

SINGLE WOMEN ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Nishtha has employed six Single Women workers, who reach out to other Single Women, in four Blocks, and help them as much as they can. Within those four Blocks, Nagrota, Dharamsala, Kangra and Rait, about 2428 women are supported by our ENSS. The Nishtha Single Women activists each are conducting each about 15 different village meetings, every month, in the various Blocks. In every village meeting there are participating between 5 and 25 women, from the surrounding area. In those meetings they discuss the latest government Schemes, upcoming events and following group actions. After the theoretical part, the activists take some time for personal problems of the individual women and plan a course of action, regarding their issues. Yearly, every member has to pay a membership of 25 Rs., which will be distributed to another women in need. Besides their field work and health camps, the activists of Nishtha are working on public events, court cases and activist movements

Single women Yearly Data 2018-19				
Blocks	Total Member	New Member	Beneficiaries of Scheme	Health Camps organized
Kangra	654	12	253	17
Dharamsala	970	42	288	4
Nagrota	804	10	89	42
Rait	1121	10	85	23
TOTAL	3549	74	715	86

Monthly Events and programs

April

In April, during an event in the Lion's Club Dharamsala, Sh. Kishan Kapoor (State Food Minister) distributed free gas connections to 39 single women. Nishtha activists had been instrumental in identifying the single women eligible to receive this benefit and had helped them to fill in all the required forms and formalities. They also provided the same support to other poor women who were beneficiaries of this scheme.

Furthermore, they managed to help 3 girls- Swati, Bharti and Anchal- to receive an education. Those girls are children of Single Women, which can't afford a proper education themselves. Therefore they are now participating at the Nishtha Sponsorship program and they can attend college classes for their studies. All the expenses are covered from Nishtha and a little pocket money is also given to them.

Every 3rd month, the activists send some single women, from every block, for leadership trainings at SUTRA. Our Nishtha activists choose some of the local energetic young single women if they feel that some training for personal development is needed and required. In the future these women could help with the organization

to sustain their programs. This time 2 women –Halo and Urmila- from the village Kaswa, were sent to a SUTRA leadership training.

May

On 21st May, the Single women organized a district level public hearing for local women, held in Nishtha. 58 women including health workers, kindergarten teachers, helpers and single women workers participated in the meeting. Mr. Ranjeet Singh from the Women's Welfare Department was called as a resource person and he shared information about the newest Government schemes with the participants. This meeting offered an opportunity for women to speak openly and discuss pertinent issues. Concerning income wages, support systems, legal or police problems, land cases and many more.

The State level meeting was held this time in Shimla and our activists sent 8 women to participate. 2 women out of each Block.

During this month the Single Women Activists worked on a "post card" campaign for SUTRA, in which single women write their problems such as being landless, having problems with their pensions, living arrangements, food, income and so on a post card to be sent to the Prime Minister. So Nishtha single women activists patiently spent time distributing the cards and helping the women with problems and filled them out, since most of the women we contact are illiterate. In total, all the activists from SUTRA managed to send 20,000 cards, for all the Single Women, from all around India.

June

On 23rd June, International Widow's Day, Nishtha Single Women Activists took out a rally. 90 women marched from the Post Office to the DC's office in Dharamsala. They met the ADC(in the absence of the DC) and they were pleased to find that he was very keen to know more about this women's program. They also provided an instant financial help for 1 woman, Usha, who didn't have any source of income and who was in financial troubles. This woman has a sick child and was unemployed. Moved by the story of this woman, the Red Cross gave her therefore an amount of 5000 Rs..

On the same day SUTRA posted the 10,000 post cards received from 20 different blocks to the Prime Minister's Office. The single women were very glad that with the support of this forum they were finally able to communicate directly with the highest authority in the land.

In this month there was also the Block meeting happening, which is conducted twice per year by the ENSS. In total 52 women participated, because from every panjayad there were about 3 single women sent. This meeting gives the participants a chance to get to know other Single Women, exchange problems and worries or find new connections. Therefore these Block meetings are very important to attend for the single women. In the Nakpandaw Mandir, a one day program of yoga, for the 20 single women in Thangh, was conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Rohit. They learned how to meditate and relax from stressful situations. This was very beneficial for the local Single women because of the relaxing atmosphere and the state of a peaceful mind.

