

## Report on the Activities of Nishtha Single Women Activists

April 2016 – March 2017

### April

From 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2016 the Single Women activists took part in a theatre workshop organized in Nishtha community workshop room. This workshop was led by an experienced theater artist from Jammu who showed the participants how the artist acts in the play and puts all her effort to make the situation real. The artist has to take on a character and empathize with his emotions. Similarly our life is a theater where we are the actors, so we can't just act as suits us, rather we should understand the situation and emotions involved so as not to hurt anybody.



On 20<sup>th</sup> April, the single women organized an agriculture meeting for local farmers of Trambli village with the help of the Block Secretary and Director. 80 single women attended this meeting and asked questions about farming. The Block Director had a long discussion with the local women explaining the latest government schemes and techniques for the welfare of poor people. They also distributed free seasonal seeds to single women for sowing.

Radha found one old single woman, who had fractured her right leg and had been abandoned by her family. She is living alone in a small unfurnished room. Radha talked about this case in Nishtha's weekly meeting and Dr. Barbara decided to take her to Tanda Medical hospital in the Nishtha Ambulance for proper medication and agreed to provide her transport for every visit.

On 18<sup>th</sup> April the Single Women Activists held a press conference on medical insurance for single women and started an awareness program in four blocks. They visited house to house in the villages and explained the benefit and importance of smart cards through which they can become eligible to get free medical insurance up to 1.75 Lakh. This scheme includes insurance for up to 5 family members.

## May

This month the single women activists were engaged in helping old and illiterate single women to fill in their forms and prepare the proper documents for making their smart cards. In this one month they made 2,100 smart cards in the four blocks in which we work.



Radha visited Delhi to attend the Pension Parishad meeting. The meeting started with the aim to get a pension for every senior citizen whether or not he or she has one or more children. They met officials and handed over the memorandum signed by the state coordinators. The department officials promised to very soon get approval for this from the cabinet. It came about that the cabinet approved this scheme and all senior citizens are now eligible to get an old age pension.

## June

Block Meetings were held from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> June. In this meeting the single women were asked about the government schemes. Are they really beneficial for them or not? They said that in many cases they are life changing – they enable them to start small businesses or help for their children’s education, loans to rebuild their houses and smart cards for free medical treatment. We asked what else they would want from the government and what problem they are facing to get these schemes. They said they would like to have a separate ration card so they could get cheaper essential food items. We also discussed about Swayat Nayay Panchyat scheme and land Act.



Dates	Meeting Place	Resource Person	No. of Participants	Blocks
10 <sup>th</sup> June	Narwana	RadhaRaghwal	40	Nagrota
11 <sup>th</sup> June	Fathepur	TriptaBaijnath	55	Dharamsala ,Kangra
12 <sup>th</sup> June	Shahpur	NirmalChandel	35	Shahpur

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June, International Widows Day, the Single women activists organized a rally from Dharamsala post office to the D.Cs office.

During their field work they mobilized single women and explained the importance of the day. More than 150 single women joined the rally from four blocks and sang songs and chanted slogans during their march.

Unfortunately the DC was not present on that day so they meet the ADC Rakesh Sharma and handed over their memorandum with demand for **“Define Separate women”**

**“swayatnayaypanchayat”** and they presented 4 cases, which were attended to by the ADC there and then.



- One single woman's daughter is paralyzed and unable to work. The ADC provided her with a sewing machine so that she can earn a living from home.
- One woman has not been getting a pension since a long time because the Patwari was reluctant to write a declaration to confirm her eligibility. The ADC ordered an enquiry and in few days she got her pension.
- One poor woman got a long awaited water connection on the recommendation of the ADC.
- One woman immediately received Rs. 75,000 to renovate her house which fell down last year.

On 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June, 12 single women from four blocks visited Shimla to attend the state level meeting. The aim of this meeting is to raise block level problems with the single women in villages. The representative discussed and raised the problems in front of

present officials from various welfare departments. They gave helpful answers and guided them how to handle such issues on a village level.

## July

From 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> July the single women held a meeting with the Asha workers, Anganwari Members and Panchyat Members about the Swayat Nayay Panchyat system in the local Panchyat.

Swayat Nayay Panchyat is a system of dispute resolution at village level in India. It used to be in most villages in India especially in Bihar and Rajasthan but it was stopped in 1972. The single women are asking for it to be reinstated. Nyaya panchyats can be endowed with functions based on broad principles of natural justice and can tend to remain procedurally as simple as possible. People can take their legal or social injustice issues to the theSwayatNayay panchayat which is a committee consisting of a policeman, an asha worker, a pradaan an NGO activist, and a lawyer all unrelated to the village from which the applicant is coming from. This committee is authorized as a court to decide cases at village level without without going to the courts.

## August

This year Ekal Nari Sangathan became registered as an organization at center level. This is a huge achievement and means that from now on now Ekal Nari Sanghthan can raise the single women's issues with the Central Government and any rulings will affect the whole of India. At present only 9 states, which comprises over 1 lakh single women are members of the national forum. We hope this will increase significantly in the coming years now we are registered with the Central Government.



