



निष्ठा

n i s h t h a

rural health, education & environment centre

**Annual Review
2021-2022**

Trustees

Soniya Sebastian



I really enjoy being a Nishtha Trustee. The meetings are always very lively and interesting and being the youngest member of the group I am always learning new things. The other members are very knowledgeable about social work and how trusts work whilst I have lot of local

connections which I am happy to share. I enjoy being involved with social work and helping people and I think the work Nishtha does is very worthwhile.

Radhika Sharma



A fortuitous meeting with the energetic Philippa, who, as soon as she learnt that I loved children and had started a couple of libraries in South India, had me assisting Nicola in birthing the Nishtha Library. Happy Task! Nishtha's core is Seva and not charity. Work as an offering to the Divine. This base

of Karma Yoga is close to my aspirations. To work, however occasionally, with Dr. Barbara and her dedicated team, is a joy.

Puja Anand



Nishtha was an important part of my family's life since I relocated here in 2013 and is a very important part of the community. Dr. Barbara is known in every household. The community Centre enriches the lives of hundreds of kids each year and there is a gradual rising of awareness

of environmental issues in the village. I am proud to be associated with this dedicated and focused organisation.

Nayantara Singh Mankotia



As an educator my contributions to Nishtha's children's programmes regarding learning activities or the nutrition food packets, are well received. Nishtha in return has broadened my understanding of the importance of the rural health programmes they carry out and their effect

on marginalized communities. Their programme to empower the single women resonates well with me. I am happy to be involved with the good work being done by Nishtha!

Remembering Kamla Bhasin

With great sadness Nishtha trustees and friends gathered to remember our dear friend and valued trustee Kamla. Radhika voiced the feeling of her fellow Trustees saying "We valued her for her immense experience and vigilance. We learned a great deal from her sharp eye and questioning mind which did not let anything escape her, always keeping the Trust in focus." Soniya mentioned how she was a great time keeper, expecting punctuality but balanced this rigour with quick wit and a fine sense of humour. Her honesty and dedication to the interests of the Trust and our work for the community stays with us as her lasting legacy.



Letter from Dr. Barbara

I think we would all agree that this year has been the most challenging faced by our local communities. The wave of COVID-19 that hit in April/May 2021 took its toll throughout the towns and villages and the consequent lock down hit businesses, the tourist industry and daily wage earners very hard. The children were off school for months and college exams and admissions were delayed causing stress and uncertainty. However, we have all survived and look forward to rebuilding our programs and using the extended outreach into the villages created by our food voucher program to energise our efforts to help those we have discovered to be in real need.

We are very grateful to all our donors who opened their hearts to support us during this difficult time enabling us to help nourish so many very needy households though food distribution and more recently through our food voucher system which enable the recipients to be able to choose what they need for themselves.

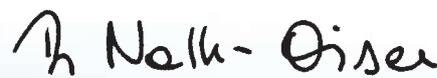
Although we no longer have Dr. Kusum who retired and Dr. Shreya who had worked with us first as an intern and then as a homeopathic doctor we were able to find an experienced homeopathic doctor and health educator, Dr. Deepanjali Arora who has done wonders working with our single women activists on the outreach clinic. We then jumped at the opportunity of taking back Dr. Sara who worked with us for almost 2 years before taking up a post in a Government hospital in Indore. She received further training in cardiology which is very useful to us here where many elderly patients have heart problems

and it is very difficult to access specialists. We feel that our patients are now very well provided for and it enables me to start to take a back seat knowing that allopathy and homeopathy are working in harmony at Nishtha.

We very much regret losing one of our very dear Trustees, Kamla Bhasin who sadly passed away in September. We will all miss her and it will be hard to find her replacement.

We look forward to another brighter year in which our programs and workshops can thrive and reach out to those who are in most need in our community. We are very grateful for your continuing interest in and support for Nishtha.

With sincere thanks and good wishes,



Dr. Barbara Nath-Wiser



Nishtha Clinic

Dr. Sara Raghuvanshi MBBS

Dr. Sara returned to us in August 2021 after a break of nearly 2 years. During her absence she spent 8 months training as a resident in cardiology in Mumbai and worked in a hospital in Indore during the COVID-19 pandemic. She therefore returns to Nishtha with a great deal of valuable experience and knowledge.

"I left Nishtha because my family needed me at home as a doctor. In fact I coped with that by doing a 3 month dance course! It was always in my mind that I would come back and work here again. This is the only place I have ever worked in which I feel comfortable in myself. It's a very feminine space and I am a fan of Nishtha because they recycle plastic and take care of the environment which is pretty unusual these days.

But seriously the main reason is that I find working here very satisfying. I can give enough time to each patient, really figuring out what their problems are and following up with them as individuals. I find it very rewarding to help poorer people who can't pay for good medical treatment. In the government hospitals the doctors have no time to spend with each patient but here I can educate them about their disease and help them to understand it. What causes the disease, what they can do to help themselves and what the medicine they have been given does for them. Local patients are not familiar with asking what is high bp, heart disease or sugar problems but I try to explain in ways they can understand so they can be empowered to participate in their own treatment.

I personally feel homeopathy is very important because a lot of allopathy has serious long term side effects. Of course there are times when allopathic medicine is essential but then you need to take account of the negative effects of medicines such

as creating an acidic environment in the gut which can lead to ulcers in the future. Therefore I am very balanced in my use of allopathic medicines. Some things like mental health are much better treated with homeopathy because homeopathic remedies don't create the dependence that allopathic drugs can. I also believe acupuncture has a very important role to play. I have worked under Dr. Barbara and Dr. Kusum's guidance on 5 stroke patients who have responded remarkably well to the treatment even when they don't respond at all to other medicines or even to physiotherapy.



Dr. Sara with twins Sejal and Sonakshi, who are responding well to their growth hormone treatment

I work 4 days a week and the other 2 days I use to study. I don't want to become a specialist I like seeing a wide variety of cases but whatever I see in the clinic I study so I can really plan for the patients. Every patient is a longitudinal study. I get many very complicated patients who have been to other doctors without success. An ulcer for example can have 50 or 60 causes so you have to systematically try different approaches

until you find the right one to give relief to the patient.

I refer patients suffering from problems such as heart failure, oesophageal varicosis or difficult birth presentations who need specialist care to hospitals and often accompany them so that I can talk to the consultant to get the best treatment for the patient. Now I am more familiar with patients with heart problems so I can discuss the cases on the phone with the hospital doctors which is easier than going to the hospital each time.

I also enjoy doing home visits to patients who are too debilitated to come to the clinic. It is true that we don't see huge numbers of patients but we are able to both provide a regular monitoring and treatment service for people who come regularly and give a special amount of intense focus on those who come with very complicated problems.

Special Needs Children



Ravindra plays with Priya who enjoys the toys and activities provided in the community centre.

We were very worried about **Bhagwanti** this year because she was so unwell but she is delighted to have a little sister and appears to be much happier now.



Dimple, a young physio-therapist who worked with our special children from July to September while she was unable to attend college in Amristar, returned to spend time with us in December during her holidays. She provided much needed physiotherapy attention to the children who we brought the community centre each day.



