



# निष्ठा

n i s h t h a

rural health, education & environment centre

**Annual Review  
2020-2021**

# Letter from Our Director

Dear Friends,

This year I would like to celebrate our staff who have, despite the difficulties thrown before us worked tirelessly for the benefit of our community. In particular I want to thank Ram Chand and Dr Kusum Thapa who have both taken retirement after over 20 years dedicated service. I will always remember them with gratitude and affection and wish them long and happy days together with their families.

Throughout this year, we have struggled to keep up our work and stay in contact with our community. We kept the clinic open, even during the strictest lockdown, because it provides such an essential service for our local poor, and often chronically ill, patients. While the options for extending assistance into the villages have been limited, our single-women activists have been doing what they can to reach out, strengthening the relationships they have with individual elderly and often solitary, housebound women. It is inspiring and refreshing to realise how resilient the local people are in the face of difficulties.



We were deeply concerned about how things have been for the very poor community on the hillside above us. Many of the women there, who had been employed as maids in private houses and hotels and others who ran small businesses, suddenly had no income. These are not people who have the produce of their own fields to fall back on. And because they work in the informal sector there is no safety net for such families. We conducted a survey which revealed many more single women than we had been previously aware of and families in serious need. We were able to help many of them by providing essential food rations.

Concerned about the nutritional status of the children and teenage girls, we have been providing healthy snacks to 150 primary school children and a similar number of teenage girls. It has been a joy to expand our relationship with the children by also providing them with activity and reading books. We have delivered these, with the snacks, in their school yards and have encouraged them to collect plastic waste for us in their villages. The girls have derived great benefit from the Wenlido training and health education talks we have provided in the Community Centre.

We have also done our best to keep in touch with our special needs children, visiting them at home. We invited some to come for play sessions in the Community Centre, where we have built up a toy library specifically for their use.

It has been very hard for students who have been unable to go to college and complete their exams. Studying through WhatsApp messages or online classes is very difficult, even if you have an adequate phone or other device.

Just as we thought we had escaped the worst of the virus we found ourselves in the midst of it again. We start this year with more disruption and concern about our community who are by now very stressed.

All the work we do for the poorest of the community here in the villages is dependent on each drop of help we receive from our friends. We are immensely grateful to you all for the special help we have received this year and hope that you will continue to remember us and help us to keep running.

I write this to you all with our affection and wholehearted thanks for your support, which has kept Nishtha alive and active through this very difficult year.

With all our love and appreciation,

*Dr Barbara Nath-Wiser*

Dr Barbara Nath-Wiser

# Nishtha Annual Review 2020-21

“Health relates not only to our bodies, but also to our minds and emotions. The practice of compassion and altruism brings us peace of mind. Even if we face trouble or someone is critical of something we’ve said or done, compassion enables us to feel grateful to them. Compassion is the best counter measure to anger and anxiety.”

**His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama**



**Celebrating the Contribution of Ram Chand & Dr Kusum who retired this spring.**



**Thanking our dedicated Trustees who have learned about meeting via Zoom as we were only able to meet in person once this whole year.**

# First Quarter: April – June 2020

## Keeping the clinic open for our local patients

During the first 3 months of this year our normal activities were restricted due to the corona virus pandemic and the sudden national shutdown. We however never stopped, focusing on keeping in contact with our local community and responding to their critical needs as best we could. Dr Barbara unwaveringly kept the clinic open, at first only for the few hours in the morning when people were allowed to be out for essential purposes, and by June, full time. Despite the prevalent fear and uncertainty, our staff bravely welcomed everyone who came in need of medical help, offering them advice, soap and masks to help them protect themselves and their families. During clinic closed hours, Dr Barbara and Dr Kusum were busy doing an on line course to improve their acupuncture techniques.

Predictably almost all our patients came from the immediate locality because all busses and taxi services were suspended at this time. The increase in patients, particularly women attending the clinic from 298 last year to 372 this year assures us that the services we are providing for the local people during these difficult times, are required and worth the risks our staff accept.

## Children with Special Needs

We particularly kept an eye on our children with special needs, visiting Sanjoli and Alka and enabling those who live further afield like Bhagwanti to visit us. We provided extra food and materials as needed to these children. The physiotherapy centre at Tapovan has been closed so we have suspended our transport service. For Shaksham whose mother was extremely anxious that he should continue to make progress towards walking, we organised WhatsApp sessions with one of the Tapovan physiotherapists twice a week. We also provided him with a suitable tricycle to ride so he can safely sit and move his legs giving exercise to his weak core and a lot of fun. The twins were unable to receive their hormone therapy for almost two months, but are back on their treatment now and visit the clinic regularly.

## Concern for our staff

While we continued to pay all our employees, they were unable to work full time for the first 6 weeks of lockdown. However, we were very pleased that our staff continued to work as much as they could so we were able to keep the clinic open and take up the task of making sure everyone in need received sufficient food to eat. Those who were unable to do their normal work put in many hours of hard work in the Nishtha organic garden which has come along well.

