



**Rural Health, Education
& Environment Centre**

Daily clinic

Holistic health

**Responding to
special medical
needs**

Herbal medicine preparation

**Library &
kids club**

Music & culture

Health education

Training programmes

Village outreach

**Environment
concern**

**Empowering
Single women**

First Aid Training

**Clean
drinking
water**

**Child
nutrition &
development**

**Self defence
for women**

Dog camps

**Youth
community
involvement**

Sports

Computer education

Annual Report 2011-12

Nishtha is a charitable trust situated in Sidhbari, a small village in the Himalayan foothills of the North Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. Our main objective is to work for the benefit and development of society as a whole by improving the welfare of families with particular focus on women and children. This objective is served through our work in running a primary health centre with a very active community centre alongside. We offer practical medical help to local people, while coming to know their needs and aspirations and working towards fulfilling these through community based activities. Our approach is holistic and our philosophy is based on an integrated approach that is inclusive of the physical, social and spiritual growth of people and nature.



Responding to the Needs of the community



The primary focus of our work has been running the daily clinic along with a small in-patient's facility. We offer medical care free to the very poor and destitute and at nominal cost prices to those who can afford them. Until recently we have been seeing up to 50 patients a day but now, due to the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme people have money in their pockets, but very little time so there are fewer patients coming for consultations as most prefer to buy quick fix medications from the local shops. As a result, for the last 4 years we have seen a significant drop in the number of



patients attending our daily clinic. However, increasing numbers of the patients who come to us are in more desperate need of help than those we had before and they are fewer from our immediate locality and more from further afield. They are increasingly those who could not find help in other facilities or have received confusing or ineffective treatments elsewhere. People come to us from far and say 'you are my last hope'. It is therefore our responsibility to give them as much time and attention as we can to try to help them.



Nishtha Clinic

Nishtha runs a well established local health clinic which this year received a total of 4,228 patients of whom 1,460 were males and 2,768 were females. 403, approx 10% were new patients. The number of male and female children is almost the same (283 males: 288 females). These figures represent a further drop in the number of patients we are seeing in the clinic from just under 6,000 in 2010-11 which is accounted for because we are now closed two days a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays when the team holds outreach health programmes in remote villages, a decision taken because there are

more medical facilities available in our area than there used to be. The majority of our patients are the very poor from labouring and farming families. Many are widows or elderly people who depend on us for their medical care.