Baby is engaged as carer to look after Sanjoli, the child with severe and degenerative cerebral palsy who we have been helping for the past 10 years.

The special children's toy library has been greatly improved this year. **Johnathan**, the Austrian civil service volunteer painted a set of wooden building blocks in bright colours.



Suresh Kumar – Clinic Dispenser

Before 1993 when I started work at Nishtha, I worked in the slate mines like my father had. When the clinic was being built I joined the construction team as it is just near my house. I was first directly employed for a month to keep watch over some expensive building material at night. I slept outside under the banana tree and would be kept awake by some wretched bird making a noise above me. Then Dr. Barbara took me on to help in the clinic. She and Dr. Kusum showed me the medicines and taught me their names so I could pick them out when needed. I worked as Ram's assistant until 2020 when he retired.

I am particularly interested in herbal medicines. I did a herbal medicine training in Shimla in 2003 which taught me how to make trifla, cough syrup, calendula ointment etc. Then I attended two further trainings at Jogindernagar which were really helpful. Now I supervise the making of herbal remedies which we use here in the clinic. They are very helpful for our patients.

I also particularly enjoy cooking and used to cook for functions such as Weddings, Shankar's birthday, Nishtha programs and so on. I really enjoy cooking!

During the time of Corona when most of the staff couldn't come because of the lockdown, Dr. Barbara and I would open the clinic from 8:30 to 11:30 just to enable the local poor people to come and get treatment. It was a very difficult time. Up to 25 patients would come during those 3 hours so it was really worth the effort of opening the clinic.

When Ram retired and I was promoted to his place we had a hard job finding a suitable assistant for me. First we tried Arvind but he couldn't understand the different kinds of medicines at

all. Then we tried Ankush but he couldn't stay in the dispensary for more than 20 minutes at a time before he disappeared. Dispensing medicines is a very responsible job so you have to be dedicated. Then we even tried Mohinder but he also has a problem staying in one place for a whole morning. Then I thought of Azad since he has helped Dr. Barbara at night for so many years that he knows the medicines very well and is very conscientious. Also he was willing to do it because he no longer had his mother to look after during the day.

Now Azad and I work together really well. He is a very easy, calm person to work with. I really enjoy this work and have learned a great many things which helps when villagers call me in emergency. I am happy that I am able to help.



Surindra Devi

I used to work in the afternoon washing clothes and keeping the clinic clean making tea, working in the garden and helping Dr. Barbara or Dr. Kusum with patients. But since Corona time it changed because there was more work to be done in the community centre with packing ration packets and snack packs for the school nutrition program.



I started in Nishtha in 2003 after I left my husband and returned to be with my mother. My mother is hard of hearing which makes talking to her quite difficult and she doesn't like it when I laugh taking to people. I like working here – it's convenient for me and the work is interesting. I get the chance to be myself. I especially like working in the garden. I am really happy with this work.

Azad – Clinic Assistant

I started working at Nishtha as night watchman in 2004. In the beginning we had quite a lot of patients who came in emergency at night. My duty was to go and get Dr. Barbara from her house who would come and attend to them and give them medicines or admit them. Every day I had to sterilise all the medical equipment that had been used during the day in the autoclave. I also helped pack up the calendars or any other extra work that could be done in the evening. When we had in-patients I had to look after the drips or check on them and help them when necessary. Now we have a new worker, Vinod who does all this work.

During this time I learned a lot about how the clinic worked and about the medicines in the pharmacy so in 2020, when I was asked to step up and take Suresh's position in the clinic because Suresh replaced Ram ji as pharmacist when he retired,



I felt quite comfortable and confident. When the patients come I find out if they are a new patient or an old patient and get out their cards. Now that we have two doctors, I ask whether they want homeopathy or allopathy. Then I give them a waiting number. I keep the staff attendance, the patient records and handle the petty cash in the clinic.

I am now also working with Arvind or Sunil to maintain the water filters. We have one in the clinic which also feeds the community centre and one in the school which has a public tap just below the primary school. Now also have one in the pay ground, another in the village and one at Chakwan school. Each filter needs to be properly cleaned and checked every week.

I like working here, it's convenient for me and I am quite happy to work for the local community.

Rashma Devi

I started helping in Dr. Barbara's house when her son Shankar was just 1½ years old so that's over 40 years ago! Dr. Barbara started seeing patients in her own house and then moved over to the present clinic when it was built. At first I worked on an hourly basis but from 1998 when my own children were 8 and 12 years old I stayed the whole day. Now I do half days as I start early in the morning and work up to lunch time.

As well as general cleaning and making tea I help Dr. Barbara when she calls me to help her understanding patients who speak the very old style local language. I also assist the doctors with minor procedures, washing and preparing the equipment and making sure it's ready to use. I help to prepare the herbal medicines that we use in the clinic, cleaning and drying, grating and pounding. I pick and prepare herbs such as lemon grass, honeysuckle and tulsi to make herbal teas. I really enjoy my work - there is lots of variety and interest. Moreover my heart is here in this clinic. If sometimes I have to stay at home idle I don't feel good.



Yes, I have some stories to tell, especially of patients who had to be looked after in the clinic. When I started lots of people used to get gastro enteritis. They would come to the clinic in a terrible state and need to be put on drips to rehydrate them. I had to help change and clean them up, washing their clothes. Sometimes we had to work all night for these patients. That all stopped as soon as we put in the water filters and told enough people that they had to be really careful about the water they drank. One time two ladies came, the mother in law was wailing because she said her daughter in law was dead. Barbara rushed to her help and together we and put her in Barbara's home because the clinic was completely full. We gave her 4 bottles of saline and kept her for 10 days and she completely recovered.

Sometimes patients took up residence here in the clinic and even when they were quite well they wouldn't go home. I had to clean for them - even sometimes cleaning their stool because they were so careless not to get to the toilet on time. I have many stories to tell!

Dr. Deepanjali Arora B.Sc (Med), DHMS, NDDY

Dr. Deepanjali, a very experienced homeopath and health educationalist joined our team in May 2021. She sees patients 4 days a week in the clinic as well as taking the outreach clinic to the outlying villages on Tuesdays and Thursdays. She has developed a very special relationship with our Single Women activists who organise these clinics.

Dr. Deepanjali says: "I started in July amidst covid but then had to suspend the program until August. My focus is on the health of women including their mental, physical emotional and spiritual well-being. Even though men do come, some wanting to understand about the management and treatment of their diseases, the women still feel free to discuss their health issues quite openly. Most women take this meeting as a chance to relax and take a few moments away from their monotonous routine, they really enjoy meeting each other and spending time. They like to learn about diet, and the management and prevention of diseases. I explain about the Nishtha OPD and medical facilities and encourage those with problems to come and see us for treatment there. Those who have exceptional range blood pressure for example are not treated during the camp by me but are given a slip with their details on it and advised to come to us or go to see another doctor. Hypertension is a silent disease so they are given guidance about who to go to for consultation about their medical ailments if Nishtha clinic is too far away for them.