## Maintaining contact with our single Women

The Single Women who very often live in quite isolated situations in the villages have been much on our minds during this period. Fortunately they almost all have pensions paid regularly into their accounts and were able to benefit from the government rations, therefore they have not been in extreme difficulties. However, fear and uncertainty about the situation and being unable to get medical attention is a source of concern. Our single women's team started visiting the women in their areas as soon as the lock down was eased. Their first effort was to make sure that everyone has a Himcare health card and if everyone had been getting their government rations. We distributed soap and masks to the single women and explained how they can protect themselves.

## Re-starting Nishtha plastic recycling program

One of the first projects to re-start was the plastic collection and brick making. Our team found that after 6 weeks lockdown that there was plenty of waste plastic in the village to collect and there is demand for our bricks from a local architect who is using them in an environmentally aware building project. The team is therefore working steadily to make blocks. With our collection and the reduced amount of purchasing of plastic packaged products in the village, we are feeling remarkably smart and clean these days!

## In the Quiet Community Centre

Salochana took the opportunity to treat, oil and polish the wooden floor in the community hall. Only Vandhana could be found, stitching masks there on her own. No children came because the government told parents to keep their children at home. No sports programs took place, though we have been keeping the playground, which is well used by the local children, in good order.



# First Quarter: COVID Relief Program

**Emergency Relief** During the initial lockdown it was extremely difficult to find out how people were coping and as our vehicles did not have COVID passes we were unable to venture out. However, in May we were able to get a pass and our drivers started helping Jagori, our sister organisation distributing food packages to needy people. These particularly included the Kashmiri labourer's families who were observing Ramadan who had lost their income and were trying to get back to Kashmir. We then assisted Jagori in delivering nutritious food supplements to teenage girls who they had identified in the outlying villages of Kangra district. Girls in the villages are almost all extremely thin and anemic because the men and boys get fed first in the family, leaving very little for the young girls. Therefore Jagori have a program which provides nutritional supplements and personal items to the girls from the poorest families. This entailed several quite stressful trips for our ambulance into very backward areas with poor roads delivering packets to 570 girls.

**Surveying the upper villages** Vijay Bhadwaj along with Vandhana, our newest single women activist undertook a survey of the scattered villages on the mountainside above Rakkar. They identified 32 single women who we had never previously encountered because of their remoteness. Many earn through daily labour and others work as domestic helpers in middle class families in Dharamsala and Yol. Because they were all at home, this was a good occasion to find and meet them all. Subsequently in June our team held a very interesting and productive meeting with them.

Our visits to these areas alerted us to the fact that many families were suffering great hardship because they either didn't have a ration card or the ration they were able to pick up from the government depository was insufficient to their needs. We therefore, with the help of Jagori who are now expert in ordering the supplies and making up the packages, assisted 88 families by delivering essential food items to them. Funding for this was provided by a kind local donor

**Engaging with the Primary school children** By the end of May we had worked out a program to provide nutritional snacks for the primary school children even though the schools remained closed. Each school area was visited every two weeks and packages made up of a variety of snacks including roasted channa, peanuts, raisins dried dates, soya nutri nuggets and fruit were provided to around 200 children. These included our special children and others from the neighboring area or who came to the clinic.

Our staff take great pleasure in meeting the children after so long. On our first visit the children were very subdued and worried about the situation, confined as they are to the area around their houses and unable to meet their teachers and friends. We then decided to provide some simple activities for them to do and so on the second occasion we gave each child a drawing book and colours and suggested they draw rainbows and things they really like. The results are lovely!

When we started the school children's nutrition program at the end of May, suddenly everyone was required to help purchase and package up the materials for distribution and the facility came to life again.

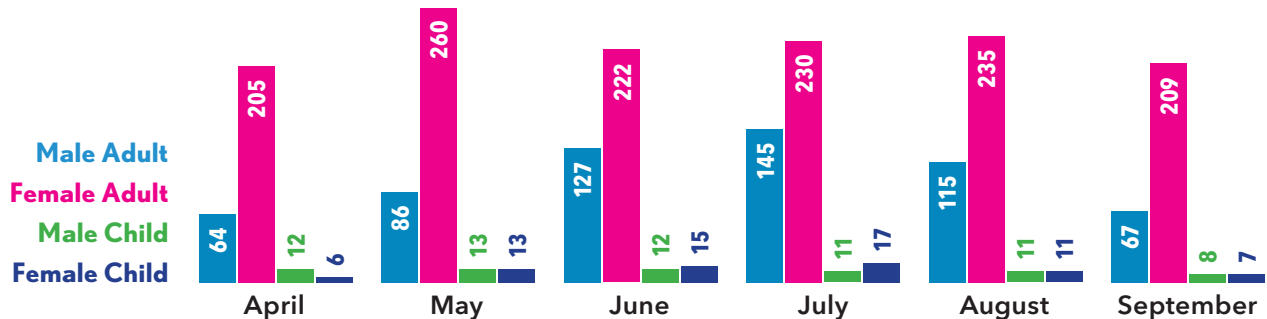
**College Students Program** Six undergraduate students and two of our MA students will be completing their courses and leaving us this year. Through our single women's network we have been receiving applications since April, so in June when travel restrictions eased we started meeting and interviewing them. Because the school board exam results were delayed until July, and the college students have not yet sat their end of year exams, we have been unable to make a final selection of new students so far. However, each student who came for interview was introduced to the community centre computer room and library and encouraged to borrow books to keep themselves occupied. They are welcome to come to use the computers whenever they wish under the guidance of Vijay and Ankush.



