara and the Nishtha staff joyfully welcomed over 200 guests to join in the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Nishtha Health Care Centre on 2nd April 2015. The event at Tara Centre was graced by the presence of His Excellency Mr. Bernhard Wrabetz, the Ambassador of the Republic of Austria who presented Dr. Barbara with the *Decoration of Honour in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria*, the highest civil award for Social Service.

Our honoured guests included over 80 sponsors who have been supporting Dr. Barbara's work for these 20 years, making it possible for Nishtha to make a significant impact on the health and social environment of the local villages. Local guests included our valuable friends and supporters including esteemed members of the Tibetan community.

As the guests assembled, a video recounting all the work done by Nishtha was shown. The programme opened with chanting by a group of 10 Tibetan Nuns from Dolma Ling Nunnery who prayed for the continuation of the good work being done by Nishtha. Expertly introduced by Radhika Shaunik, His Excellency made a speech in which he expressed his pleasure at being here and being able to see Nishtha, an organisation that he has heard a great deal about, with his own eyes. He has met Dr. Barbara before in the Embassy in Delhi and always enjoyed talking to her and was impressed by her sincerity and dedication to her work as well as by her humour! He remembered his mother who, he felt, being also a doctor would have applauded the work

being done in the villages by Dr. Barbara and regretted that she was unable to visit along with him and his family today. With that he presented the *Decoration of Honour* to Dr. Barbara, pinning it onto her sari. We then all rose and lustily sang the Austrian National Anthem.

Dr. Barbara addressed the gathering, expressing her pleasure that so many had come so far to share this occasion which was really not hers but belonged to everyone involved in Nishtha. She presented her staff, starting with the senior staff, Dr. Kusum Thapa, Ram Chand and Suresh Kumar who have been working with her the longest. To these she presented a shawl, a certificate and a statue to adorn their household shrines as a memory of the occasion. She remembered Subhash Chand who sadly passed away in October 2014 and presented a certificate and a statue of Ganesh-ji to his widow who is now employed at Nishtha. Mohinder Sharma who she referred to as being like a son to her also received a certificate and a statue of Lord Shiva. There followed our community activists, Ravindra, Vijay, Megha, Ravi and Vijay Bhadwaj, our cleaning staff: Rasma, Surinder and Salochana, the stitching women's group leader Maya Devi and our team of single women activists headed by Radha Devi. Finally, Philippa Russell who has helped Dr. Barbara with the administration of the project since 1995 was introduced and spoke briefly expressing how much she has enjoyed being a part of this project.



RSARY CELEBRATIONS

VARIOUS GUESTS THEN ROSE TO GIVE THEIR OWN PRESENTATIONS



Mr. Wolfgang Grader one of our oldest donors, presented a cheque from the Club of Austria Bamberg.



Christl Lange presented a cheque from Weltladen, Ulm.



Prof. Dr. Paul Drobek presented a cheque from the Charity Christmas Fair which was held in his castle.



Michelle Jaques and Molly Cooper presented a cheque from Hands Together, a British organisation which aims to help organisations which work in the fields of peace, justice and poverty alleviation.



Rinchen Khando Choegyal, Director of the Tibetan Nuns Project presented a beautiful door curtain stitched by the nuns themselves.



Tenzin Palmo presented a gorgeous statue of white Tara and spoke warmly about the value of Dr. Barbara's work.



Welmur Koekebeker spoke about her commitment to establish Nishtha Netherlands in order to assist the on-going work of Nishtha.

At that everybody went out to enjoy a sumptuous local style lunch cooked by professional village festival cook Suresh Kumar along with the rest of our staff.

This was followed by a cultural performance which opened with a lively song and dance by the Sidhbari Nepali Young Girl's Dancing Group. Bhandana Sharma, dressed

in local Gaddhi dress and accompanied by local musicians Trilok and Rishi performed a haunting local song. Our sponsorship students delighted the crowd by performing a lively Gaddhi dance in full costume and drew everybody in to dance along with them until the end.

20TH ANNIVERSARY WEEK-LO



SUNDAY, 29 MARCH

Over 80 guests, some who had arrived earlier, some on the flight from Delhi and a large group who had been on the Indian Classic Tour with Dr. Barbara's son, Shankar all assembled on the 29th at Nishtha for a reception and tour of our facilities. The rain caused havoc to the arrangements Dr. Barbara and the staff had carefully made to hold a reception under canopies in her garden behind the community centre. At the last moment everything was shifted inside the Clinic where we enjoyed a traditional welcome and a wonderful lunch cooked and served by the staff. Many of our guests were old friends who had visited Nishtha before, but for quite a few it was their first time to see where we are and we were particularly delighted to be able to show them all around. By 5.30 everyone returned to their guests houses, many at Tara Centre and others in Himalayan Brothers, Norling House and Dolma Ling Nunnery guest houses.



MONDAY, 30 MARCH

This morning we were able to offer a very special chance to our guests to be a part of a public audience offered to visitors to Dharamsala on that day by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Not only did we get a very special photograph with His Holiness but he also gave us a short talk, sharing his commitments to increasing ethical values in the world, religious harmony and the securing the future of the Tibetan people. We then drove down the windy roads to the Norbulingka Institute which strives to preserve Tibetan culture, for a traditional Tibetan lunch and a tour of the very interesting Institute with its craft rooms, exhibition of costume dolls, beautiful temple and gardens.



TUESDAY, 31 MARCH

Shankar and Philippa organised each to take a group by bus for a picnic. Shankar took his group to the unique Musroor rock temple and then picnicked at the ancient fort in Kangra while Philippa took hers to see the exquisitely carved Baijnath temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva in his role as a healer. We then drove part way home and stopped at an organisation called Aavishkaar where they very kindly provided facilities for our group to picnic. There was a group of young girls there, undergoing a two week training who entertained us by singing a song expressing their desire to be free from constraints and gave an impressive judo performance. We then got to look around the very interesting facility which provides for children to explore science in a totally hands-on way. We then walked to the nearby tea gardens and were enthusiastically shown around the factory by the owner Mr Butail. Many of our party were delighted to be able to buy packets of tea straight from the source!



While we were out, Barbara and our Trustees Radhika Saunik and Soniya Sebastian received His Excellency the Austrian Ambassador and his family and friends who swelled our numbers by a further 10 people. They were hosted for lunch at Dr. Barbara's house and then were taken on a tour of Norbulingka Institute and Dolma Ling Nunnery. In the evening they joined the rest of the party at Tara Centre for a festive dinner followed by a wonderful evening of music in which an excellent classical Indian musician Prabhu along with Hans, a guitarist from Sweden and two local musicians Mani and Navi performed local folk songs and Sufi poems accompanied by harmonium and tabla.



NG PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, 1 APRIL

Today the whole group went up to McLeod Ganj by taxi calling in at the Tibetan administrative area on the way to learn something about the Tibetan community in exile. We were fortunate in being able to see inside the Parliament building as well as to visit the temple of the state oracle. We then called in at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives which has a beautifully laid out museum of Tibetan art. In McLeod Ganj we visited the main Tibetan temple, the 'Tsuglhakang', which is situated by Namgyal monastery and the entrance to the residence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Despite the rain some hardy walkers enjoyed a walk around the Lha Gya Ri, a path which circles the hill on which His Holiness' residence sits. Everyone was then ready for a comforting cup of coffee and a toasted sandwich in one of the several coffee shops on temple road on the way into the main town. People then shopped until it was too cold and wet and took taxis down to their guest houses.

FRIDAY, 3 APRIL

This morning a group of our guests left with Shankar on a tour of the Himalayan region. The rest of the party divided into two groups, one going by bus with Philippa to Musroor Rock Temple and Kangra fort and a smaller group with Dr. Barbara to visit Baijnath temple, Aavishkaar and the tea gardens near Palampur. We all had a great day!

SATURDAY, 4 APRIL

This week the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts were holding a festival of "Lhamo" Tibetan opera performances at their centre above McLeod Ganj. We therefore all went to see the impressive performance going on. Some people stayed, enjoying the opportunity to sample a rare Tibetan experience while a group of 16 intrepid walkers headed up the mountain. 13 made it as far as Magic View cafe. There we rested and snacked before heading down the hill, though two people made it all the way through the snow to Triund, the high grazing ground just under 10,000 feet. The rhododendrons were spectacular!

In the evening the whole party met at Dolma Ling Nunnery where we held a small ceremony to remember our friends and loved ones and to rejoice at the good work we have been able to achieve by lighting 750 traditional Tibetan butterlamps. It was a very moving occasion.

SUNDAY, 5 APRIL

Today we were invited by Dr. Barbara to hike up to her retreat house on the mountainside above Rakkar village for a picnic. Following the trail used by goats and the few villagers who live up here we saw in passing one of the mountain schools and baby crèches which are supported by Nishtha. The children who live in these poor mountain settlements are some of the most important beneficiaries of our programmes. The weather which had been rainy off and on all week continued to be unpredictable, but fortunately it rained while we were at the house and when we got back down to the village so we had a good walk without getting wet.

In the evening we all got together in Tara Centre for a final wonderful dinner prepared by the Tara Centre staff before everyone headed home. We had a wonderful week with our amazing friends and supporters! Thank you all for coming!





NISHTHA RURAL

Nishtha Health Clinic was started in 1995 by Dr. Barbara Nath Wisser on the advice of her husband Kishan Nath Baba to provide affordable medical care for the poor of the village. Together with a core staff: Dr. Kusum Thapa, Ram Chand and Suresh Kumar she has been running the daily clinic along with a small in-patient's facility for the past 20 years. We are grateful to Nishtha Austria Trust who fund the majority of the clinic expenses including staff salaries and the Nishtha UK Trust for their help with special cases and the Outreach clinic. This year we have also received funding from the Population Foundation in India for salaries connected with the Outreach Clinic.

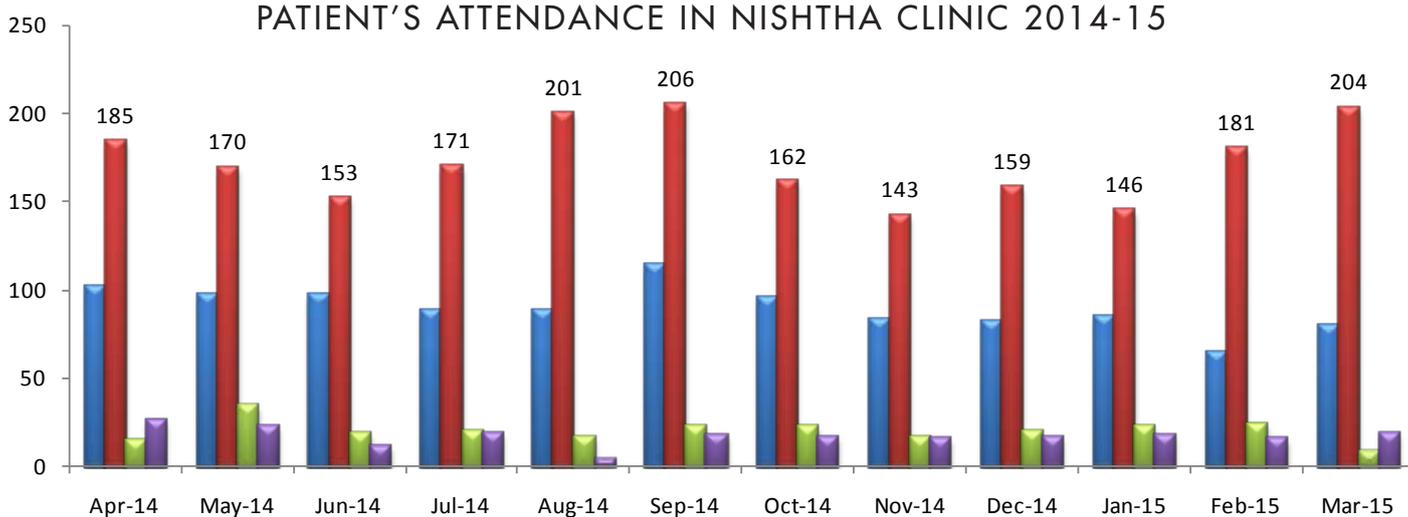
The majority of our patients are the very poor from the local farming or landless labour communities. Many are widows or elderly people who depend on us for medical care. Our approach is holistic and patients are observed and treated utilising the disciplines of Allopathy, Homeopathy, Ayurveda and Acupuncture as appropriate for each individual patient. Serious cases are referred to the nearest specialist facility or to the Zonal hospital along with our vehicle and assistants if needed.