I explain about seasonal diseases such as typhus which is very common in Kangra area, water borne diseases, sunstroke, allergies and jaundice. In winter we talk a lot about respiratory problems. Women usually ask about menstrual problems which are very common. I explain when they ask about infertility which is a huge burden on women, that it is very often not their problem but their husband who needs to get tested. This they don't want to do. As with the sex of the baby it is not the women's fault but is blamed on the women which causes a great deal of distress. Diabetes,

hypertension and kidney stones are the most common problems in this area.

Many women are obese due to stress and erratic eating habits. People are stressed due to the media flooding the children with temptations, who then pressure their parents for gadgets. Alcoholism is another major burden on the females of the house. Hypothyroidism is also quite a problem in this area - mainly to do with stress. Many women suffer domestic violence because of alcoholism. This is not something they keep quiet about -the older people in particular speak freely in the gathering especially about alcoholism. Another quite common symptom of anxiety in this area is compulsive mud eating.

Differently abled children benefit from treatment both through homeopathic medications, physical therapy and social therapy. I encourage the parents to play and work with the children in a way that is helpful to them - including them in their daily activities. When our trainee physiotherapist Dimple was available she would come

with me and would show the parents how to do exercises with a disabled child. She was also very good at demonstrating helpful exercises to the group."



Ravi - driver

I usually take the doctors on the outreach and play an active part in setting up the materials, taking bp and talking about the environment. When I first started I found it difficult to relate to people but now I am relaxed talking to people and explaining things. During the last year when the children were home from school our portable library was very useful. I would set it up and engage the children in looking at the books and reading stories.

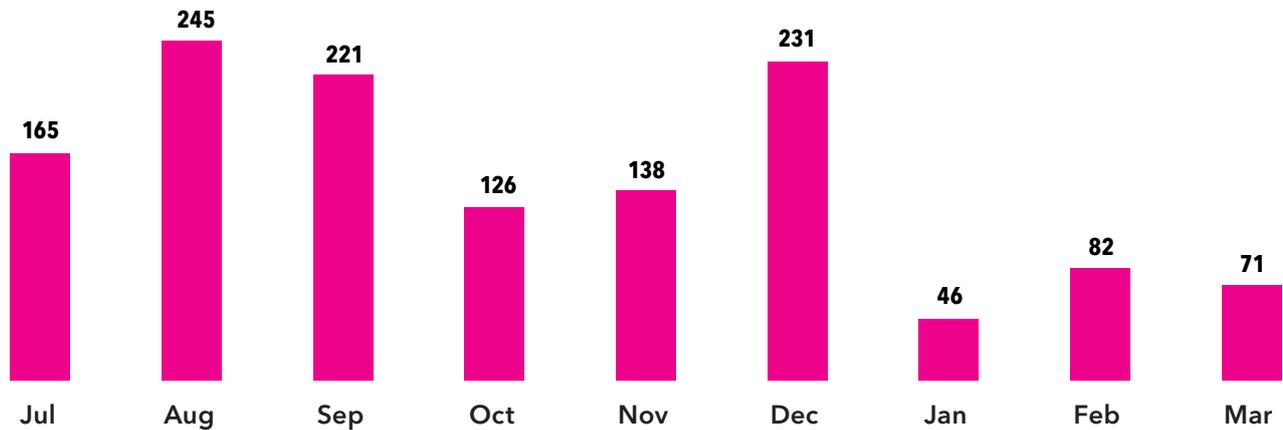
Outreach Health Education Camps

Our outreach health education camps are organised by the single women activists in their areas. They re-started in July after the lockdown from April to June. Each of the 6 single women have organised 7-8 camps during these nine months. Further restrictions due to Omicron reduced the number of camps we could hold in January and February and the single women's busy schedule in March when they organised important meetings in each block in which they work.



Nishtha portable library kindly supplied by Prathan Books

Outreach Clinic Attendance Data 2021-22



Suresh says:

I enjoy going to the village for the outreach camps. I take the patient's blood pressure and weight. Many people get medicines from the Government hospitals but are confused about how to take it. I can read their prescriptions, answer their questions and give them advice. People need to know that tea and sweets are the main cause of high blood pressure and diabetes. Sometimes we have alcoholics show up and cause disruption in the meeting so I have to deal with them. Alcoholism is a big problem in the villages.



Mohinder Kumar – Project Manager

I was born and brought up in this village. Dr. Barbara's family was my second family and I spent a lot of time there so I watched how Dr. Barbara worked for the people, always ready to help them and it inspired me. I am passionate about nature and was involved with a lot of volunteer programs in college: campus clean ups, tree plantation and helping the college gardeners. Then I was selected to take part in the Dharamsala sanitation survey where I met many people, from whom I learned many things.

Meanwhile I completed my graduation. I was not very keen on working in an office but I applied to Nishtha to help with the administration. At first I found it irksome to sit in one place and do accounts, I preferred going here and there meeting people. Then I formed a youth club to start sports in the village - all the boys did was to sit around drinking and eyeing up the girls. There was no flat ground on which to play but with the help of Nishtha we were able to remove the rocks and make it level so we could play cricket. I realised that working for Nishtha had its benefits! We started doing village environment projects, cleaning up the garbage and planting trees. The community center and the activities going on there enabled me to work with various ages doing trainings and meetings.

As Nishtha grew and we employed more people to run the office and do the accounts I had more freedom to devote to environment projects. Then we started the organic farm where we can experiment with different techniques and train the local people to avoid chemical fertilizers and insecticides. I also play a participatory role in the panchayat, forming a pressure group to make sure the panchayat funds are going in the right direction.

Now Nishtha is not work for me, it is my home and

all the staff are my family - it is my passion to keep everyone happy and busy, working harmoniously together. My role is Project Manager so I hold meetings with the staff to plan the day's activities, events workshops, seminars and so on. I do most of the running around to organise and fix things and make sure every project is running smoothly. If required I work physically on the farm or in the plastic brick making or on the playground. I am really proud that we have developed the playground, in fact saved it for the village - otherwise the whole area would have been encroached. Unfortunately we couldn't hold a sports tournament this year

but we did manage a couple of full day programs for the children and are busy improving the play equipment.

During the covid outbreak we worked hard to make sure the poorest who had lost their income were fed. We had to work hard to access supplies of oxygen and medicines for the sick people. We ran our ambulance to help people to get to hospital or get oxygen supplies. It was a very difficult time but we even managed to donate 2 large cylinders to the DC's COVID emergency program as people were dying for lack of oxygen.

This year I have tried to extend Nishtha environment program by coordinating with other local organisations and groups who are working in the same direction. We have formed a group called "Dharamsala Environment Preservation Network" which I hope will help us to have greater impact than each of us working on our own.

The past 24 years has been a learning process for me. Now I am confident to be able to stand up and introduce Nishtha to visitors, answering questions and providing information and to speak for Nishtha to Government officials. I feel happy to be working for the people of my village and to be doing something for the local ecology.



