

A photograph of two women in traditional Nepali attire. The woman on the left is standing, wearing a blue velvet top with gold trim, a black sash, and a red and orange patterned skirt. She has a blue and silver headpiece. The woman on the right is kneeling, wearing a maroon velvet top with a black sash and a maroon skirt with a white floral pattern. She has a red and orange patterned headscarf. They are both looking at each other and holding hands. The background is a lush green field with orange flowers.

निष्ठा

n i s h t h a

rural health, education & environment centre

Annual Review
2025-26



Nishtha Trust

Thank you to everyone who attended our 30th Anniversary Celebration!

We were delighted that so many of our long-term friends and supporters were able to join us to celebrate 30 years of working for the uplift of the village communities in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to everyone who came and hope that you have taken away as many wonderful memories as we have kept with us!

We also offer our thanks and appreciation to our local board members who have supported our work for so many years.

Soniya Sebastian joined in 2010 and is our

longest serving Trustee.

Radhika Shaunik joined our board in 2012 and has served as chief functionary since 2016.

Puja Anand and **Nayantara Mankotia** both joined the trust in 2016. Our numbers were further enhanced in 2022 with the addition of **Benita Sharma**. We are very fortunate that they all live locally and are very well informed about the situation in the communities in which we work.

Each brings an important and unique value to the Trust offering effective monitoring and guidance during our regular meetings.

FiRST PiCk Phonics Program (FPPP)

Living in this area for some years, Nishtha Trustee Puja Anand has been taking an active interest in the local school children who are from the very poorest families in the neighbourhood. Realising that their reading levels were very low, Puja gained the trust of the school teachers and has, since 2023 been introducing a phonics reading program into one local school. This year she expanded this very effective program into six schools with the help of 3 facilitators who she has trained.

In 2025 she wanted to expand the program and it was agreed that Nishtha would help her to take this project forward as part of our Community Centre Library program. She is now working in 4 more remote schools using interesting teaching aids and reading books to support the children's learning.



Letter from Dr Barbara

This year was a very important year for us because we were able to celebrate 30 years of running our health centre. We organised a function, invited guests and asked the staff to share their experiences working with us. Most have been with us for many years. Suresh has been with us the longest, for 32 years! He shared how he came to know me when he was helping on the construction of the clinic and then moved on to helping Ram in the dispensary. He remembered how he learned about different kinds of medicines from Ram, Dr Kusum and myself and is now able to explain to the patients how to use them. It makes me very proud. His assistant Azad also remembered how he worked as night watchman in the clinic for 18 years and how in the diarrhoea season very ill people would come to the clinic in the night because at this time there was no other health facility available in the area.

We were very happy to welcome our visitors who are all long-term sponsors from Europe Austria, Germany, the UK and to share with them our work through the presentations of our employees. They very much enjoyed the festive lunch which we prepared and served ourselves and were entertained by our children and sponsored students with Puja's line dance, traditional ghaddi dancing as well as by local musicians. We hope that everyone will have taken strong memories and warm feelings away with them.

Earlier in the summer we were very busy conducting empowerment workshops for young people – both girls and boys in order to encourage them to play a positive role in their rapidly changing communities. We particularly worked on promoting awareness of the dangers of social media and its pernicious influence on the aspirations of young people. We also held several Wenlido workshops which focus on safety for women and girls, encouraging them to realise that the strength they need to stand up comes from within themselves. Very successful workshops for the boys and mixed groups focused on gender, sexuality, masculinity and the importance of their role in society.

All our activities and programs are fully displayed in this our 2025-26 Annual report which I hope you will enjoy and will help you to appreciate just how much we have going on every day. We are deeply grateful for all the support we receive and sincerely hope that, despite these difficult times we can continue to serve the community to which we are deeply committed.

Dr Nalk-Oiser





Nishtha Clinic

Our clinic continues to function as a drop-in clinic for the local community and as a place where people suffering from long term ailments can consult sympathetic holistic doctors in depth.

Although Dr Barbara is officially retired, she still sees a few of her old patients and in particular offers acupuncture treatment to those suffering from paralysis and other problems. She oversees the clinic and is available for Dr Sara and Dr Shreya to consult about difficult cases.

Dr Sara and Dr Shreya share the average 30 patients who come to our four-day-a-week clinic between them. Patients either request to see a particular doctor or are directed to one doctor or the other, according to who is free or the nature of their problem. Both doctors take a great deal of time over their consultations, giving patients the opportunity to talk about their problems and allowing the doctors to carefully explain the effects of medications they may prescribe. This leads to greater compliance regarding treatments and adjustments to their life style. The doctors consider their relationship with the patients to be of utmost importance, so they have a lot of regulars - patients who rely on them steadily to manage their health issues.

Dr Sara is pleased that she has been able to reduce over-reliance on antibiotics by explaining antibiotic resistance to patients and discouraging them from taking them more than twice a year, and even then to reserve them for serious problems such as chest infections. It is relatively easy to buy antibiotics over the counter from local pharmacies so generating awareness of antibiotic resistance is very important. She sees nine regular patients with

asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease caused by smoking or inhaling the indoor smoke from burning wood and other materials on an open fire. People in the villages suffer from a great deal of suppressed trauma which can also result in chronic lung issues.

Diabetes mellitus continues to be prevalent, though we have witnessed better control through taking medicine and following up regularly so we can reduce the dose. Both doctors believe that stress is a major factor in the quite dramatic insulin and cortisol spikes presented by local people, even among those who are quite fit and active. Dr Sara says that what used to be known as the diseases of the poor, such as skin and gastric infections are very much reduced in our village community, but are giving way to diseases that used to be more prevalent in affluent urban societies. She says: "I think they are stress rather than lifestyle related - people are more tense than they used to be and they do not get enough sleep. It is customary for people in the village to get up at 6 in the morning, but if they don't turn their phones off at night and keep talking or watching videos late into the evening, they simply don't get enough sleep. Every diabetic I meet has an issue with sleep - they worry a lot about the future because they get too much information through social media."

Another issue that concerns both doctors is the prevalence of cancer in this area. According to local news reports Kangra has recorded a spike in cancer cases over the past few years. In the clinic we are observing disturbing patterns in local families. Unfortunately, too many people come to the clinic when they have already reached the

Patient Consultations 2025-26

Month	Men		Women		Boys		Girls		Patients	
	New	All	New	All	New	All	New	All	New	All
April	10	55	9	137	1	4	1	14	21	210
May	11	66	12	163	3	7	1	15	27	251
June	15	74	12	184	2	11	1	15	30	284
July	12	70	14	175	5	25	6	18	37	288
August	9	64	9	138	3	33	2	10	23	245
September	8	93	16	220	1	31	4	16	29	360
October	10	82	13	157	5	28	1	14	29	281
November	4	59	8	135	3	11	2	10	17	215
December	7	63	15	122	2	14	4	30	28	229
January	7	55	10	125	0	15	1	13	18	208
February	11	71	15	147	4	23	1	19	31	260
March	8	76	16	151	2	13	4	22	30	262
Total	112	828	149	1854	31	215	28	196	320	3093

fourth stage. This is because they ignore their health problems for too long and don't go for screening. One suggested cause is that people burn everything - wood, paper, leaves and lots of plastic in their home fireplaces which are built without chimneys so they inhale toxic smoke. It might also be that people are eating much more meat, especially chicken, and since they are farmed without government controls, it is possible that the meat is contaminated with carcinogens. The use of toxic chemicals on the land and the adulteration of cooking oils are other likely causes.