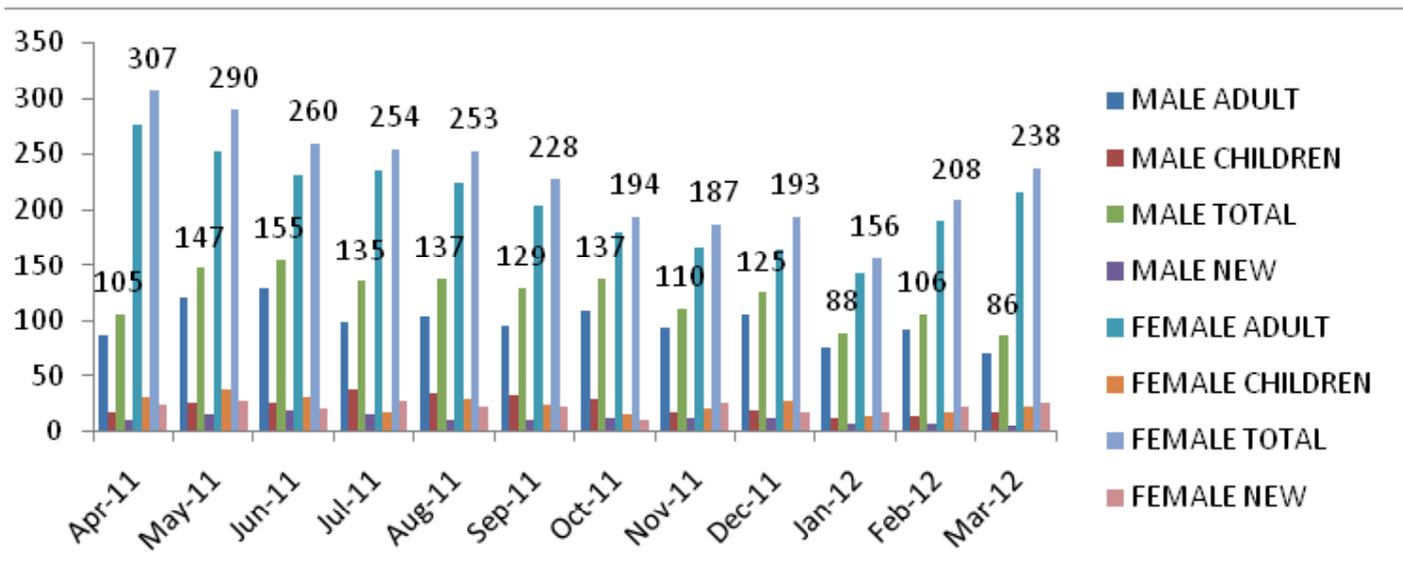


Chart showing Nishtha Clinic Patient's Demography 2011-12

Nishtha in-patients facility has been occupied for 49 days this year by patients with serious problems such as gangrene and kidney failure as well as infections and only 3 cases of gastroenteritis. Our water filters are effectively treating the local water so we get far fewer patients than before needing hospitalisation for rehydration. We continue to assist destitute patients in paying for their medicines and accessing specialist medical facilities by sending our vehicle and assistants.



Herbal Medicines :

We have an active programme to make medicines from locally grown herbs. Our very effective cough mixture is made from plantain, which is picked in April by all the staff and volunteers. It is then washed and mixed with the spice peeper and brown sugar and is left for 3 months in the dark to mature. Calendula ointment is made from flowers grown in the clinic garden mixed with beeswax. Trifla, a powder for digestive ailments is made from three tree seeds: hara, bera and amla and geloi (a creeper plant) is used for blood production. A popular treatment for constipation is made from jam-



mun, banana and mango seed and a massage oil for joint pain from camphor oil, datura leaves, garlic and other ingredients all boiled together.

Medical volunteers and Interns.

Several interns and volunteer doctors have joined us in the clinic this year. In October, Dr. Imogen Batteram gave her voluntary services to the clinic for free for nearly 3 months. As a very experienced British doctor, she was a great help especially in setting up and monitoring our outreach clinics along with Dr Kusum, organising the medicines to be taken and helping with feedback and reports. In the clinic itself she was an invaluable asset particularly with complicated medical cases and with our special needs' child Arushi.

Medical interns included students from British and Austrian medical colleges. We are able to offer interns a valuable experience of holistic primary health care and in return they are a great help to us in the clinics and assisting keeping good records of our pharmacy.



Special Health Programmes

Special Needs Children

Two local children, Arushi and Sanjoli are suffering from cerebral palsy. Under the guidance of our special needs consultant, Nicola Tansley, we have been able to improve the very difficult lives of these children by providing suitable chairs and guidance to the mothers about how to feed and care for the challenged child. From August to December we helped Arushi attend the nearest school which has a classroom set up for children with disabilities, however, Arushi's case is so severe that it was not very satisfactory. Since February, twice a week Nishtha transports Arushi and now Sanjoli, a 4 year old with less severe cerebral palsy to the Tapovan clinic where there is a well set up and managed physiotherapy unit. Subash manages this outing and the children love to go there. Dr Kusum, visits the children in their homes as often as she can and we arrange for them to come to the community centre to join in the kids programme at least once a week. We are very grateful to Nishtha UK Trust for providing funds for these special needs.



First Aid Training

A one day refresher First Aid training was carried out in October by the visiting St John's Ambulance team. 17 people participated in this training which covered basic first aid in the morning and introduced new techniques in resuscitation in the afternoon. We provided lunch for the trainers and participants and gave the trainers Nishtha bags as thank you gifts. This is a very valuable training which enables young people in the village to actively step forward and help people in times of medical emergency. It also enables our staff to feel confident about providing emergency first aid to patients who arrive with severe burns, wounds or dog bites in the clinic.

The training is immediately brought out into a wider arena by Dr Kusum who uses the dolls left us by the St John's Ambulance team as training modules during her health education sessions in the villages. Below Dr. Kusum is teaching the village women how to hold a choking baby, a technique that has life saving potential especially in remote villages.



Dental Camp

Our friends the dentists from Austria came in November to hold a 3 day dental camp during which over 200 patients were seen and treated, among them single women and patients from very poor backgrounds. The school children also received a dental check up and treatment when required. The dentists provided most of the equipment and materials themselves as well as paying their own transport costs. We are very grateful to them for their hard work and enthusiasm providing a valuable service for the village.