Vijay Kumar – Program Administrator

I joined Nishtha in 2012 after finishing my B.Com. I had worked as a tuition teacher at Nishtha so I knew about the work Nishtha does and they were prepared to let me continue studying for an M.Com by correspondence at the same time as working. At first I worked with Ravindra in the library, registering books and as a computer teacher in the afternoon. Then I joined the clean green survey of the local households, organising the collection of soft plastic. After 6 or 7 months I was asked to help with the accounts to relieve Mohinder. I had to learn from scratch how to manage the computer program and present the accounts for audit as well as collecting data and making reports. Now this is my main job though I still get back to the community centre to teach computer to children and students. Leading special programs for the children and taking them to the sports ground is a real joy.

This last year we have been very much engaged with programs to help people who suffered during the Corona time. For each program I was involved in making lists of how much material we needed and organising weighing it out into packages keeping track of it all carefully to ensure an equal distribution to the most needy people. Now we can show who the beneficiaries of every program were. We all really enjoyed delivering the nutritious food packages to the kids in their school areas when the schools were closed and the children couldn't coming down to the CC. I really like working with kids.

During the lockdown I had to work from home to finish the accounts and make reports for our trustees and chartered accountant. Fortunately we managed to complete it all properly. This year we were also very involved with providing all the necessary papers and accounts for our FCRA renewal application. We had to open a new account in Delhi to receive money from abroad which was complicated but very fortunately we succeeded and our renewal was granted in December. Now we have to be even more careful to follow the strict rules about how to manage our accounts.



I am very involved with the sponsorship program. I feel this program is very helpful for the students who come from very poor, illiterate families and want to study at college level. I receive their applications, interview them and set up an interesting Sunday program in which they learn English, how to use a computer and engage in a local dance training. This is all way beyond their expectations and creates a situation where they make friends with students from different courses and levels so learn a lot from each other.

Last year the colleges didn't open up until September before which the students were shut up in their homes studying on line. We had the idea to make a timetable for them to come in small groups to help Nishtha with our ongoing covid relief and environmental programs. This was a great success - they really loved coming and being together. It was also very helpful for the Nishtha staff.

I used to apply for government and bank jobs but now I realise that I couldn't have found a better place to work than here because I find it very satisfying to engage in social programs, being able to help people with their problems and to earn their respect. The staff are like a family to me. It would be very hard to find this kind of work environment anywhere else.

I am looking forward to being involved in more trainings this coming year. I would like to do a training for boys in 8-10th class so they understand the dangers of social media and the wider opportunities, beyond games and social media that your phone allows you. The boys really want some gender training for which I have done a course but have been unable to use because of the last two years restrictions.

"We should not tell our girls not to go outside at night to protect themselves but we should tell our boys how to behave."

Sponsorship Program

In August, when the lockdown had opened we conducted interviews for the new applicants for our sponsorship program. All the candidates filled in the form through which we find out about their family background, hobbies, interests, career objectives, strengths and weaknesses. We were particularly impressed with this year's candidates. We ended up considering the difficult circumstances, accepting 11 new students, 3

studying BA, and 5 BSc Students. We also accepted two BA students who requested us to help them complete their final year because they found themselves in a very difficult economic position due to the lockdown.

Now 15 of the 29 students are about to graduate which leaves us with 14 students who will stay, almost all of whom are from single parent families.

Sponsored Students 2021-22

	Old		New		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Nishtha UK (B.A, B.Sc , B.com)	4	7	0	8	4	15
Nishtha UK Special (B.A, B.Sc , B.com)	1	4	0	2	1	6
Germany (M.A, B.A, B.ed)	0	2	0	1	0	3
					5	24

Puja Anand

I teach spoken English with the help of various playful activities, creating situations, discussing daily activities and group discussion. Every student wants to learn English but because they don't learn to speak at school they are very hesitant and lack confidence. I found it very difficult for the first weeks, this year particularly since all the girls have been so shut up in their homes for so long. Whether what they say is correct or not, I say it is sufficient that they are provoked to speak out. Gradually they do gain confidence and start speaking. I find this work very satisfying. Seeing kids and youth grow in confidence and enjoy speaking English is a reward in itself.



Vijay Bhardwaj

Dance class is fun and helps the students come out of themselves. I am always surprised to find many students who don't know a single step of their local dances despite their importance in marriage ceremonies. These days everyone knows Punjabi pop, but influenced by our students many local weddings can be seen to be returning to the traditional group dances again. I try to make the students laugh, have fun and become fabulous dancers in both the tribal Ghaddi tradition and in the Kangra Jamkda style. Three or four of our girls have performed in local Ghaddi song videos. This year they performed on women's day during the local Panchayat program.



Rinki Devi

Rinki Devi was selected to join the special professional BSc course in Bio-technology that would cost 3 times the cost of a normal BSc course. She is a leading light in all our programs

who took the microphone on Women's Day and gave a powerful speech about why women should be aware of their rights.

Ankush Kumar – Office Assistant

I joined Nishtha when I had completed my college BCA (computer application) in 2016 as Vijay's assistant. I felt this would be a very valuable learning experience for me rather than just getting a job in any office. I am very familiar with Nishtha because I used to attend the tuition and computer classes here.

Every morning I enter the account vouchers into the computer program, I collect data from the project staff and enter them into the computer. I go to the bank, the post office or on other office errands. I also enjoy taking pictures, keeping the photo documentation in order and posting facebook posts.

Sometimes I have to help the community centre staff delivering the school nutrition material. During the Corona time we were very happy to all work together to pack and deliver food materials to people who were really in need. I kept the records of who we gave packages to and now we are doing the voucher program I keep the records which I get from the single women about who receives them so we make sure some people don't get more than others.

During Corona time I also went with the ambulance

to pick up patients or deliver oxygen. As I live nearby I could be called on in emergency.

A year and a half ago I started working with the youth club in place of Mohinder who always used to run it. I particularly focus on organising the village youth to celebrate local festivals. This year we did special programs on both Dussehra and Holi. On Dusshera we played a short version of the Ramayana trying to show why we celebrate the defeat of evil in preparation for the coming new year. Previously Holi was celebrated as a whole village but recently people only celebrate in their small clusters. The youth club aims to bring everyone out of their houses to celebrate together again - to bring new life into the village.

I am also very involved with the classes we hold on Sundays for the sponsorship students. I call the students and keep the register. I make sure the CC is ready for the English and dance classes and I usually take the computer classes myself. We also try to organise a picnic every year but this hasn't been possible for the last two years.

I am very interested in photography and would really like to have some more training in how to take and work with my pictures on the computer.



Ankush helping to distribute care packages to the anganwari children

Ravindra – Community Centre Manager

“When I started working with Nishtha in 2002 we were just starting a small library in the newly renovated building which is now our fully-fledged community centre. At that time I learned to do screen printing which we did ourselves for our bags. We started the school nutrition and encouraged the children to come to our centre after school. This is still going on though this year the schools were closed and the children couldn’t come to the community centre until late September.

Although I couldn’t come to Nishtha for a month during the lockdown, everyone was very busy packing food supplies for people who were really suffering shortages. As things opened up, we visited the 6 hillside school areas every two weeks, calling the children and giving them packets of nutritious snacks along with activity books, drawing materials and story books which we bought from Pratham especially for the purpose. We also did tooth brushing sessions and gave the kids tooth brushes and paste. That was a lot of fun. It gave us a burst of energy to see the children and to interact with them. It was lovely that they were so happy to see our car driving up the road. They greeted us with smiles and showed us their paintings - It was a lovely time.