July

Our Single women activists heard from some of the women they contact that they are receiving responses to the cards they sent to the Prime Minister's office. A letter has also been received by the National single Women's Forum assuring them that every possible help will be provided to the organization by the Government. In the villages the Single women are delighted that they got a chance to directly share their problems with the PM through the forum. The women who wrote about general issues evoked slight changes in the recently launched schemes and for upcoming single women projects. All women who didn't have a land and wrote about it, they receives a piece of 6 marla (1marla= 1600 sqm). Even the Newspapers published an article about this project of the Postcards. So even more attention was drawn towards the issues, of the single women. All in all one can say that through the huge participation of the women, this campaign was quite successful.

August

Radha and Dr. Barbara attended the "Baatein Amanki" meeting held in Jagori, where many reputed NGO members gathered together for a discussion on "Baatein Amanki - Talk about peace". They discussed, among each other, how to realize upcoming events, aims and projects.

The Single women activists presented a memorandum to the DC (Sandeep Kumar), demanding an equal pension of Rs 3000 per month for every single woman. Next month this demand will also be mentioned in the national level in Delhi through "pension parishad". Currently the Single Women, who are not employed by the government, receive an amount of 750 Rs per month. Additionally to the low pension, they only receive it every 3 months. For this reason, the ENSS are demanding for a regular and higher pension.

September

From 14th to 16th Sept, the Single women conducted a 2 day meeting "Swayat Nayay panchyat" in the Nishtha community Centre. 76 participants including kindergarten workers, Mahila Mandal members, local government delegates and health workers attended this meeting. These representatives are working on ground level, directly with people, so significant awareness of the value of swayat Nayay Panchyat can be transmitted through them. Ranjeet Singh (Children and women development officer) and Tripta (Senior single women activist) were the resource people in this meeting. They introduced the newly updated government and non-government schemes available in the department and provided information about how to access them. Furthermore they talked about domestic violence and that there are 5 different forms of violence; verbal, physical, mental, economic and sexual violence. The women also discussed about the differences between domestic and outer violence. Another aspect of their discussions was the governmental program called SHIWDO, which follows a 15 year plan and affects also the women in the rural villages. This meeting was very successful and a lot of women left happily.

From the 21st to the 23rd of September, some of the Single Women participated in the Gender Workshop which was conducted by Manju. The Gender training was for women who do suffer from a gender inequality. Therefore also our Nishtha Activists have been participating and supporting Manju during the training.

On 29th and 30th of September, all the 6 Single women activists and 8 village single women went to Delhi to participate in a “pension parishad” agitation. More than 30,000 people from all over India gathered in this movement. “Pension parishad” and “Help Age Organization” planned this agitation together with the help of other small organizations, demanding an equal pension of Rs. 3,000 for elderly people and single women. This pension should be regularly increased along with inflation. Until they don’t receive a fair pension for the single women, our activists will keep going to those “pension parishad” movements, which happen annually. Even, if they have to pay it out of their own pockets. For them a regular pension is very important and they have the right to receive an adequate amount for their living.

October

Radha and Kummo attended the three month review and planning meeting, which was held in SUTRA. Activists from different blocks presented their reports, discussed problems and provided their monthly feedback. During the meeting they discussed starting up a single women’s self-help group in different villages. However, most participants rejected this idea because there are anyway a lot of active self-helping groups in the villages and in which women are already engaged. At the same time preparations for the national forum “advisory meeting” and the next month’s “Bheena Dooj” program were going on. Moreover they helped a single woman, Manisha from Yol, to find an employment. Sunita went and searched a proper job for her, so she would receive a small income. Another follow up meeting, about the pension, was held in Delhi and it was attended again by the Nishtha activists.

