

A photograph of two women in a rural setting. One woman, wearing a yellow and black plaid shirt and glasses, stands and looks at a document. The other woman, wearing a green shirt, is seated at a desk and writing on the document with a purple pen. The background shows wooden window frames.

# निष्ठा

n i s h t h a

rural health, education & environment centre

**Annual Review  
2022-2023**



# Nishtha Trust

**N**ishtha Rural Health, Education and Environment Centre is a registered Charitable Trust set up to work for the benefit of the local community in the fields of health, education and environment.

Nishtha is governed by a board of five local women who are dedicated to furthering the work of the Trust. **Radhika Saunik, Nayantara Mankotia, Puja Anand** and **Soniya Sebastian** were joined this year by **Benita Sharma**.

Three Trust meetings were held this year to ensure that our Trustees are kept up to date with our activities and finances and that they are all fully involved in decisions effecting the direction the Trust is taking. It is with their encouragement that this year we have undertaken a series of workshops for adolescents.

Mohinder Sharma our Project Officer is

responsible for organising daily activities through our daily team meetings and weekly staff meetings and overseeing the running of our very varied programs. Each Wednesday a full meeting of the staff is held in which he or Nishtha's director Dr. Barbara Nath-Wiser discuss any particular issues and together they talk through the forthcoming programs and how they will be organised. The staff are all encouraged to speak out about any ideas or problems they have and to feel fully engaged in the work that is being done by Nishtha. We encourage our staff to talk to people in the villages about the work we do in so many areas and to feel proud and committed to Nishtha. They have been showing the short video we made last year in English and Hindi about the work Nishtha does during the outreach camps and on public occasions.



**Benita Sharma, Radhika Saunik, Puja Anand, Nayantara Mankotia, and Soniya Sebastian**

## Benita Sharma

**O**ur new trustee, Benita Sharma, who recently moved from Delhi to live in her family home at the nearby Drang tea estate. Benita's marriage took her to Mumbai where she studied for her B.Ed. and as her children grew, she taught in the same school as they studied. She went on to gain an M.Phil. which enabled her to take up a college teaching post. However, when her husband died, she moved to Delhi where she first worked with an NGO called Udyugini, setting up self-help groups with totally illiterate women in Bihar, Rajasthan and Orissa. They published illustrated booklets explaining entrepreneurship to women in an easily accessible way.

Benita went on to work for the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, an organisation which focuses on governance, democracy and issues such as violence against women. For 4 years she worked with Unifem looking at gender responsive budgeting in South Asia - why women don't get their share of a budget compared to men. She would, for example identify anti-poverty schemes and work out whether they were benefiting women as much as men. Given her interest and energy in pursuing justice and right livelihood for women, the Trustees felt that she was an excellent addition to our board and we are all very happy to welcome her.

# Letter from Dr. Barbara

We are very happy that after two years of disruption, the restrictions are over and our children and students are all back at school and college. We have therefore been able to concentrate on running all our normal programs and more!

My dream for the clinic has come true. We now have two extremely dedicated, young doctors, one a fully qualified allopathic doctor and the other an excellent homeopath. They work very well together using these complementary medical systems with very good results. Because there are so many other medical facilities available these days, people come to us as a last resort. Our doctors are able to spend time, empathically listening to their patients to really find out the nature of their discomfort and treat them in a holistic way.

Since our patients are so well attended, I decided to step down from the day-to-day clinic but am always available to be consulted and have time now to revive my interest in treating patients with acupuncture. This is especially helpful for those with problems such as paralysis.

The health education sessions in the villages continue to be a very worthwhile way of using our clinic resources and our doctors find it very interesting and motivating to meet with the local people where they live. They explain that we are coming to their village not to hand out medicines or prescriptions, but to help them understand their health issues better and adjust their diet and lifestyle so as to be healthier.

The single women involve the disabled people living in the area to come to our outreach clinics. Dr. Shreya is particularly interested in mental health and has been offering patients the opportunity to consult her. She also provides the invaluable support of a listening ear to members of the families who are caring for these patients. Our outreach workers continue tirelessly to hold meetings and provide information for women in the most backward villages, making sure they are able to access the services available to them, particularly the very affordable health insurance cards which allows for free treatment from the Government and



certain other hospitals.

Alongside the clinic the community centre has been vibrantly busy this year with children attending our after-school program each day, students using our centre and computer room on Sundays and a new adventure into adolescent trainings. In May and September, we called a hundred girls divided into five groups according to their age for two single day health and empowerment sessions. In the course of these we gave them two sets of cloth washable sanitary materials made by the Nayi Asha stitching group. In July and August, 75 of the same girls attended three-day residential Wenlido workshops. The interaction with and response from these girls has been very stimulating and encouraging.

Our trainers, Vijay and Ravindra went on to hold workshops for mixed gender pre-adolescent children from the local schools and held one boy's workshop from which we understood that we needed to organise a professional trainer to come and assist us in holding workshops for adolescent boys in the coming year.

I am especially pleased about the progress of our organic farm which is now regularly producing good crops of vegetables. We have, with the help of our Austrian social service volunteers analysed the soil, organised the plots and worked on improving our compost. We also successfully work to maintain the good health of the village by providing clean drinking water from our filters and by persisting in collecting and re-cycling plastic waste, discouraging people from polluting the rivers and streams with it or burning it which pollutes the air. Our efforts to make a significant impact on the local people is enforced through our regular social media posts - a new means to spread our message!

We are immensely grateful for your support which enables us to continue our important work providing medical care, social empowerment for those who struggle most in this unequal society.

*Dr. Nalk-Oiser*







# Nishtha Clinic

Since August we have had two new full-time doctors both of whom spent time with us in the past and who, appreciating the very special medical possibilities at Nishtha chose to return to work in our clinic. Dr. Shreya Malik is a homeopath who is now fully qualified and has a keen interest in mental health problems. She works full time for Nishtha, 4 days in the clinic and on most Tuesdays and Thursdays leads our clinic team in holding Health education outreach clinics in the villages. This last is a challenging task which she has relaxed and grown into during the year and now carries out very confidently and effectively.

While Dr. Shreya is in the villages, she engages with the large number of disabled patients who our single women activists are in contact with and assesses their needs. In the earlier part of the year Dimple, a student physiotherapist gave advice and treatments as and when she was available. Now she is no longer around, Dr. Shreya visits them and assesses their needs. We are building a data base of the disabled in the villages along with photographs and details of the doctor's visits in order that we can keep track of their progress and the services we have provided.

Dr. Sara is a fully qualified Allopathic doctor who has had substantial clinical experience working in Government Hospitals. She works four days a week in Nishtha clinic and routinely consults with Dr. Shreya to work out the best course of medication for particular patients. We are very pleased that Dr. Shreya and Dr. Sara have become firm friends, respecting each other's medical disciplines.