In the Community Centre we took the opportunity to hold 2 dental hygiene education sessions for the local school children who attend our programmes. Our volunteers had a lot of fun teaching the children how to take care of their teeth. Nadine made a huge set of teeth out of stuffed cloth and sat with them on her lap opening and closing them! They all learned the correct method of brushing and received free toothbrushes and toothpaste to take home. We are grateful to Nishtha Uk Trust for covering the local costs for the dental camp.

Homeopathic Seminar

In April 2011 Dr Nandita Shah, a renowned homeopath from Mumbai held a 10 day seminar attended by a group of 12 homeopaths. During their sessions they were able to do in depth study of 12 complicated cases, long term patients who were able to greatly benefit from her diagnosis and prescription. Dr Shah is particularly specialised in the use of a vegan diet to promote health and well being and held a demonstration cooking session to show how to cook with no oil and using only vegan foods.



Heart Camp – May 2011

Following the homeopathic seminar Homeopathic Dr med. Werner Diez who is a top class heart specialist stayed on with us and held a 4 day camp during which he saw all the regular heart patients who come to our clinic, 9 single women from outlying villages and many others who dropped in. He was able to check their heart function, review their medicines and give them lifestyle and nutrition advice. Over all Dr. Werner said that the condition of the patients he saw was remarkably good considering the seriousness of some of their hearts and he encouraged our Nishtha doctors to treat them with confidence.



Health Awareness Outreach Camps

Through our reach into the more remote villages through our Single Women's Programme, we have seen the need for village people to understand their medical issues and what medical options are available to them. The villages we have chosen to go to are particularly in remote areas in where women especially continue to have less access to medical care. Our programme aims to give health education with primary consultation for a limited number of needy patients. Serious and chronic cases are referred to the Nishtha clinic or specialised hospitals. A great deal can be done through passing on a little understanding of how the body works, what people can do to avoid getting sick and when and when not to use antibiotics.



From the beginning of October this programme started in earnest with twice weekly clinics run by Dr Kusum accompanied by Ram Chand our dispenser and Suresh or Subhash, in a range of remote villages in the Blocks covered by our Single Women's programme. The hamlets and a suitable house were selected by our single women's activists who picked those that seriously lack medical facilities.



Over the past 5 months from October to March the team has conducted a total of 45 clinics during which 1678 people attended the programmes (average 37 per clinic) of whom 323 were single women and 1,119 took the opportunity to consult the doctor. However,

because we are not permanently attending any one village and so cannot give ongoing medical care, our main intent of these village clinics is not to give out medicines but to give much needed health education which is much appreciated by the villagers. The topics covered by Dr Kusum who shows a real flare for education, often relate to the cases she sees such as talking about the causes of diarrhoea and teaching exercises for a frozen shoulder, but she also prepares modules which during this period included dental hygiene, fertility and family planning and first aid, particularly for burns which are common in village houses.



In order to enable the staff to travel into the villages to carry out these health education camps, through the kind donation of Cargo Partners we were able to purchase a larger vehicle, a Mahindra Xylo which is a sturdy off road vehicle with a roof rack and so extremely helpful.



School Nutrition Programme

sponsored by Kinderhilfe Bad Wurzach, Germany



Integral to our work to upgrade the health of the village, our school nutrition programme continues to be very successful in the village school. 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.



Food provided as mid-day meal in Government schools. has very little nutritional value or interest for the children

The Indian government has introduced a midday meal programme into the schools but the quality of this is so poor that it does little to improve the nutritional status of the children. Nishtha therefore augments this basic meal 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

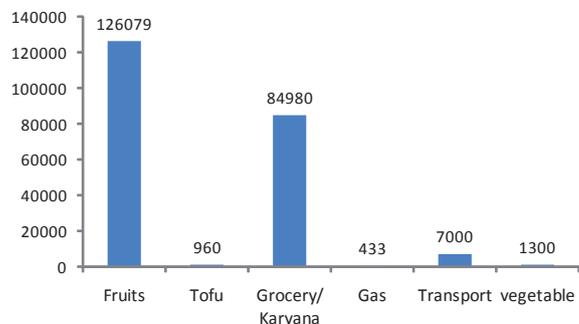
for the children. The result in the Rakkar school is evident and the children there are growing well and the standard of the school has improved. However, in this area there is a new convent school which is providing education for the village children at very nominal rates so a great many families are sending their children there instead of to the government schools. The parents consider that the standard of education at the local convent and other private schools is better because the teachers demand discipline and a wider range of subjects is offered including English from an early age and creative activities, dance and computer studies. The

teachers in private schools are more motivated to demand a high standard from their pupils than they are at Government schools. Consequently the number of children at the local Rakkar Government school this year has decreased from 120 last year to just 65 this year.