Dr Shreya treats her patients almost exclusively through homeopathy. Her greatest success is with skin problems, joint issues and depressive symptoms such as binge eating, fear of heights and so on. She has achieved very good results with some of our specially-abled children, whose fear and shyness is decreased by her treatment, and they are able to become more expressive and capable. She also prescribes controlled courses of glucosamine and chondroitin for people who suffer from joint issues and says that people respond very well. She too agrees that cancer, auto-immune disease and thyroid imbalance come from suppressed grief and anxiety. People are worried about the future and the future of their children. And since they don't gather to chat in the evenings as they used to, watching their phones by themselves instead, they feel more isolated and fearful.

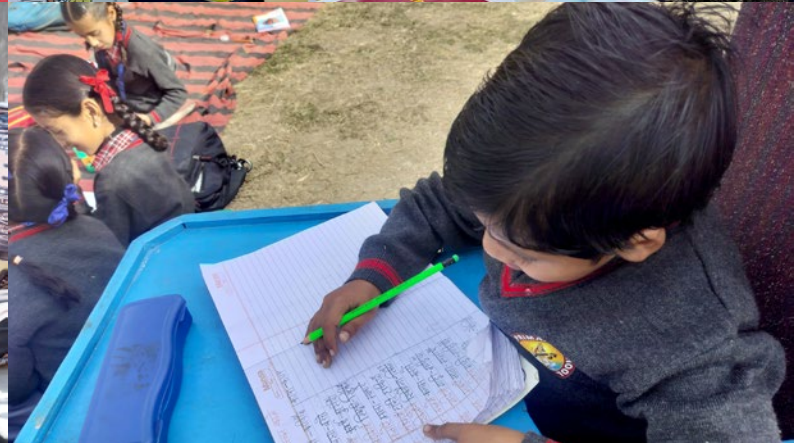
Both doctors work with the specially-abled children who come to the clinic. The children are responding well to our freshly initiated nutritional program, which is protein & fat focused. They are clearly gaining weight and height.

Nishtha Ambulance

Patients who need are taken to Tanda and Dharamsala Zonal Hospital in the Nishtha ambulance. The driver, Arvind, is extremely good with the patients, helping them to find their way through registration, to the right departments and for any tests or investigations they might need. He also helps them navigate the procurement of medicines - some from the hospital dispensary - and finding those that are only available in outside pharmacies. The situation with the Himcare and Ayushman cards, individual insurance cards, is unpredictable and many patients need help in keeping them up to date and understanding what services they can get 'on the card' and what is not eligible.



Thank you to Suresh and Azad, our longest serving staff members on their retirement



Help for the Children with Special Needs

Transport to Tapovan/School

Between 3 and 8 children a day are transported in our clinic vehicles to attend Tapovan physiotherapy clinic. We also include some of our clinic patients who need physiotherapy. This service has become so sought after that Ravi, the driver reports that sometimes he has to do 3 trips in a day.

Shaksham and Priya regularly attend Tapovan clinic and the local school nearby. Shaksham is making very good progress with his walking and general ability to manage by himself. His speech has improved and he is doing remarkably well in school. Priya unfortunately broke her leg in the autumn so had time off. Vihana, who is now 6 years old, does not attend Tapovan as regularly as Dr Shreya would hope. She says that the children who don't go regularly show regression in their progress over time. Now the family have shifted to Ranital which is too far away to maintain contact.

Miraya also goes to Tapovan as well as being treated with considerable success by Dr Shreya. She is developing more muscle strength. Mitali was going to Tapovan regularly for speech therapy until March and was making good progress but now the family have moved to Thakudwara.

Tarushi attended Tapovan until June when the family moved to Shimla.

Afza is a CP patient from Chamba. She joined us in May last year at which point she was very agitated, restless and was hardly sleeping. These symptoms improved with homeopathy and when she attended Tapovan regularly her stiffness

reduced and she became more social, smiling and would calmly sit on her mother's lap. However, recently the family returned to Chamba for a function during which she got very much worse, Dr Sara suggests the reversal is due to travel, heat exhaustion and over exposure to a very loud and busy family situation. She is a child who needs calm and quiet and a regular daily program.

Vibhan is now 5 years old and has started walking with support. He has the use of the walker that Shaksham grew out of. He is growing very fast and is extremely strong so he is increasingly difficult for his mother to handle. His anger and aggressive behaviour does improve when he takes a homeopathic remedy. He does not go to Tapovan because his mother is unable to leave her mother-in-law. Their house is very small and living conditions difficult so we are concerned about Vibhan's future.

Pratham, a 10-year-old boy from Chamba, has been living in Khanyara since December. He presented with a number of problems which were addressed with homeopathic treatment. He has been going to Tapovan regularly and has shown considerable improvement. We also looked after **Sagar** who had a badly broken leg and attended Tapovan for 4 months this year until it healed.

These children are encouraged to join our Saturday program when the mothers and children get together to practice the exercises they learn from Tapovan, play together, cook food and relax.

Other children we help

Sanjoli, who is 17 years old, has grown and can no longer use her wheelchair. Her carer, Baby, is using moving and lifting techniques learned from physiotherapist Valerie and practised under her guidance. It requires either her brother or father to lift her to move her onto their veranda for a change of scenery. Valerie has also worked to show Baby how to relax Sanjoli's legs and has even got Sanjoli to reach towards an attractive object in front of her. She is happy, eating well and is well looked after.

Abhi, a 15-year-old blind young adult from Jhul village near Khanyara has no father. His sister is married so his mother looks after him on her own. He has a considerable range of problems including epilepsy, anger, balance issues, and poor coordination.

Sejal and **Sonakshi** are doing very well with their growth hormone treatment. Both girls are developing fast, both physically and mentally.

Anku is a 5-year-old who lives nearby. He is a slow learner but attends school. He has sponsorship because of his special family circumstances.

Bhagwanti attends the school local to her and is managing well with a special chair. Although she

cannot walk, she is happy and more stable—her shunt is working well. Nishtha provides diapers and extra nutrition for her. She now has two younger sisters who she responds very well to.

A single woman who lives in Rajol has four disabled children: **Sapna**, **Kajal**, **Priya** and **Atukl**. They all suffer from mental retardation. Three of the siblings attend Surya Uday School.

A single mother with two disabled girls who lives in a village near Shahpur is visited by the clinic outreach team when they go to a camp nearby. They take nutrition packets and check their medicines. This year, **Sanjoli's** outgrown wheelchair was provided for **Anshu**, the younger girl.

Equipment provided: This year we assisted in buying calipers for Vibhana as advised by the physio at Tapovan. Physiotherapist Valerie came twice during the year to advise on special patients including Sanjoli. She is particularly helpful in working with the carers, showing them how to move the children without causing themselves harm. Shaksham received a new, larger walker which is helping to improve his core stability.



Extra Nutrition Program

In December 2025, at the recommendation of our clinic doctors, we started providing monthly packs of supplemental foods to 13 special needs children. We have been making packs from the list we created in collaboration with our doctors of foods rich in protein and fats, finding out which items the mothers and children like. Some, such as oats, tofu and peanut butter are unfamiliar so they

reject them in favour of more familiar items such as dals and soya nuggets. The cost per child is approximately Rs 1,200 so our budget is Rs 15,000 per month. The first three months were paid from available funds for disabled/destitute, one month from each of the 3 Trusts: UK, Germany and Austria. During 2026-27, this program will be paid for from funds left over of the 30th Anniversary.