## Second Quarter: July – September 2020

### Six month clinic report

Dr Barbara and her core team have continued to work hard to keep the clinic running in order to provide medical services to local people, as well as to those who are chronically ill who often come from further afield. Each of the 4 days a week that we are open, we see between 17 and 24 patients, despite the lockdown.



Surprisingly, during the first 6 months of the year we have seen 211 new patients, many of whom come from further afield seeking medical help because they have tried other options or are afraid to go to the Government hospitals.

### In patient treatment through the monsoon

In early June a young man called Arvind arrived at the clinic with a neighbour, unable to walk and in great pain. He stayed with us as an inpatient receiving regular acupuncture, physiotherapy and homeopathic treatments for 3 months through the monsoon. Nourishing meals were provided and he attended Dr Barbara's yoga session every morning. He also enjoyed the library. By the time he was discharged in early September, he had gained strength and was able to walk with a stick on his own. His stiffness and pain was very much reduced. We hope he will not forget to do his exercises and will continue to improve at home.

### Limited Outreach Clinics

We have been unable to conduct more than a few very controlled outreach clinics because gathering large numbers of people together in small spaces is just not viable these days. We have, nevertheless, been paying particular attention to our single women, initially providing emergency food rations to the neediest to make sure everyone could eat. Now, our activists are able to visit the outlying villages, very often on foot because of a lack of public transport. They confirm that all the women are insured and are getting their government rations and pensions. They help them to fill in application forms and most important of all, keep in contact with them so they don't feel so alone.

### New Toys for our Special children

We also welcome our special children regularly to the clinic and community centre where we have set up a new box of toys specially chosen for children with limited ability. It is good to see them at least twice a month so Dr Kusum can talk to their carers and check their equipment. Fortunately the number of COVID cases in Kangra remains quite low and stable and when cases arise in our area we quickly get to know about them. There is a good test and containment program so we are confident that we are not in too much danger at the moment.

### Agricultural training

A 3-day training program was held in July for the single women and our farming team in methods of composting to enrich the soil. This training mostly took place outside on the farm and was very hands on practical. The monsoon lifted early this year allowing for a bumper early rice harvest and time to get vegetable seeds into the ground before the cold set in in November.

### Rakkar playground

The Rakkar playground, carefully kept in good repair by our staff through the monsoon, is crowded each clear evening with 50–70 children playing on the swings, slides and climbing frames. The boys are keenly playing football and soon will start cricket though officially sports programs are not yet allowed. Our water filters are used by everyone and the cases of gastroenteritis have been negligible this year. Everyone is outdoors in this bright clear weather which is very healthy and is scaring away the virus. Let's hope it continues this way!





## Second Quarter: Special Relief Programs

### School children's snack packages

Unable to hold our usual children's programs or the school nutrition program because the children are not in school, we have continued taking packages of nourishing snacks to the primary school children on the hills above us as well as here in the village every two weeks. At the same time, our idea to provide drawing, activity and reading books has been really successful. It is a delight to see the joy on the children's otherwise downcast faces when they are presented with new books. We are also drawing the children into our efforts to collect plastic waste. Those who bring a nice bag of it to us receive a bar of chocolate as a reward!

### Focus on Teenage Girls

Our survey of the more remote communities on the hillside and in our area has revealed who is seriously in need. We are consequently paying special attention to the teenage girls, who sadly are very often malnourished. Nutritional supplements and health education are really essential for them. In September we held our first socially distanced Wenlido trainings, first for our sponsorship girls and then for the local teenage girls.