Until recently we have been seeing up to 50 patients a day but now people have money in their pockets, but very little time so there are fewer patients coming for

consultations. In the last two years this is also due to a new very helpful Government scheme which provides free health care in the Government hospitals for below poverty line patients. In response, since 2012 we have been going out from the clinic 2 days a week visiting more remote villages which we access through our single women's programme offering health education and a limited number of consultations particularly to the women, elderly and children of the area.

This year our doctors held 3,619 consultations in the clinic itself, almost two thirds of whom were women and 329 were new patients. Our patients come from an ever widening area throughout the Kangra Valley, reflecting the effect of reaching out into the villages with our twice weekly health outreach clinics. The percentage of patients from Rakkar itself is decreasing slowly because people are more mobile and medicines for a quick fix are much easier to obtain than before. Often Dr. Kusum will advise women she meets while she is out on her field clinics to visit the Nishtha clinic for particular treatments such as acupuncture, homeopathy and for gynaecological problems. At present we have around 75 patients who visit us regularly who cannot be operated for uterus prolapses, usually the very old or the under 40s. This year we had many patients

PATIENT'S ATTENDANCE IN NISHTHA CLINIC 2014-15





HEALTH CLINIC

who each took 10 sessions of acupuncture. People suffering from migraines, sciatica, frozen shoulder and joint pains particularly get significant relief from this treatment. We also have our regular homeopathic patients as well as those who come for homeopathy to treat infertility.

Monsoon and winter are the busiest times in the clinic and that is when we get most of our in-patients. These are often local long term very poor local patients such as Ragh who is 86 years old and was admitted three times this year for various problems, Sandhya Devi who suffers from epilepsy and lives in very depressing circumstances and Khampo Devi, a 68 year old woman who frequently has health problems because of her arduous labouring work. In 2014-15 we admitted 7 patients suffering from acute illnesses such as diarrhoea, hypertension and migraines who were given emergency treatment and sent away restored within 2 days.

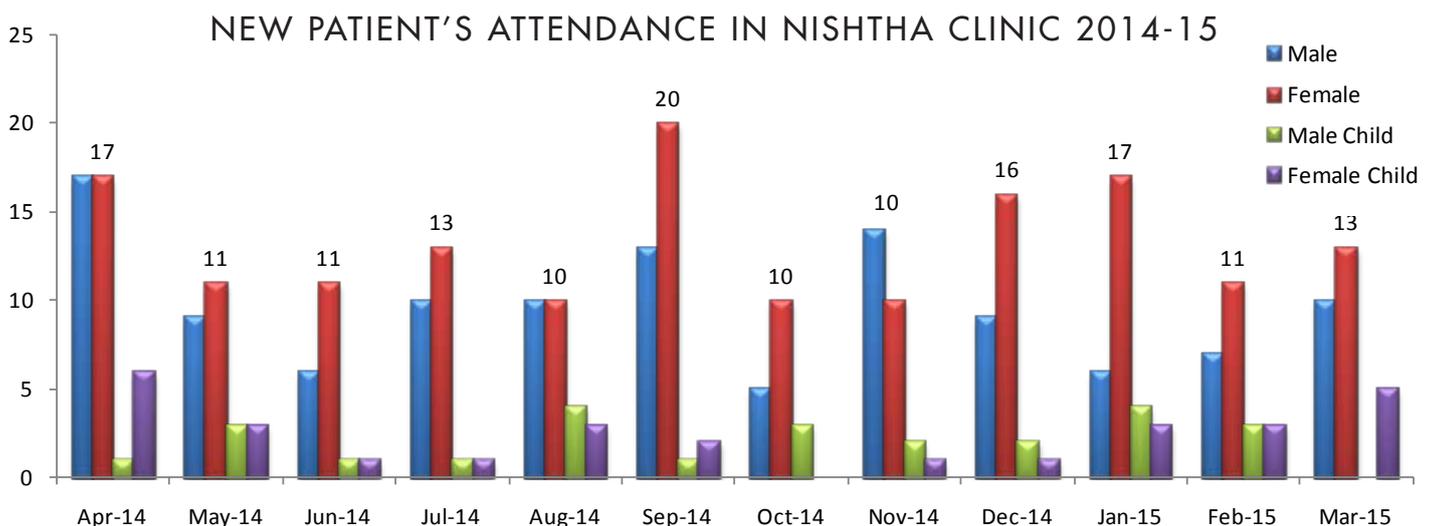
More long term are the chronic serious cases for whom we do our best such as Ranju a, a 29 year woman who fractured in her spine in 2012. She was treated in the government hospital and then sent home where she developed very bad bed sores and her health deteriorated. In 2014 the family contacted us and we started dressing the sores but it was not easy for her family to bring her

everyday to clinic so Dr. Kusum visited her twice a week in her home in Yol. In December she became worse and we admitted her in our clinic. At last she returned home where she died which was very sad for our team.

Many of the very poor are provided free medicines and have their treatments paid for through our destitute fund. These include single women such as Darshna, a 43 year old who has severe weakness and is unable to work to feed herself properly so Nishtha has been providing help for her to buy food and vegetables and we take her to Tanda hospital for her appointments. Ichiya Devi is a 45 year old lady who has breast cancer and was operated in a city hospital. Nishtha funds her ongoing medical bills as well as providing regular treatment in the Nishtha clinic.

One of Nishtha's long term patients is a teenage girl from a remote village who is HIV+ve. Both her parents have died and she lives with her uncle. Nishtha has been paying for her to get food supplies for the past 2 years. Our single women activists and Dr. Kusum keep a good eye on her and report that she is much stronger and more confident than before and is progressing well in her studies.

Ten other local poor patients have received financial help from us (normally 50% of their bills) to help pay for their medicines and treatment from other medical facilities.





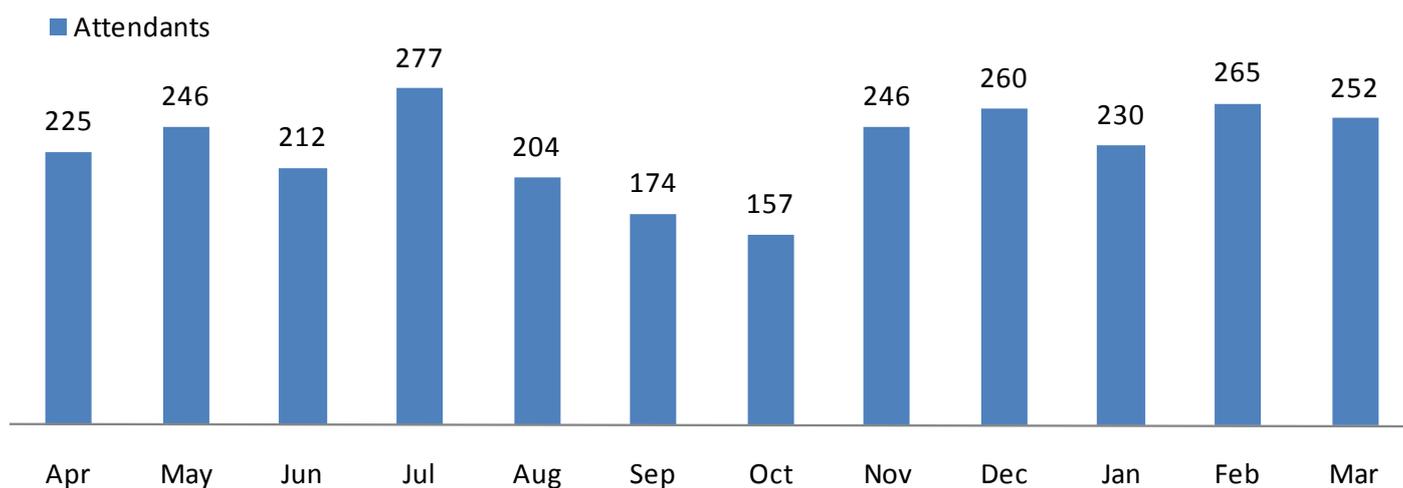
NISHTHA OUTREACH HEALTH EDUCATION

This Programme takes the team out of the clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays to visit villages and hold camps organised by our single women activists. This year we have held 85 separate events in remote rural villages attended by a total of 2,748 villagers, an average of 32 people attending each session. The most needy and immobile people in each clinic have medical consultations with our doctor. The health education provided by Dr. Kusum covers hygiene, nutrition, exercise, the causes of illness, public health, waste management, information about particular diseases such as diabetes and heart disease and female and reproductive issues. Although the sessions are organised by the single women activists only around a third of those who attend

videos and charts to help the sessions have greater impact.

In order to get feedback from the villagers about our outreach clinics, during October the single women's team asked the women during the monthly meetings in each village about their thoughts about Nishtha's outreach clinic. The women commented positively that there is a lady doctor so it's very easy to share their personal medical problems with her. They also enjoyed the short health documentaries in Hindi and appreciated the information given about rich healthy natural products readily available in our villages. These days everyone has become dependent on what is available in the market and we are forgetting the value of the natural home cooked foods.

OUTREACH CLINIC ATTENDANCE APRIL 2014 TO MARCH 2015



are single women, the majority are married women or young girls. Sometimes some men attend, especially to see the doctor, but generally it is a women's clinic. Dr. Kusum is an excellent educator and has lots of patience to answer questions and huge store of practical information about how to be healthy. She presents her topics using a number of

The women appreciated that this is not just a clinic where you get medicines and that's over. 'Dr. Kusum gives us health education, which is more important than medicines; she talks about various women's health problems and what we can do about them.' The women all spoke very highly of Dr. Kusum.



CLINIC DISPENSARY

The clinic dispensary is run by Ram Chand and Suresh Kumar who is also in charge of clinic maintenance. Each patient has a card which is kept systematically village wise and brought out each time the patient comes. This way the individual's medical record is carefully maintained and our doctors can look back on previous treatments dating back up to 20 years! Together with Dr. Kusum they put a great deal of care and effort into making our own Ayurvedic cough mixture, calendula ointment and stomach pills.