Dr. Barbara has been seeing her old patients and acting as an advisor for the other two doctors but is increasingly drawing back from the clinic as our two new doctors take over. She remains the Director and spends a great deal of time overseeing the work not only of the clinic but also of our community activities.

A total of 3,549 consultations were provided this year, between 340 and 260 a month. 425 new patients came to our clinic during this time.

1,150 people attended the 75 Health Education clinics organised in the villages by our Single Women Activists. It is to be noted that the clinics are

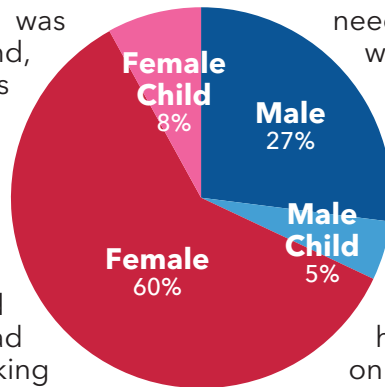
organised in the most remote villages as those in more "urbanised" areas are less in need as they have good access to medical attention and their increasing literacy enables them to be able to source information about common ailments themselves.

**Our ambulance** is provided for needy patients free of charge. Those who can afford to pay do so. Most often patients need to be transported to and from Tanda Government Hospital where those with Himcare or Ayushman government issued medical cards (the very poor) are able to get consultations, tests and treatments free of charge. Consequently, our need for a destitute fund has reduced but a real need for transport, especially in acute cases and for the bedridden remains. The destitute fund has been primarily used for emergency operations and treatments. Because we felt the ongoing need for food vouchers for the very poor who had particularly suffered due to the covid shutdowns we spent an extra Rs. 124,125 last year as help for the very poor.

**The cost of medicines** has increased substantially in the last two years. A total of Rs. 93,414 has been spent this year on regular allopathic medicines; Rs. 24,955 on homeopathic remedies and Rs. 19,614 on bottles & materials for our own herbal preparations such as calendula ointment and cough linctus.

This year we used the maintenance budget to carry out the necessary repairs needed in the clinic, particularly repairing Dr. Barbara's much worn consulting room slate floor. This was a considerable task which involved purchasing heavy but smooth slates from the local quarry and having them laid by expert masons. It is a very dusty and noisy job so it was done in July while Dr. Barbara was away.

Several important pieces of equipment including a new heavy duty weighing machine for the clinic and a new safe box were purchased which exceeded our budget but were essential. Last year we unfortunately had an attempted break in and although the thieves didn't manage to get into the old safe box, they damaged it so badly that it was unusable. We have not only replaced the safe but also appointed Vinod as night watchman.



**NISHTHA** has been participating in an initiative by a group of young people from Kangra who provide a free lunch on Sundays to the attendants of patients at Tanda Hospital. Because this hospital caters for the very poor, although the patients get fed, attendants have to buy their own food from the cafes outside the hospital. They feed between 200 and 400 people each Sunday a good meal with rice and generous helpings of 3 kinds of dal and vegetable dishes. So far we have funded 2 of these lunches at a cost of Rs.16,000 each using up covid relief funds. We plan to fund these once a month this coming year.







# Special Children

This very valuable service, enabling children who need regular physiotherapy treatment to go to the facility set up at Tapovan re-started this year after the school holidays at the end of April. Our drivers Ravi and Arvind use the Tata Sumo to do the pickup and drop off these children every day.

Sanjoli is our most regular attendee with Shaksham re-joining after a failed attempt to get him to settle at the Surya Udhay school in Yol. Since June his mother has been taking him to Tapovan and he is very much happier and making better progress with this arrangement. In order to make it possible for the family to survive, a sponsor provides a small monthly stipend for his mother. In September Priya also reverted to going to Tapovan and we provided her mother with a small stipend to enable her not to work but to be with her as the children have to be accompanied by a carer. They returned to their village in Rajasthan in September

for the winter and have only just returned.

Other children such as Prince, Anushka and Abhishek come from other places in Himachal and stay in Sidhbari or Rakkar for two- or three-months treatment at Tapovan. We are happy to take them in our vehicle if there is space. Mitali is a child with quite serious hearing, learning, coordination and speech difficulties who is making good progress at Tapovan. Nishtha helped to purchase hearing aids and is helping the family who have new born twins to engage a carer (Mishru) to enable Mitali to continue to go to Tapovan. Mirya also recently moved to the area for this purpose. She has learning difficulties, is deaf and can't speak.

On days when Tapovan is not working, which tends to be around 8 days a month, the children are brought to Nishtha where they are able to play together with the special set of toys we keep ready for them.

## Sponsorship for Special Needs children

Sponsorship is provided to help several of our special needs children: Bhagwanti receives a monthly stipend for food to improve her nutrition and to cover her medical expenses which can be considerable. Anku, the child of the single mother Sunita who is a very poor patient receives a monthly stipend for food as well as an insurance policy for his future. Sanjoli, an extremely disabled child with cerebral palsy needs a full-time carer who is paid for by Nishtha as her mother has two other children and only works as an anganwari teacher.

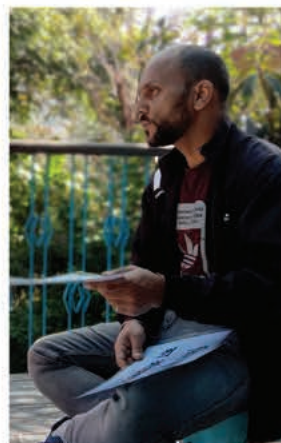
The twins who have growth hormone deficiency have continued to be supported with both medications and extra nutrition to help them to grow. Shaksam also receives a maintenance allowance which includes funding for teaching aids and clothing.

In early January I was delighted to see our special children, Sanjoli, Shaksham and Niraya and their carers enjoying the sunshine on the Community Centre terrace. There was fresh snow over the weekend and very cold at night so we are grateful that they were also able to receive the new thermal underwear we provided to 232 children in the local primary schools.

## Tapowan Attendance Chart 2022-23

Name	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Sanjoli	7	12	22	17	16	18	15	20	12	20	14	19	192
Mitali		9	17	9	4	11	12	15	4	4		5	90
Prince		8	15	0	6	9	5						43
Saksham			2	18	16	18		18	14	18	12	17	133
Priya			1	10	3	0							14
Akshar					1								1
Anushka									5	7			12
Abhishek									6	4			10
Mirya										7	8	13	28







# Workshops for Adolescents

During 2022-23 Nishtha carried out a series of very successful workshops for adolescents in our local area sponsored by SMILE Germany. Through our work providing health and social services within the community we have developed in depth understanding of the issues faced by our community which our staff have effectively employed to create well informed practical workshops for local young people.