Community Center

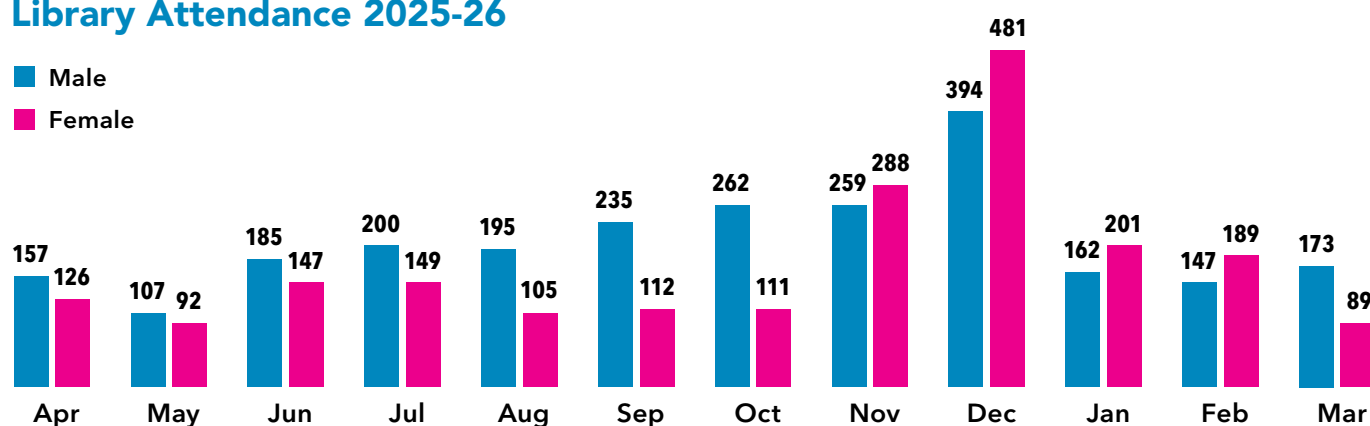
Library & Kids Program

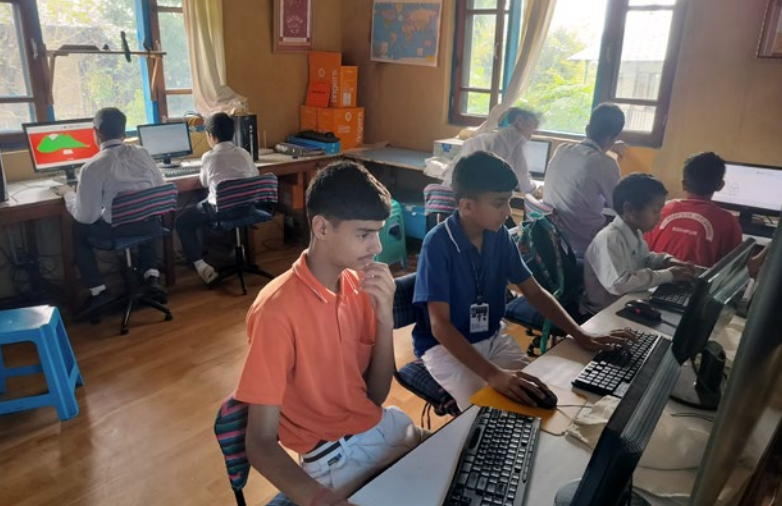
Ravindra, our community centre manager and librarian tells how she has been struggling to engage the children's interest in reading in the library this year because they have a great deal of energy and not a lot of attention. We have stocked the library with magazines including Champak, Kids National Geographic Akar Bakar and Pratiyogira Darpan which is a general knowledge magazine designed for older children preparing for exams. They do read these but only a few are comfortable picking up a book and reading their way through it.

In November Ravindra attended a 2-day library workshop held by the Free Library Network at Jagori which drew together librarians from several independent libraries in the Dharamsala area. They shared their experiences and tried to brainstorm ideas to encourage children to pick up books and read. It resulted in the organisation of a library mela which was held in a new local library called Manara. Nishtha provided storytelling, a display of books and mobilized at least 20 children from the Rakkar side of the river to attend. We hope to be able to hold similar events in the future to motivate children to read.

Library Attendance 2025-26

■ Male
■ Female





Computer Classes Children from Rakkar school and nearby areas attend computer classes after school. Most of the children are from the Rakkar primary school with a few from the senior secondary school. The majority are boys as mothers insist that their daughters should return home after school and engage in domestic chores. This is such an ingrained attitude it is very hard to change.

In our computer classes we teach children the basic fundamentals of computers, how to start and

shutdown the computer, how to open and create folders, how to open files and save them. Our main focus is on developing skills, how to do ten-finger typing, how to hold a mouse, and to know the different parts of the computer.

However, many students don't keep up regular attendance because they say they prefer playing games on a mobile at home. We therefore work to maintain interest by allowing them to play some simple educational or race games after their class.

Tuition Classes Twenty-eight children aged 6 to 16 from the local schools registered in our tuition program this year. An average of 12-16 come to the community centre each day to study together with the help of Indu and Manvi. When it comes to tuition, we get more girls than boys, but the moment there is a fun activity scheduled, the balance tips towards the boys!

Indu is a kindergarten teacher who has been tutoring children especially in Maths for many years, whereas Manvi, one of our sponsored students, is young and energetic and now has 4 years teaching experience with children.

Vijay reports: In October, we announced the tuition program in our nearby Govt. school and started classes with 28 children from different grades. Our objective is to provide extra support to students who need help or can't afford private tuition classes. Most of the children come from very poor illiterate families so there is no one at home who can help them with their school work. These tuition classes are therefore, extremely beneficial for them

In October through December, the attendance was very good. However, in January, attendance suddenly dropped due to a case where two of our local children went missing. Although they were found safe and sound the following day, it terrified all the parents who then strictly instructed their children to come home straight after school. It has

taken a few weeks for the situation to settle down. After visiting the school and talking to the children and parents, the children have started to come to the community centre again.

After the tuition class, children have some fun time with activities such as trampoline, reading in the library and outdoor games, so they don't feel too much study pressure and enjoy studying. Everyday after the class, we give the children good nutritional refreshments.





Single Women



Our team of Single Women activists continues to work tirelessly in the villages and now has a membership of almost 4,000 women. This year membership increased by 27 but declined by 42 through death or the occasional re-marriage.

One such case was Shilpa, a long-serving field worker who remarried because of family pressure. Having an unmarried woman in the household is considered inauspicious and can make it difficult for siblings to find marriage partners. Shilpa married not because she met and liked her husband, but so that her brother and sister could marry. We admire her courage and wish her every happiness in her new life.

Her position has been filled by Nimmo Devi, who previously worked with Jagori Rural and is familiar with village outreach. She works closely with the Mahila Mandals, village women's groups, helping organise local meetings and Nishtha Health Camps.

Our activists travel extensively by bus and jeep to reach far-flung villages and meet widows and other women living without a husband. This year they held nearly 1,000 village-level meetings, attended by around eight women each, as well as three block meetings attended by more than 100 women in each of the three blocks where we work. Government officials, legal and medical professionals, and local administrators attend these gatherings to provide information and assistance.

In addition to offering a valuable forum where women can meet and discuss their problems, much of our work involves explaining government schemes and helping women access them. This is especially important for newly widowed women applying for pensions, which must be claimed within six months of a husband's death, even though local convention discourages widows from leaving home during their first year of bereavement. Many therefore miss benefits to which they are entitled.

This year our team helped 57 widows apply for pensions, 48 women obtain the Mother Teresa benefit for their children, 30 women secure assistance for house construction, 12 receive support for their daughters' education, and 20

obtain government health insurance cards.

Our activists regularly record the stories of the women they help. Sunita, our longest-serving team leader, explains that gaining a woman's confidence takes time and patience. Often the most valuable service our activists provide is simply listening. Ranjana Devi, who has worked as a Single Women activist for ten years, says many women have no one else with whom they can share their worries. Meetings, camps and rallies help widows overcome isolation and rebuild confidence.