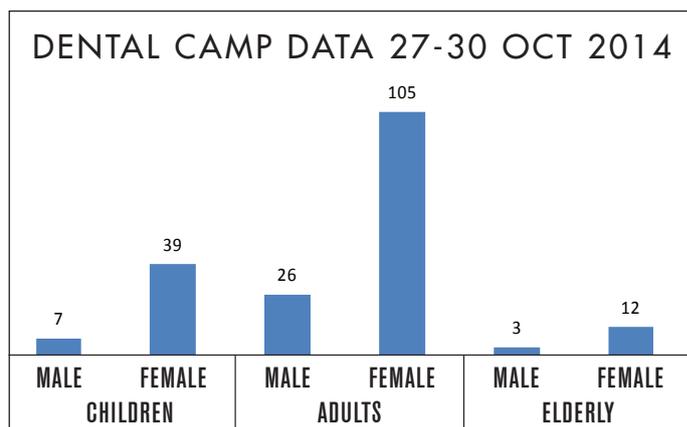
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

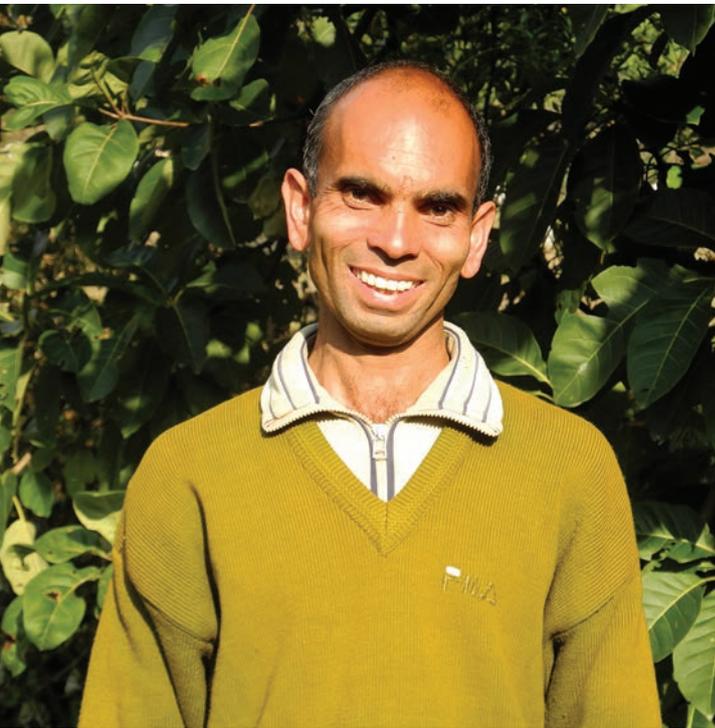
This spring we undertook significant repairs, especially to the clinic floors and we remade the little kitchen. The whole clinic was given a facelift with new curtains and paint in preparation for our 20th anniversary celebrations. Less planned was the huge amount of water pipe repair we had to do following the re-making of the Rakkar road. During the roadwork all the pipes were damaged and had to be unearthed and replaced with new pipes re-laid at a cost of over Rs.22,000.



DENTAL CAMP

Nishtha was very pleased to be able to host a very successful dental camp in October 2014 held by an eminent dental team from Austria. Dr. Anita Strobl, her dental student daughter Viktoria and her friend Bjorn, along with Dr. Martina Pommer and her daughter Lucy arrived fully equipped to be able to set up a complete dental clinic at Nishtha. During their 5 day programme they saw a total of 192 patients including Tibetan nuns, single women, local people and the school children. The Nishtha staff, students and single women activists all took their turn to assist in the clinic ensuring a high quality of hygiene and efficiency. It was a very busy but rewarding 6 days.





SUBHASH CHAND

28/6/1972 – 28/9/2014

Subhash joined our clinic team in 1999 after the death of his father Banni who was a friend and assistant to Krishan Nath Baba and who worked for Nishtha in the early years of the project especially overseeing the construction of the clinic. Subhash quickly learned how to assist with a wide range of work in the clinic as well as to drive, becoming our principal driver. We appreciate the work he did for the school nutrition programme, going to the market in the early morning and selecting the best fruit and vegetables for the children. He was known for his gentle kindness especially when transporting our special children to Tapovan daily and is much missed by our guests. We very much regret his early demise in October 2014. In order to help his family we are pleased to have engaged his widow Sujata to be in-charge of our organic farm and we are committed to funding his 2 small children through their education.



CLEAN WATER

Integral to our work to improve the health of the village are the water filtration units we have set up in the clinic, at the school with an external tapping point for the villagers and at Tara Centre with an external tapping point for those living in the lower part of our village. All three of these systems are used regularly by most families who collect their daily needs for drinking and cooking, thereby significantly reducing the cases of gastroenteritis. Water filters have also been provided to Chatwan and Samlekanath schools which are a part of our school nutrition programme. Suresh is responsible for cleaning and maintaining all these filters and the community centre staff who deliver the fruit and vegetables to the upper schools regularly help him by cleaning those filters and reporting any problems. This year we had to change some piping in the Chatwan school. The filters are changed every 6 months and the tanks, piping and taps kept in good clean working order.

We were happy to welcome the student group from Peddie School in the US to help us by painting the filter cages.

HOMEOPATHIC OUTREACH

Nishtha Homeopathic Outreach (HOPE) was initiated in order to extend our provision of free homeopathic medicine and health education to a much wider range of disadvantaged rural communities. Since January 1st Nishtha has adopted SHRI (Shantideva Homeopathic Research Initiative) Free Clinic in a small village in Bajnath Block, Himachal Pradesh. The clinic is open 4 days a week and is run by local staff with the assistance of volunteer homeopathic and health care professionals Spero Latchis DHom and Robin Jameson. The clinic has been very busy seeing around 60 patients a month. In addition the team has been visiting a local Tibetan nunnery once a week treating around 15 patients a day there. Most of the patients seen are suffering from joint or back pains and or some type of asthma. They are also treating epilepsy patients, a boy with spinal bifida, and patients with hypertension and chronic heart disease. Their success rate is high because they can track the patents and get them to come for follow ups. Funding for this clinic is coming from donors in the USA.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

As in any population, there is a small percentage of children in our village who are born with birth defects including sensory impairment and cerebral palsy. The problems faced by their parents are enormous, the sense of shame and personal responsibility for the child's defects, the often unsupportive response of the family, neighbours and doctors, and the physical and emotional stress of looking after such a child are huge burdens for people to bear. Very often parents conceal or deny their baby's disability until it becomes too problematic to handle in the home when it is very often late to be able to work effectively with the child to improve her development potential.

Although the Government schools provide limited facilities for differently-abled children within some schools, many children have very severe educational and accessibility problems and therefore cannot attend. However, CORD rehabilitation and day care centre at Tapovan which is only

3 kms from Nishtha Clinic runs an excellent programme providing physiotherapy and very practical and caring assistance for children with disabilities. Their treatment and day centre is attended by around 30 children who receive daily treatments and exercise in the physical therapy, audiometry and speech units and enjoy the play therapy centre with their friends. We are delighted to have found this excellent facility in our area and have developed a good working relationship with them.

As well as offering medical and social support and paying for additional equipment, supplies and carers, Nishtha currently provides between 5 and 9 children with daily free transport to attend this rehabilitation centre at Tapovan along with their carers. The Nishtha driver picks them up from their houses along the road and drops them at Tapovan at 9:30 am and brings them back home at 3:30pm 24 days in every month.



OUR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Arushi is now 12 years old and has cerebral palsy. She was the first child we engaged with 4 years ago and since then the quality of her life has improved, though her physical condition is not very good as she gets a lot of infections. Arushi's father abandoned her mother, Vishvendru and Arushi when she was young so Vishvendru works as an anganwari teacher. To help her manage financially Nishtha pays her to tutor Rupa, a young girl from a very poor Nepali labouring family who Nishtha also sponsors. It is very hard for Vishvendru to manage without help as Arushi needs 24 hour attendance, therefore we have a very kind sponsor who pays for an attendant, Soma Devi to take care of Arushi while her mother works, and pampers so it is easier to look after her.

Sanjoli is now 6 years old and the second twin of a poor Nepali family living on Rakkar Road. The father cannot work and Sanjoli's mother is an anganwari teacher earning only around Rs.3,000 a month. Sanjoli's cerebral palsy is more manageable than Arushi's but none the less

her mother needs help and therefore Nishtha has also found a sponsor to pay for a helper for her. Both these children use chairs provided by Nishtha.

Several other children have specifically re-located to this area in order to attend the Tapovan facility. They include eight year old Arnav, a cerebral palsy patient whose parents have moved from their home in Chamba to rented rooms on the Rakkar road in order that he can go join the Tapovan physiotherapy programme. Five year old Navya has a severe squint - her mother too rents accommodation in Rakkar. Akshar aged 4, Smile aged 2 and Atul aged 8 from Palampur all with cerebral palsy often join the car. Then there are 2 children, 6 year old Padma and 5 year old Choephel who come from Ladakh and are living at the Spiti children's Hostel and Aadrikaan, an 8 year old autistic child.

We are very happy to be able to help these children by providing the vehicle and driver who also helps them free of charge.



PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMME

For many village children their first experience of 'school' is when they are left in the local baby crèche, Anganwari by their mother who needs to work either in the fields or in arduous manual labour. The government has set up these facilities in every hamlet in every village and appoints teachers and assistants to register the pregnancies and births in the village, provide food supplements to pregnant and lactating women and to look after the children aged one and a half to 5 years old. The children go on from there into the local government schools.

Most aspiring families however, wherever it is possible, choose to send their children to private nurseries which are generally in much better condition and provide teachers who can focus on the children rather than being distracted by the other activities required of the government Anganwari workers. Private kindergartens feed the children into private schools or are attached to them so it is thus much easier for children to get a place in a coveted private school. The result is that the children remaining in the government Anganwari are from the very poorest and least aspiring families and have a very poor chance of doing well in their education.

Nishtha aims to uplift the provision for the children in the poorest Anganwaris in our area by providing them with improvements to their facility, regular fruit and nutritious snacks and books and toys. We send our community activists regularly to spend time in the crèches to play with the children in a creative educational manner and encourage the teacher and assistant to give more positive attention to the children.

Nishtha has been working with four Anganwaris for the past two years and this year, since October, with the help of the UK Trust we have been able to add two more: Salet Godam and Naag Mandir bringing the total number of baby creches we help to six.

Salet Godam is up on the hillside, far from the town. Most of the people there depend on mine related work which is hard and poorly paid. Consequently, the kids are quite poorly nourished and never get to see any fresh fruit. The baby creche is established in a local government building which is not in good condition. Often more than the 8 kids registered attend the kindergarten every day and are looked after by one teacher and one helper who requested Nishtha to help to provide better for the children.

Naag Mandir Anganwari is in Upper Rakkar and the teacher there is Arushi's mother Vindru. We visited it two years ago at a time when it was very poorly attended and so we did not take it on. However, now they have 15+ children attending regularly so we felt it was necessary to extend help to them. This baby creche is housed in a rented room in the village which is very dark and cramped, however it is quite dry and has a nice outside area that the children use when the weather is good.

Although the main problem with all the Anganwaris is the lack of proper facilities, there is very little Nishtha can do about this because these are government projects and all attempts to improve the infrastructure in any significant way is refused. We therefore concentrate on providing playing materials, cooking equipment, bowls and spoons, sitting mats, storage boxes and so on. In November we whitewashed the rooms to make them brighter. We also now include the Anganwari children in our school nutrition programme and provide them with a piece of fruit at least 3 times a week.