Our program for adolescent girls carefully explained the changes that take place during puberty and offered the opportunity for girls to share their experiences of their first menses and ask questions. Our doctors also explained the need for girls to manage their mood swings and feelings of insecurity and upset by talking about them and realising they are part of this process of change. Nutrition, hygiene and exercises to help menstrual cramps as well as personal security and expectations were all discussed. The girls were delighted with their vanity bags and reported positively about the re-usable cloth menstrual pads we made for them.

This was followed by a series of **Wenlido** trainings in August. We had great feedback from the girls who joined these workshops which were led by our very efficient team Ravindra, Deepa and Neelam. Not only had they learned important safety techniques and safe decision-making strategies but they had also discovered their own personal strength, building confidence and developing trust in themselves.

In September, Vijay and Ravindra attended a training in teaching young adolescents at Shaishav in Gujarat. This was paid for through the Varien

Mitmensch fund. In November they used their new skills and package of games and techniques in a 2-day adolescent empowerment and safety training with 15 boys from classes 4, 5 & 6 from the local government schools. They introduced the meaning of sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual exploitation of children. They discussed violence that happens to children in school, home, playgrounds, buses and public places and what provisions the government has made to protect children in our country. They talked about how to set boundaries and to say "No". The boys now know how to make safe decisions and to ask for help and make healthy friendships.

However, managing a large group of adolescent boys was challenging for the trainers. They used all their skills to switch activities frequently to retain the interest of the boys who had huge amounts of energy! However, they did retain much of what was covered and had a very good time. It was then agreed that Ravindra and Vijay should focus on training younger, pre-adolescent children, boys and girls together, until we can get a more experienced trainer to help them to focus on the adolescent boys.

In February they held three very successful one day trainings for 51 pre-adolescents in three mountainside schools. Their aim was to raise the children's awareness of issues around personal safety and how to protect themselves from any kind of abuse. The children responded extremely well to all the games and exercises, thoroughly enjoyed the special lunch of puris and were very pleased with their new pencil boxes to use in the coming new school year.

## Adolescent Awareness 2022-23

### Adolescent girls awareness

Date	Participants	Age Group
3 May	20	12 - 14
14 May	23	15 - 16
16 May	20	16 - 17
24 May	20	17 - 18
4 Jun	17	18 - 19

### Wenlido self defence training

11-13 June	13	16 - 19
5-7 July	16	16 - 19
9-11 July	13	16 - 19
13-15 July	19	13 - 15
16-19 July	15	13 - 15

### Girls follow-up training

25 Sep	19	14 - 15
2 Oct	19	15 - 16
8 Oct	12	16 - 17
9 Oct	20	17 - 18
16 Oct	13	18 - 19

### Pre-Adolescent workshop

12-13 Nov	15	9 - 12
10 Mar	15	8 - 11
13 Mar	16	8 - 11
14 Mar	20	8 - 11







# School Children's Nutrition

We are very pleased to have been able to continue to supply fruits, vegetables and tofu or panir to the 6 primary schools in our locality. The number of children in each school is steadily decreasing as increasing numbers are being sent to private schools where the parents feel they receive greater opportunities than in the government schools, even though the student teacher ratio is better in the government schools. This means that the students who attend the government schools are the poorest in our community. Either their parents are not very motivated or they are unable

to help their children to study. These children need and appreciate the additional nutrition and help with clothing that Nishtha provides.

In October this year we took on 3 more very small schools who requested us to include them in our program. All are high on the hillside and it takes effort and the dedication of our staff to get the supplies up to them because of the lack of roads. Through this program we are now providing for a total of 203 children including the kindergartens. The kids club also benefit, though the number of children varies for day to day.

## School Feeding Program April 2022 to March 2023

School	Students	Apr	May	Jun	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total		
Rakkar	26	4,487	7,460	4,152	2,880	8,789	3,816	6,558	6,150	6,311	7,305	4,629	62,537		
Chakwan	26	3,007	4,297	2,884	931	4,320	2,480	4,263	3,997	4,102	4,748	3,009	38,038		
Samlekhar	10	1,333	2,189	1,458	440	2,692	954	1,639	1,537	1,577	1,826	1,157	16,802		
Saletgodam	17	2,441	4,019	2,561	929	3,511	1,526	2,623	2,460	2,524	2,922	1,851	27,367		
Andrar	50	5,219	8,740	5,145	2,612	8,579	4,579	7,870	7,380	7,573	8,766	5,555	72,018		
Mohli	17	2,438	4,094	2,654	873	3,811	1,717	2,951	2,767	2,840	3,287	2,083	29,515		
Kaswa	14						1,336	2,295	2,152	2,208	2,556	1,620	12,167		
Khidku	7						763	1,312	1,230	1,262	1,461	925	6,953		
Thatri	12						1,145	1,968	1,845	1,893	2,191	1,388	10,430		
Kindergarten	24	1,937	1,965	1,745	966	3,347	763	1,312	1,230	1,262	1,461	925	16,913		
Kids Club		1,952	1,722	741	924	3,904							9,243		
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>22,814</b>	<b>34,486</b>	<b>21,340</b>	<b>10,555</b>	<b>38,953</b>	<b>19,079</b>	<b>32,791</b>	<b>30,748</b>	<b>31,552</b>	<b>36,523</b>	<b>23,142</b>	<b>301,983</b>		
													<b>Fuel</b>	<b>13,000</b>	
														<b>Sabji Mandi visit</b>	<b>8,030</b>
														<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>323,013</b>

## Winter Clothing

This autumn, as the days grew colder, at the suggestion of our Trustees, we decided to provide thermal inner wear (tops, leggings and socks) for all the children. We bought samples of the various brands available in the local market and asked the staff to choose which they thought

would be most durable and warm since they have experience of buying these for their own children. We then ordered in bulk in order to get the best price and Ravindra, Vijay and Ankush along with our drivers delivered them to all the schools making sure they fitted each child properly.

## Clothing Distribution

Age	Rakkar	Mohil	Saletgodam	Andrar	Chakwan	Samlekhar	Thatri	Naag Mandir	Lunta	Total
3	0	0	4	4	4	0	0	3	3	18
4	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	2	2	10
5	2	5	0	8	1	0	3	0	1	20
6	5	0	2	8	7	1	3	0	0	26
7	4	2	4	8	2	2	0	0	0	22
8	6	4	1	6	8	2	4	0	0	31
9	13	3	4	10	5	4	2	0	0	41
10	13	0	4	8	4	0	0	0	0	29
11	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	<b>43</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>200</b>







# Single Women's Program

The Single women's team have been working hard in the villages all year and together have added a total of 320 new members. Their work involves considerable planning, travelling by local transport, engaging with officials or active people in each village and organising and holding village meetings. We recognise that it is not easy for them to work independently and therefore call them to our Nishtha Wednesday meetings and once a month hold full single women's meetings

at Nishtha in which they can meet and spend the day with each other, talk about their problems and discuss and lay plans for the following month. Much of their work involves assisting the semi-literate women in the villages to apply for the various pensions and Government schemes available. This is a laborious and time-consuming process but one which is extremely helpful and appreciated by the women in the villages.