Single women's children benefit from the Nishtha sponsorship programme. However, Ranjana also encounters families whose needs fall outside our remit. She recently met a 24-year-old woman with a two-year-old daughter whose husband is frequently drunk and refuses to allow her to work. Cases such as these make Ranjana very sad, but there is often little she can do beyond offering support and understanding.

Many such situations arise when young women are married to unsuitable men. Three years ago Ranjana met Salochana Devi, who had returned to her mother's house with her ten-year-old son after years of abuse from an alcoholic husband. Married at 18 to a man she barely knew, she hoped he would settle down after the birth of their child, but his behaviour only worsened until she was subjected to daily verbal and physical abuse.

Ranjana encouraged her to join the Single Women's group for emotional support. As Salochana still hoped to save her marriage, Ranjana organised a meeting in the husband's village to explore the possibility of reconciliation. Instead, the husband and his mother publicly insulted her and questioned her character, making it clear that she was not welcome. Although deeply discouraged, Salochana and her mother still hope that he will eventually accept responsibility for his family. Her story reflects a wider reality in which women often bear the shame of a failed marriage while responsibility is shifted elsewhere.

A similar story was shared with Shilpa Devi by a 38-year-old widow from Harned village who lives with her mother:



"After completing my Plus-Two education, I got married in Khudiyan village. My husband was addicted to alcohol and did not work, so life was very difficult and after two years we divorced. During this period I also lost my father. My mother was left alone to raise three daughters. In our society, it is very difficult for younger sisters to marry if there is a divorced woman in the family, so my family arranged a second marriage for me. Unfortunately, I had difficulty becoming pregnant and my second husband's family treated me badly. My husband gave me no support, and eventually we agreed to live separately."

This was a better outcome than that faced by Pinki, whose husband died suddenly two years ago. She now lives with her two sons in a single room in a joint-family house. There they must sleep, cook and study, while Pinki supports them through stitching work. The treatment of widows in the villages, even today, can be extraordinarily heartless.

Heartless also describes the case of a 70-year-old widow whom Nishtha worker Vandhana found living in the community hall in Khaniyara village. Although she had raised two sons and seen them married, neither had accepted her into their home. Perhaps she is difficult to live with, although Vandhana says she causes no trouble. Even so, should anyone be left destitute in a village hall after raising a family?

Vandhana helped her apply under the Mukhya Mantri Awas Yojana housing scheme and secure a plot of government land. Construction, however, has stalled because her sons have not completed the plinth, preventing her from receiving the next instalment of government funding.

In some cases our activists show remarkable initiative. Nirmala Devi lost her husband two years ago. He had operated a small shop which was taken over by another villager who claimed ownership. As the shop was her only source of income, Nirmala was devastated. Sunita encouraged her to take action. Together they examined the land records and discovered that the property remained in her husband's name. They also learned that he had borrowed Rs

10,000 from the man and had never repaid it. Nirmala borrowed money, settled the debt and regained possession of the shop, restoring both income and dignity to her family.

Women often do not receive good advice. When Jamna Devi's husband disappeared while collecting wood in the forest ten years ago, no one suggested filing a missing person's report. After hearing her story at a village meeting, Sunita accompanied her to the police station and helped complete the necessary formalities. Because her husband had been missing for more than seven years, she was also able to apply for the Single Women's pension, which she was delighted to receive.

Having a disabled child can add enormously to a single woman's burden. It is not uncommon for husbands to abandon women who give birth to children with disabilities. Our activists have encountered many such cases.

Pawana Devi has three girls and a boy, all of whom are disabled. After the birth of their fourth child, her husband abandoned and later divorced her. She felt completely hopeless because he left when she needed him most. However, she applied for the Sahara pension for her children and learned about Surya Uday, a school for disabled children in Khaniyara. The school transports three of her children each day, enabling them to receive an education.

At the same time, Pawana struggles with a heart condition that limits her ability to work, leaving the family dependent on government pensions. When payments are delayed, they struggle to buy enough food. For the past two months Nishtha has provided special nutrition packets to help them through this difficult period.

Our activists work hard to ensure that mothers of disabled children receive the Sahara Pension. Women left without savings or support often face immense hardship. Sneha Lata lost her husband when he fell from the roof of their house. She has two sons, the younger of whom has a severe disability and receives a disability pension. She survives on their pensions, supplemented by a small income from making and selling pickles.



Health Education

The Health Education Outreach clinics have continued to be run on Tuesdays and Thursdays by our Clinic staff, normally Dr Shreya with one of our two clinic workers, Suresh or Azad along with Mohinder as driver and environment awareness participant. However, Dr Barbara has also led several camps this year while Dr Shreya was on leave introducing a new dynamic to the events.

Up to two clinics a month are organised by each of our Single Women activists in the areas in which they work. They appoint a woman who lives in the village to assist them in making sure everyone is aware of the camp and sets up the selected venue. They are also responsible for providing tea or other simple refreshments for the women who very often come straight from their work in the fields to the meeting.

The clinics are attended by an average of 25 people from the locality, the vast majority of whom are women, to whom our talks are primarily addressed. Men enjoy coming along to have their BP taken and to see what's going on and the children join during school holidays. Dr Shreya reports how joint pain is a chronic condition amongst the villagers. She encourages people to exercise and uses some of her relatively brief time to go through some basic stretching and strengthening exercises. She advises the women about nutrition and tells them that the all too readily available pain killers should be used cautiously, encouraging foods that reduce inflammation. Suresh or Azad teach the women how to make herbal massage oil which people find very effective to relieve pain. When Dr Barbara is there, she will offer the women ear acupuncture which is also very effective.

Dr Shreya also talks about how mental and emotional disorders are quite common among women and young people. Village people's lives are no longer secure and predictable, instead there are a lot of challenges, options and desires – many more than there used to be. If you are

educated and married into a traditional family in which you are expected to do farmwork and manage the family without the number of women there used to be in the old extended families, then you very easily become disappointed with your situation. She encourages them to come to the clinic where she has time to listen to them and is able to help with homeopathic remedies. In such cases appropriate homeopathic medicine and counseling are very effective. Many college girls feel better after having a talk about their lives and finding a suitable way to face a situation. Women who quietly confide about gynecological disorders during the outreach clinic are also referred to the clinic for treatment.

During the outreach visits, people with disabilities in the village are seen when possible and are reported in the clinic so we can discuss their situation and needs and see how we can help them.

Outreach Clinic Data 2025-26

Month	Visits	Attendees	Single Women	Men
April	1	28	10	0
May	6	160	52	28
June	7	167	53	52
July	3	80	33	3
August	7	169	57	23
September	7	200	46	14
October	4	92	30	3
November	3	95	28	6
December	8	203	62	17
January	4	96	23	8
February	7	161	56	6
March	6	145	43	5
Total	63	1596	493	165