November

“Bheena dooj” is the female equivalent of “bhai dooj” which is a festival when sisters welcome and honor their brothers by applying a tikka or sacred red mark on the forehead. For a long time Nishtha’s Single women’s group thought about celebrating this day to honor and rejoice in our relationship with our female friends and acquaintances. At last this year on 1st of Nov, 80 single women from 7 blocks gathered together in the Nishtha premises to celebrate this “Bheena Dooj” festival. They applied a red “tikka” and a wrist band on each other, signifying their long and happy lives together as sisters. Some “Lions club” members and Nishtha’s Director Dr. Barbara attended as guests in the program. They not only encouraged the single women in their collective effort striving for their rights but also assured them of every possible help they might need. After small refreshment with Samosas and Gulab Jamun, they went home very happily.

From 27th to 28th of November, Radha and Sunita participated in the national forum advisory meeting along with 16 other members from Himachal Pradesh. This meeting was attended by 160 women from 12 different states. Each state presented their annual report followed by a discussion of their upcoming program. In fact, every scheme launches from one center but it has different aspects and effects in every state. Our Single Woman profit a lot from those gatherings because they learn from the other state members and at the same time they interact and connect with them.

Another exciting event for them, this month, was the Nishtha Cycle tour 2018. With a lot of joy and hospitality they presented a warm welcome for the cyclists. Furthermore, they supported the other Nishtha staff members throughout the day, by serving food, tea, and so on.

December

On 8th of December 2018 a press conference was held, in Dharamshala, on the rights of single women. They also interviewed 13 active agricultural women from three different blocks about the effect on agricultural land of environmental problems and changes. They were asked if they noticed differences and changes in the land production and so on with recent agricultural methods and environmental conditions. Moreover the women asked for a piece of land, on which they can build houses for living.

Some Single Women wrote a letter to the DC asking him to allot land for building a house for single women in the Kangra district. On the 28th of December the Single Woman participated in a public hearing in Dharamshala, which was conducted by the legislative assembly. The purpose of this meeting was to strengthen the connection with the government but also to raise awareness among society. Various authorities, like the health, infrastructure, land, pension and home minister were participating as well. They further on discussed welfare fees, and social and legal problems. All in all, the single women were very happy that this special meeting was set up to address their issues.

January

Throughout this month, the Single Woman participated in various health camps, conducted some field work and went to a lot of offices. During this month a new local government was elected in the village Menjha. Therefore a lot of time was spent to convince them of their new Single Women projects, because the new government wasn't informed yet, at all. It is sometimes very time consuming for our Single Woman to achieve a breakthrough. Especially with the government or legal support, due to the fact, that they have to visit different offices and authorities more than once, until results are showing. This often results in multiple visits of the official offices, furthermore a lot of generating and convincing work has to be done. Also a lot of patience is required, from our Single Women. However, a breakthrough for them was when a Single Woman, from the neighbor village, Yol, received some land for agricultural activities. Our Single Women keep persuading the government offices and are always up to date about the newest Schemes released.

This month, on the 23rd of January, the Single Woman attended an agricultural meeting in Nishtha about sustainable and natural farming for the woman who are agriculturally active at home. This was held by some officials of the Palampur agricultural office. The participants, all 6 Single women activists and other Nishtha staff members, promised to implement some of the environmental friendly ideas in their fields. Nishtha also motivates the Single Woman to go out in the fields to talk about a different way of farming, which is healthier and more beneficial. At some meetings of the Single Women, they help out in the Nishtha farm, which was innovated to demonstrate to people an alternative way of farming. Our activists, who are often also having a small piece of agricultural land at home, are learning about a sustainable way of natural farming methods in the Nishtha farm. For example, they learn how to compost, harvest, plant and cut the plants in a certain way.

Some background information, on the plants and compost used, is also provided likewise. The use of water is being discussed. But also natural farming seeds and bacteria are taken into account. Everything is done without machines, just by hand. Often these are hard body works to do, but they manage perfectly. The Single Women activists learn from the Nishtha farm and later on they present the results to other Single Women, in their village meetings. Ambitiously, they try to convince more people of the natural and sustainable farming method.