Despite this, Nishtha has spent Rs. 2,20,752 on nutrition for the students at Rakkar school in 2011-12, mostly of it purchasing fruit which the children are given every day and the rest buying ghee, dal, milk powder and so on to make the meals more nutritious and attractive.

**UNICEF says:
Malnutrition is more common in India than in Sub-Saharan Africa. One in every three malnourished children in the world lives in India**



Nishtha is now turning towards the less endowed mountain communities on the mountain behind us and since October we have adopted a small primary school called Samlekanath school where there are 25 children from poor mining families. We now deliver the same variety of foods, vegetables and fruit to this school as well as to the nearby baby crèche. We also feed fruit to the children who come in the afternoon to our kids programme. In this coming year we also plan to adopt another school in the village of Chatwan which has 65 children plus a baby crèche. Being more remote, these schools have less access to supplies and are therefore more in need of help.



WE NEED Improved school governance and child-friendly classroom environments in Government Schools

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.



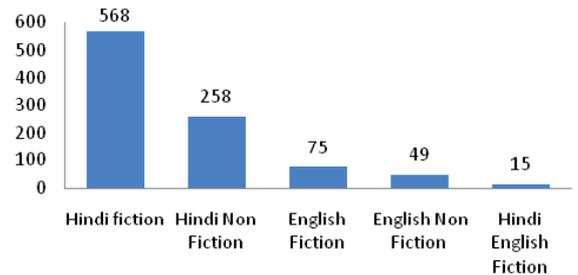
Nishtha Library and Kids Programme

Ravindra is our librarian and the main person in charge of the library and the kids programme. She has been very well trained by Nicola and we have a strict process of managing the books and the library set up. Ravindra is really good with the children and young people who come to the library. However, as she is expecting a baby this year, at the beginning of March we engaged two young men to assist Mohinder with the administrative work and to assist in the community centre. Vijay has become pretty good at managing the library and helped a great deal during the stock check which was done in March. Therefore Vijay will be running the library while Ravindra is on maternity leave. Mishru, the community centre housekeeper is also very good with the children, helping them select books and write them down on their borrowing cards. She gives out the snacks each day both for the school feeding programme and the kids programme.

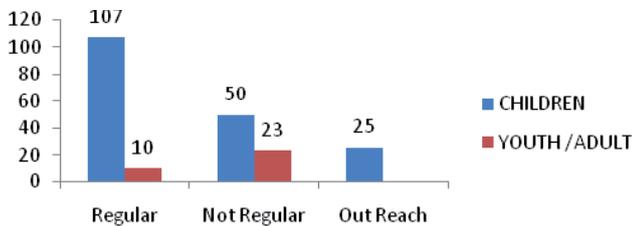


Library Development

Since last year the library has seen a complete transformation with the re-creation of the room as a children's space, the re-making of the shelves and book boxes to make the books far more accessible to the children. We now (March 2012) have 965 books in the library of which 597 books were donated and 368 were bought. A simplified Dewey system of cataloguing has been introduced and a simple borrowing card system which the children themselves can manage. We have printed bags with our library logo for



the kids to carry books home in and lots of activities to keep the kids interested and keen to read. We have 215 borrowers of whom 25 are from the Samlekarnath school outreach library. These are library boxes which we are starting to take to the outlying schools and contain a selection of books chosen by the teachers and changed every month.



From our survey of what kind of books people like to borrow we find that children like stories, spiritual tales, maths, science and animal books. Young people and adults prefer general knowledge books, magazines, books about health and religion, cooking books and they like to read the newspaper.



The kids club is a very lively and interesting event that takes place every afternoon after 3 when the kids run in from school. Some go straight into the library and start on the books, others get the badminton rackets, balls or skipping ropes out and run out to play and others are keen on the board games, particularly matching pairs of cards. We try to do a story telling session once a week, sometimes with visiting resource people who make a lovely lively session of it. Our volunteers and supporters often get involved and organise creative craft sessions of music and sometimes we have sports and games on the playground. We welcome people to come and bring ideas to our kids club.