Ravindra, Vijay, Ravi and any volunteers in Nishtha visit all the Anganwaris at least once a week. At times we are able to increase the number of visits and time spent but this is not always possible. In the Anganwaris there is a lack of 'real activity' for the kids, therefore with this program we are hoping to improve and awake the children's creative skills by introducing them to various activities: drawing, cutting, singing or dancing as well as providing them with playing material, books and stationary.

Our book "Fun Learning" is distributed and worked with in every kindergarten. This book is based on a variety of teaching methods which help the teachers with ideas for more enriching activities with the kids.

For two months between April and June 2014 Ravindra was joined by a volunteer from Delhi who went with her in her visits to the anganwaris and helped her to keep the programme active. With the onset of the monsoon, accessing the higher anganwaris became more difficult and so the visits were reduced to once a week. As the monsoon finished we re-assessed each of the anganwaris to see what they needed. We bought an induction stove for Samlekharnag, 2 grain storage drums for Chakvan and lots more toys and board picture books for all the Anganwaris. The two new baby creches have had toy boxes made and they are being regularly re-stocked.



SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMME

Child nutrition is a crucial issue which effects growth, performance in school and future opportunities for children. In India, around 46 per cent of all children below the age of three are too small for their age, 47 per cent are underweight and at least 16 per cent are wasted. Many of these children are severely malnourished. In our local area we can see this is true – even when parents are earning, the cost of food is increasing so rapidly that child nutrition suffers. Malnourishment effects children's disease resistance and causes them to under achieve in school.

Integral to our work to upgrade the health of the village, since 1998 we have been running a school nutrition programme which continues to be very successful in the Rakkar village school. Nishtha augments the very basic meal provided by the Government by providing oil or ghee as a cooking medium, some spices and extra dals and beans, but particularly a good range of nutritious vegetables and fruits for the children. The result is that the children in this school have been doing very well both physically and in their studies and the standard of the school has improved.

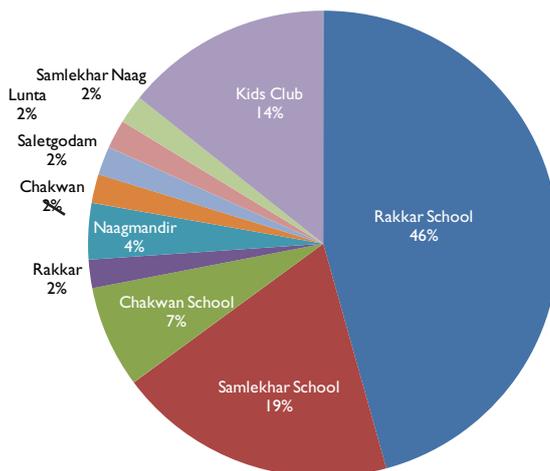
In the last two years, Nishtha has started to also help the more remote schools in the less endowed mountain communities on the mountain side above Rakkar and Khanyara villages. We have adopting a small primary school called Samlekanath and

the school in the village of Chatwan which has 65 children from very poor mining and farming families. In addition we are supplying fruit to 6 baby crèches. The remoteness of these schools and baby crèches means that the families have much less access to fresh fruits and vegetables and therefore more in need of help. At present we assist a total of 273 children from the very poorest families in the area.

Our staff visit the Dharamsala vegetable market in the early morning each Monday – the goods are sorted in our community centre and prepared in crates for delivery to the schools. The road up to Chatwan in particular is very rough and can become difficult during the monsoon. At the same time, our staff service the water filters we have installed in these schools to ensure that the children get clean drinking water and visit the baby creches. This water is also available to the local community and has greatly

improved the health of the villagers.

We are pleased with the response of the teachers from the more remote schools who welcome our visits and do their best to prepare the vegetables and include them properly in the school meals. We continue the programme in the Rakkar school because only the poorest children now attend. We are happy that these include children from migrant labour families who are here while their parents are working on a construction in the area.

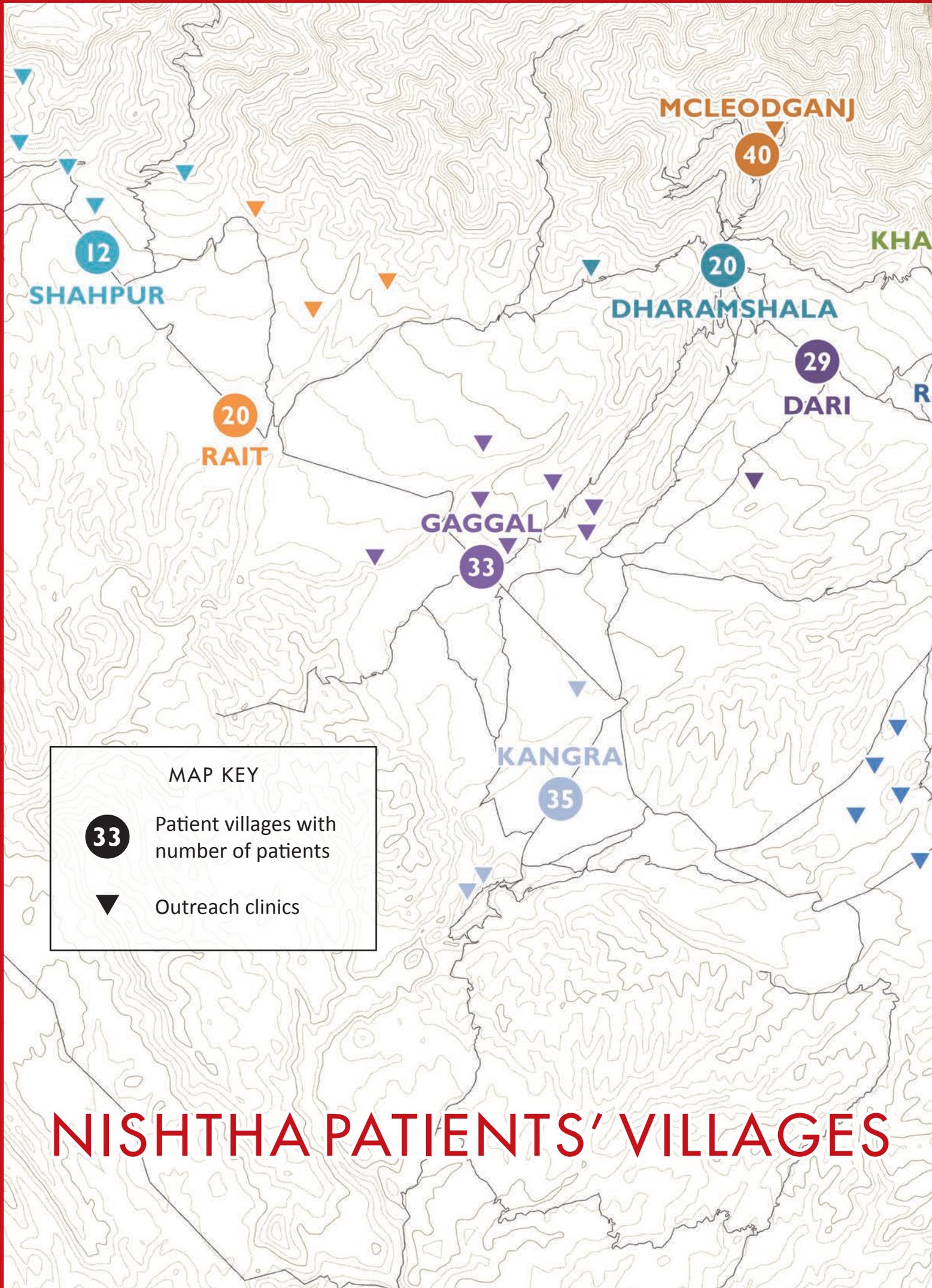


PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMME CONTINUED

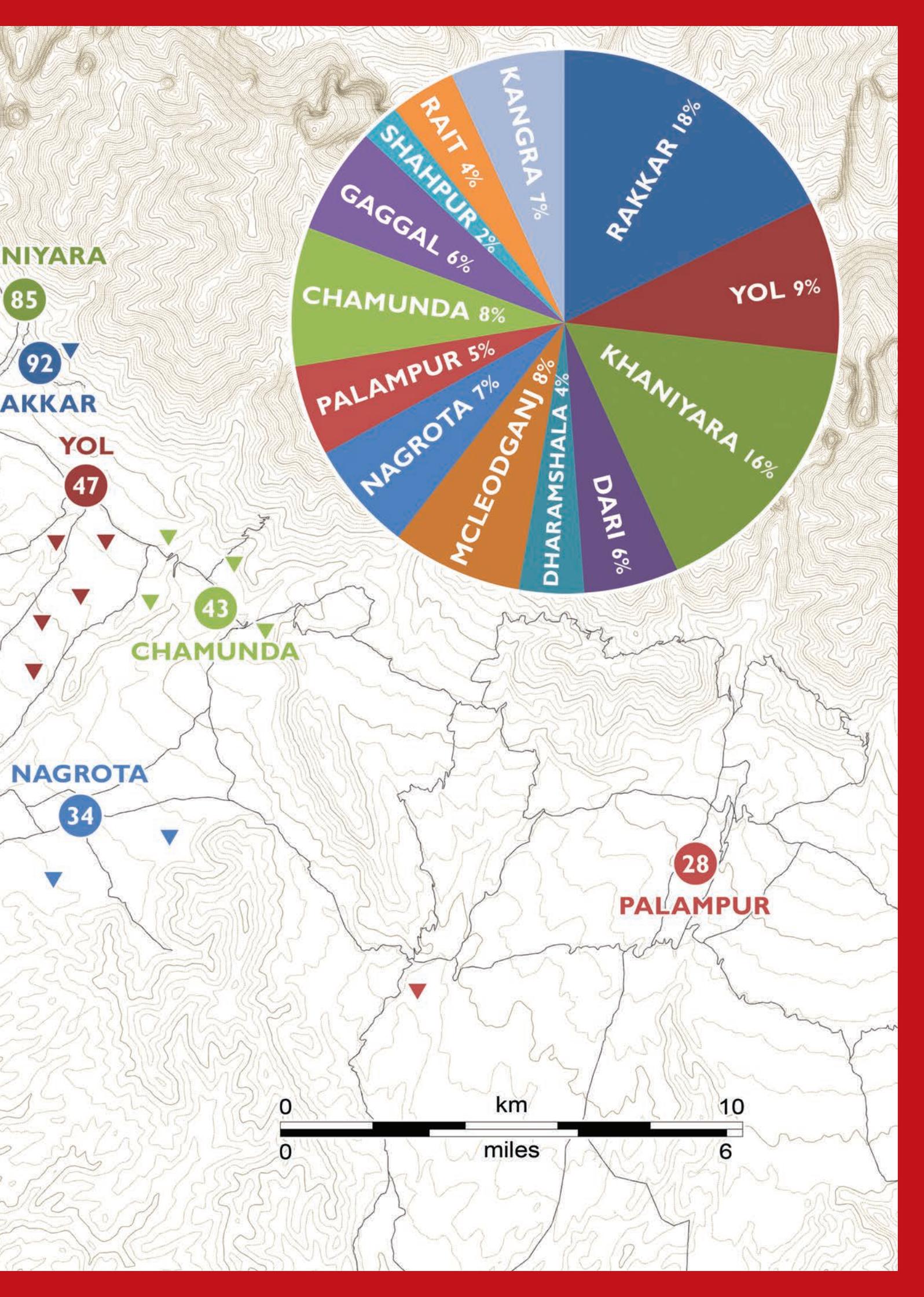
with books, drawing equipment and toys.