## Single Women Members

Block	Activists	Old Members	New Members	Total Membership
Nagrota	Sunita & Pratiba	865	74	939
Rait	Kummo & Ranjana	1,291	117	1,408
Dharamsala / Kangra	Shilpa & Bhandana	1,163	129	1,292

The Single Women's team have now completed distribution of the food vouchers. We have decided not to continue this program this coming year as the economy has generally recovered after the Covid shutdown. Those in real need such as the very old, disabled and really destitute will be

reported to the clinic and can be provided for individually through our special needs/destitute funds. We are very proud of the careful and efficient way in which our activists handled this quite sensitive project.

## Single Women Scheme Data 2022-23

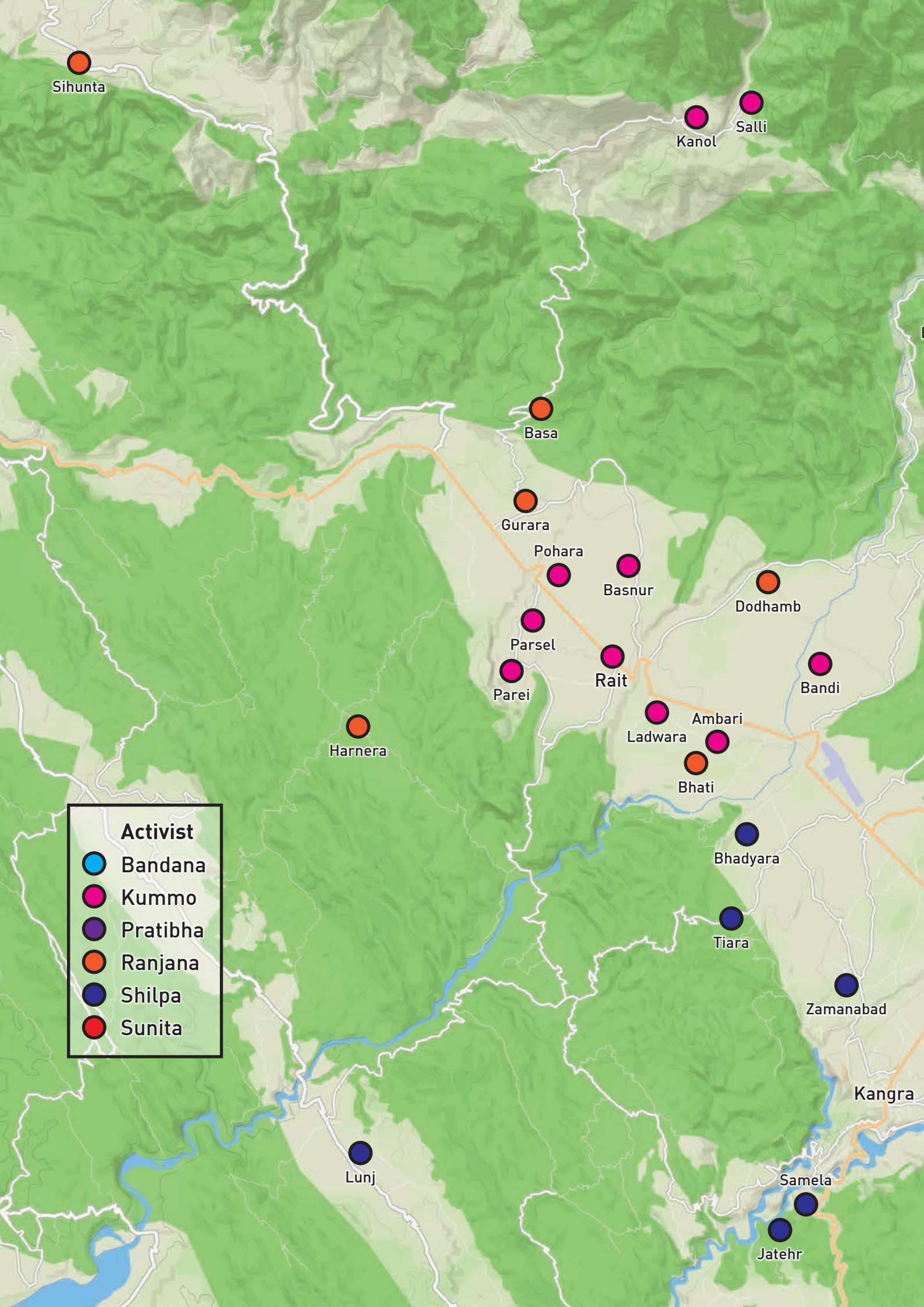
Scheme	Nagrota		Rait		Dharamsala / Kangra	
	Applied	Received	Applied	Received	Applied	Received
Widows' Pension	34	20	22	10	23	10
Mother Theresa (for widows' children)	18	6	20	4	5	0
Home Loan (for below poverty line)	18	3	21	7	5	0
Sewing Machine	5	2	0	0	0	0
Girls Marriage	6	0	37	8	1	1
Sahara pension (for disabled)	6	3	0	0	2	2

Block level meetings are usually held twice a year offering an opportunity for single women to meet useful Government officers, local officials and the Nishtha doctors to discuss their various problems and receive advice and help. The first meetings after COVID were held in March 2022 so in this present year we held only one series of meetings in December, the two for Kangra and Nagrota blocks were in the community centre at Nishtha and the one for Rait block was held at Shahpur. A full lunch cooked by our staff was provided during the events

held in Nishtha Community Centre while pakoda, banana's, tea and gulab jamum sweets were provided during the meeting held in Shahpur. The costs of travel allowance and the food was divided 50/50 between the single women's area accounts and Nishtha.

The single women also organise and act as facilitators for our twice weekly Health Education Clinics held in the villages. These are marked, according to the activist who organised them, on the map on the following pages.