School Children's Tuition:

Our free tuition classes for the poor students from the government school who cannot afford the private schools and paid tuition are very popular with the children and definitely helps to raise the marks. Classes ran from October 2011 till Feb 2012, just before the final examinations, with 35 students from 5th till 8th class for English, science and mathematics. Two graduate local girl teachers, Indu and Laxmi were engaged to teach the programme.



Computer Training

Having prayed for a really good computer teacher, one turned up in the form of Ludvig who is taking his commitment to running this programme very seriously, deciding that he would focus initially on training the school children. In order to bridge the gaps as he can't be here all the time he asked that we engage a couple of local college level girls who he could train and therefore we have Indu and Laxmi who run the classes even when Ludvig is here. A programme of 6 classes for three months ran and trained a total of 30 students

We decided to start an ideal programme for the local school children who are from the very poor families. There is a growing trend for all families who can afford it to send their children to private schools which provide computer education as well as a more interesting and extensive curriculum including games, smart classes, yoga classes, extra tuition classes and dance classes. As a result, the number of children attending the local government school, where the teaching structure is strictly defined and very limited, is decreasing day by day and the resulting gap between the government school educated and those from private schools is becoming more



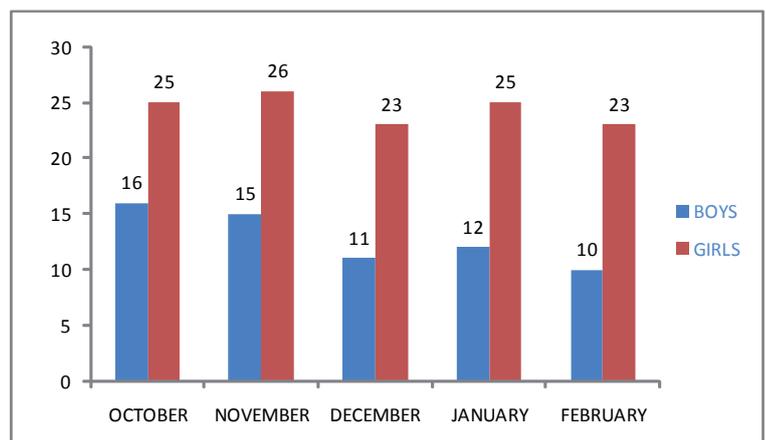
and more obvious. When it comes to jobs, the local school graduates will not be able to compete with private school children if they are computer illiterate.

In order to redress this imbalance in our village, Nishtha provides computer education classes after school in the community centre for local government school children. Our session started in September and ran until February when the children need a break to prepare for their exams in March.

Vijay has made the following chart of attendance and the number of children who benefitted which is quite impressive. These children are all now familiar with the basics of Microsoft Office and have been practising the typing tutor.

The next session will start when the schools reopen in April and will run through until September.

On Ludvig's advice, as he very quickly saw that a great deal of time was being lost trying to keep alive and running our old machines, we have, since October re-vamped our whole computer centre providing 7 new computers along with new tables and even chairs. These were funded by Aktion Regen's special fund. It is remarkable how much easier life has suddenly become in the computer centre!



Youth, Environment and Social Club

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. Nishtha Community Centre offers 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 also are full engaged with the environmental protection of the village as well as organising rabies vaccination of dogs in the area and holding sterilisation camps.



Our youth club has been selected as the mentor youth club in the district and won the first prize (Rs 10,000)

Project Clean and Green Rakkar



Mission: To make Rakkar village clean and green and make the project self sustainable within 3 years.

Vision: to develop the habit of garbage segregation and proper disposal as well as encouraging kitchen gardening by providing vermi-compost units.

Target Area: 500 households in Rakkar Village

Action: A primary introduction of the project to the community was done by introducing the project at the Panchayat and Mahila Mandal meetings and then visiting each house and talking with the householders. The women

are especially involved. Every household with a garden will be provided with a small compost unit and the women will be trained in how to manage it. This will encourage people to separate wet from dry waste. Each family will be trained

to separate their non-bio waste into two bags, one for plastic and the other for resaleable waste. Dirty plastic should be washed before putting it in the bag. Ajay, our newly appointed garbage manager will pick up the plastic non-saleable no-bio waste each month from each house and bring it to the community centre for sorting before taking it to the PWD for making into roads.