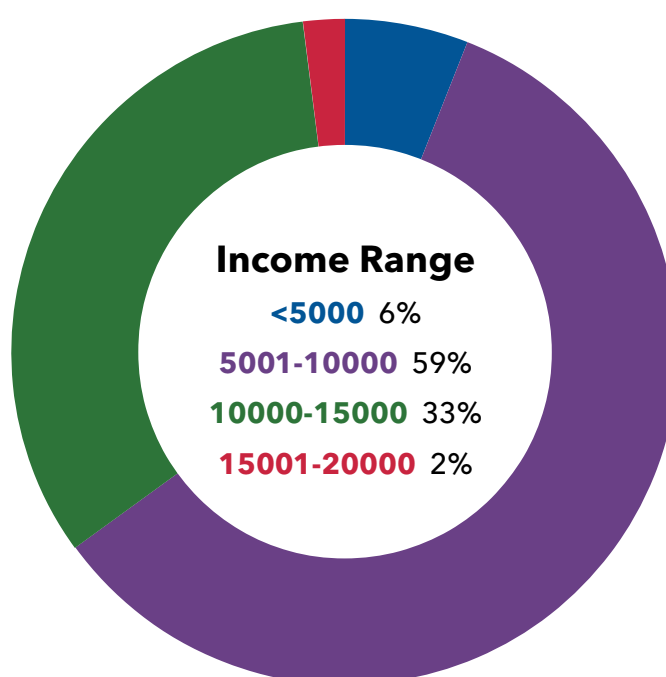
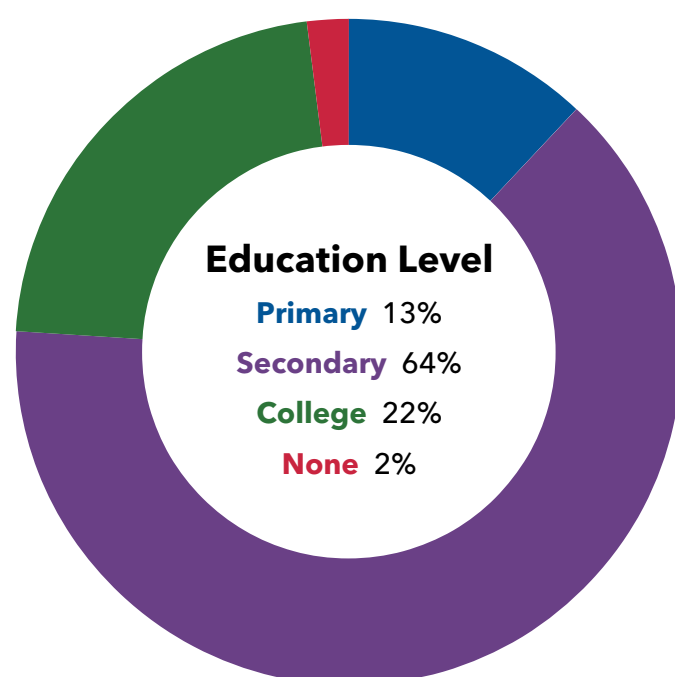
Nishtha Skill Centre

This project was conceived in January 2025 in response to an offer from the Austria Rotary Club to introduce a new project for the benefit of the most remote and economically backward village people. Our team set about conducting surveys in the villages in which our single women's outreach team work, to find out what would enhance the opportunities for village women to be able to increase their financial stability. The conclusion after several weeks work was that setting up skill centres offering training to women in specific skills such as tailoring, beautician, electrical training and so on would be most

helpful. By the end of the year a 3-year plan had been presented and accepted by Austria Rotary to start with stitching centres in selected villages. By April 2026 we had selected the first village, Jhul, near Jia, Palampur district where we rented a room, found a teacher and were ready to begin the first stitching course.

We are very grateful to Ishita Gupta, who volunteered her services assisting our team in conducting surveys and interviews in accordance with the Rotary club's strict guidelines and creating a very clear and effective power point presentation of the project.

Rural Women Survey Data









School Nutrition

The Nishtha school nutrition program is a very popular and appreciated program in the nearby schools, so much so that we have been requested to add three new schools, including the Surya Uday school for the specially-abled children in Khaniyara village. The total number of children who benefit has therefore risen from 364 last year, to 477 children in 11 primary schools and one senior secondary school. In addition, we give fruits to 85 children in 9 local kindergartens. These schools are all located in economically depressed areas which serve the poorest families who do not have the means to buy fruit and vegetables for their children.

We provide seasonal fruits five days a week and vegetables including onions, potatoes, tomatoes and tofu and a selection of items seasonally available such as spinach, cabbage, cauliflower, beans, carrots, bottle gourd and pumpkin to the nine primary schools, and only fruit to the kindergarten students and children in Surya Uday and Rakkar Senior secondary school. In 2025-6 this added up to an expenditure of Rs 818,891 including the transport and morning visit to the wholesale market. We are very grateful to Nishtha

Germany Trust and a special fund from Austria who have enabled us to increase the number of children who have benefitted this year.

The effort put in by our staff to organise and deliver the materials to the schools is considerable. Every Monday, Arvind, with an accompanying staff member, visits the wholesale market in Dharamsala very early in the morning to be able to buy the best quality fruits and vegetables for the children. Each week, we discuss what is in season and decide what to buy, doing our best to provide a nutritious variety each week. In the morning when the staff come to work they unload the materials in the community centre court yard and work together dividing it by weight into crates or sacks for each school, depending on the number of children. The delivery team then set off up the hill in the Nishtha summo jeep while Vijay Bhardwaj uses his scooter to reach two of the schools which are very far from the main road to deliver the material. The delivery normally takes two mornings to complete. The response from the school teachers is very positive. They report that the children enjoy their fruit every day and look forward to the school lunch which is made more healthy and tasty with Nishtha's provisions.



School Feeding Program 2025-26

Name	Students	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Rakkar Primary	94	7073	7292	18338	11923	11939	22265	25499	28828	22806	11114	167077
Andrar	27	2222	2244	5434	3461	4176	6910	7913	8947	6842	3335	51484
Chakwan	15	1111	1122	2903	1923	2764	3838	4396	4970	3801	1853	28681
Kaswa	33	2625	2524	6444	4230	4531	8445	9672	10935	8362	4075	61843
Salet Godam	70	5356	5609	13085	8082	7766	17657	20223	22864	16726	8151	125519
Mohli	8	505	561	1631	1153	2058	2303	2638	2982	2280	1111	17222
Thatri	9	708	841	1908	1153	2058	2303	2638	2982	2280	1111	17982
Tapowan	20	1116	1682	4176	2692	2471	5374	6157	6959	5321	2593	38541
Sidhpur	7	505	561	1271	769	705	1535	1758	1988	1520	741	11353
Khaniyara	24	1820	1963	4812	3078	2823	6141	7034	7953	6082	2964	44670
Suray Uday	50	3640	3647	3614	3000	3751	4014	5568	5612	3854	4751	41451
Rakkar Sr. Sch.	120	7200	10800	10080	7200	11200	12500	13454	14222	11547	12220	110423
Kindergartens	85	3600	3600	2380	3600	3700	2654	3865	3912	2477	4702	34490
Total	307	37481	42446	76076	52264	59942	95939	110815	123154	93898	58721	750736
											Fuel	54705
											Parking	1350
											Morning Visit	12100
											Grand Total	818891

Note: There were no deliveries in Aug and Sep due to school holidays and an exceptionally heavy monsoon.



Public Health & Environment

Environmental Education

Nishtha Environment team focuses on educating both our immediate village and those we visit during our outreach camps. Mohinder takes the lead in this, talking to groups about the proper, safe disposal or reuse of waste and avoiding the blocking of water channels. Because there is no municipally organised waste collection in the villages, it is essential that people are very careful how they dispose of plastic because it can be fatal for livestock if eaten, and blocked water channels can cause serious floods. He encourages them to segregate their waste and make clean plastic into sitting mats and baskets.

Friday is our regular clean-up day, when our staff and students participate in localised cleaning of the village. Mohinder talks to the group about the importance of segregating waste and setting an example to the community by keeping the area clean. The quantity of trash thrown randomly along the roads is truly shocking these days, even though Waste Warriors, working under the Municipal Council, charge each household Rs 50 a month to collect their waste. Unfortunately, not everyone sees this as a great opportunity to reduce the amount of waste they throw casually, even though there is a valid alternative.