This year in November we gave the children shoes and socks. Because they weren’t going to school we chose colourful sports shoes which the children all really like and they seem to be wearing well as we see them lined up in the community centre each afternoon. The responsibility of choosing the right kind shoes and socks that the children like is quite a headache and it is not a small job to make sure each child gets the right size!

All the schools, including the aganwaris re-opened in March at which point we decided to provide special care packages for around 60 children in the 5 local anganwaris. These packages included one pair of shoes and one pair of crocks for each child. Socks, underpants, toys including balls and vehicles to play with as well as nutritious snacks.

This distribution enabled us to meet the children and their mothers and assess the future needs of the anganwaris.

When I get up each morning I think about what we should do this day, who will be there to help with each program, whether the weather is fine enough to visit the anganwaris. I am happy and satisfied with the work I do and hope to be able to continue to do my best.

School Nutrition Program (April to March) 2021-22

School areas	No.	Apr	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Feb	Total
Chakwan	23	6,704	5,347	11,427	5,295	9,476	5,772	9,407	19,076	72,504
Saletgodam	15	4,662	3,835	8,277	4,044	6,592	3,624	6,544	13,887	51,465
Rakkar	38	11,123	9,524	16,762	8,214	13,296	11,396	16,362	29,319	115,996
Andrar	56	7,046	10,909	26,696	12,384	24,324	15,840	24,543	49,667	171,409
Mohli	19	5,494	4,591	11,163	3,743	8,817	6,772	9,407	17,162	67,149
Disabled	6	1,480	2,188	5,270	1,459	5,982	1,256	4,573	9,936	32,144
Total	157	36,509	36,394	79,595	35,139	68,487	44,660	70,836	139,047	510,667
									Fuel	29,500
									Packing Material	4,545
									Stationary	25,960
										544,712

Tuition Program

In September Neelam joined us and we started the tuition program with 20-25 children every day. In view of the fact that the schools had been closed for 20 months and children from less literate families have had a particularly hard time keeping up with their school work using smart phones, It was decided that a strong tuition program would be offered this year for children from Government schools who have very little opportunity to get help with their school work at home. We are really pleased that almost all of our children got 1st division in their exams.



Neelam describes how the classes are divided into two sessions - "the first 45 minutes focuses on the school curriculum providing syllabus support

reasoning, games which encourage them to use all their senses, communication skill development, vocabulary building, and learning and teaching new skills.

Whenever possible I discuss environmental and social issues with the children."

for the children. This primarily means that the children receive help with their school homework and covers basic maths, general science, general English, reading books and writing exercises. During the second 45 minute session the children are engaged in different activities designed to sharpen their mental abilities. These include logical

Salochana Devi – Community Centre Housekeeper

I started working in the Community centre in January 2002 for 3 hours a day. At that time I worked for the school nutrition program. We used to cook meals for the children in the kitchen under Dr. Barbara's house and then I would take them down to the children for their lunch. At that time the school did not provide a midday meal. I would take soap and ask the children to wash their hands and then serve the food in individual dishes. I would clean all the utensils and the dishes every day.

As the work with the children changed so my work has changed. Now I clean and look after everything in the whole building. We now provide fruits and vegetables to 6 schools so I have to prepare what we are supplying to Rakkar school each day and take it down to them. On Mondays the weekly supply arrives and has to be separated out and delivered to each school. The school work is less but the community centre work is more now we have more workshops and meetings for which I have to prepare chai and clean up. I am

happy to work overtime when there is need like at Diwali when we have to clean and decorate the community centre. I am proud of my work in the Community Centre and like to do it properly.



Ravi – Driver

I joined in 2013 starting in the environment program for 2 years. Then in 2015. Shubhash taught me how to drive and now I am the main driver and am in charge of the vehicles. We have three vehicles: a Xylo which usually goes out with the doctors, the Sumo which is used for the special needs children, school nutrition and so on and a small ambulance which is used for patients.

I usually take the doctors on the outreach and play an active part in setting up the materials, and talking about the environment. When I first started I found it difficult to talk to people but now I am relaxed standing up and explaining things. During the last year when the children were home from school our portable library was very useful. I would set it up and engage the children in looking at the books and reading stories.

This year because Tapovan wasn't running we brought the children with special needs here most days from



September to March, especially when Dimple was here giving physiotherapy. At first I found it difficult helping the children in and out of the vehicle but now I am used to it and know how to fit their equipment. I am happy to be able to help them.

When the covid outbreak first happened I was called to help Jagori distribute food packages to migrant labours who were unable to go home. We had to drive very far down to Kotla and quite far from the main road. There were covid patients there as well. Last year we delivered SMILE packages and did a lot of running around finding places where we could refill the oxygen cylinders.

I still work in the clean green program, cleaning up the playground and helping Suresh maintain the water filters. On the farm I mostly do digging, composting, and trimming. I really like farming. When we have trainings in the community centre I help Sunil with the cooking.

Arvind – Driver

I joined in July 2015 as assistant to Vijay Bhardwaj collecting plastic waste and making blocks. I also worked on the farm. After a few months, because I could already drive, Dr. Barbara decided that it would be useful to have me as a second driver to help Ravi. During lockdown we had less driving but I spent more time on the environment and on the farm. We kept on working even during the lockdowns.

I worked a lot with the SMILE project getting the material from the shops. I also gave some of the wheat from my fields to be ground into special flour for the needy people.

I clean the filters and help with repairs. We have to regularly check the pipelines - people put their feet on the connections and damage them so it breaks and no water comes. Then I have to go and find out where the problem is



and get it fixed.

We do a lot for our patients, the doctors even do home visits. If the patient doesn't follow what the doctor says then it's not really worth going out of our way to visit them but if they are following our advice then it is useful. I also drive for the outreach clinics which I think is a useful program for poor people who are unable to go to the main hospital. Sometimes people ask for medicines but when we explain they understand that it is the government rule that we don't give out medicines only tell them the best place to go if they need.

Early on Monday mornings I go to the vegetable wholesale market in Dharamsala to bring vegetables & fruit for the school program for the week. I also do one night duty a week. I am happy with this job because I am able to interact with many people and I learn a lot.

Sports Programs

In November, for the first time since the lockdown, Saturday became sports day. At last the children enjoyed all kinds of games and activities on Rakkar ground. Cycling, skipping rope, badminton and Kabaddi are among their favorites.

Sports activities are a great way to encourage team building. All ages playing together is very important for personality development and mental growth. Regular events and games on the ground also ensures that it is kept clean and tidy.

In December a two day winter sports program was held in which 80-90 children, more than we have seen for a very long time came and joyfully took part in in athletics, tug of war, long and high jump and much more.

The Nishtha staff were assisted by a team of our sponsorship students who enjoyed the event as much as the kids! All the winners were awarded trophies while everyone who participated in the events received gifts of pens, colours and a drawing or exercise book. Lunch and snacks were provided for all the participants on both days.