Sihunta

Kanol

Salli

Basa

Gurara

Pohara

Basnur

Dodhamb

Parsel

Rait

Bandi

Parei

Ladwara

Ambari

Harnera

Bhati

Bhadyara

Tiara

Zamanabad

Lunj

Kangra

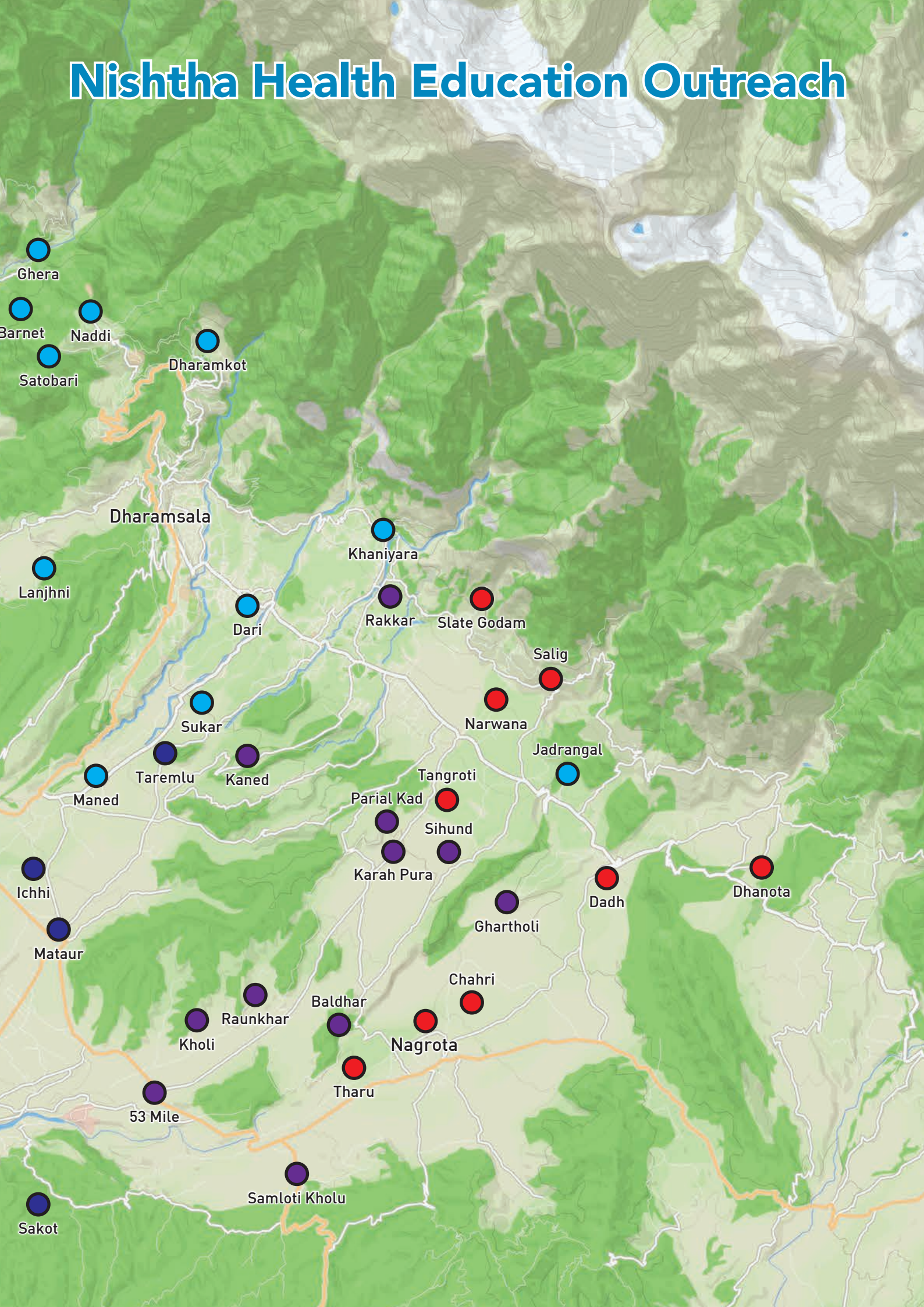
Samela

Jatehr

- Activist**
- Bandana
  - Kummo
  - Pratibha
  - Ranjana
  - Shilpa
  - Sunita



# Nishtha Health Education Outreach









# Community Centre

## Children and Youth

The Community Centre has been very well attended this year with lots of activities going on every day as recorded regularly through our facebook and Instagram Posts. Ravindra looks after the facility and manages the library, ordering and registering new books as well as encouraging children to read. The school book boxes have been taken to the schools though Ravindra feels that it is necessary to visit each school mini library each week and encourage the teachers and children to make use of them. We intend to order 3 portable display cases for the smaller schools that we are now involved with.

In the early summer we were joined by Aki and her daughter Tara who filled the community centre with creative activities and fun. They were followed by a team from Teach India who prepared the children to perform an very bright and effective skit about waste management on Environment Day.

During the summer holidays in July, Neelam ran a rich variety of activities for an enthusiastic group of children, from practicing yoga, dancing in rivers, exploring the farm and catching up with homework to painting rocks, and being involved in environmental clean-up. After Neelam left us in August, Ankush took on running the after-school program until the tuition classes started in November. Despite the rain 8-10 children came every day to learn to use the computer and enthusiastically joined Ankush in his repertoire of interesting indoor games.

We are very grateful that the Community Centre is now equipped with a new projector. Florian, one of our new Austrian Civil Servants who is an electrical engineer fixed a support from the ceiling and wiring so that it can stay permanently in place and be used whenever we want to show the children a movie or a training video.

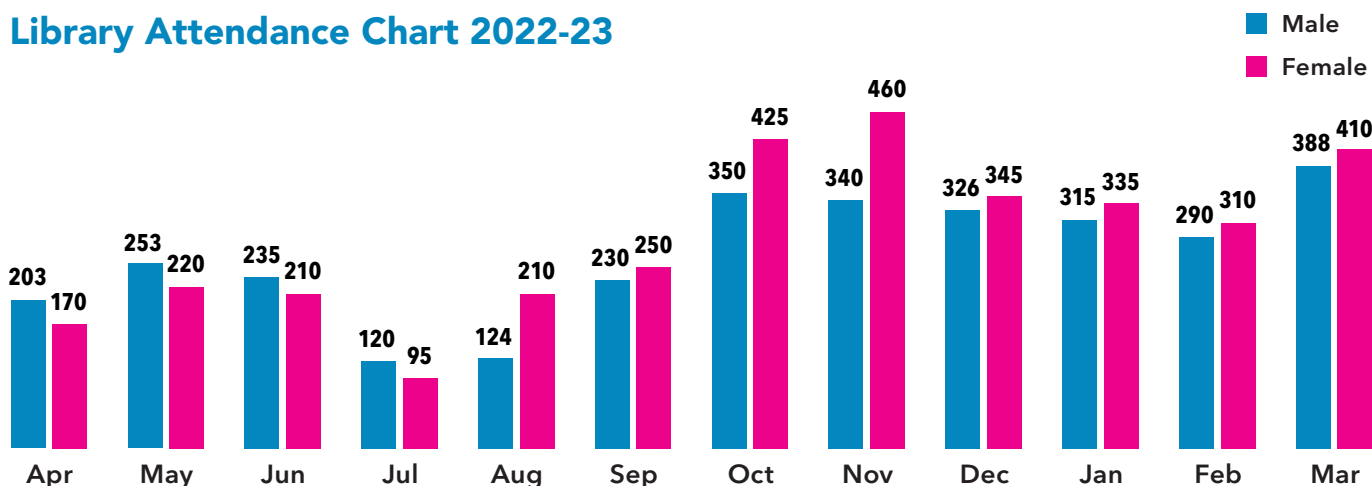
The computer room was well attended between April and December with up to 12 children taking advantage of the opportunity to learn from Vijay. Although from January to March most of the children opted to join the tuition class in preparation for their exams, the computer classroom is regularly in use as various older students drop in to work on a computer and our sponsorship students make use of them every Sunday.