In February the dental program which we did in the schools and outreach clinics extended to the anganwari kids. We taught them how to brush properly and regularly and to gargle after eating. We distributed one brush and a tube of toothpaste to each child.

The teachers and parents of kids are very happy with this program. They say that with the help of Nishtha their kids are learning a lot of things and are much more active. Earlier many children were often absent or only came to the Anganwari for half an hour but now they are doing a lot of activities and it is more attractive.



NISHTHA PATIENTS' VILLAGES





NISHTHA SINGLE WOMEN'S PROGRAMME

The Nishtha Single Women's programme has been running under the Himachal nodal agency SUTRA since 2005. Named locally Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan has completed its ninth successful year and has achieved a prestigious name and considerable fame. The purpose of the programme is to provide single women, the most depressed and undervalued group of people in this society a forum to meet and discuss their problems and to provide access to means to address issues which are otherwise ignored by society and government alike. SUTRA supports our work by organising trainings and providing sufficient funding to cover the travel allowance and expenses of the single women activists. All the salaries and major events are supported by Nishtha.

Each year we increase our reach to vulnerable women in the area and consequently our ability to enact real social change. This year we have been working in 90 panchayats in 3 blocks in our area reaching a total of 2,643 women, the majority of whom are widows but including a smaller number of separated, divorced, abandoned and women who have never married. The number of women attending our meetings is steadily increasing reflecting the hard work and dedication of our team and the perceived effectiveness of the Single Women's Programme in the area.

3-YEAR COMPARISON DATA CHART



SINGLE WOMEN'S ACTIVISTS

Our Team is led by **Radha**, Nishtha group coordinator and National Single Women's Organization member. In 2006 she started her career as an activist after being abandoned by her husband and now takes care of her young son alone. She is totally dedicated to her work and passionately grasps and understands ideas very quickly. She is a compelling speaker and has written many articles for the single women's newsletter. She says: "When rural single women, alone or in a group fight for their rights or raise their voices against violence it gives me immense satisfaction that my efforts are bearing fruit. However, sometimes I am depressed when our efforts to obtain justice are obstructed by government rules and regulations, especially regarding the single women's pension scheme. Those single women whose children are in government jobs are not eligible for this scheme, but they don't see the pitiful elderly single women who should be cared for and treasured being disregarded and unsupported by her family as we do in the field."

Kummo Devi is a senior activist and coordinator in the Nishtha Single Women's Program. In 2006 she joined the single women's group after getting swindled in her divorce by her husband. At that time she had no idea what to do and felt totally helpless. Contact with the single women's group calmed her and focused her attention so she could fight her case. With the help of the group she appealed in the Supreme Court and duly got her rightful compensation and was convinced to join the single women's team and help others in similar positions to herself. Having worked steadily and effectively in Rait block for the past 9 years Kummo has gained the trust of the single women in that area and is known for her compassion and being always ready to help a woman in need, day or night.

Shilpa joined Nishtha Single Women's Team in 2011. Radha met her in one of the single women's meetings when she came with her mother, a very poor widow, and asked for work. She had been living with her mother since her husband abandoned her after brutally beating and fighting with her everyday over each and every small issue. Having



NISHTHA SINGLE WOMEN'S PROGRAMME

received training at Nishtha she was appointed as assistant activist in 2011. Shilpa gained the courage and strength of the organization to get a divorce, and compensation of Rs.80,000. Her natural shyness is gradually being replaced with confidence and she is an effective and valuable member of the team.

Sunita is a widow and has three sons. In 2010 her husband committed suicide and left her in serious trouble. She had no income but plenty of intelligence and resourcefulness and so joined the single women's group in her area. In 2011 Nishtha appointed her as a single women activist and sponsored her son's education. She works really hard covering Nagrota block with conviction and determination. The local women as well as her colleagues praise her work and say she is the most active field worker. She feels sad about the inadequate and unfulfilled government schemes for single women, largely due to weak government bureaucracy.

Pratibha is a widow and has two children. In 2013 she was appointed activist in Nagrota Block. She is highly educated which helps her manage legal and official work which requires understanding complex documents. She is new but grasps everything quickly which is good for the organization. She believes in honest work and always advises single women never to be afraid of menace or raise your voice against violence. She gets very angry about Indian culture and rituals where people worship the goddess in the temple and abuse the women at home.

Pammi Devi is a widow and has two children. She joined the Nishtha Single Women's program as an activist in 2011 and has been working in Rait block. Unfortunately she has not been well for some time and so has been unable to work. The team is very sorry not to have her well and active as, despite her lack of education she is very good in the field, mobilizing women for meetings and programmes and is a good communicator. We pray for her good health. It is hard to find such a dedicated and honest worker.

Gyani Devi is 72 years old and has been working since 2013 in Rait block, assisting the other activists. Though she is the oldest worker in the group she has amazing energy which boosts the other activists to work hard. She

is a widow with two grown children and is excellent at communicating with the village women.

PROGRAMMES 2014-15

The Nishtha Single Women's team is involved in a busy round of meetings and events throughout the year. Our activists organise monthly meetings in every Panchayat (village area) and a block level meeting, either in the village or at Nishtha every six months. During these meetings we draw in single women, register them and hear their problems. We provide information about their rights, government schemes and explore ways they can get financial and other help. We take effective steps to address immediate problems such as legal issues, domestic violence and health problems.

This year our Block Meetings were held in June and December. Our activists worked hard to reach out to those single women who were hesitating about joining and who are not properly aware of their rights. The meeting on June 10th in Rait Block was held in the community hall Shahpur. Advocates Roji Katoch and Rohit Katoch were present as legal consultants. The 52 women who participated in this meeting received useful legal information on domestic violence, land rights, child labour and other issues.

Three monthly meetings are held at Sutra in which representatives from 20 blocks across Himachal Pradesh present their reports and review and discuss their work and activities as well as showing their accounts. This year they discussed important issues such as the misuse of funds provided to the Panchayat for the health of the rural population being used for construction and in October they had a long discussion on the memorandum of the National insurance scheme through which every single woman gets free medical facility along with life insurance. Although last year the CM of Himachal Pradesh assured us that he would act on this very soon, it has not yet been implemented. In January the meeting focused on new membership of single women in Himachal Pradesh and reviewed the last years work.

SUTRA also provides valuable **Leadership Trainings for young single women**. In April, Nishtha's Single



NISHTHA SINGLE WOMEN'S PROGRAMME

Women sent 7 members, all kindergarten teachers who have a close connection with village children, young girls and women to a training which focused on developing the scope and effectiveness of their work, providing participants with confidence and means to handle and act in critical situations and how to lead a group. In November, 15 more potential activists from Kangra, Rait and Nagrota blocks were sent for a training in which they learned how to manage meetings, maintain records and data in a proper way and how to motivate weak women to stand up for their rights. In December a 6 day training was held specifically for new young single women to introduce them to information about the condition of single women in the country and in this state, to tell them how the group are fighting for their rights and how single women can get help through the force of effort of a united group of single women.

SINGLE WOMEN'S SUPPORT

Nishtha is fully engaged in supporting the work of the Single Women's group. Each month the team of activists meet in our community centre to submit their reports to Radha and plan the coming month's work. If any activist is facing difficulties in their work or has other problems they try to work out a solution as a group. These monthly meetings are also attended by Dr. Kusum, Dr. Barbara and the administrators who try to respond to the needs of the group.

In June some of the women who are interested in income generating brought their handcraft products: knitting, macramé and candle making to the community centre to discuss the feasibility of making them into salable products. It was agreed that the women need proper training and guidance but that it would be very good if they could make enough of such items so they can sale these products in a shop near Chamunda, where they could get a good price.

In July Ravindra, Nishtha's wenlido trainer and Dr. Kusum gave programs in three blocks on domestic violence and health. In the three blocks we had more than 100 participants. Dr. Kusum gave an interactive talk on how to look after your own health - what to eat to get proper nutrients from your food and how to keep yourself in good health. Ravindra, who is a wenlido trainer, talked about self empowerment, how it is physically and mentally valuable for all woman. The response to this programme was very good and a lot

of women, especially the younger ones showed interest in learning wenlido.

During August the panchayat level meetings focused on reviewing the response and effect of Nishtha's outreach clinic which has continued this year to visit villages identified by the Single Women Activists as in need of medical attention, offering health education and a limited number of consultations. The women commented positively that there is a lady doctor so it's very easy to share their personal medical problems with her. They also enjoyed the short health documentaries in Hindi and appreciated the information given about rich healthy natural foods readily available in our villages. These days everyone has become dependent on what is available in the market and we are forgetting the value of the natural home cooked foods.

In October 120 single women were the beneficiaries of a free in Dental camp held at Nishtha by a team of Austrian and German dentists and later that month 7 single women joined the first Aid Training held at Nishtha given by the St John's Ambulance First Aid team from Wales. They learned how to react in medical emergencies such as bleeding, burns, snake bites, shock and heart attack in a proper and safe way.

Nishtha also supports the local activities of the Single women's group such as the **Public Hearing** which was held in Dharamsala 23rd May in the Lion's Club hall. Officers from all the Government departments concerned with the affairs of Single Women were invited including Welfare Officers, Santosh Katoch and Narendar Jaswal; Tehsildar Pawan Sharma; Anjana Devi from the police department; Jagdish Chander from the Vigilance department and Sutra Co-ordinator Nirmal Chandel. 160 single women participated in this important event. The program started with discussion on single women's pensions, low income certificates for Government schemes, cases of domestic violence and other problems. The single women asked various questions and got satisfactory answers from the officers. The Welfare officer announced that the limit to entitle you for a low income certificate is Rs.35,000 a year and if any Patwari refuses to give this certificate despite the woman having below level income then she can come directly to him or any other officer present. A person who is 40% to 69% handicapped will get Rs.550 per month pension and above this will get Rs.770 per month.

One of the most important events of the year for the single women's group is the 23rd June - **International Widow's Day**



NISHTHA SINGLE WOMEN'S PROGRAMME

which is celebrated in Dharamsala, this year with 160 single women taking out a rally demanding free travel on buses for single women every 23rd June, free medical treatment for single women and their children, land for those single women who don't own any either in their parent's home or in their in-laws and a home for homeless single women. We conducted a short march from the Post Office in Dharamshala to the DC's office where we meet with the DC and ADC Sudesh Mokhta. We presented our memorandum to the DC and ADC and the DC assured us that he will give this memorandum to the CM of Himachal Pradesh and will try his best to act on this.

On 10th December the group organized a small rally to gain the attention of the Himachal Government who holds their winter legislative session in their new building at Tapovan. This rally was attended by more than 150 single women who marched from Sidhbari bazaar to Tapowan ground which is near the Legislative Assembly. There we met with MLA Sudheer Sharma who we presented with our request for a Fast Track Court in the panchayat which would help us to get fast results in single women's land or violence cases.

On 15th January, 15 children from Khanyara village along with our activists visited the ADM office as part of a National campaign initiated by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan to hold the government accountable to its promise to end poverty, social exclusion and discrimination and to demand for 9% of the Gross domestic product (GDP) to be committed to health and education.