The Youth club organised an **AIDS awareness rally** in September 2011 with the help of Nehru Yuva Kendra Dharamshala. (Nehru Youth Centre). About 80 young people and school children participated in the two Km walk with posters and banners. Aids awareness leaflets were handed out to everyone all along the route.

In March Vijay and Raju, attended a **Capacity Building Workshop** held by the Ministry of Sports in Kullu district through Nehru Yuva Kendra. The five days intensive training covered health education, various govt. schemes at Panchayat level included information on the MNREGA work programme through lectures, group discussions, cultural activities and mountain climbing activities. Both Raju and Vijay are enthusiastic about revitalising the youth club membership. We look forward to seeing their positive contribution to our youth and social services this coming year.



Cultural Training has been going on with groups of young adults and with the school children. Our male Gaddi costumes are now complete and enable us to put together a full team of both male and female dancers in costume. In addition, several children and volunteers have been learning classical Indian tabla and singing from our music master TriLok.



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 any one 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.

This year the winter cricket tournament was extended to two weeks to enable the record number of 20 participating teams to get through their matches. This programme took place between December and January and more than 200 young people took part. Whilst cricket is the major sport and attraction, badminton, volleyball and football matches also took place. At the end there was a colourful awards ceremony. The sports festival is a source of intense entertainment for the village who participated as spectators enthusiastically. The event also builds friendships and good relations between the different groups of society.

Children's sports programmes:

The winter children's sports programme was organised separately from the adult programme this year because the school holidays have changed and this way they got the whole ground and attention to themselves instead of dodging cricket balls. The two day event took place in January and was attended by about 200 children from Rakkar and Sidhbari middle schools and from Moli primary school.



Girls were specially encouraged to participate in the sports and test their skills and abilities. Ten teams of girls and fifteen teams of boys participated in cricket, football, volleyball and athletic competitions, including traditional village games such as cabadi, coco and catch. The programme ended with a cultural performance put on by the children themselves which everyone took part in and thoroughly enjoyed.

Women's Programmes

Nishtha, working along with SUTRA, the nodal agency for Ekal Nari Shakti Sangatan (Single Women's Programme) in Himachal Pradesh has developed a strong and committed programme in three Block areas in the State. The vast majority of the women contacted through this project are widows and the rest are unmarried, separated or, less commonly, divorced. Single women suffer numerous economic and social difficulties as well as emotional and physical abuse, particularly from family members, and consequently require tremendous strength and courage to negotiate the challenges of their daily lives. Many of the issues that we are finding through contact with these women can be addressed most effectively through the creation of a space for single women to discuss their collective concerns. Nishtha provides this space by organising regular meetings in the villages and encouraging women to become involved in our programmes and activities.



Block	Members	Registered Members	Widows	Divorced	Separated	Abandoned	Un-married	Handi-capped
Nagrota	589	513	547	7	30	4	1	0
Kangra	691	600	651	9	19	3	6	1
Rait	592	458	558	10	6	3	2	3
Total	1872	1571	1756	26	55	10	9	4

The Nishtha Single Women's team: Deepa, Radha and Kummo-Devi have been running this programme for the past 6 years and every year we increase our reach to vulnerable women in the area and consequently the ability we have to enact real social change. In order to increase the number of women we contact, last year we selected 5 assistant single women workers and trained them how to organise meetings, how to go to a new village, meet the local officials and influential members of the village in order to reach and mobilise the single women. They also had to learn how to plan the meetings with Panchayat members and government officers. One woman dropped out but now these four new team members: Vandhana, Shipa, Pammi and Sunita are well trained and working hard so our organisation is growing and we are caring for more single women in more villages.



Having established a relationship with the village we hold 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.

Together we celebrate special days such as 23 June, Widows Day. This year we organised a rally which was attended by 135 women in which we marched to the DCs office where we met the officer who listened to



the women's problems particularly with regard to pensions. In 2007-8 we held a big rally in which we met the minister in Shimla who promised particularly to help single women to get their pensions, to make the process of obtaining ration cards and health cards easier and to provide land for landless women. Following this, in July 2011, in order to maintain pressure on the local officials to consider the single women's pension and legal cases, we held a public hearing for each block so that the women were able to voice their grievances. The panchayat and government members were obliged to hear and answer these important

questions. Already much has been achieved towards changing society's attitudes towards single women, It was good for the single women to realise that although they feel very isolated in their communities, the government has to listen to them if they stand up with courage in a group. Again in January, during the session of the State Assembly in Dharamsala, the women took out a march and petitioned the ministers to listen to their demands.