In September, just as we were all feeling exhausted by the long monsoon, Farid, a visiting clown workshop trainer thrilled our children, students and staff by sharing with us his delight in making people laugh and bringing out the very best in them through clowning. We were all enlivened by wearing the smallest of masks - a red nose and learning the power

of a smile, a funny walk, or expression to lift the mood and bring about joy. What a wonderful day.

To celebrate the festival of Dussehra in October, Rakkar Social and Environment Club, supported by the village Panchayat were delighted to present a short version of the traditional Ramayana story on Rakkar playground. Vijay and Ankush put a great deal of time and effort into preparing the event, selecting a short version of the story for the children to enact. A group of Nishtha students sang a traditional song to introduce the program and then the children who had practiced hard for the past week put on a really good performance, remembering all their lines and delivering them loudly and clearly to the delight of the large crowd.

## Library Attendance Chart 2022-23









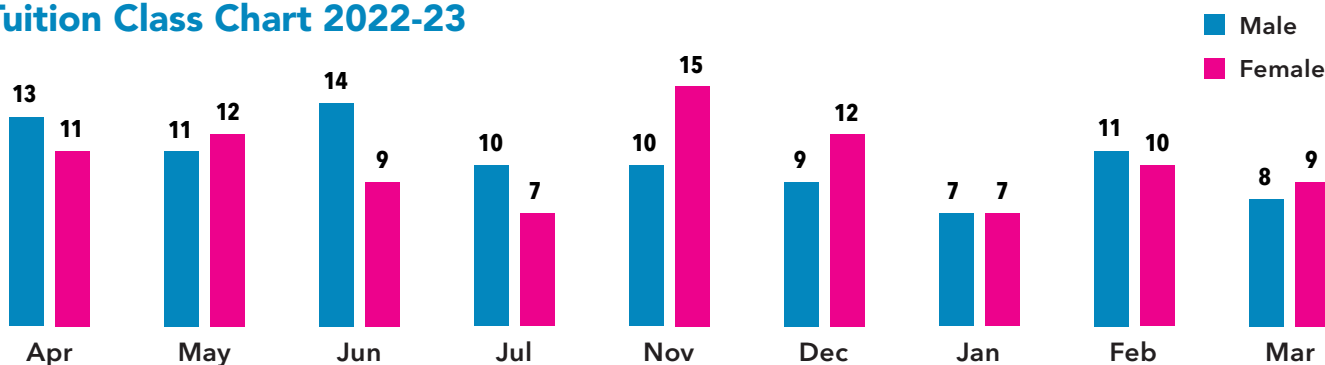
## Tuition

After the Diwali break the children returned to school and enthusiastically joined in our after-school program. Two of our students, Shalini and Kanishka ran the tuition program for those who need help for their school work. They also guide and encourage reading, creative activities and plenty of sports now the weather is fine. At the same time, they were taking part in an on-line training called "Maths Matters" on how to teach maths in a creative and interesting way. They were able to put the techniques and ideas they learned directly into practice with their students and could discuss the results and issues they encountered with their trainers.

The childrens classes were taken by Neelam from April to July and by Shalini and Kanishka from November to March.

Two months into their on-line course in Maths Matters, Shalini and Kanishka, our tuition teachers talk about how delighted they are to have learned how to teach basic maths using different techniques that interest the children. They say that when they started the tuition class this year the children were reluctant to do any maths. However, these great maths games, and the new teaching skills they have acquired, have transformed the children's interest and enjoyment in working with numbers and shapes.

## Tuition Class Chart 2022-23



## Sports Programs

Every week once the rain stopped in September one day was taken off from tuition or ordinary community centre activities to take the children to the ground to play games. They make regular use of the new play circle and love to get the cycles out. We have cones and tapes to create courses for them to ride and of course ensure that the helmets and bicycles are all kept in good order.

Whilst it is no longer possible to hold the cricket tournaments on the ground because the school has enclosed more of the upper area, we do hold 2 day childrens sports programs in the winter. Seventy boys and girls from 5 local primary

schools joyously participated in a two-day sports program held on Rakkar ground at the beginning of their short winter holiday. With the help of our sponsorship students our team organised athletics such as long jump and high jump and fun games such as lemon and spoon race and sack races. An exciting obstacle race using the playground equipment as their course was the new event which challenged and enthralled the children. On both days healthy and fun snacks were distributed and at the finale medals were given out to those who excelled. A big thank you to everyone, including our students who participated and enabled this very special event to take place so smoothly.

## Playground Development

In June the children were delighted that we installed a ladder and slide over a large rock in the playground. The team painted it blue before the monsoon rains started in earnest. A new adventure for the younger children!

In July the long-awaited new play centre for Nag Mandir area was not only delivered but also, through the hard work of our team installed on the

ground outside the anganwari. The teacher who runs the anganwari will take good care of it and let us know if there are any problems that need attention. We held a very happy inauguration with cake for everyone! Thank you so much to Jenny who so kindly made this possible and who will be fondly remembered through this thoughtful gift to the children.







## Nishtha College Sponsorship Program

The new Session for Nishtha sponsored students began in August with 8 new admissions to our program, 7 girls and 1 boy who needed assistance to complete his final year bringing the number of students we are helping through college this year to 20. This year we have 5 students who are now in their final year of studies: Karen, the only boy in the group who has been sponsored by Nishtha since high school because of special family circumstances Shubham who dropped out of the program in January and 2 girls: Kajal and Deepanshi who have completed their studies. 7 girls in their second year of study remain and are joined by 8 new first year students.

In addition to these 18 students an individual sponsor kindly supports Rinki Devi who is doing very well in her BSc. course in bio-technology in Dharamsala degree college. Bharti who is now in her third year M com is our only MA student this year and will complete her third and final semester in July 2023.

The students are all expected to attend our Sunday program which took place on 30 Sundays this year. This is an opportunity for them all to come together and enjoy and learn from a range of activities including computer and dance classes. Puja who teaches English always holds interesting and useful classes focussing on getting the students to speak through presentations and discussions on topics of current interest.

We are encouraging more girls to take up science and economics rather than only enrolling in the arts courses which seem to inevitably lead them to studying political science which does not hold any prospects for future employment.