On 14th February Nishtha organized a small rally with the participation of the local school children, Nishtha staff and 13 single women to join in the International campaign against violence initiated by Eve Ensler called One Billion Rising. We marched down the Rakkar Road to the mela ground where the children danced, sang and performed a play based on violence. The kids released some balloons

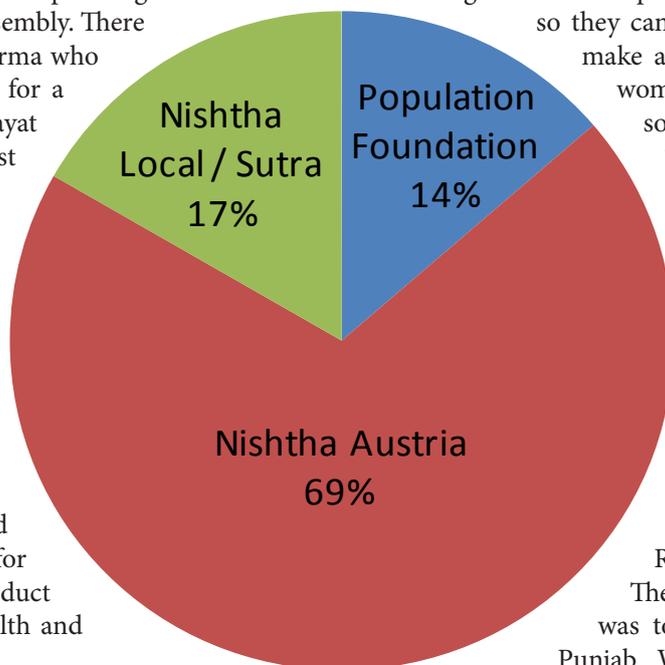
with Hindi and English slogans written on them including: 'No More Violence!' and 'My sister wants Freedom, My mother wants Freedom, We will have Freedom.'

International Women's Day, 8th March, is normally a big event in Nishtha's calendar, however, this year we were preparing for the 20th Anniversary and so Kummo, Shilpa and Ghayani instead attended a women's day program organised by our local sister NGO, Jagori Grameen in Dharamshala. They very much enjoyed the program!

NATIONAL FORUM

Group Co-ordinator Radha, as a member of the National Forum for Single Women attends the National Forum meetings held in Delhi. On 10th to 12th September, 21 members from 7 Indian states attended to discuss asking the government to provide land for poor single women so they can grow crops and fruits and thus make a living. It was tabled that single women should have the right to get some share of their family land. They should also get preference in MGNREGA, government jobs and be availed of low interest loans. In November the meeting discussed single women's pension and land rights demands.

Later the same month Radha, Pammi, Kummo, and Sunita participated in the Ekal Nari summit held at Amritsar along with 10 members from Rajasthan, Punjab and Jharkhand. The objective of this meeting was to review the full year's work in Punjab. We had some achievements but the conclusion is not very satisfactory because very few single women in Punjab have become involved in the programme. We discussed the use of various ideas how to mobilize the single women in the State. There are a great many documented cases of single women in the Punjab being abused and not being able to claim their basic rights but they are not yet coming forward to form a group.





NISHTHA CLEAN VILLAGE PROJECT

Nishtha's clean village project was started in May 2012 in Rakkar village with the aim to make people aware of how to manage their household waste. The project was inspired by Mohinder Kumar our project manager who has worked for the last 10 years with the local youth and school children conducting regular clean up days in the area, monsoon tree plantation and vermicompost workshops. He has also been very active in holding meetings with groups of youth and women and has built a good relationship with the community.

Over the years Nishtha has set up about 10 garbage collection bins in the village in an effort to keep the village clean. However people were putting their waste into the bins without segregating it so it was a challenge to manage it. There is no garbage dump site but large amounts of re-cyclable waste are collected by the local rag pickers – an unseemly job if all the waste is thrown together. An incinerator was built for the medical and dirty waste which is still in use for our clinic waste. However, it was clear that a new approach focusing on educating the community how to manage their waste was needed.

In May 2012, with new employees, we started mobilizing a target of 100 households in the upper part of the village. Maps of the village were created dividing the whole spread out village into 5 manageable areas. Hand outs were distributed and each house was visited with the aim of talking to the women and girls because they are the ones who are dealing with the household waste every day.

Our talks explained the negative consequences of allowing waste plastic in particular to accumulate in the streams and fields and the damage it does to the people and animals living here. This is a relatively new and growing problem in India because 20 years ago there was very little plastic packaging and everything was wrapped in more natural materials that easily degraded when it was thrown. Therefore people don't know what to do with their waste and either throw it or collect it and burn it which gives off dioxin which is very dangerous to health.

Our approach is to ask people to clean and collect their waste plastic from their household in bags which can then be picked up by our green-workers and brought down to the

Nishtha collection point. The plastic should be kept clean and separate from food waste which can be fed to animals or composted and recyclable waste such as glass, tin and hard plastic which is collected by the rag pickers. The collected plastic was taken by jeep to the Public Works Department in Dharamshala who had a machine to process the plastic into material to use in road construction. However, after a few months this broke down and we were forced to think of new solutions how to deal with the approximately 80 kg of soft plastic waste which we collect from even this limited area of the village per month.

PROGRESS DURING 2014

Nishtha Clean Village Programme now covers 420 households from the Chatwan/Khanyara area at the top end of the village where the channels which feed the village start, down to the Nepali and middle class section of the village half way down the Rakkar Road. By starting at the top we are making sure that the water channels are clean and if no plastic waste is coming down from above then the lower people don't immediately feel it is normal to throw waste into the channels.

70% of the households we deal with are very basic farming families who produce very little plastic. The 30% middle class households are the big plastic producers and have been much more difficult to work with. However, gradually we are gaining their confidence and most people within our area now keep a bag of clean waste for our team to collect every 2 weeks.

We now have the support of our village panchayat/government who have designated the area of land where we already have the incinerator and a garbage bin for the Rakkar village garbage project. We have enclosed this and are developing it as a garbage management and demonstration unit.

PLASTIC BRICK MACHINE

Inspired by a design which we got from the internet from a project in Haiti by Harvey Lacey, with the help of our intelligent and helpful blacksmith and a car manufacturer from Jullundur who produced the screw rod, we have



NISHTHA CLEAN VILLAGE PROJECT

created a hand operated machine to compress plastic into blocks suitable for simple construction. We sew down cement or animal feed bags to the correct size to fit into the machine. The bags are stuffed very firmly with the collected clean soft plastic waste. The stuffed bag is put into the machine, the lid closed and the screw turned to compress the bag. When they open the machine the bag is only 1 foot long. It is then firmly tied with wire. Each brick weighs

about a kilo so if we expect to make around 80 bricks a month from our immediate village waste.

We will use these bricks as wall filling in construction of stores or boundary walls. They will be packed firmly between vertical columns and sealed on both sides with plaster on chicken wire netting. This is a very exciting innovative programme which we hope to take much further this coming year.



NISHTHA ORGANIC FARM

Over the years we have developed a strong interest in growing organic vegetables and herbs and have conducted a number of workshops and trial plots with some success. In order to encourage local people to value their traditional knowledge and to grow herbs, in past years we organised a number of herbal gardening workshops and visits to the Himachal Government Nursery in Jogindernagar with groups of young people. However, this project did not take root among the local people because of lack of interest and space for production. We are therefore keen to link this project with the need to provide sustainable income generation opportunities for destitute single women by establishing an organic demonstration farm.

To this end we are cultivating a 4 kanal plot of land behind the clinic. This has been fenced and we are gradually converting what was commercial agricultural land into an organic farm. This requires careful tending of the soil and planting with a variety of plants to both experiment with what will grow well and to help to clean the earth. For the first few months the clinic and community centre staff have been working the garden but since January we have engaged a local single woman with good experience of local agricultural practices to be in charge of managing the garden. We hope that in the coming year we will get good crops of vegetables and success with certain herbs and medicinal plants.



CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES

Nishtha is fully committed to working with the Government Schools to ensure that each child gets the best start in life, thrives and develops to his or her full potential. To this end we run a rich after school programme for children in our community centre offering a library full of books for children, creative activities, tuition, sports and computer training to the poorest of the local children. We strongly focus on environmental and health issues, encouraging the children to show their families how to segregate waste and to appreciate the natural environment.

NISHTHA COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Since 2010, Nishtha library has been completely re-made into a child-oriented space and stocked with over 1,000 books for children and young people in Hindi and English in easily accessible display shelves and boxes. All the books are organised into categories for easy access and a book borrowing card system is in place. Children carry their books in special Nishtha book bags to protect them. Regular story reading and creative writing sessions take place in the library and children are assisted and encouraged to read and develop a love of reading. Adults are also very welcome in our library and find plenty of interest from history and fiction to competition success manuals and cookery books.

More than 20 children from nearby villages come to the library everyday to read and borrow books. All the children have their own cards on which they write the names and accession number of the book they want to borrow and sign it back in when they return it. The library is also used by over 40 adults, including our sponsorship students from different villages to borrow novels and read the magazines in the library.

REFRESHING NISHTHA LIBRARY

During the months leading up to the school exams in March, the children are occupied with tuition classes so the lull in library attendance has been used as a good time to refresh our stock of illustrated children's books. Our aim is to provide new and interesting fiction and non-fiction Hindi, English and dual Language books in the library for the children to keep their interest in reading fresh.

Having gone through our stock and the publishers lists we were able to see what we needed to replace and what new we should buy. In January we ordered 57 Hindi and 50 English

books from the Children's Book Trust in Delhi. Ravindra has been busy entering them into our system and categorising them. Once these are complete we will go through the other most popular publishers in our library such as National Book Trust, Pratham and Tulika. The new books will be launched into the library after the exams in March.

READING FLUENCY PROGRAMME

It was noticed by several of our volunteers that many children loved to flip through our picture books but few really took time to sit and read them cover to cover. They did of course love to be read to! It was clearly necessary to help the children to develop the reading proficiency to enable them to discover the joy of reading for themselves.

With the help of a series of books produced by NCERT we introduced a programme in which individual children take turns to sit with Ravindra and gradually read through this excellent graded series of story books. Ravindra encourages them gently to spell out difficult words and rewards the completion of each of the 4 levels with a treat. More than 30 students aged 5-11 years have so far completed the programme. We are now planning to do the same, using a different series of books that we have yet to find to encourage their English reading.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

This year we have had some excellent creative activities for the children provided by our valuable volunteers. Three young artists working with an organisation called Art Refuge spent some time with us in April 2014. They got all the children creatively drawing as never before! When their programme closed in the Tibetan Refugee Centre, they very kindly donated several child-sized tables and lots of art materials to us for our children. Thank you Art Refuge!

Sangeeta, a volunteer from Delhi who specialises in theatre and story-telling spent almost 2 months with us between April and June. As well as helping Ravindra with the anganwari visits, she worked with the children to create a puppet show drama on the need to take care of the environment. She and the children made all the puppets themselves and then made wonderful masks.

Jude, a visitor from the UK, came and taught the children how to make papier-mâché bowls and plates.



CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES

SCHOOL CHILDREN'S TUITION NISHTHA COMPUTER CENTRE

Between September and March when the school exams take place, we offer tuition classes for the local school children to give them a chance to do as well as their more well off neighbours who engage private tutors to get through the exams.

In 2014 the tuition classes started in October and were run by the same two well qualified and enthusiastic teachers who taught the children last year with very good results. These teachers are friendly with the children and have made a very good relationship with them. We focus on two subjects: Maths which is a problem for all the children regardless of whether he or she studies in the Government or a private school, and English, which is very difficult for Government school children because they do not get a lot of exposure to it.