Playground Development

The Rakkar playground has been constantly used by the local children throughout the pandemic. We therefore developed a long term plan to improve the play equipment. We began by extending the concrete under the basket ball pole to enable it to be used more easily for games and practicing shooting the ball.

With the help of our Austrian civil servants we have created a very exciting sitting circle. The base is made out of our plastic bricks.

The roundabout has been repaired and we will replace the wires on the spider web climbing frame which were vandalised last year. We have also ordered a new ladder and slide to sit on to of a large rock in the ground for smaller children to enjoy.



COVID Relief

Vijay Bhardwaj – Village Surveys

Since last year I have been spending a lot of time finding out who is in trouble in our local villages because of the COVID lockdowns and the lack of work, especially those on the hillside who have no land to fall back on. I have done house to house surveys identifying different groups of people who are helped by our different programs such as the elderly single women, teenage girls, families with children and people living with disabilities.

It was quite difficult going to each and every hamlet, mostly on foot because there are no roads above certain points. I feel good taking this responsibility and do my best to make my lists very accurate, leaving no one out. I get some help from elected members of the village councils who know the very poor and tell me to check this or that person out. Some people who were not so poor would ask to be put on the lists but I would talk to them and help them to understand that this is a critical situation and we are intent on helping those who really need it. I never ignored anyone but just asked them to consider realistically who really needs it - this person or you. We would drive our car to the road heads and ask people to

collect the rations from there but sometimes there were people who couldn't walk down and then I had to run up the hill to drop the ration packages at their house.

I am very happy and proud that through Nishtha I was able to help people during this time.



Special COVID-19 Relief Programs Sponsors

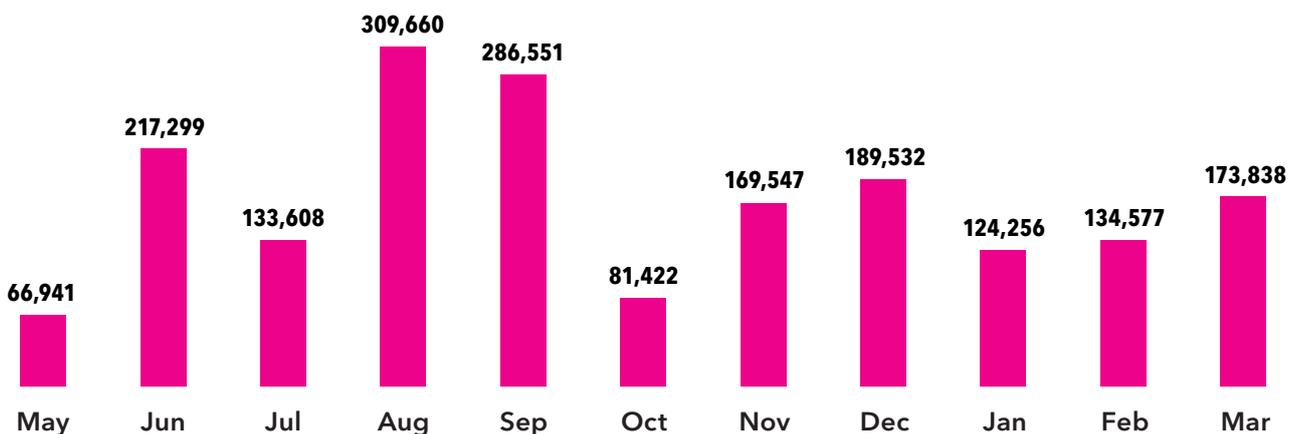
SMILE-de, who provided the means for us to make 236 relief packages for those suffering from food poverty during the lockdown.

Nishtha Austria and Nishtha Germany provided funds with which we converted into Rs.1001 food vouchers which were distributed by the Single Women Activists among the most needy families

throughout the 90 panchayats in which they work.

Nishtha Germany and Nishtha UK provided funds with which to provide special nutritious snack packs every two weeks to the children from 5 local government schools which remained closed until March 2021.

Special COVID-19 Monthly Rupee Expense Report



Vijay Bhardwaj – Clean Green Program Activist

I joined Nishtha in 2014 to work with the clean green program. We collect plastic from the households and make it into blocks in our compression machine. Most of what I do is talking to people. I visit all the households explaining why we are collecting plastic. Most people in the area know me and I am quite comfortable talking to them - I explain about what kinds of plastic we take and how we all need to be aware of what waste we produce and how to dispose of it carefully for the sake of the environment.

The village people usually don't have a lot of waste material - they feed the wet waste to the cows or throw it in a compost heap in the garden. The kabaris (rag pickers) take all the re-cyclable waste which leaves the dry soft plastic which creates a lot of problems as it blocks the irrigation channels and finds its way into the fields. The problem is that there are a lot of new people coming into the village who have houses with closed gates or are on short term rents who are more difficult to work with. People take time to understand why they should not just throw their waste in the river or burn it. When they understand that we are not making money out of their waste but collecting it so it doesn't cause harm to the environment they appreciate what we do. I say: The earth is like our mother so we should respect it as our mother and do our best to protect it.

I also work on the farm with the other male staff doing the work of digging and cutting that is difficult for the ladies to do. I too help clean the filters - they all get cleaned twice a month. I go with Arvind to buy vegetables on Mondays and then help deliver materials to the schools, I help clean and maintain the playground - the thorn bushes need cutting back regularly and the play equipment needs repair sometimes.

It's my birthday on 5th June, Environment Day so it is god's gift to me that I was born for this work!



Farm Team

Sujata

I Joined Nishtha in 2014 after my husband Subhash who worked as a driver for Nishtha passed away. Because I grew up on a farm I was engaged to help on the organic farm which has been set up as an example and training facility for local people to learn organic farming. I find it very interesting to learn the different techniques for adding quality to the soil. I now make compost and use round plots in my own farm because it is easy to reach all parts of the plot without stepping into it and compacting the soil. This is very useful for small vegetable farms.

I came to Nishtha as a timid and sad woman but today I feel confident and full of purpose. I am proud of my two children who I am able to support and send them to schools so they get a better education that I did. Even though life is tough as a widow and single mother I'm determined to keep going. I am grateful to Nishtha for giving me purpose and direction.

Sunil

After finishing school I was looking after our family farm and sometimes cooking for marriages and functions, a skill I learned from my uncle. I decided to join Nishtha because I needed permanent work - the cooking and farming as we do it is very seasonal. In 2018, Dr. Barbara engaged me to work on the Nishtha farm to help Sujata. I know farming well but here we are doing organic farming which needs different techniques - we work with smaller plots and concentrate on making compost and mulching. We have had several trainings about permaculture which I found very interesting. I enjoy experimenting like when we cleaned and filled a desi cow's horn with desi cow manure, planted it and left it for 6 months. When you dig it up the manure is converted into very fine compost which when mixed 1:10 with water and sprinkled on the vegetable plants and fruit trees, they give a lot more fruits.

I like the work and get on with the rest of the staff.



Bandna – Community Centre Assistant

When I broke up with my husband I worked as a single women activist for 4 years until we got back together. I am trained as a tailor so, not being single any more I moved to working in the Community Centre stitching and managing the library. Now I also work on the farm and together with Sujata we collect plastic waste from the lower part of the village and engage in the village clean ups and bag filling.