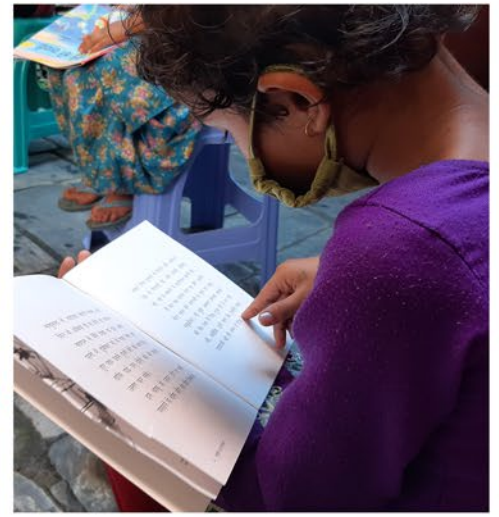
Now that the lockdown is easing, some people are able to start earning again, though for many work continues to be very limited. Therefore, whilst food supplies are no longer the main need for families, we continue to be concerned about the children and young people who are left at home while the schools and colleges are closed. The future seems so very uncertain to them and the amount of stress within families causes cases of depression and suicides to increase. Most of the schools provide some on line assistance with school work, but many of the poorer families in our area do not have access to smart phones and so will find themselves behind many of the others when the schools do re-open.

### Drawing our Sponsorship Students into the Community Centre

In our sponsorship program we now have eighteen BA students, five doing MA, one B.Ed. and one doing an advanced computer diploma. They are all waiting either to take last year's exams or for the colleges to re-start so they can begin their courses. It is a really frustrating time for them. We have been calling them in small groups in the mornings to the community centre where Ravindra teaches them a little yoga and refreshes their self-defence skills. Alternatively, Dr Kusum gives them some health education when she has time out of the clinic. They can use the computers and help making up the nutrition packages for the children's program or join our clean up and plastic block making project. It has been lovely to see them after so long and they really appreciate the opportunity to get out of their houses! We are hoping the colleges will re-open in September.

### Encouraging localised tuition Classes

Because several of the girls are holding tuition classes for small groups of children in their villages and others are interested to do so, we held a meeting to encourage them. We promised activity books, stationery and money to top up their smart phones so they can assist children, who otherwise have no access to the school programs on WhatsApp. During September we held very small tuition groups for those local primary level children who really have no other way of getting any education at all until the schools re-open. On line schooling is going on but many families don't have smart phones or the literacy to manage to interact with the teacher on WhatsApp.



## Third Quarter: October – December 2020

### Nishtha Annual Picnic

The Nishtha staff went for their picnic at the beginning of October when the cases of COVID were less and they were ready for a break after the monsoon. We decided to spend the day at a nearby temple where there is a fort on a hill in the rugged landscape below the mountain range. Everyone enjoys cooking and eating together and relaxing in the open air for a day. Some enjoyed climbing the hill to the top of the fort and admiring the view of the mountain, others preferred to sing devotional songs and dance in celebration of the Goddess at the temple. Before we left for home we all joyfully celebrated Vandhana's son Suria's birthday with a cake, balloons and yet more dancing.

### On the Farm

October is the finest month when the weather is clear and fresh after the monsoon. Our farming team were busy, threshing and winnowing the rice by hand and then preparing the fields and sowing calendula seeds. Planting is most successful when done according to the moon cycles. Later in the season as the weather got colder we ordered good quality greenhouse plastic to cover our greenhouse frame. Sujata and Vandhana were busy preparing the ground for growing seedlings, some of which were later shifted outside. Through November Navneet from Jagori gave our team weekly training sessions in compost techniques and how to space and combine crops.

### Sponsorship Students help with Diwali preparations

Our sponsorship students who are still studying on line and only occasionally able to go to college visit Nishtha in small groups. As well as accessing the computers and library, they have been a huge help working in the fields and in the community centre. First there was the pre-diwali cleaning to be done and later they prepared our 2021 calendar for posting. The students also helped packing the children's snacks, a program which continued right through the winter as the primary schools remained closed. Those who worked especially hard were honored with a small gift at the end of the year.

### Drawing & Tuition classes

Suverjit Mandal, an artist who lives locally held drawing sessions for the sponsorship students, the teenage girls who came for special sessions with Dr Kusum and for some of the children who showed up in small groups to do their school work in the community centre. The students also engaged with tutoring small bubble groups of children from the nearby localities.

### Wenlido Two day workshop

A Wenlido workshop was organized jointly by Nishtha and Jagori Rural on 17th and 18th November for 16 young women from the Shahpur area. Nishtha provided the trainers and the wooden boards for the karate exercise, whereas Jagori Rural facilitated the training hall, meals and accommodation for all the participants and trainers. Each workshop is very different according to its participants. This group was made of young active unmarried women aged 15 to 25 years. Most came from semi urban areas so have a certain amount of freedom and a great deal of hope and expectation that their education will lead to qualifications which will enable them to work outside the home.

### Group Meeting of Local environmental Activists

Reviving our group action to improve the garbage situation in the Dharamsala area, Nishtha invited the local groups, including Dhauladhar Cleaners and Waste warriors to share what they have been doing during the lockdown and what their plans are for the future. We can all benefit from hearing from each other and directing our efforts towards segregation and educating youngsters through WhatsApp groups.