February

One of the Single Woman, whose husband died recently, has received an employment from Nishtha. She is now a care taker for a handicapped child and is absolutely excited about her new job. Supplementary, the women organized some health camps in the remote villages. These projects, so called “outreach”, are conducted weekly by the ENSS. They not only have to arrange everything for the doctor’s arrival, but also have to spend a lot of time recruiting participants for these meetings, in advance. However, besides their monthly visits in the 15 different villages, the outreach camps and Nishtha meetings, they also manage to give legal support for case studies and help with government schemes. On top of that, they constantly recruit new Single Women members. One of them is Skuntla, from Tangroti, who joined the Single Women in this month. They filled out 4 pension forms, for Single Women from Narwana, as well, which means spending a lot of time and energy in the Dharamshala authority’s offices, but also a ton of paperwork.

March

On the 8th of March, the international women’s day, the women gathered together and went through the streets of Dharamshala. They were raising awareness towards Single Women on the official international Women’s day. With a lot of effort and enthusiasm, they tried to draw the attention towards them. There was also a punjayad meeting conducted in the Tungroti village, where the government authorities gave 150 Rs to every woman, who was participating. This special meeting was not only for Single Women this time.

Furthermore, the new government budget, for our Single Women, is about to be released. It will maybe bring new and different benefits, relevant Schemes, more support and understanding, for our Single Women.

On 24th of March, a Jagori program happened, in which our activists participated. Besides that, they are doing field work, health camps and more official visits.

One widow, Tara Devi, from the Kanyara village died suddenly and the single women activists went to give them support. On the 28th of March, a meeting took place in Dharamshala about raising awareness among the youth, concerning topics like education, alcohol, sexuality, women’s rights and awareness. About 30 young people attended this meeting. Furthermore, a new Scheme was launched called “surjit”, which is a governmental support for Single Women who want to build up their business with small animals, i.e. Chicken.

Major Achievements this year

- The Single Women, who do not have their own agricultural property or a job, receive support of 6000 Rs/year, from the Government
- They also managed to gain a monthly pension for 17 Single Women in their areas.
- Everyone is informed about the minimum salary per day, newly launched by the government, so they can prevent exploitation of the defenseless women.
- More new Schemes concerning Single Women
- Raising awareness among the youth
- Separation from SUTRA
- “Behain dooj” celebration with Loin’s club

Goals and achievements for next year

- Creating a data base with all the member’s information (NO private data)
- Conducting leadership trainings and workshops for Single Women at Nishtha
- Keep participating in national forums
- Monthly meetings and events
- Creating a account on behalf of the Single Women
- Creating a list of the beneficiaries of the launched government schemes
- Helping them to conduct their proper own documentation

❖ Girl’s

marriage:

40,000 RS for mothers of girls, who are going to marry soon. They need to prove their identity, income details, ration card, residency in the local area, the boys identity and the one of his family and

Single women Yearly field work in Four blocks (2018-19)

Block →

Activist →

Block	Nagrota	Dharamsala	kangra	Rait	
Activist	Sunita & Pratibha	Radha	Shilpa	Kummo & Ranjana	Total

New Member	10	42	12	10	74
Girl’s Marriage	3	11	11	3	28
Pension	45	70	50	17	182
Mother Theresa / Mata Sabri	17	48	48	20	133
Cow Loan	2	18	11	0	31
House Loan / Indira Awas Yojana	16	28	33	3	80
Sewing Machine	6	13	20	42	81
Medical Facility / Smart Card	0	100	80	0	180
MGNREGA	30	450	400	75	955
Single Women Attendant outreach clinic					644

much more; application to fill out for government office

- ❖ **Pension:750 RS/month** for handicapped people; single women/men; women, who miss their husbands; widows; separated women; they have to fill out the application
- ❖ **Mother Theresa: 2,000 RS/year** for children of Single Women, until the age of 18; application at authority offices
- ❖ **Cow Loan: 10,000-15,000_RS** for Single women, who want to buy a cow; without interest; from Lion's Club
- ❖ **House Loan: 1 lakh 60,000_comity and 1 lakh and 18,000 village** for widows, people with disabilities and handicaps, matriarchal households, ex-service persons, the individuals falling in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories, free bonded laborers; application at authority offices and online
- ❖ **Sewing machines: for** Single Women, who can sue and like to make handcrafts; Lion's Club/ Government/ Panjayad
- ❖ **Smart Card (SW): for** Single Women, who can't afford health care; Dharamshala hospital 30 RS registration fee; hospital Dharamshala
- ❖ **MGNREG: 140 RS/day** for 100 days of work within a year, for all people who are unemployed; authority offices