We ask the students to join us in visits to the farm, to understand and participate in our environmental programs and to help us with our Diwali cleaning and childrens sports programs. This year in October everybody happily worked cleaning, repairing and painting the Clinic and Community Centre in preparation for the festival of Diwali.

In November the Sajhe Sapne team from Aavishkar NGO visited Nishtha to talk to 14 of our female students about the one-year residential course they hold. Their program develops girls' potential and ensures them work opportunities as educators, social workers or IT operators. They discussed the meanings of "Career" and "Job" and what their expectations of both are. The girls talked about what they hoped to get out of

their academic courses and what their studies will enable them to do in the future. It was a very thought provoking and interesting session.

Following this, Shalinia and Kanishka, our students who are taking the Nishtha tuition classes this year signed up to do an online course called "Maths Matters" run through Aaviskar NGO. They are learning how to present maths in an exciting and tangible way so that the children enjoy learning the basic concepts of maths very meaningfully. They immediately used what they learned on line in the classroom with the children with tremendously positive results.

In February, our college students had two weeks holiday so we invited them to join our team to learn about our organic farm and the Clean Green Rakkar program. the concept of natural farming that included the harmful effects of pesticides and chemicals on the land. The 18 students were divided into three smaller groups so that it would be easier for them to understand what was going on and to be able to ask questions and be involved. Each group first visited the farm where Sunil and Vandana showed them around.

Mohinder then gave a thorough explanation of the concept of natural farming including a good explanation of the harmful effects of pesticides and chemicals on the land.

The students also learned about the compost unit as well as the rich dilution made from food waste and worms that feeds the farm and the eco-san toilets. They then took part in cleaning up selected garbage hotspots on the hillside where people

hold parties, leaving rubbish such as empty and broken liquor bottles lying around. Mohinder worked hard to motivate the students to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Plastic and to talk to their families and neighbours about disposing of their waste more carefully.

To celebrate the end of their studies, the Nishtha Team organised a trek up the mountain with the students. On the way they enjoyed the beautiful mountain environment and picked up all the litter they found on the path. They had a great time cooking a wonderful lunch together and will remember this happy day spent in nature with their friends.

At the end of this academic year 5 of our BA students will graduate and leave us, 13 will continue next year. New applications will be received in April and the selection of students who will join our program will be done in June once the exam results are available.

On October 4<sup>th</sup> Dr. Barbara dropped in on the well-attended students meeting held this Sunday in the clinic reception area - every space is being used these days! It was wonderful to see Puja back teaching English and giving the students so much priceless encouragement to make the very best of their opportunities.







# Public Health and Environment

## Organic Farm Program

Nishtha farm provides a venue to experiment with and share organic farming techniques. Our aim is to promote organic farming methods and experiment with ways of improving the quality of the earth on marginal plots to make it more productive for subsistence farmers. We encourage people to grow local varieties and to make compost. We spread awareness of how the use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides damages the earth, destroying its power and killing off the bees, those most essential pollinators. We teach people the value of preserving local seeds, saving their

own and avoiding using genetically modified seed.

This year our farm has been more productive than in previous years as the quality of the soil gradually improves. Niklas, our Austrian volunteer undertook to test the soil from different plots to see what nutrients may be lacking or in excess. He did a great deal to help the team to organise the plots and introduced new methods of making vermicompost. Focusing more on vegetables, we have been able to sell over Rs. 6,000 worth of produce to our staff and for use in the childrens programs.

## Water Filter Maintenance

Regular cleaning and maintenance of all our filters is carried out by our staff and volunteers. The filter at Samlekanath school was shifted down to an area of Rakkar village who requested a larger unit than had been installed. A new stand was built to provide enough height for the filter to work properly and then the tank had to be replaced because it was leaking. The provision of clean filtered water in the schools and village is very much appreciated and greatly contributes to the health of the community.

### In December we posted:

“We are pleased to have been able to respond to the needs of the villagers by fitting a much larger water filtration system so that sufficient clean water is available for all the families living in the area.”

## Clean Green Rakkar

Our program to work with the households in the village has been challenging this year because of the arrival of “Waste Warriors” who set up on Rakkar Road and have employed workers to run a truck to collect waste and take it to their segregation centre.

The Nishtha team, though discouraged, continues to collect plastic from the households who are still keeping it for us and maintain a good relationship in the village working to encourage awareness about waste disposal. Until December we made 225 bags, however, since January we have agreed not to make any more blocks until we have an order. Instead, we

deliver everything we collect, including bottles to waste warriors who have undertaken to manage it.

This year we used all our remaining stock of blocks on building up the wall around our plastic collection and block making facility in order to discourage people from throwing their unsegregated bags of garbage in there for us to deal with.

The boards near the river have some effect in discouraging people from throwing garbage into the river. We are shifting our focus to concentrate on community education through social media and practical action.

### A case of Practical Action:

During the monsoon our environment team were busy keeping our local drains clear so they run smoothly during the heaviest of downpours. This is important work. Sadly, how important was proved when in September a cloudburst above Khanyara village where the drains were blocked, caused a devastating torrent of water flooding through the village. Many shops and homes were damaged and poor families lost everything. Nishtha provided aid but also encourages everyone to respect waterways.



## United Kingdom



Nishtha UK Trust

Charities Commission  
Registration No: 1118248  
IR charity status ref No: XT2400

Nishtha UK Trust  
sort code: 30 97 41  
a/c No.: 00118802  
BIC: LOYDGB21063  
IBAN: GB82 LOYD 3097 4100 1188 02