This work suits me as there is a lot of variety and I enjoy the company. We all help with the school nutrition program and workshops which I enjoy. Nishtha has been a breakthrough from the harsh web of abuse and unhappiness that has been my life. In my work I forget my sorrows and find the energy to work towards providing better opportunities in life for my children. I want them to grow up to be independent and strong.

Single Women's Program

Kummo Devi

I joined the Single Woman's Project when the Kangra Himachal chapter first started in 2006. At that time it was decided that the program would run as a satellite of the Himachal Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan which runs out of SUTRA, an NGO based in Solan. I, along with the original group of women field workers received basic training from SUTRA and reported to them until 4 years ago when Nishtha decided to run the program in this area themselves in order to be able to expand the program and so that we wouldn't have to travel all the way to Solan for meetings.

Although at first it was difficult to even use the taboo word "widow" in the villages we soon learnt and found ways to get help from the village panchayats. I remember when widows had to follow the local custom of giving water to a peepal tree for a whole year, barefoot, which is very tough during the winter months. Now things are not so bad - people are coming to understand that women should not be blamed for losing their husbands. I am happy to be able to help women such as Gulabo who, though she raised two sons on her own, when they got married their wives treated her badly. I went to her house and spoke to the sons to help them realise their responsibilities. Now things are better and they all sit together for meals and eat like a family. Abandoned wives also suffer a great deal because the husbands rarely want to sign divorce papers because they will be made to support the children.

Ranjana

I joined Nishtha in 2016 through Kummo Devi who lives nearby in Rait area. I now works with Kummo and enjoy going out into the villages organising meetings and helping women in need. One case I helped this year is of Savita, a 35 year old widow with 2 disabled daughters aged 16 & 18. I was shocked and sad to see how they lived in only one small room with no kitchen or bathroom. Nishtha found a sponsor and we were able to get a toilet & kitchen made for them. Through they had been neglected before, I talked to the village panchayat and got them a water connection and warm clothing and blankets for the winter We applied to the Grih Nirman scheme and they received 1.5 Lakhs with which they got their veranda made, giving them more space. I drop in from time to time and find them happy and grateful. It is very satisfying when cases work out well like this.

Kummo & Ranjana work in Rait block. They have 1,255 members 143 more than last year and they helped 27 women benefit from Government schemes. In March they held a block meeting in Sharpur attended by 126 women along with the Sharpur lady police, anganwari workers, the Child Development Officer and Zilla Parishad representative. It was a very intense and useful meeting.



Single Women's Program

Sunita

I have been working with the Single Women at Nishtha for 12 years now. At first I felt awkward visiting the villages and talking to the people about the program but, as I too had been shaken by the death of my husband I really wanted to help people. I found that listening to the problems and sufferings of other women helped ease own pain. I have met a lot of women in different situations, for example Usha who was pregnant when her husband died. She gave birth to a healthy son but was left without any source of income, not even have a proper house to live in. I helped her to obtain and fill in her pension form and to apply for the Mother Teresa govt. scheme which provides Rs.6,000 a year for the support of children up to 18 years. This at least helps a little bit. I also helped Usha apply for the Grih Nirman Scheme which enabled her to build 2 rooms with kitchen and washroom for herself. Today Usha does not feel helpless but is much more confident and regularly attends the various Single Women's meetings and events which makes me feel happy & proud. This year I was also able to provide her and so many needy women with food vouchers from Nishtha with which she can buy Rs. 1001 worth of food of her own choice.



Pratibha, above, and Sunita, right, organizing outreach clinics

Pratibha

My husband died suddenly leaving me with two children to support. I met Sunita who suggested that I should join the Nishtha Single Women's group. At first I wasn't sure that I would be able to do this work but I learned the ropes quite quickly from the other women. In the last 10 years I have seen many suppressed single woman who had no pension for years or any knowledge of the Govt schemes available for us. I have also encouraged many of the younger women to do computer courses through which they can get jobs. Every month I organise 21 meetings, and 6 to 8 health camps which I feel are very helpful for the women in the villages. Sometimes I am disappointed when a woman who I have helped doesn't want to come to meetings to join hands with other women and make them aware.

Sunita & Pratibha work in Nagrota block. They have 954 members, 114 more than last year and they helped 46 women benefit from Government schemes. In March they held a block meeting in Nishtha community Centre attended by 65 women. Three doctors, Dr. Kusum, Dr. Deepanjali and Dr. Barbara all talked. The Government Welfare officer, Ramesh Chand explained about the schemes the Government has set up to help single women. Sidhbari Municipal Council member Dimple Sharma also talked to the women about how the MC can help them.



Single Women's Program

Shilpa

I joined the Single Woman's Project in 2010 while my divorce case was going on. My family situation was very bad and I desperately needed work. Then I heard about Nishtha's Single Woman's program and took a Wenlido training course which gave me a feeling of strength and was taken on by Nishtha as a Single Women activist. I was really happy to go out into the village to talk to the single women and give them hope & direction. Sitting at home and simply pondering your problems is not helpful. Women need to build their lives and develop their self-respect. I currently take care of 35 village panchayats and feel a great sense of purpose. It is not uncommon around here that women lose their husbands to alcohol induced suicide. A woman 29 years old was pregnant when her husband committed suicide by hanging himself in the house. She used to cry and have suicidal thoughts herself but I talked to her and gave her hope and practical help applying for financial aid during this very difficult time of her life.

Vandana

Having suffered 15 years of domestic violence I left my husband and returned to my parents' house. I started working with Naya Asha, the stitching group that makes bags for Nishtha. Four years later my husband died of natural causes. Then, in 2020 Dr. Barbara asked me to join the Single Women's group I now handles 17 village areas. I have also done advanced Wenlido training which gives me the confidence to go into the villages to meet and talk about the project. I meet people like a 35 years old who is paralysed from her waist down. She is unmarried and lives with her mother, doing all her housework by sliding on the floor. I talked to our doctors and organised a special low level wheel chair from Nishtha that helps her move around freely. She is even taking stitching classes in order to be able to support herself when her mother is no more. I am happy that I have helped her and many other poor widows improve improve their lives.

Shilpa & Vandana work in Dharamsala and Kangra blocks. They have 1708 155 members, more than last year and they helped 32 women benefit from Government schemes. 138 women attended their block meeting held in Nishtha community Centre. On this day the Block Medical Officer came to talk to the women who talked to him about the Aayushman health insurance card he

promised to help them. Rajni, a former mayor of Dharamsala spoke about how the panchayats have to disclose their budgets and expenditure on their websites. The local Praadan talked about schemes available through the panchayat and the Director of ITI Dhari Manish Rana told about the course children of single women can take in his college. Altogether this day was very useful and productive.