The following Cases have been resolved:

Bimla Devi from Narwana had a land dispute with her sister-in-law for years. Her drunken son was trying to encroach Bimla Devi's land, abusing and harassing her frequently. He dug a pit just near the house, which caused a lot of difficulties for Bimla Devi. Therefore she raised this matter in single women panchyat meeting and Nishtha Activist Sunita, visited the spot along with the Patwari and other local women. The Patwari measured the land in front of both parties and made it clear to both what was their actual possession. Later Sunita personally talked with both parties and got them both to agree so solving the case through negotiation, not the courts.

Meenakashi, from Village Banninear Yolis apoor widow, who has 2 married children, both of whom are living away from her. She works in the Government MNEREGA scheme which gives a very merge living. When she visited the Patwari to get her low income certificate in order to apply for her widows pension, she was denied because her son runs a shop and has some land. When Meenakshi told Nishtha Activist Sunita about this problem, Sunita visited the office together with the Meenakashi and talked with the Patwari explaining that since she is living separately and receives no help from her son, his income is not a valid reason for denying her a low income certificate. Sunita also told him of the single women's forum work in Himachal Pradesh with the result that he finally issued the low income certificate and Meenakshi got her pension. This is very general problem in villages where women are not aware with their rights and don't have courage to speak out.

Asha a poor lady from Ambari Panchayat, Rait Block, lost her husband in car accident. She came to know that the government gives some financial help in cases of sudden death and went from office to office to complete the required formalities without gaining any assistance. At last she met with Nishtha Activist Kummo in a village level single women's meeting and was able to explain whole situation. Kummo, who is senior activist understood and assured Asha that she would help her. Together they collected all the required documents and visited the welfare department with a full file so they were able to sanction her a payment of a 4 lakh on account of the sudden death of her husband.

Roshni Devi had a long dispute with her neighbors regarding her property and even though she is very poor and single she wasn't intimidated by her neighbors. In the "Rait" Block, the Activist Kummo solved this standing and difficult land case for her. Calling the assistance of Kummo, they both went to the neighbor's house to talk about the case. Kummo was able to negotiate a settlement with the neighbor, explaining that should they persist in pursuing this case in court it would go on without settlement for years and everyone would feel discomforted and unable to do anything with the land. Furthermore she explained that if they put undue pressure on a single woman then they themselves can be charged with harassment and will face legal prosecution. In this way Kummo was able to patch up the matter and now both families are living happily next to each other.

Volunteer Feedback

Following Sunita around for a day was very helpful for me to understand the way in which the single Women Activists work on the ground. Every day in all weathers they go out by bus and walking to reach around 15 different villages in each month. Every month they attend a whole day meeting at Nishtha as well as coming to Nishtha weekly meetings so the Nishtha team can stay in touch with their work. They visit the various government offices with requests and appeals for individual single women and organize public forums, press conferences and bi-annual block level meetings. In addition they organize the Nishtha Health Education camps which reach out into remote villages each block in turn and provide the opportunity for women to understand their health issues and receive advice from our medical team.

Personally, I think that they are doing great work with the participants of the meetings. The support, which they provide for the other women, is enormously important. Without our Single Women workers, a lot of Single Women would be in a very bad condition. It's not just the financial support from the government, which is valuable for them, but also the fact that someone is listening to them and that they have a network of other women within their villages as support. All of the women we visited were extremely friendly and voluntarily opened up and told me their stories. I think that wouldn't have happened without the ongoing work of the activists who have built up a steady store of trust from the villagers. Sunita spends a good amount of time recording and documenting everything. She has proper details about a lot of women and has created a social network among them. The topics they talk about are always current and they try to be informed about every support system for the others. I am greatly impressed by the honest, serious and important work they are doing to fundamentally help these most deprived and looked down on women.

Pictures of the events that took place this year:

Domestic Violence Workshop by Nirmal and Rhada

14-16.09.2018



Gender Training by Manju 21st to 23rd of September



Bheena Dooj 01.11.2018



Blockmeeting of the Single Women 20.12.2018