The children going to the local school are rarely well motivated to attend extra classes because their parents are poorly educated and do not see the value of it. However, in the first three months, 30-35 students attended the tuition classes. In January, fewer children attended because it was really very cold this year and when it gets dark early parents want their children home quickly. Those students who have a long walk to get home had to stop attending. Nishtha provided a room heater and good mattresses to sit on so some students did continue to attend the classes for a while, but in February we had to close the class because one of the teachers got a job and the weather got even worse with cold and heavy rain for days on end.

Despite this, when the students got their results, all who had attended passed with good marks. The teachers were particularly pleased that three boys who have been regular students of Nishtha tuition classes for the past four years got first position in their standard this year.

Nishtha computer centre was re-made three years ago and contains 7 neat desktop computers with small flat screens. The room is set up with purpose made tables and swivel chairs with a whiteboard and projector and screen so our teachers can use a variety of teaching methods. The children are organised into regular one hour classes and they love learning typing tutor, MS word, excel and using paintbox with our teachers. Vijay who is incharge of the computer room puts a great deal of effort into maintaining the computers, managing the power back up system and preparing teaching ideas and programmes.

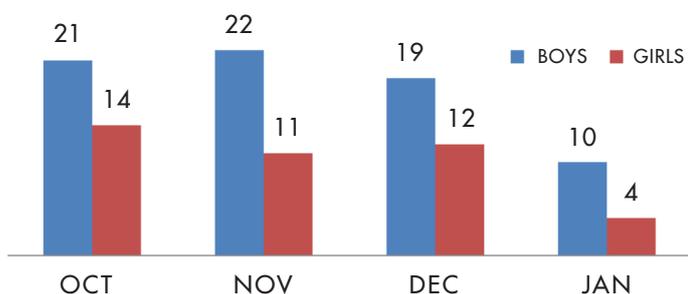
COMPUTER CLASS REPORT

This year we had seven students, 4 boys and 3 girls from families of migrant labourers who are presently working in our area and attending the local government school. They visit the after school programme at Nishtha every day and are very enthusiastic to learn though also very shy. When they first had the chance to sit at a computer and turn it on they were very hesitant and not at all sure what to do, but our teachers gently showed them and gave them courage to discover the wonders of the computer. Communicating with these children is not easy because they are very weak in English and even Hindi is not their first language, but with painstaking effort the teachers have worked to maintain their interest in computer by changing the activity frequently and giving them different kinds of fun games.

Besides these children we have 11 students who have been attending computer classes regularly. We divide the groups according to the standard of the students. New students learn how to type and use paint and word. More advanced students learn how to surf internet, send or receive mail, how the antivirus works, make charts and graphs in excel and presentations in power point. Unfortunately these classes are still dominated by boys as girls are expected to go home and help their mothers with housework after school whereas boys are free to do as they please. We try to talk to the parents to explain the value of learning the computer for girls but we are not always successful.

In addition of this our computer lab is used by some college going students during the day time. They practice typing and

TUITION CLASS ATTENDANCE





CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES

learn how to use word and excel. Our teachers, Vijay and Megha are usually busy in the morning with their office work so can't always have time to guide them but whenever they can they help these students to increase their skills.

YOUTH PROGRAMMES

Young people in the village experience tremendous stress in their teens, when they struggle to reconcile the ever increasing differences between them and their parents in what they expect out of life. Our Youth Programmes offer a wide range of activities and interesting events for young people including sports, outings, trainings, cultural events, computer education and a library of movies and books. We are also fully engaged with protecting the local environment and developing the village ground.

FIRST AID TRAINING

In conjunction with the St. John's Ambulance team from Wales, we hold regular first aid trainings for young people and our clinic staff to enable them to actively step forward and help people in times of medical emergency and to give our ancillary staff the confidence to act quickly to help patients who arrive in the clinic with severe burns, wounds or dog bites.

We were very pleased to receive the St John's Ambulance First Aid Training team from South Wales again this year. This team has now been visiting Dharamsala for 10 years and have been collaborating with Nishtha for the past 8 years. On 30th October 2014, 26 participants attended the programme held in Nishtha community centre hall. They included 14 Nishtha staff, 10 Sponsorship students and 2 officers from the CID Department who happened to visit us that day. The team headed by our old friend Des Kitto, demonstrated and then had us all practice how to respond in an emergency to save lives. They showed us how to use the 'ABCD' code: A- Airways, B- Breathing, C- Choking, D- Danger and R-Recovery, which is very useful for us all.

We learned how to do emergency dressings, what we can do if someone has a heart attack, is bitten by a snake, is burned, or falls and breaks bones. We never know when we might suffer some natural disaster in this area so we should all be prepared. This was the first time the sponsorship students and the CID officers had undertaken this training so the Nishtha staff who received this training on previous years helped the new participants. Snacks were provided to all the participants and trainers.

At the end of the session the participants expressed their

appreciation for the personal trouble and dedication of the team to come all the way from South Wales to provide us with this valuable training. It was agreed that we should plan to do a series of village outreach training programmes so that we can extend this knowledge into the villages.

CULTURAL TRAINING

Our local village population is largely made up of Ghaddi tribes people who have a rich cultural heritage of stories, music, songs dances and traditional dress. Although India encourages it's diverse cultures, with the increasing impact of Bollywood movies through television, there is a grave danger that this heritage will be lost. We therefore encourage and provide training for our young people to learn the traditional songs and dances, to tell the traditional stories and we have made a set of 6 Female and 4 male traditional dresses in which they can perform locally.

This year Vijay Bhadrwaj and Bhandana Sharma held regular training sessions with our sponsorship students on Sunday afternoons in the community centre. By the time it came for our 20th anniversary we had an excellent troupe of performers who put on an excellent performance.

WENLIDO TRAINING

For young girls and single women we offer Wenlido self defence training to provide them with the self confidence and strength to withstand domestic violence which is very common in the villages. Three day residential Wenlido workshops are held for groups of 9-16 women in Nishtha community centre, during this year. We particularly focus on women from outlying areas who we have contacted through our clinic outreach and single women's programmes.

During 2014-15 three three day residential workshops were held in July. The 1st was held from 18th to 20th July in which 13 girls participated from the nearby villages of Rakkar, Cholla, Khaniyara and Pallon. The 2nd was from 22th to 24th July 2014 in which the participants were from two areas: Khaniyara and Dharamshala. All were school girls, between 16 to 20 years. The 3rd was held from 26th to 28th July 2014 in which there were 16 participants from Shahpur village, again aged 16 to 20 years.

All 3 trainings were conducted under the supervision of certified trainers Deepa Gurung and Ravindra Kaku. None of the participants had any previous knowledge of Wenlido or any other self defence technique. During the three day training the young women learned to explore the physical and mental skills to enable them to face any situation.



CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES

Wenlido helps girls and women to connect with their strength, overturning centuries of conditioning, which convinces women that they are the 'weaker sex'. As much as learning techniques of physical self-defense, Wenlido training involves the evolution of a woman from a passive victim into a strong capable individual who can control her own life.

The whole workshop is planned with a feminist perspective and not only deals with physical safety but also with mental and emotional stability. In the workshops not only do girls learn to protect themselves, but also to recognize potentially dangerous situations early on and to respond verbally effectively when harassed. They become aware of personal boundaries, problem solve together on how to stay safe and get out of the (inner) victim mode.

SPORTS PROGRAMMES

Our village ground which we have worked on so carefully is now the regular meeting place for the youth of the village and every evening kids play on the ground. Cricket continues to be the most popular sport but anyone who wants to come and kick a ball around will quickly find a happy group of kids join them. Sometimes groups of foreign students come and play with the kids on the ground much to their mutual enjoyment.

November 8th was a big day on Rakkar ground when 150 kids from 6 local schools joined our team of community activists and sponsorship students in a full day of sports, games and fun. As the children arrived they were registered and shown the variety of games in store for them, each well organized by one or two of our team.

In school only good athletes get the chance to get involved in playing games, the others are just spectators. Our ambition is to provide the opportunity for every child to be able to play any game whether or not they are good at it. Everyone should get a chance and be encouraged.

We provided both outdoor and indoor games. Outside there was football, cricket, badminton and volleyball. Athletic events including long jump, high jump, and track races. Indoor games included chess, ludo and carom.

At the end of the afternoon snacks and fruit were provided for all the children and helpers. We asked the kids what they thought of our programme and they were loud in their appreciation and begged that it should happen again next year.

CRICKET PROGRAMME

This year Nishtha cricket tournament could not be started as usual in December because of construction work going on by the side of the ground and a Government pipeline was being

re-laid across one section of the ground. Once the pipe was laid and the new shop concrete roof was poured, the weather was bad so we were unable to start our tournament until the beginning of January. By then the school was back in session so we could only play cricket when the children were on holiday so the number of matches possible was limited. Therefore only 12 local teams competed in our tournament this year.

The opening match was between the Yol Cantt. and Sidhbari cricket teams. The teams came from the nearby villages of Khanyara, Dhari, Sidhbari and so on and rather further afield from Naddi and McLeod Ganj. Everybody enjoyed the matches and the villagers and monks from the nearby Tibetan monastery would spend their day off watching the teams play. The standard was very good and our carefully prepared pitch was much appreciated by the players. After the league matches, the final match was played on 26th January between Lower Yol vs. Dharamshala. In this very interesting match the Dharamshala team clinched the Nishtha Cricket Trophy by 20 runs. Nishtha Director Dr. Barbara distributed prizes along with our 2015 calendar to the winning and runner up teams.

Next year we will make every effort to start the tournament by the first week of December. We also feel that there is quite a danger in playing with a hard ball on this ground which is right by the school and children's playground. Therefore we are considering using a cosco ball which will also be safer and easier on the pitch. The great thing is that now every evening the pitch is in use by the local youth who are enthusiastically honing their cricket skills so they can perform well next year. The pitch will now be in continuous use right up until the monsoon's arrival in July.

CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

The swings and slides are the most popular element of Nishtha children's playground and it has become a regular meeting place for the mothers of the village. Nishtha staff regularly check and do any necessary repair work including re-fixing the tyres, adding extra support bars to the apparatus and re-grouting the swing stand. We were very grateful for the help of the Peddie School students for giving it all a coat of paint in March.

In response to the overwhelming popularity of the playground, with the help of our new Austrian Civil service volunteer Gaban who is a trained architect, we have big plans to extend and improve it by adding new swings for younger children and more adventurous climbing equipment.



EVENTS

ENVIRONMENT DAY

To celebrate 2014 Environment Day a puppet play “Bhagwat” was prepared by Volunteer Sangeeta with 14 local school kids to promote Nishtha’s Clean Green Rakkar program which is successfully functioning for over 200 households in Rakkar village. The theme of the play was how the animals get together to revolt against the human race when they realize that human beings are polluting the river and not segregating their garbage and disposing of it properly, so it becomes a threat to animal life. It touched on the most important local issues: water pollution and garbage segregation.

In addition, an illustrated handout was produced which explains how to segregate household waste in three languages: Hindi, English and Tibetan. This handout will be given to every household involved in this and future programmes as well as to the local shops, schools, temples and so on.