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## United States

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## Germany



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DE40673900000084335401

<https://www.nishtha.de>

## Austria

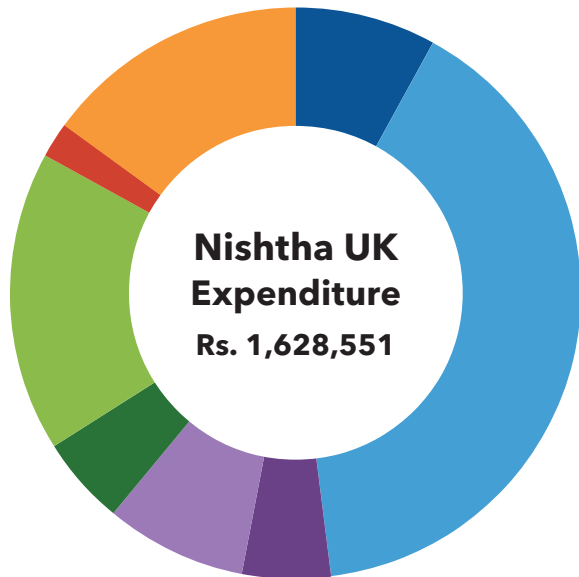


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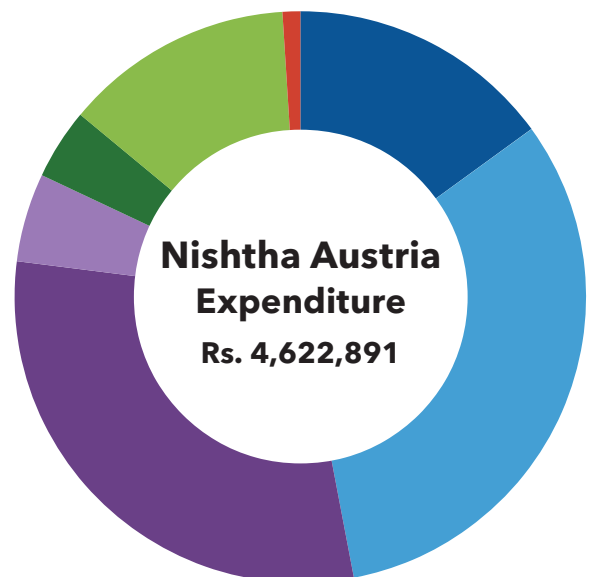
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IBAN: AT241500004591018215  
Verwendungszweck: Projekt  
Indien

<http://www.nishtha.at>

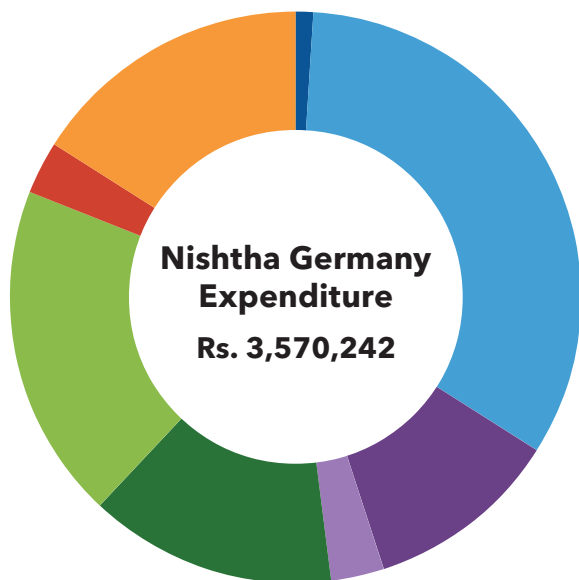




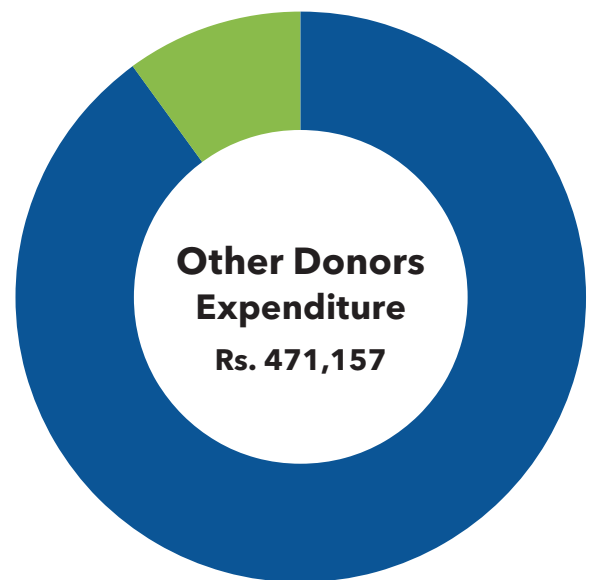
Admin	129,397
Children and Youth Program	645,581
Clinic Special Service	73,452
Community Outreach Program	125,718
Workshop	89,472
Public Health and Environment	280,964
Publicity Projects	40,696
Students' Sponsorship	243,271



Admin	673,290
Clinic	1,509,179
Community Center	1,415,466
COVID Relief Fund	253,071
Publicity Projects	167,384
Single Women Program	580,620
Workshop: VM	23,881



Admin	22,599
Clinic	1,224,614
Environment: Land Project	384,755
Publicity Projects	95,436
School Children Shoes & Nutrition	488,860
Single Women	673,195
Student Sponsorship	104,419
COVID Relief	576,364



SMILE.de: Workshops	429,849
Timberline: Disabled Help	41,308



## Republic of India



### Nishtha Rural Health, Education & Environment Centre

VPO Rakkar, Sidhbari,  
Distt. Kangra 176057  
Himachal Pradesh, India

Email: [contact@nishtha.ngo](mailto:contact@nishtha.ngo)

#### For donations within India only:

Account number: 55094118584  
SBI, Sidhbari branch code: 50441  
IFSC: SBIN0050441  
MICR: 176007053  
Swift code: SBININBB277

Nishtha Rural Health, Education & Environment Centre is a registered charitable Trust  
Registration No: 51 1/4/98  
FCRA No: 182450048

Income Tax Number:  
AAATN4316QE19981

Tax exemption available



Nayi Asha is a Women's Sewing co-operative based in Rakkar Village in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh. Using locally sourced, quality materials – the home spun khadi fabrics, which are particular to village India, and bright Bhutanese plaids – the women carefully combine patterns, colours and textures into delightful creations that are a joy to use.

Please visit our online shop:

[nayi-asha.com](http://nayi-asha.com)

## Local Income

Bank Interest	298,756
Clinic	193,740
Donation from Maria Luisa	50,000
Donation from Yudishter Raj	50,000
Donation from Charanjeet	6,000
Donation from Nick Chopra	5,000
Donation from Murari Lal Arora	5,000
General Donation	59,140
<b>Total</b>	<b>667,636</b>

## Local Expenditure

Operational Expenses	10,047
Clinic	275,152
Environment	41,395
Stitching Project	46,873
Community Center	65,411
Disabled Children	23,490
<b>Total</b>	<b>462,368</b>

Our accounts are audited and prepared for submission to the Home Ministry and Income Tax department by Mr. Dhar in Dharamsala and Mr. Shardha in Delhi.

## Nishtha Annual Report

A full report of the activities of the Trust in 2021-22 was prepared and 50 copies were printed and distributed to Trustees and local officials. This report featured the individual staff members explaining in their own words what it means to them to work for Nishtha and what they do. The annual reports along with our financial reports are posted on our website [nishtha.ngo](http://nishtha.ngo) which is kept up to date with our social media posts under Events.

## Nishtha Calendar

Our 1,100 calendars for 2023 with photos featuring village life taken by Nurith Wagner Strauss were printed this year. They were posted to our foreign Trustees and supporters in early December along with a letter explaining each picture and requesting support. The calendar is our main fund-raising activity, augmented by events and meetings with supporters in Austria, Germany and the UK.

The calendar is also used for local distribution and publicity. Our activists present calendars to officials in the offices in Dharamsala and in the local areas, appreciating their help and co-operation.







# Nishtha

Rural Health, Education &  
Environment Centre

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