Wider village events involving 25 to 30 people are held in collaboration with members of the Mahila Mandal, representatives from the local Panchayat, and Waste Warriors to clean the village with the aim of raising awareness among the villagers about proper waste management practices. Nishtha hosts lunch or snacks for the participants and talks about handwashing to encourage villagers to think about hygiene. Discussion sessions are held to address the

growing problem of waste in the village and to plan future initiatives. The impact of these events can be seen when more villagers, especially women and nearby households, actively participate and support the team. There is a genuine desire in the village to keep the roads and waterways clean, but there are many newcomers and visitors to the area who pay no attention to where they throw their waste.

Rakkar Mela takes place at the beginning of June each year and is attended by the entire village, so it is an excellent opportunity to show our presence and let people know who we are and what we do. This year we had a very tiny space allocated for our Nishtha display, but we used it well to advertise our clinic and community centre and to talk about maintaining the cleanliness of the village. It attracted a good deal of attention.

On **Environment Day**, our students and children marched, cleaning up the sides of the road and the streams from the playground and school up beyond the Nag Mandir, collecting 14 sacks of garbage on the way. They then held a rally outside the anganwari, where a group of girls from Tillu village performed a skit, Mohinder gave a talk, and Vijay Bhadwaj and our sponsorship students sang the environment song, reminding everyone not to carelessly throw their garbage.

Nishtha's Vijay Bhadwaj recorded his **Environment Song** in the local studio along with a traditional backing group. The result is a highly successful song which is played at all our public events, including the outreach clinic when there is time. It was a big hit during our 30th Anniversary festival when he performed it with the students' vocal group. Thank you to Kalyani Goswami for paying for this recording.

Water Filters

Each year we order a new set of filter cartridges for all the water filters so they can be changed as needed. Our staff, Vijay Bhadwaj and a driver visit all the filters and flush them out to make sure they are clean and functioning correctly. This year we also bought a new filter as we are installing a new water line and tank for the farm to be used by the farm team and the children and students who will use the new play platform which has been installed on the rocky area in the middle of the farm. Everyone will be very grateful to have drinking water on tap there. We are planning to hold some of our coming adolescent boys and girls' workshops there this summer.



Organic Farm

This year, our farming team focused on growing a diverse mix of herbs and vegetables that do well in small plots and when grown together. Substantial efforts continue to be made to improve the health of the soil using natural methods of composting and mulching. We have also engaged in producing natural sprays such as nettle tea, Jeevamrit, home made fertilizer which increases the microbial activity in the soil and organic bio-washes to naturally boost crop immunity.

Vandana and Sujata, accompanied by Dr Barbara, attended a *Kheti Bari* workshop at Jagori. There, they learned valuable techniques such as seed selection, planting methods, compost preparation, and other organic farming practices. Inspired by this, the team prepared four new pots and revitalized two old ones with nettles to make tea which will be ready for use in a month. Nettle tea acts as a powerful organic liquid fertilizer and a natural pest repellent.

During the prolonged rainy season, Vandana and Sujata, with support from Vijay Bhardwaj, cut the grass across all the planted fields and boundaries. This grass was then chopped into small pieces and used for mulching, a crucial practice that helps protect the soil from erosion, suppresses weeds, and retains compost under the plants. Their dedication has brought visible

results, with good pluckings of herbs such as of tulsi, chamomile and calendula which are used in the clinic. Crops like ladyfinger, long beans, kidney beans, pumpkin, bitter gourd, turmeric, and ginger showed better-than-usual growth early in the season. Unfortunately, heavy rains and monkey attacks severely damaged crops such as soybean, brinjal, chilli, maize, as well as some vines of long beans and cucumber.

From October onwards we experienced long months without rain during which we applied a cheap paper pulp technique to help the soil hold moisture and stop weeds. We also trimmed overgrown tree branches to bring maximum winter sunlight to our crops and to prevent monkeys from using the branches to swing over the fence. We repaired our fencing and blocked holes in the ground level stone boundary to prevent porcupines, who are also very destructive.

As we harvested the crops we retained, dried and stored seed to be able to use our own seed next season so as to remain independent of commercial markets. Our newly built pavilion on the farm provides plenty of space for drying and storing farm produce.

Crop Success: Crops such cauliflower, peas, white radish, beetroot, and other local vegetables did well though the turmeric and ginger suffered from it being too dry all winter.





Student Sponsorship Program

The 2025-26 group of students funded through the UK Trust consisted of seventeen girls and one boy. This year seven new girls joined our group. One is studying fashion designing at ITI, one is studying for a B.Sc., one is studying for her B.Com., and four are B.A. students.

From donations to our local account, we have also sponsored eight students. Avantica and Manvi have now completed their M.Com. Abhishek attended ITI and is now a qualified electrician. Ansh required funding for only one year to complete his B.A., and Ritishka has completed her M.Sc. Two girls, Shivani and Saloni, are continuing their studies for an M.B.A., and Shiya will complete her course in August.

In addition, Rinki Devi, who, as a special case, is sponsored by a UK trustee and a US donor through Timberline Foundation, is continuing her studies in Food Sciences at Shoolini University. During her holidays, she joins our group and inspires the students to study hard and make the most of their opportunities.

We were very pleased when our former student, Manish, who is in the final year of his Ph.D. in Economics at CDS Kerala, came to meet the present group of students to share his story. He told them how he had recently spent two months as an intern in Finland as part of his research in International Trade and Environment. They all felt very encouraged by his visit.

Gender Awareness

This workshop for our sponsored students brought together experienced and first-time participants, creating an environment for peer learning and mutual support.

Through activities exploring the difference between sex and gender, participants examined how social norms create inequalities between boys and girls. Discussions focused on issues such as freedom, education, marriage, responsibilities, and societal expectations.

A particularly impactful activity was body mapping, where participants identified areas of strength, fear, pain, and shyness. This exercise encouraged conversations about reproductive health, body awareness, and emotional wellbeing.

The workshop also addressed online sexual harassment, cyber safety, patriarchy, violence, relationships, love, care, and respect. Through reflection exercises, participants recognized that lasting social change begins with personal behavior and family relationships rather than waiting for society as a whole to change.

Several students shared that the workshop helped them gain confidence, discuss family challenges, and better understand themselves and others.



Students Picnic

In January, thirteen students and two volunteers, Leo and Luisa, joined our two-day picnic above Jiya village. On the way, they visited a Tibetan monastery and a Gurudwara, where there is an old cave associated with a Sikh saint. It was very cold at night, but they all kept warm by singing and sharing stories. In the morning, they warmed up with yoga exercises and by playing the traditional game called *pithu hup*. Then they went for a walk in the fresh snow! The students were very grateful to the Nishtha cooking team for joining them so that they could cook their own meals. It was fun helping with the cooking and washing the dishes.

At the end of this session, seven of the B.A.



group and five of the locally sponsored students will be leaving us as they have completed their courses. It has been a great group. We have had a lot of fun and learned a great deal in the process.



Sunday Classes

Students are required to attend the extra classes and group activities held at the Nishtha Community Center every Sunday. Attendance this year has been exceptionally good and enthusiastic.

English Class: Puja Anand, who very generously comes to teach English each Sunday, reports that she works with the students for an hour, doing a variety of activities that require them either to converse in English or to learn more about the language. They learn, for example, to introduce themselves in English, talk about and discuss countries of the world, prepare and act out short skits and dialogues, and, at the end, relax by learning line dances. The students presented performances of *Cotton Eyed Joe* and *Sway* to Nishtha visitors during the 30th Anniversary. Their assistance during the program was very much appreciated.