In September we held a two day domestic violence workshop with Dr. Kishwar at Nishtha. 30 women from various new villages joined this workshop. During the final session we visited the police station and there the women's police unit gave some useful information to the women about their rights and the law which is made to protect them as many people are afraid to involve the police even when they are in serious need of protection.

Wenlido Workshops are another very effective way of providing vulnerable single women with a means to stand up against violence. This year we held two which were specifically for single women or the daughters of single women.



This year Nishtha has been working on a number of health interventions specifically targeting single women. In July 2011 a heart camp was held in the clinic and 9 of the patients were Single women from outlying villages who suffer from heart problems. They were able to get a good check up and treatment for their medical problems. Similarly, in October 3 dentists from Austria came and provided a free dental check-up and treatment for many single women

In conjunction with the single women activists, Nishtha has this year set up a regular mobile health education programme in which twice a week the team takes off from the Nishtha Clinic and visits remote villages which do not have good medical facilities. Our purpose is to provide people with health education and advice about how to deal with medical problems as well as some medical consultation. Women are able to ask questions and get good information about their ailments and those with serious problems are advised where to go for help.

This year, through our efforts, 12 women got monthly pensions, 10 women got money for house repairing and 7 women got assistance through the Mother Teresa scheme. 12 children of single women got free computer classes and 8 single women got INR 11,000 for their daughter's marriage through the government. 16 sewing machines were obtained from the Red Cross. The Lions Club has been very helpful in giving interest free loans to women to buy cows, giving sewing machines to girls and paying for weddings.



We handled 14 domestic violence cases this year. These are the most time consuming and difficult tasks and very often a full resolution is not possible because the woman has no choice but to remain in the same community. Listening to the abused woman and negotiating a way of relieving her anxiety and sense of oppression is a major part of the work. Most of these cases concern women who have been abandoned. When violence is involved a complaint is registered with the Panchayat (village level council) who have the jurisdiction to remonstrate with the family, after which, if the situation becomes dangerous the case can be taken to the police.

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. Six three day residential Wenlido workshops have been held in Nishtha Community Centre, during this year. We focused on women from outlying areas who we have contacted through our clinic outreach and single women's programmes. Deepa and Ravindra are our trained Wenlido trainers



Women's Self Help bag making group: The well established group of 9 women who were trained by Nishtha to make attractive bags and other saleable items are now functioning as an independent unit out of our Community Centre. The women are running their project themselves with help from our team for orders, quality control and marketing. Altogether they made and sold

We are proud that they were able to organise their project themselves and have run smoothly through the year.



Events and Publicity Programmes

International Women's Day Programme



Celebrated on March 10th this year, over 100 women attended a lively event focusing on the proper use of medicines. Our Community Centre team performed a lively and informative play in which players dressed up as germs attacking a 'patient' which made everyone laugh and had a good impact.

This year our male Gaddi costumes were ready to use. We formed a team of four young Gaddi boys and trained them to perform with the existing girls group. After a week of solid practice the group gave a wonderful performance in front of the large and very appreciative crowd. For most of the boys in this group it was their first experience of performing their traditional dance in public. They very much enjoyed it and it made them feel proud of their heritage. The older women really appreciated the performance and the costumes which looked so good on the young people.

The following week the group was invited by our sister organization Jagori, who are working on women's rights, to perform at an event they were holding at Shahpur village. The dance was enjoyed by the old tribal people from the upper villages who attended the event and who gave their full approval to how the tradition was being preserved.

Rakkar Mela: Our team once again set up a stall at the local June fair displaying library books, bags and giving information about environment, alcoholism and nutrition. Our presence at the mela which is attended by a large crowd of local people gives us good exposure in the local area and an opportunity for us to tell people about the various projects we are involved with.



In October we assisted the local school in hosting a sports and cultural programme for the children from the surrounding local Government schools, providing food and assistance with the games.