### Dr Shreya Returned to the Clinic

In November we were delighted to welcome back Dr Shreya, the young homeopath who interned with us last year. She agreed to return and help Dr Barbara and Dr Kusum out until April. Together they visited our special children in their homes in order to better understand their needs.

### Single women Training

The Single women were very grateful to Nancy Young who led them in several sessions exploring their feminine power and enhancing their personal strength to deal effectively with difficult situations .



## Third Quarter:

# Single Women's Activities

Since October it has been easier for our 6 single Women activists to get out into the villages and start to hold meetings. We encouraged them to post pictures and stories about their activities and the single women they meet on our staff WhatsApp group which have proved to be very revealing.

### Filling in "life certificate" forms for widows' pensions

Sunita talks about the most pressing issue of the meetings she has been holding in the villages has been to get all the women who receive government pensions to fill in a "life certificate" to prove they are still alive. The government requires this annually but it is not always easy for women who are isolated, illiterate or disabled to do it.

### Introducing new members

New members are welcomed to the meetings where our activists talk to them about the work of the Single Women's group and introduce them to some of the government schemes they eligible to apply for. There are a great many complicated forms to fill in and documents to be submitted to get these awards. Our activists guide and help them.

### Accessing Government Schemes

58-year-old Raj Kumari lives with her daughter in a very small run down mud house with a roof that leaks. Though she had applied for the welfare department home repair scheme a long time back but hadn't received anything. Shilpa was able to intervene with the result that she received the home scheme award in December.

Single Woman Dolma's daughter is getting married so Pratiba helped her fill out the form of the Kanyadan Yojana scheme which provides Rs. 40,000/- for the marriage of a destitute woman or girl whose father is unable to provide for his family due to physical or mental disability.

Urmila Devi's husband has been missing for nine years. With the Nishtha activists help she has at last got her pension. She is very grateful.

### Health care insurance

Making sure that the women have their Government health cards up to date is one of our missions. Recently, Shilpa helped 62-year-old Snehlata apply for the Ayushman health card (which is valid all-India, but is only available to people selected by the government annual allotment) . She was then able to get her gallstones removed in Tanda Hospital without paying a single penny.

Vandana helped an old lady living alone in Naddi village to make her Himcare card (Himacare is a Government health insurance available to everybody, but it only gives free healthcare at specified hospitals in Himachal). This card enabled her to get her eye operation in the Zonal Hospital in Dharamsala for free.

### Helping women to get jobs

We are very pleased when our activists help Single women to get jobs. Kummo Devi posted a picture of Billo Devi, a handicapped single woman who she helped apply for a vacant post at a society bank near her village. She is now happily employed. She was also able to help Puniya Devi who lost her husband 7 years ago. She has been raising her 2 children alone and to find a job as a cook close by her house has made her life very much easier.

### Addressing Harassment and Land issues

During the village meetings women come with many problems, often related with land encroachment. Vasla Devi's neighbour sold land to a person who has forcefully fenced a part of her yard in order to construct a truck road to his land. Supported by Kummo, Vasla Devi and other village women who are all against the construction of the road, demanded a village meeting to resolve the issue.

## Third Quarter: Single Women's Activities *cont'd*

Shilpa helped 62-year-old Maya Devi whose son and daughter in-law were trying to force her to transfer all her land into his name. Shilpa took the Panchayat members to Maya Devi's house to talk to the son and daughter in-law. They warned the young couple not to bother the old lady or they would take legal action against them. Shilpa keeps in contact with Maya Devi who is now happily living separately in the same house.

Anu needed help because, after one and a half years of happy marriage her husband left her and now gives her no support. She moved back to her mother's home. Sunita invited both husband and wife to meet and talk. The couple don't want to be divorced as it carries a very strong stigma in this society so they agreed to both move in with Anu's mother because she lives alone and would like the company.

Kummo observed that many newly married girls don't realise how important it is for them to get their marriage registration certificate. In one recent case in her area, a girl was abused and when she tried to take legal action against the family, they demanded proof that she was even married to their son, which she didn't have. It was only with great difficulty that she managed to formalise her complaint against them, Kummo thinks we should inform every woman and talk in every village meeting about this so in future no one will get into this difficulty.

Archana Devi is a young handicapped single women who lives with her elderly Mother. Realising her mobility problems, Vandhana requested Nishtha to loan her our trolley wheel chair which can be self-propelled.

An important part of the Nishtha activists work is to keep in touch with the various officers who are responsible for processing the single women's applications to access government grants. They went to the Department of Women and Child Development to enquire about the progress of forms submitted for the Mother Teresa Asahaya Matri Sambal Yojana. The officer assured them that all the formalities had been cleared and the money will be released on the introduction of the new budget. They took the opportunity to raise the subject of the Single women certificate which according to the government definition is only applicable for a woman who is under 45 years of age and is not married. "We told them why the single woman's certificate is important for widows and abandoned women. He assured us that he would definitely raise this point in the coming meetings. When we gave him our Nishtha calendar he was immediately interested in the plastic brick on the cover so we told him about how and why we make it."