Although it is not easy to perform a play in several places on one day, we wanted to maximise the interest in the environment by showing it to as many people as possible on June 5th instead of 6th which was a Sunday. The first show of the day was performed at Rakkar School at 11:00 am. We set up our stage and performed to 78 kids from the middle and primary schools. They really enjoyed watching how the puppet moves on the stage and the different voices of the characters, especially since the performers were mostly

their classmates. We then talked to the children about garbage management and handed out the new leaflet.

At 1:30 pm we arrived at Chakwan School where 65 kids and their teachers were waiting eagerly to see this puppet show. They were very happy at the end of this show and all joined in the dance with the puppet show team. We handed out and explained the leaflet before rushing off to our last venue of the day at Norbulingka in Euro Kids school. There 30 to 35 Local kids and some foreigners and local people enjoyed the show. Before starting Mohinder talked to them about our Clean Green Village project and had an interactive session on how to segregate their waste.

By the end of the day we were tired but we felt we had managed to contact as many people as we could and make this day meaningful.

ONE BILLION RISING 2015

One Billion Rising is a global movement, founded by Eve Ensler, to end rape and sexual violence against women. In 2012, the One Billion Rising campaign culminated in the biggest mass global action to end violence against women ever, with tens of thousands of events held. On 20 September 2012, people from 160 countries signed up to take part in the campaign.

On the 14th of February 2015, Nishtha celebrated this global event on Rakkar Village ground. All the Nishtha staff, a group of our single women, the Nishtha sponsorship





EVENTS

students, kids of Rakkar, Chakwan, and Samlekhanag schools, our special needs students, the stitching women and a crowd of people from the village came to participate in the movement.

We made a round circle, where we discussed what is OBR and why we celebrate it. What is the significance for this kind of movement for us? The single women's group sang some songs and acted a play about non-violence. Vijay Bhardwaj and the students sang a song about violence that destroys our lives.

We then marched down the road in procession as far as Druni Mata Temple carrying banners and balloons with slogans and cut outs of doves to signify the peace we wish to find in our lives. When we reached the Temple all the children sang with great enthusiasm. Two kids from Chakwan school sang the wonderful famous song "O ri chiraiya" which everybody loved. We all sang and danced with joy.

When the programme was over we enjoyed healthy refreshments and walked back to the Rakkar ground where all the kids played together and then went home. It was a wonderful morning and a great celebration on this One Billion Rising world movement day.

RAKKAR MELA

Our local village fete is held on 31st May and 1st June every year. It is a big event for the village when everyone comes to

enjoy the fun of the wrestling, side shows, trinket and food stalls. Nishtha puts up a stall there in order to make the local people aware of what we do, to advertise our social programmes.

The Nishtha stall was decorated with lots of banners with environmental and social messages. Due to the bad weather people did not turn up until around 3 pm. Then we started a 'ring throwing' game which attracted more than 150 children who enjoyed playing games especially because we didn't charge any money for participating. Interestingly, not only the children but also women and some older people wanted to play. It was a good activity that everyone, even the very poorest could play and try to win our simple prizes of bath soap, biscuits, chocolates and so on.

When they had played we talked to the children and adults and found that people really appreciate Nishtha's programmes in the village. They were all happy to tell us about their views on the environment, and how they want to keep the village clean. We put up a white board where people wrote messages and suggestions for the 'Clean Green Rakkar Programme'. We were able to pass on valuable instructions about garbage segregation and reducing, reusing and recycling household waste.

The stall was attended by Megha, Vijay, Mohinder, Ravi and Sangeeta and assisted by Lovely, Sakshi and Raman from the student scholarship batch.





NISHTHA 20th Anniversary
CALENDAR



PUBLICITY PROJECTS

NISHTHA CALENDAR

One of our principal publicity projects is to produce a calendar each year which we send out to all our friends, supporters and local businesses and acquaintances as an expression of our gratitude and hopes that more people will see what we do and be interested in helping us with our work. This year, to celebrate our 20th anniversary we printed the calendar in full colour which has been very enthusiastically received by everyone. We are very grateful to Brian for doing the design work and helping us to get it printed in Delhi.

NISHTHA VIDEO

This year, to mark our 20th anniversary we made a simple video outlining and illustrating all our programmes over this first 20 years. It was first shown to a very receptive audience during our anniversary function. The video is available on the Nishtha website which is kept updated with our news and events.

www.nishtha-hp.org

www.facebook.com/nishtha.ngo



RAKKAR WOMEN'S SELF-EMPLOYMENT GROUP

The team of 7 women who form the Rakkar women's self-employment group use the community centre as their main work base for their stitching projects. They produce hundreds of beautifully crafted bags each year. Many of these are purchased for Nishtha fund raising programmes and as gifts for visitors. This year we are fortunate to have generated a link with a Canadian organisation called Wandering Mango. Kelly and Amy have been a great help to the group purchasing over 200 bags to be sold at Christmas sales. In addition the stitching women

make bags for Nishtha programmes including for the single women's day in June and for the 20th anniversary this year. If anyone would like to know more about how to buy their bags please contact us. Although Nishtha supports the bag making project by providing the facility and machines for them to work, design and quality control expertise and marketing assistance free of charge, the project is financially independent of Nishtha. All profits are shared among the women themselves as a co-operative, augmenting their meager family income.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT

This year we have expanded our administrative offices by taking over the single patient's room in the clinic in order to make an environment office from where our project officer Mohinder runs the programmes and organises the expanding team. It allows the original office to be the accounts office occupied by Megha Thapa who has been running the accounts for more than a year now. She also documents the programmes and is in-charge of the clinic and community centre inventories. Vijay Kumar who is mostly based in the community centre computer room also helps with the accounts and does most of the reports and data base work. We are very grateful to have such a reliable and dedicated administrative team.

WEDNESDAY STAFF MEETINGS

Every Wednesday afternoon the staff, both from the Clinic and the community centre come together to go through the ongoing programmes and events. These are important occasions for everyone to come together and to come together and appreciate what everyone else is doing, what events are coming up and to highlight specific topics that involve all the staff such as security, maintenance and environmental issues. These meetings were particularly helpful for us in planning our 20th Anniversary when everyone from top to bottom participated in week after week of brainstorming and planning sessions. Through this everyone was completely involved and worked together as an efficient and incredibly hard working, dedicated team to make it a wonderful occasion.

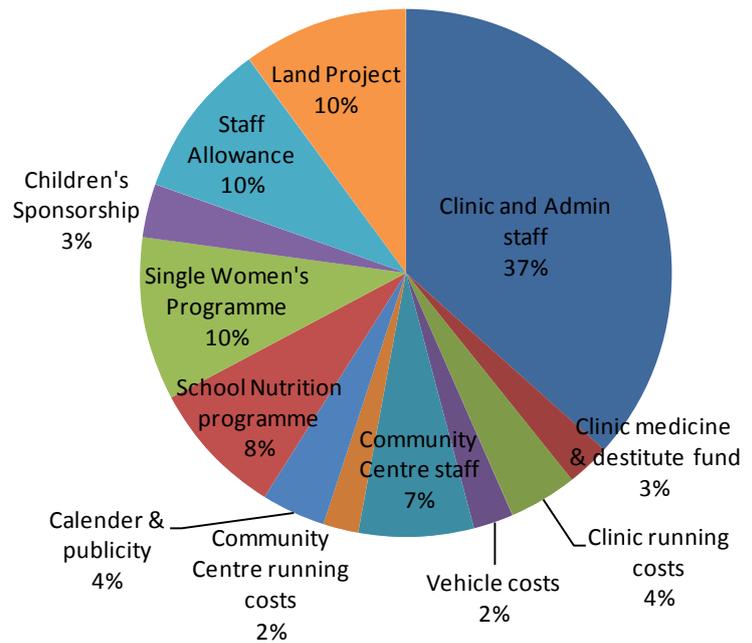
FINANCIAL REPORT

This year we received Rs.43,62,470 in Foreign contributions from which account we spent Rs.48,49,763. The overspend was covered by cashing fixed deposits from last years' running expenses and those set aside for the staff cost-of-living increment.

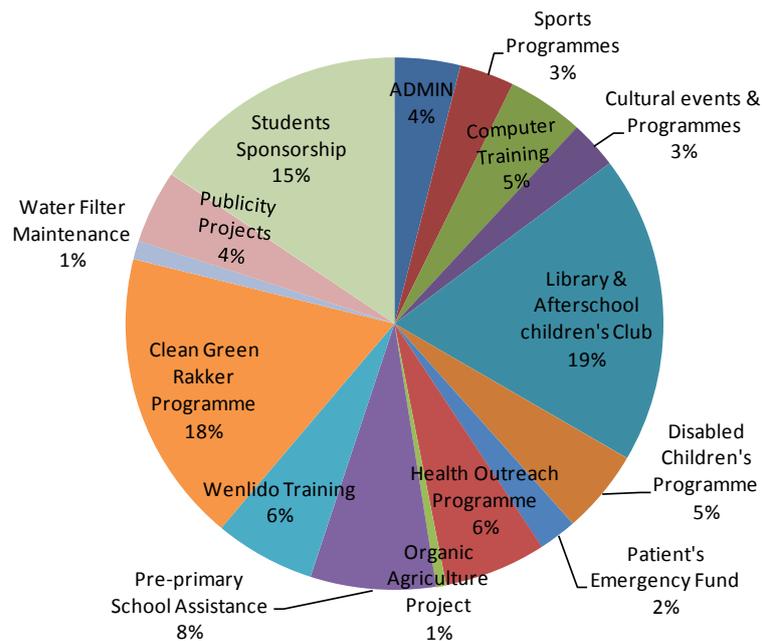
Local receipts totaled Rs.8,68,374 made up of local donations and Rs.4,50,000 from Population Foundation who are assisting with the health outreach programme for one year from November 2014 – October 2015. We spent a total of Rs.4,04,396 from this account.

We are very grateful to Nishtha Austria Trust and trustees who have recently taken over the role of Aktion Regen in Vienna. Thanks also to Nishtha UK Trust and their dedicated trustees who help us with medical cases and the community centre programmes from the UK and to all our donors.

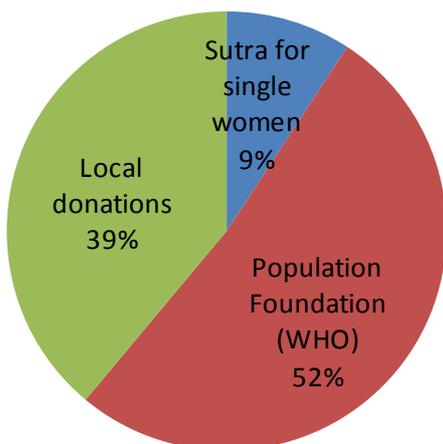
AUSTRIA TRUST EXPENDITURE



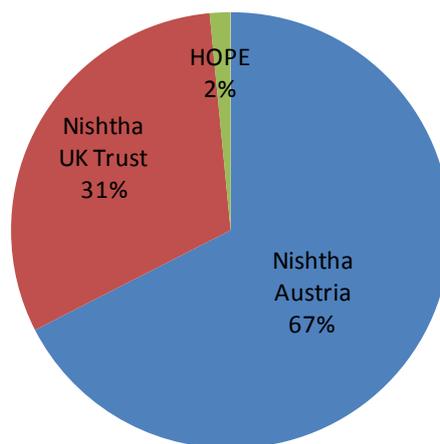
UK TRUST EXPENDITURE



LOCAL INCOME



FOREIGN INCOME



LOCAL EXPENDITURE