Emerging Programmes

Anganwari (Kindergarten) Project

Although the government is to be applauded for providing staffed kindergartens in every village, the paucity of materials, facilities and staff who know how to play constructively with the children is very disappointing and the children lead a very dull existence. With the intention of seeing what can be done to improve the early learning opportunities of children in the remote villages, In January, with the help of funding from Cargo-Partners we started out by visiting several local Anganwaris and selecting 3 village crèches – Lunta, Rakkar and Tillu to work with. At Lunta the children were sat lined up on a stone cold floor for several long hours with little or nothing to do or play with. The buildings themselves are inadequate with no basic facilities beyond a single room and a veranda covered with a dangerously poor concrete flat roof. The windows have no glass and are very often kept closed when it is cold or wet so the room is lit by a single bulb or strip light. Although there are some play materials, charts, pens, paper and some books, they are very limited.

Yusha, a young Austrian volunteer who is a qualified and enthusiastic teacher has undertaken to develop this project for us. She has kept a diary of her weekly visits to the crèches which gives a vivid account of the materials she prepares and how she presented them to the children and discussed the purpose and methodology to the teachers. She is transported to the nearest road head and together with our driver or one of our other workers she climbs the mountain track laden with fruit, equipment and play things. Improving the infrastructure has to be done case by case along with the Government and will take time but we are investigating ways to provide bathrooms, some basic amenities such as carpets and water filters for the crèches. Yusha is also training our staff to continue this work when she leaves.



School and College Students sponsorship:

Special assistance is given to Rupa who comes from a very poor background to attend a local private school. Her uniform and books are paid for through a very kind individual donor and she has tuition every afternoon to enable her to do well in her studies. Because we discovered that she was unhappy with her tutor, we changed the situation and engaged Indu, a young woman with a handicapped child who needs the money and they hold the tuition in the community centre itself so we can see how she is on a daily basis. She is evidently much happier with this arrangement and rather than skipping sessions is happily enjoying her classes with Indu.

This concept of sponsoring children is being extended to other children from very needy families but most importantly to college level students who without financial assistance would be unable to avail of higher education.



Aktion Regen Staff Support and Special Development Programme

We are grateful to have received INR 2202,536 in response to our appeal for funds to provide a staff security fund and to develop our community projects and maintain our buildings. The 16,20,000 intended for the staff security fund is being invested at optimum rates and will provide up to 10% per annum. This fund has also enabled us to engage our 2 new staff members: Vijay and Raju who began from the beginning of March and are fitting in well with the Nishtha team. INR 201,170 has already been spent on setting up the new Computer room. This includes the purchase of 7 computers, two new long computer tables, 8 special chairs and a back up power system. The project ran over budget because of the back up power system which was seen to be necessary if we are to get serious about giving the school children proper training in how to use computers considering the frequency of power cuts in this area. Funds are also available in this grant for waterproofing the 2 roofs in the clinic and community centre that leak and for leadership and capacity building training for our staff.

Visitors are welcome to stay or work with us. In February we received a group of students from the Bangkok International School who spent two afternoons playing games and interacting with the children who come to our kids club.



We also receive visitors from the UK, Germany, Austria, Australia and the USA who are interested in our work and very often make very valuable and appreciated contributions to our programmes.

The **2012 Nishtha Calendar** with black and white pictures of the local children taken by Nurith Wagner-Strauss and designed by Brian Sebastian has been a great success both locally and abroad where it is a major fund raising tool.



Staff picnic

Every year we go on an outing with our staff. This year we visited Pong Dam to see the famous Batu temples which are submerged most of the year but are usually visible in the summer, though



this year we could only see the tops of them. However, we had a wonderful time there and at Musroor rock temples hidden in the folds of the Kangra hills. We took a large bus and filled it with everybody including the Single Women Activists, the Stitching group and Dr Barbara's household staff. Everyone brought a lunch box from home and shared it so we all had a good meal and a interesting and fun time together.



Nishtha Trustees

This year we are pleased to welcome Sonia Sebastian as a Nishtha Trustee. Sonia is a long time friend and has always gone out of her way to helping Nishtha in all sorts of very practical and networking ways.



Nishtha depends on individual donors to continue our health and community work.

We are very grateful to all those who donate through our foreign donor agencies: Aktion Regen and Nishtha UK Trust who channel all funds received to us directly without deduction.

We are also immensely grateful to Cargo Partners and all those who help us directly and to our invaluable local supporters.

www.nishtha-hp.org