Activists Sunita, Pratibha and Bandana also met with Additional District Magistrate Mr. Rathore. They talked to him about a woman who has been accorded APL (Above Poverty Line) status though her financial position is actually BPL (Below Poverty Line). They gave an application to the officer to request a change in her status. This was the first time Bandana has met with any government officer. "Being a part of our Sangathan (organization) enables us to approach the government officials and request change when we see it is necessary."

This topic often comes up during the village meetings. Many of the women are afraid to get vaccinated and rumours spread quickly around the villages. The Activists try to reassure the women that they will not be forced to take the vaccine—they can decide for themselves whether it's more of a risk to take it or not to take it considering the huge rise in cases. They emphasise the importance of social distancing, regularly washing your hands, avoiding taking busses or going to markets, wearing a mask, and eating well. They should be very careful.

**Giving Good Advice & Practical Help**

**Visiting Government offices and meeting the officers**

**Concerns about the COVID-19 virus and Vaccinations**

## Fourth Quarter: January – March 2021

### Ram Chand and Dr. Kusum Thapa Retired

Ram Chand, our pharmacist who has been unwell since August, and was given half paid leave for 3 months, decided to take the option of early retirement at the end of January. Nishtha held a leaving party for him on 2<sup>nd</sup> March in the Community Centre. Ram's position has been filled by Azad, our night watchman who has been working alongside Suresh on a trial basis. He is also very dedicated to the preparation of Ayurvedic medications such as cough syrup and calendula ointment.

Dr Kusum also retired at the end of March. A leaving party was held for her on 30<sup>th</sup> which was attended by several of our Trustees and good friends. Dr Shreya who has been with us since November is leaving at the end of April. Therefore we are urgently looking for a new doctor. An advertisement has been prepared and posted on several job sites and social media platforms.

### Outreach clinics briefly restarted

We restarted the outreach clinics in the last week of February but unfortunately had to stop them again at the end of March because of the surge in COVID cases here in Himachal Pradesh. Despite the Single Women's initial hesitation they have been extraordinarily popular with large numbers of women attending and actively participating. The most popular topics were joint pain management, diet, blood pressure and digestive problems.

### Single women's Block Meetings

Nishtha single women's activists organized two large meetings covering all four blocks: Nagrota, Kangra and Dharamshala on March 25<sup>th</sup> and on 26<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held for women from Rait block in Sharpur. Both meetings were very well attended and provided a good deal of information for all the participants. The first block meeting held at Nishtha was a celebration of spring after a year of virus anxiety. The women all enjoyed getting together after so long. Our students provided entertainment in full Gaddi costume while everyone enjoyed a very good open air feast.

### Students Return to college

In February the colleges re-opened so we re-started our Sunday program with computer classes and English classes conducted by Puja Anand. This program was however reversed due to the renewed lockdown in Himachal Pradesh.

### Children with Special Needs

All the special children in our area have received our special ration packs throughout the year as well as the warm clothing: jacket, pants and socks that we provided to the primary school children this winter.

Dr. Kusum and Dr. Shreya have together visited Sanjoli and Shaksham who have been unable to get their physiotherapy from Tapovan at all this year. They attend our twice a month sessions in the community centre where they happily play with the toys in the toy library and watching cartoons on the laptop.

Bhagwanti, our child with multiple disabilities has been very unwell and spent several days in Tanda hospital. We are organising a trip to Chandigarh to see her consultant and will pay for the taxi ride in April. Other special children who we treat in our clinic include twins who are on growth hormone treatment which suffered a setback this year when they were unable to get to Chandigarh to get their supply of medicine because of the lockdown which shows in their growth charts.





## Fourth Quarter: Special Programmes

### Special Programmes for the Children and Teenage Girls

As the primary school children are still not going to school we have been continuing our twice a month food delivery to the children from the extended area we took on earlier in the year. In December we gave 130 of these children a hoody, warm pyjamas and socks. These were also given to 7 children with special needs, 17 of our staff children and 8 children of migrant labourers who live nearby.

Tuition classes for 25–30 local children have been going on in the community centre every day since the beginning of February. These are mostly 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who are preparing for their exams. They are really happy to be back studying, mostly maths with Sanjay, our tuition teacher again.

Our Teenage girl's snacks and activities program wound up after January when they returned to school. We gave warm coats to 150 girls from particularly needy backgrounds. Fifty of these coats were paid for by the State Bank of India who held a presentation event at Nishtha.

### Single Women activists identifying people in need

The single women have been very helpful in finding people who have particular needs during this very difficult time, enabling us to help them individually. They have identified a number of families of single women who have run into financial troubles and have been unable to feed themselves properly. There are several cases of disabled people living in inadequate circumstances and with very little help from the community. On the basis of their information we have been able to provide food supplies several very needy families.