Computer Class: Vijay and Ankush provide the opportunity for the students we sponsor to expand their knowledge of how to use a computer. They work together on the seven desktop computers and four laptops, with one new and one senior student paired at each machine. The class starts with ten-finger typing, followed by lessons prepared by the teachers on Paint, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and some sessions on internet research.

We also explain the parts of the computer, how they function, and how to replace them when needed. We talk about software, how to install it, and how to update different programs. These

Sunday classes help the students to prepare course presentations, carry out research, perform data analysis, and create documents. Some of the senior students are now able to type at a speed of 40 words per minute. The students really appreciate and benefit from these classes because in school they learned mainly theory and had very little opportunity to work on a computer.

We are very grateful to the organization **PCs für Alle**, who very generously donated six refurbished computers this year for the students to use. These, together with our high-speed internet and power backup, have attracted some local boys to come in the mornings to use the computer lab for their coursework and preparation for competitive examinations. They use our laptops because they watch course videos with sound, and our desktop computers do not have speakers.

Music Class: Every Sunday, music teachers Rishi and Vandhana hold a special music class for students who are keen to sing and learn how to play local instruments, including the dholak and harmonium. They teach the students about several traditions of Himachali folk music and dance, including Nuala, Gaddi folk dance, Kangra folk dance (Jamakda), and Himachali Nati, introducing the students to the rich cultural heritage of their state. This encourages young people to develop pride in their cultural heritage and gives even the very shy the confidence to perform together as a group.

Trainings

During 2025, Nishtha organized a series of educational and empowerment workshops focusing on adolescent health, gender equality, life skills, self-defence, critical thinking, and personal development. These workshops were designed to create safe learning spaces where adolescents could openly discuss sensitive issues, build confidence, improve decision-making skills, and gain practical knowledge for their future.

The workshops reached boys and girls from remote villages of the Dharamshala and Kangra blocks. Through interactive activities, discussions, role plays, films, games, and practical demonstrations, participants were encouraged to reflect on their lives, challenge harmful social norms, and develop healthy attitudes towards themselves and others.



Wenlido Workshops

The Wenlido Workshops focused on empowering adolescent girls and young women through practical self-defence training and violence prevention education.

Initially, many participants were hesitant to share personal experiences of violence or abuse. However, as trust developed within the group, more girls openly discussed experiences related to bullying, harassment, domestic violence, and cybercrime.

Participants learned practical self-defence techniques using their hands and legs, practiced responding to different levels of danger through

role plays, and explored strategies for building personal safety networks.

A major concern raised by participants was cybercrime. Trainers discussed common forms of online abuse and emphasized the importance of seeking support rather than experiencing guilt or shame.

The workshops also covered sexuality, healthy relationships, domestic violence, bullying, and cyberbullying. By the end of the sessions, trainers observed visible improvements in participants' confidence, body language, leadership abilities, and willingness to speak up.

Life Skills

The Life Skills Workshop was introduced following training received by Nishtha staff in Gujarat. The workshop focused on the ten core life skills recommended by the World Health Organization.

Rather than relying on lectures, the workshop used games, activities, discussions, reflection exercises, and films to help participants experience these skills directly.

A particularly memorable activity involved

participants reflecting on their strengths, dreams, values, hobbies, and support systems. Many realized they rarely spend time understanding themselves despite focusing heavily on the needs of others.

The workshop encouraged participants to develop greater self-awareness, emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience—skills essential for both personal and professional success.



Adolescent Girls These workshops focused primarily on health education, nutrition, menstruation, reproductive health, hygiene, first aid, career guidance, and responsible use of mobile phones and social media.

Many girls reported that this was their first opportunity to openly discuss menstruation, reproductive organs, and adolescent changes with qualified doctors. Sessions helped participants understand menstrual health, balanced nutrition, body awareness, and personal hygiene practices.

First aid training was another important component. Girls learned how to respond during emergencies such as burns, snake bites, dog bites, unconsciousness, and accidents. Practical exercises on recovery positions helped them develop confidence in handling emergency situations until professional help arrives.

Participants also discussed the increasing influence of social media and mobile phones. Trainers encouraged them to use technology for educational purposes while reducing excessive screen time and cyber risks.

The follow-up workshops conducted throughout the year reinforced previous learning and helped girls retain knowledge gained from earlier programs. Participants demonstrated good recall of topics such as nutrition, health, first aid, career planning, and safe phone usage. These sessions highlighted the importance of continuous engagement and follow-up support.

Adolescent Boys These workshops provided a rare and valuable opportunity for boys to discuss issues that are often ignored or considered taboo.

The workshops addressed adolescence, body changes, relationships, masculinity, critical thinking, human rights, substance abuse, pornography, smoking, mobile phone addiction, and emotional wellbeing.

Participants were encouraged to anonymously submit questions about topics that concerned them. This created an open atmosphere where boys could explore issues such as attraction, sexuality, peer pressure, stress, and life goals without fear of judgment.

Sessions on critical thinking helped participants understand the importance of questioning harmful social norms and making informed decisions. Discussions on masculinity explored how societal expectations can negatively affect boys and men by discouraging emotional expression and creating unrealistic pressures.

The boys demonstrated a strong willingness to support gender equality and reject violence against women. Many expressed a desire to become more responsible family and community members and committed to sharing what they learned with friends and peers.

A follow-up workshop further strengthened learning and motivated participants to revive youth groups and continue discussions beyond the training environment.



Sports Programs

Kids program Sports and games are a regular feature of the after-school program. They take care of the bicycles and, when the weather is suitable, spend time on the ground practicing riding. Football, volleyball and badminton are also favoured sports. The trampoline which is set up right behind the community center is a regular source of fun and exercise as are skipping ropes and hoola hoops (which need replacing). Sometimes the table tennis table is set up in the courtyard and the children practice enthusiastically. Everyday there will be some children playing carom and chess, perched somewhere in the center. We now also have a space on the farm for children to play and exercise which will be very helpful when the community center is occupied by workshops.

The **Winter Sports Program** began with pre-sports activities in eight primary schools. We conducted high jump, long jump, and race events to select the best athletes and invite them to the main event on 25th December. This year, we divided the pre-sports program into two groups—Classes 1 to 3 and Classes 4 to 5—so that younger children would also get a fair chance to win. It was fascinating to see how excited the children were. They gave their best performances to get selected.

We also provided snacks such as gachak, eggs, and fruits to all the children, and chocolates to the winners. From all eight primary schools, we selected a total of 88 children for the final event.

The final event took place on a sunny Christmas Day. All 88 selected children from the primary schools were transported to the Rakkar ground using our vehicle. More than 130 additional

children from Rakkar Middle School, Bhagsu School, St. Mary's School, Kangra Valley School, and other local schools participated in the event.

The Nishtha staff and sponsorship students efficiently managed the huge crowd of children and successfully organized all the games: high jump, long jump, 80 m race, sack race, and skipping. Meanwhile, our staff, including Ravi and the housekeeping staff, in the absence of Sunil, who was supporting his wife in hospital, were busy preparing lunch for the children in the Rakkar Primary School. We fed the girls first and entertained the boys with singing, with the help of our students, until the girls had finished. They then had a lovely time playing on the swings and slides until the program started again at 3 pm.

All the children enjoyed the special lunch and snacks. Despite the number of children far exceeding our expectations, the team managed to cook another 10 kg of rice and quickly made more kari. Proper toilet and drinking water facilities were also arranged in the school.

At the end of the program, the girls from Rakkar School presented two beautiful Himachali dances in full costume. Philippa, Nishtha's administrator, and trustees Radhika Shaunik and Puja Anand distributed medals to the winners and shared their best wishes with all the children.