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

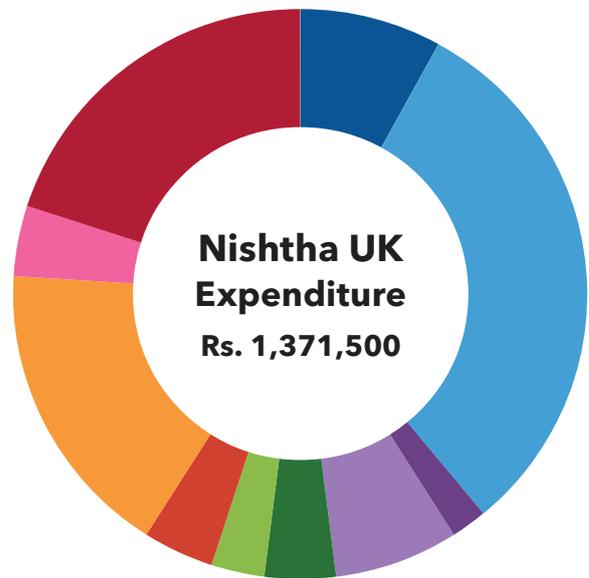
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Program	Amount (Rs.)
Admin	116,320
Children and Youth Program	430,050
Clinic Special Service	20,295
Community Outreach Program	96,731
COVID Emergency Fund	46,541
Disabled Children	41,605
Wenlido	46,255
Public Health and Environment	242,723
Publicity Projects	50,510
Sponsorship	280,470

Germany



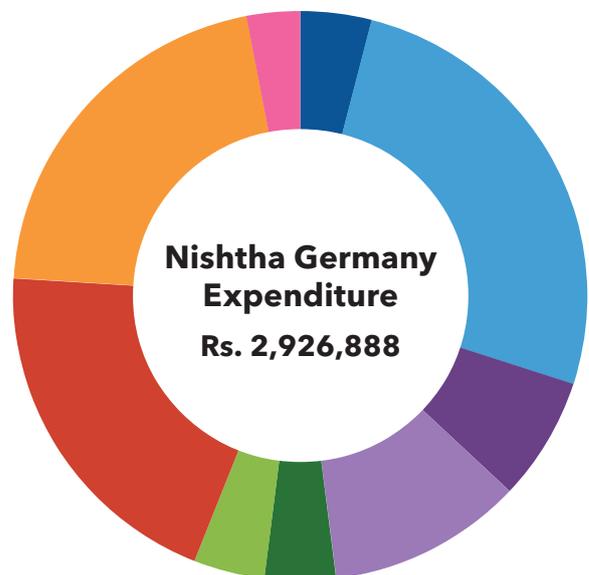
Bank: Volksbank Main-Tauber eG

BIC: GENODE61WTH

IBAN:

DE40673900000084335401

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Program	Amount (Rs.)
Admin	115,507
Clinic	750,637
Clinic Destitute Fund	206,738
Land Project	329,933
Publicity Projects	111,499
School Childrens' Shoes	128,246
School Nutrition	573,217
Single Women	610,243
Sponsorship	100,868

Austria

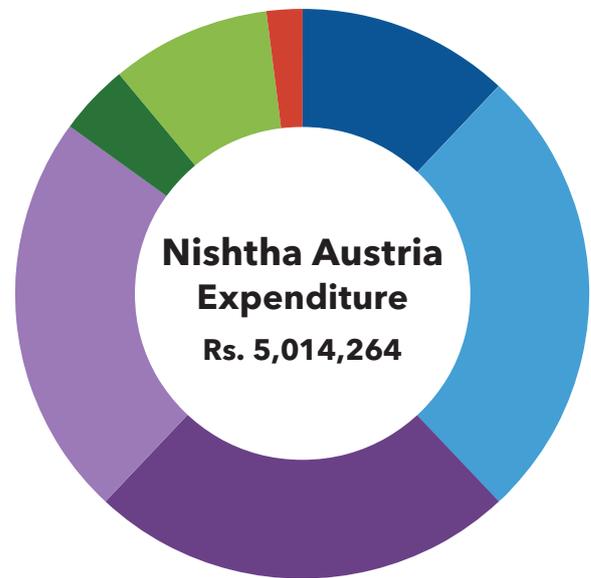


Nishtha Austria

Gemeinsames Engagement für
Entwicklungszusammenarbeit

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

<http://www.nishtha.at>



Admin	618,187
Clinic	1,302,695
Community Center	1,204,901
COVID Relief Fund	1,150,128
Publicity Projects	203,730
Single Women Program	473,410
Sponsorship Program	61,213

United States

TIMBERLINE FOUNDATION

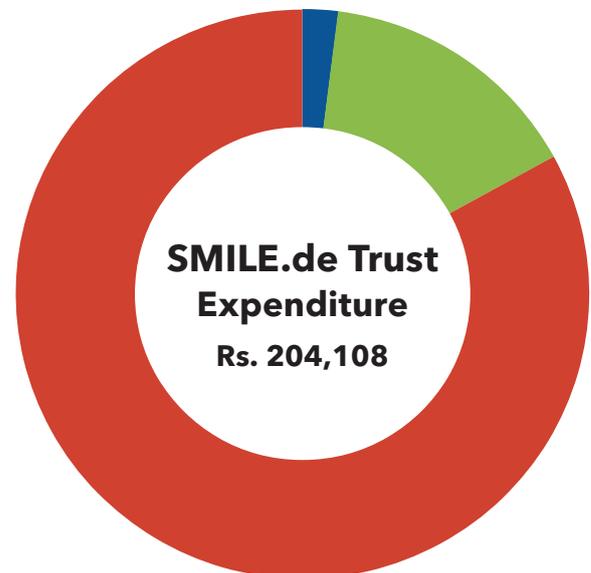
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If you would prefer to post a check,
you may send it to:

Timberline Foundation
Box 301
Driggs, ID 83422

410-715-8901

ExecDir@timberlinefoundation.org



Admin	1,426
Girls Program	31,234
Nutrition	171,448

Republic of India



Nishtha Rural Health, Education & Environment Centre

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

Email: contact@nishtha.ngo

For donations within India only:

Account number: 55094118584

SBI, Sidhbari branch code: 50441

IFSC: SBIN0050441

MICR: 176007053

Swift code: SBININBB277

Nishtha Rural Health, Education & Environment Centre is a registered charitable Trust

Registration No: 51 1/4/98

FCRA No: 182450048

Income Tax Number:

AAATN4316QE19981

Tax exemption available



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

Please visit our online shop:

shop.nayi-asha.com

Local Income

Bank Interest	378,653
Clinic Donations	223,820
Community Center Donations	81,140
Sponsorship for Sahil	18,000
Sponsorship for Simran	20,000
Donation from Yudhistar	50,000
Total	771,613

Local Expenditure

Office Expenses	4,194
House keeping / Watchman	120,000
Clinic Maintainance	73,511
Outdoor exp. & Supplies	17,413
Housekeeper / Cook	107,000
Community Centre Exp.	9,076
Computer Equip / Eye Glass	12,279
Disabled Saksham	14,000
Clean Green Village	5,285
Nayi Asha admin Exp	2,311
Sahil Sponsorship	15,500
Simran Sponsorship	15,904
Shahpur Destitute	11,837
COVID-19 Special	28,000
Total	436,310





Nishtha

Rural Health, Education &
Environment Centre

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