### Special assistance for a family in serious need

One family who were particularly in need consists of a grandmother and mother who are both single and two daughters aged 26 and 16 who both have cerebral palsy, the younger one very seriously. They live in a village above Sharpur in the end room of a traditional family house with only a lean too kitchen and open washing area at the back. They were particularly anxious about the lack of security and privacy for the two young women. We were fortunate to be able to direct funds we had received from a local donor towards building a secure kitchen and bathroom for this family. Our efforts encouraged the local Panchayat to step in and provide them with a small toilet and septic tank outside. They are now extremely happy to have secure walls, windows and doors! Our single women activists are helping them to apply for a water connection and we will fund the purchase of pipes and fitting.

### A lift up for the Nayi Asha stitching group

Two years ago, we were able to get the Nayi Asha Women's Sewing co-operative registered as their own independent organisation. They have been busily making bags and other items using locally sourced, quality materials in carefully combined patterns, colours and textures. This year the group's six members found themselves in real trouble because we have had no visitors and no trips to Europe to be able to sell the bags.

We therefore decided, as part of our COVID relief program, to help these women set up an on-line sales platform by which they are able to access our friends and supporters and encourage them to purchase their products.

Please check out their site:

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

Nayi  sha



# Administration

**Use of Funds** After the initial lockdown, our office functioned with a high level of diligence. We completed last year's accounts and organised reports and, despite the uncertainty about what programs we would be able to carry out this year, sent our annual budget proposals for the coming year to the Austria, Germany and UK Trusts. Some of the budgeted funds were, with the permission of the concerned Trustees, re-directed to COVID relief programs in order that it would be spent benefitting the same beneficiaries but in a different way. For example, as the students were unable to attend college for much of the year so did not require transport costs, instead we provided monthly pocket money so they could recharge their smart phones and so keep up with their college work.

**Compliance with Government Regulations** In compliance with the Government requirement, our accountants compiled and sent details of our expenditure on COVID Relief in the community every month from April 2020 to the MHA. This enables the government to keep track of NGOs responses to the COVID Pandemic.

Across the country all NGOs who receive funds from abroad were preparing to submit their applications for renewal of permission to receive foreign contributions (FCRA). In September the Government introduced new rules which make the administration of funds received from abroad much tighter and require that our main receiving account will be in the Main Branch of the State Bank of India in Delhi. Fortunately we were able to complete all the forms and formalities so our new bank account was opened by the end of March as required. With this account in hand we are embarking on submitting our applications for FCRA renewal and Income tax exemption.

**Publicity & Fundraising** All funds transmitted from abroad will from now on have to be sent to the new account and must be accompanied by a letter to us clearly stating for what purpose the funds are being sent. For details of this account please contact us.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, personal fundraising in Europe was not possible, therefore we sent regular letters to our friends and supporters. We launched a very successful COVID-19 appeal for funds to help our community. The projects supported were primarily directed towards reducing food poverty for those rendered destitute by the circumstances, single women, families and the elderly.

We also keep our friends and supporters informed by regularly posting our activities on facebook and Instagram and keeping our website news up to date.

This year we made several short videos, one of the clinic activities in the early part of the year, another of the single women activists and the women they were able to meet in the villages and a third of Ram Chand's retirement party. These are posted on our website which we keep up to date with our news and events.

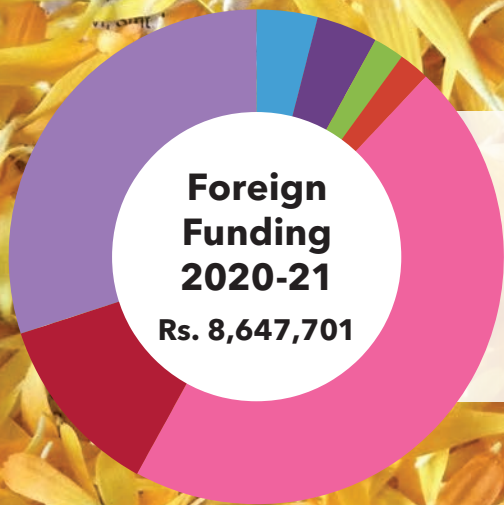
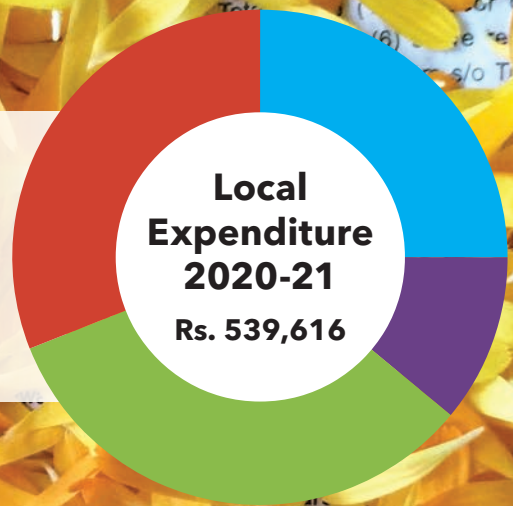
Our annual report for 2019-20 is also posted on the website.