Playground Maintenance & Development is carried out by our staff and volunteers. Austrian Civil Servant Leo worked hard to plan and fix some of the equipment that was damaged. At last the empty frame in the playground has new chains fitted so it is once again a fun climbing frame. Maintenance is a perpetually ongoing process.

Administration & Publicity

The administrative team is primarily engaged with managing the day-to-day cash and bank accounts and ensuring that the annual audit and submissions to the government are correctly and efficiently filed. They also manage the staff welfare and gratuity funds.

The administration works together with the management in making proposals and budgets which are sent to donor agencies, ensuring that the project teams are aware of the programs we are committed to carrying out and report back to us about how each project is progressing. Thorough documentation is an important aspect of our work. Outreach programs are reported on WhatsApp groups so the administration and management are able to keep in close contact with the work going on in the field. This is reinforced by regular staff meetings during which issues arising during the course of the work can be raised, discussed, and resolved. It also enables the production of accurate, interesting narrative reports, which are essential in encouraging our donors to continue

their valuable support.

Each year, we produce a **photo calendar** which is distributed to our supporters and the people we connect with both here in India and abroad. This year the theme was Village Life. Although we do not sell the calendar, it is a very effective publicity project which attracts interest in our work and is probably our most effective fundraising tool. We also produce a full-color annual report which is on our website for all to see. The limited printed copies are used for local and official reporting and are given to each of our trustees and major donors both here in India and abroad.

Our **website and social media**, Facebook and Instagram, are maintained regularly to ensure that our supporters are aware of events, programs, and the work we are doing in the villages.

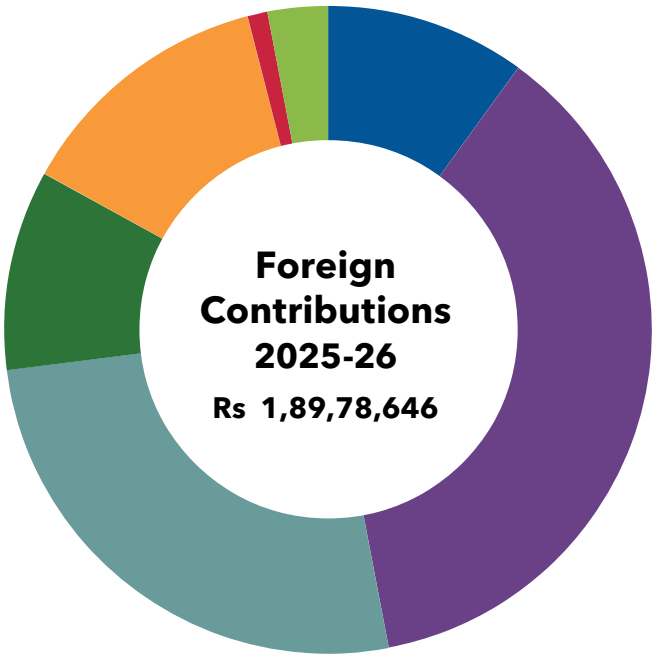
For **our annual staff picnic** 22 of us went to Parishar lake, which is at 2,700 m above Mandi. We had a very special encounter with this immaculate temple and sacred lake in pristine snow.



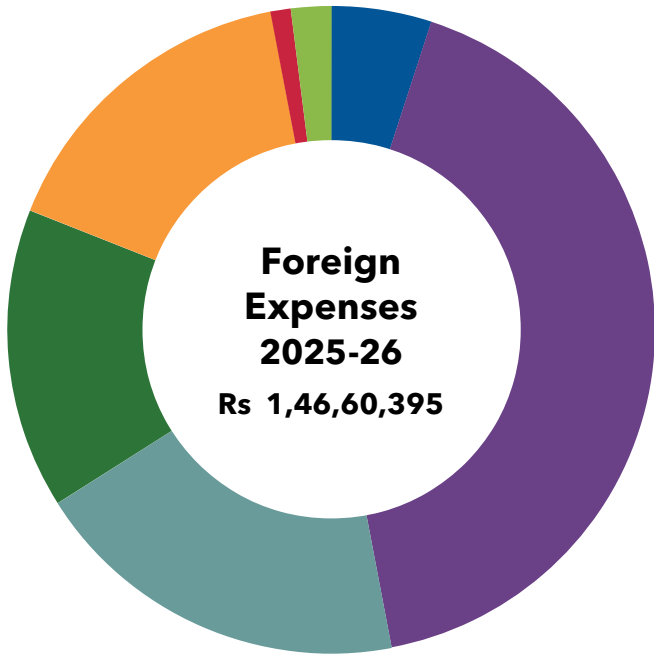
We are very happy that Leo joined us this year as our latest Austrian Civil Service volunteer. We are very grateful for his dedication and hard work.



Financial Report 2025-26



Bank Interest	19,50,832
Austria Trust	70,24,436
Austria Special Donation	48,23,500
Nishtha UK	18,66,064
Germany Trust	24,93,086
Smile Project	2,83,728
Timberline	5,37,000



Bank Interest	7,13,277
Austria Trust	64,78,073
Austria Special Donation	27,26,697
Nishtha UK	22,24,379
Germany Trust	23,99,927
Smile Project	27,965
Timberline	90,077

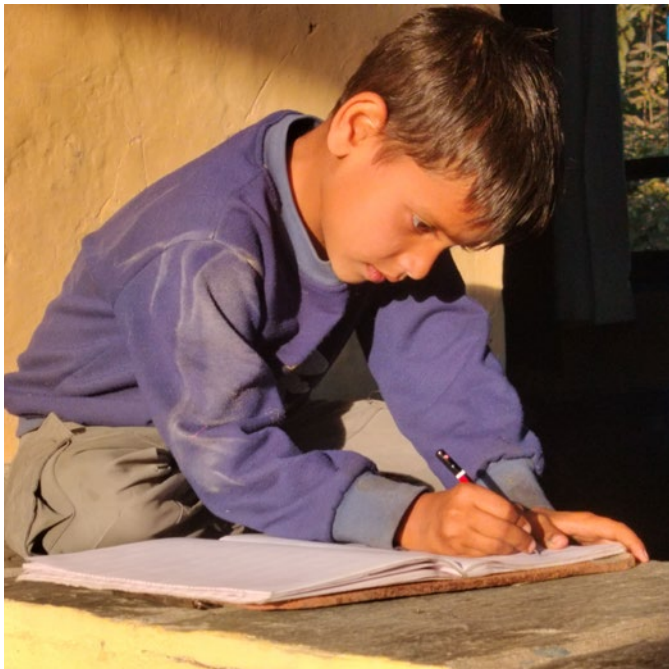
Local Account

Income	Expenditure	Utilized
9,07,529	6,59,111	73%

Nishtha Corpus

Old Corpus	60,36,030
Austria	1,51,76,190
UK	51,17,120
Germany	18,06,592
Total	2,81,35,932

Note: All funds are in Indian Rupees (INR)



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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Nishtha Germany

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IBAN:

DE40673900000084335401

<https://www.nishtha.de>

Austria



Nishtha Austria

Gemeinsames Engagement für
Entwicklungszusammenarbeit

Bank: Oberbank BLZ 15000

BIC: OBKLAT2L

IBAN: AT241500004591018215

Verwendungszweck: Projekt
Indien

<http://www.nishtha.at>

United States

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Republic of India



**Nishtha Rural Health, Education
& Environment Centre**

VPO Rakkar, Sidhbari,

Distt. Kangra 176215

Himachal Pradesh, India

Email: contact@nishtha.ngo

For donations within India only:

Account number: 55094118584

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Nishtha Rural Health, Education

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Registration No: 51 1/4/98

FCRA No: 182450048

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AAATN4316QE19981

Tax exemption available

Cover photos by Mithila Jariwala

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