On 12 to 13<sup>th</sup> we organize a “mann ki awaj” meeting at Nishtha for elderly single women to come to understand the feelings of older single women. 50 women participated in this meeting and shared their views and told how their wishes were fulfilled through the single women's forum. Before this group was formed they were unable to know about any of the government schemes and now they confidently stand in any government offices and ask for their rights.

## **September**

From 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> September, Radha and other single women from other states visited Uttarakhand to assess the “Single women house” allotted by the government for needy single women. They found that it is not being used by any single women and it is empty. The issue was raised in the national forum meeting and the question “Why are all four “single women houses” allotted to Uttarakhand State?” was asked.

This month Nishtha appointed Ranjana as a new Nishtha single women activist. She is from Shahpur village and fills the seat left vacant by the death of Pammi Devi. Ranjana was abandoned by her husband and has one child. She is enthusiastic about the work and is performing better and better in every month.

## **October**

Two Days Swayat Nayay Panchyat Meeting held at Nishtha

**Resource Person:-**Kamla from District Mandi and Radha from Dharamsala Block

28<sup>th</sup>Nagrota (20 member)

29<sup>th</sup>Dharamshala Block and Kangra (25 member)

Participating members includes the pardhan, up pardhan, BDC member, Jilla Parishad and ward member at the swayat Nayay Panchyat meeting held at Nishtha. Single women have been raising this issue from long time to H.P Government but they just talk saying it is very costly and more burden on the state. During this meeting the single women would like to know the view of delegates on Swayat Nayay panchyat. They discussed the benefit of the scheme, how women will get fast and cheaper legal solution at panchayat level and Government could make one local body with the collaboration of 6-7 villages Panchyat and appoint the local Panchyat Pardhan, NGO worker, Advocate, Police person the active member of Swayat Nayay Panchyat. To following this process Nishtha single women activist did Rally in Shahpur Block with 100 women and had organized the press conference to raise their voice for Swayat Nayay Panchyat.

## November

Maya Narayan, an experienced single women activist and psychologist held an Communications skills session at Nishtha from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> November. This was attended by all the Nishtha single women's activists. Maya did verbal and written sessions on various topics like Communication, Listening, Judgment, Need and so on with the aim to increase our communication skills. She explained the value and importance of communication skills, how people get their impression of you from the first word you say. Because activists daily meet with single women and have to understand their problem, their listening skills should be perfect. They should follow the rule No judgment No blame.



Maya agreed to continue this session once a month so we can review the points raised and relate them to our experience in the field.

## December

On 5<sup>th</sup> December the second block meeting of the year was held in Sidhpur community hall with the participation of 80 women from Dharamsala, Kangra and Nagrota blocks. Advocate LP Sudhan, Patwari Joginder Singh and Members of the Municipal Cooperation attended the meeting. During the meeting the single women activists presented a review of the past six months activities. Our achievements included the number of women who have got their smart card, Pension, Gas Connection, House loan and other entitlements from the Government. There were some women who have still not got these due to some tricky legal issues so they asked the meeting for help. The Advocate, Patwari and MC members promised to help them within their jurisdiction.



## **January**

In all four blocks Nishtha single women activists worked in their areas and met with Pardhans, Panch and villagers of panchayat to raise the issue of “swayat nayay panchyat”. They discussed the benefits of swayat nayay panchyat and urged everyone to attend the meetings to boost this agitation on a state level.

In Knol village, Rait block, one single woman came to the monthly meeting with her problem that her husband, who was a shepherd had died in a natural calamity in the mountains. She hadn't got any help from the government side so the single women Activist promised to help her and they did all documents and within the month the Government sanctioned her 4 lakh Rs. Compensation for the loss of her husband.

## **February**

This month during the village meetings we talked about the movement One Billion Rising Which is a movement to bring to attention the issue of violence in the community, particularly to women. The Single women activist encouraged people to join and explained the benefit and importance of OBR program, Since 2011, people from all over the world have been celebrating this event on 14<sup>th</sup> February. People across the world came together to express their outrage, strike, dance and RISE in defiance of the injustices women suffer, demanding an end at last to violence against women.

From 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Feb, Radha attended a gender training in SUTRA. In which they discussed how to tackle gender problems in panchyats and how to solve these. She then talked about this topic in every panchyat level meeting.

Activists filled various form like Kanya Dan Yogna, Cow Loan, Home Loan, MNERGA etc. as they do each meeting for the women.

## **March**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> March, Radha went to Delhi to receive the second installment of her Subramanian award. She presented her report of what she had done in the past months along with her proposal for the use of the second installment of this award. This time she would like to spend it on leadership training with the help of SUTRA.

On 22nd March the Single women held a meeting on Swayat nayay panchyat with the Panchayat Anganbari and Asha workers in the Nishtha community hall. Radha and Tripta led the meeting and which was attended by 15 people. Resource person shared their experience and told, this is third meeting on the same issue and we must continue these meetings until we get swayat nayay panchayat rule in villages. Radha also explained importance and benefit of swayat nayay panchyat.

Gaggal Panchyat (Kangra Block) Nishtha Single women activist solved the case of a local girl who accused her husband of frequently beating her. The single activist found it was not true and the fault is her own so they settled the case and took a written undertaking to live peacefully together from both parties.

Radha did the follow up after the case was settled and found both parties were fine and living happily in Delhi.