We printed 900 copies of our 2021 calendar, 650 of which were mailed to our friends and supporters abroad. The remaining are provided for Government offices, the single women's contacts with officials, local supporters and each member of our staff receives and uses a calendar.



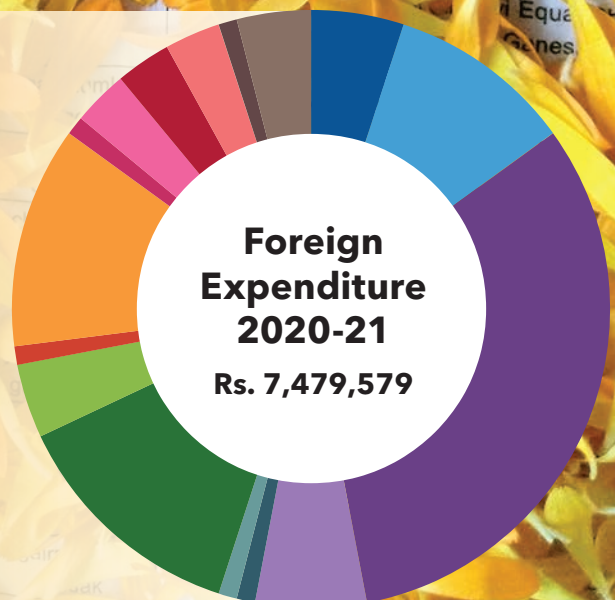
Bank Interest	403,809
Community Centre	52,402
Clinic	176,575
COVID Relief	212,224

Admin	135,991
Community Centre	54,089
Clinic	180,267
COVID Relief	169,269



Fixed Deposit Interest	374,510
Austria Corpus Interest	368,918
Germany Corpus Interest	83,282
UK Corpus Interest	77,941
Austria Trust	4,012,848
Nishtha UK	1,078,630
Germany Trust	2,651,572

Employee Benefits	365,647
Admin	724,911
Staff Salaries	2,466,888
Clinic Destitute, Medicine & Equipment	430,502
Utilities & Maintenance	97,217
Vehicles	86,300
Single Women Program	945,149
Community Center Program	314,765
Outreach Program	22,893
COVID Emergency Fund	920,283
Special Needs Children	46,439
Clean Village Program	196,973
Publicity Projects	237,976
Sponsorship Programs	261,691
Wenlido Training	42,230
Land Project	319,714





Very special thanks to all our friends everywhere who responded so generously to our appeals for support to provide for those in our community in real need.

## Timberline Foundation Agrees to Support Nishtha Projects

We are very pleased that Timberline Foundation based in the USA, have agreed that our supporters may send funds intended to benefit Nishtha Projects to their designated account. By doing so, Timberline joins the coalition of groups based in Austria, the United Kingdom, Germany, and India in ensuring that the work Nishtha is doing here in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh can continue.

As you are all aware, our work is entirely dependent on individuals who understand the unique value of our programs. We work to enhance the lives of and offer educational opportunities and empowerment to marginalised children, young people and women. By working with Timberline, whose principal focus is to affect young lives through educational experiences, we hope to expand our scope to bring about real and positive change in our community.

Timberline is recognized as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization by the United States Internal Revenue Service. All contributions are tax-deductible.

To donate please log in to:  
<https://timberlinefoundation.org/get-involved/>

If you would prefer to post a check, you may send it to:

**Timberline Foundation**  
Box 301  
Driggs, ID 83422  
410-715-8901

[ExecDir@timberlinefoundation.org](mailto:ExecDir@timberlinefoundation.org)

## United Kingdom



### Nishtha UK Trust

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

Cheques can be made out to  
Nishtha UK Trust and sent to:

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

### or paid directly to:

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

*Your donations will qualify us  
to receive Gift Aid benefit!*

## 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  
Tax exemption available

## Austria



Gemeinsames Engagement für  
Entwicklungszusammenarbeit

Bank: Oberbank BLZ 15000  
BIC: OBKLAT2L  
IBAN: AT241500004591018215  
Verwendungszweck: Projekt  
Indien

## Germany



Bank: Volksbank Main-Tauber eG  
BIC: GENODE61WTH  
IBAN: DE40673900000084335401

Nishtha's Website  
[www.nishtha.ngo](http://www.nishtha.ngo)

Nishtha on Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/nishtha.ngo](http://www.facebook.com/nishtha.ngo)

Nishtha Office Phone  
**+91-98828-95838**

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

**Rakkar Village, Sidhbari  
Distt. Kangra (HP) 176057 India**

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**contact@nishtha.ngo  
e-mail**

**www.nishtha.ngo  
website**

**Find us on  
Facebook & Instagram**

